

# *Introduction:*

## *Women's Role in the Christian Community*<sup>1</sup>

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We do not start our Christian lives by working out our faith for ourselves; it is mediated to us by Christian tradition, in the form of sermons, books and established patterns of church life and fellowship. **We read our Bibles in the light of what we have learned from these sources;** we approach Scripture with minds already formed by the mass of accepted opinions and viewpoints with which we have come into contact, in both the Church and the world. **Inevitably, we grow up children of our own age, reflecting in our outlook the mental environment in which we were reared.** The process is as natural as breathing in the air around us, and as unconscious. **It is easy to be unaware that it has happened; it is hard even to begin to realize how profoundly tradition in this sense has moulded us.** But we are forbidden to become enslaved to human tradition, either secular or Christian, whether it be 'catholic' tradition, or even 'evangelical' tradition. **We may never assume the complete rightness of our own established ways of thought and practice and excuse ourselves the duty of testing and reforming them by Scripture.**<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

As we explore the role of women in the church, we need some background into the field of biblical interpretation. How should we interpret the Word of God? Is the **context** a necessary ingredient for proper exegetical studies? Should we consider the intent of the author or just cite his words without a reference to **context** or **cultural background**? In order for the reader to learn how to interpret the Word of God more accurately, this "INTRODUCTION" is designed

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is the **introduction** from my book: *Women's Role in the Christian Community: Interpreting First Timothy through First-Century Eyes* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2017), xv-xlix.

<sup>2</sup> I was born July 4, 1934. I have been a serious student, teacher, and preacher of the Bible for just a little over sixty-eight years, supporting myself for many years as an agent for AFLAC. I have written numerous articles for religious journals, as well as many essays and sermons which are available on my website ([www.freedominchrist.net](http://www.freedominchrist.net)). I am also the author of fourteen books. Within my ministry, I developed a keen interest in promoting unity among God's people through a more accurate reading of the Word of God. I hold the B.A., M.S., and M.Div. degrees from Amridge University (formerly Southern Christian University), and I hold the Doctor of Ministry degree (1999) from Erskine Theological Seminary. Also, I was the Director of Extended Learning with Amridge University for about five years.

<sup>3</sup>J. I. Packer (b. 1926), *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), 69-70.

to prevent the reader from falling into the same pitfalls that I fell into in the earlier part of my ministry. In order to call awareness to my troubled spiritual journey of unfounded explanations of certain Scriptures, it is necessary to give a brief biography of my association with the men who influenced me with their methodology of interpretation as I sought to learn more about God's Word and how to teach God's Word. As we seek to understand God's Word more clearly, sometimes we have to be willing to go in directions that contradict our heritage. I am still conscious that it is very difficult for older generations to escape their cultural bondage.

Even though I mention the names of godly individuals in this study who influenced me, nevertheless, this naming is not to be taken as an attack or denunciation against these sincere and saintly men. This scenario of my own journey of faith will set the tone for the first chapter in this book ("How to Interpret Holy Scripture"). Chapter 1 of this book deals directly with the principles of how we should interpret Scripture. We need to be conscious of the correct principles of biblical hermeneutics (science of interpretation) in order to prepare ourselves for a precise and correct reading of First Timothy and I Corinthians 14:34-35 as it relates to the role of women in the Body of Christ. **When we start with an incorrect premise as to what we think Paul meant by what he wrote, we will reach a conclusion that is not true.** It is not uncommon among Christians to build a superstructure on that foundation of a false premise or proposition concerning women's place in the proclamation of God's Word both publicly and privately.

My second chapter focuses upon the "Role of Women in the Great Commission," which study examines Chapter 24 of Luke's Gospel. This chapter is prerequisite to an adequate understanding of women's place in the Christian community. This study of Luke 24 unravels the role that women played following the Resurrection of Jesus. Chapter 3 surveys the philosophy of interpreting the Word of God with literalism and, at the same time, scans the practice of isolating a particular text from its cultural context. This chapter ("Wooden Literalism: Abuse of Holy Scripture") examines this mind-set of a "stilted or wooden" interpretation as far back as the seventeenth century among the church fathers. When we cite book, chapter, and verse without consulting the context, we misapply the Scriptures just as much as Satan did in his exact quotations from the Septuagint (LXX) to Jesus. Even though Satan quoted the Scriptures verbatim, nevertheless, Jesus corrected his application. Satan failed to give the intent of the author's saying(s).

Following this chapter, we respond to the question: "Are Women to Announce the Good News of Salvation to the World?" In Chapter 4, we call attention to the prepositional phrase "**from Galilee**" and its importance in arriving at an accurate understanding of the role of women in the church. In addition to this emphasis, we also scan negative statements concerning what women can do and cannot do with reference to their part in the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 dissect First Timothy as a book in its cultural context in order to grasp the significance of the vocabulary employed by Paul. Also, these three chapters explore the cultural context of this Epistle. In probing the cultural context, we need to visit the city of Ephesus with the backdrop of Acts 19. Unfortunately, many people in the "pew" are quite gullible when it comes to searching the Scriptures for themselves.

Chapter 8 will focus upon the negative statement about women found in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Did this declaration originate with Paul or did this account come from the religious leaders? Too many Christians rely upon the man in the pulpit for their interpretation of God's Word. It is time that we, as followers of Christ, cease to reflect upon our own interpretation and turn our attention to the intent of the author. Chapter 8 of this study will demonstrate that these often cited negative statement about women in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 constituted the oral law of the Jews. Our present-day understanding of this pericope is grounded upon our teachers in the pulpit or seminaries rather than the Bible.

## MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF FAITH

When we ignore the cultural context within which the author penned certain words, we will continue to follow in the steps of the religious leaders in Jesus' day. When Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount, He had to combat two-hundred years of oral tradition, which tradition later became known as the Babylonian Talmud. Today, as Christians, we, too, are confronted by hundreds of years of oral tradition. The following comments by Leroy Garrett (1918-2014) should grab our attention about our failure to learn from history:

The value of history is variously appraised, from Henry Ford's insistence that history is bunk to Montaigne's [1533-1592] view that history is the window through which we look out upon our world. If Hegel [1770-1831] saw history as the story of mankind's struggle to be free, Thucydides [460-411 BC] saw the study of the past as a means of interpreting the future. Harvard's George Santayana [1863-1952] spoke to us all when he warned that those who ignore history have to repeat its mistakes. And we can all probably agree that there is at least some truth in that line engraved on the cornerstone of the National Archives in Washington, D.C.: *The Past Is Prologue*.<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis mine)

### Gullible's Travels

I have sought to learn from my own personal history in my journey of faith. An examination of my own spiritual journey of faith reveals that I, too, relied upon the preachers in the pulpit for my interpretation of Scripture. Hopefully, this biography of my spiritual journey will set the tone for others to properly interpret God's written Revelation. Confidently, I believe that my brief biographical journey will help other Christians to avoid the many difficulties that I encountered during the early part of my ministry. During the first twenty-one years of my ministry, I cited Scriptures to justify my beliefs concerning the mandatory silence of women in the assembly.

At that time, I knew nothing about the immediate context, the remote context, the larger context, or the cultural context of Scripture. This INTRODUCTION is designed to help prepare the reader to identify himself or herself in the various stages of their own pilgrimage of faith. I, too, can identify myself with a large majority of Christians who still hold to the traditional view—silence of women—since I maintained the same hand-me-down tradition that I received

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<sup>4</sup>Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (College Press Publishing Company, 2002), 1.

from my church fathers. Regardless as to our denomination, we need to study our past history in order to not repeat the same mistakes in our study of God's Word.

In this overview of *how* to interpret God's Revelation, I am seeking to call awareness to the *how* and the *why* of **differences** within the Body of Christ. This overview should alert every believer to go back to the Scriptures to see if the context of any pericope or section of Scripture has been consulted in trying to arrive at a correct exegesis of God's Word. As stated above, Chapter 1 of this study will explore the techniques of the proper methodology of interpretation. The primary objective of this INTRODUCTION is to identify with the average reader since I too have had a distinctive spiritual journey that I sometimes refer to as Gullible's travels.

## MY BIOGRAPHICAL SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Initially, the beginning of my spiritual journey as a young seventeen year old preacher boy may be described as "Gullible's Travels," not Gulliver's Travels. I accepted what I was taught without question. I memorized verses from the Bible by the hundreds. **In the early stages of my ministry, I did not understand that one might cite Scripture and, at the same time, fail to apply the text correctly in light of its historical background or context.** In the beginning of my spiritual leadership, as preacher and teacher,<sup>5</sup> my instructors taught me to commit to memory Holy Writ, not to analyze its context.<sup>6</sup> In fact, I had never heard of the word *context* utilized as a means of arriving at a correct interpretation of the author's meaning. I never employed context in my preaching or my teaching.

My statement about these righteous men in this "introduction" is not to be taken as a diatribe or as an attack against them in our disagreements. We must all strive for peace and unity among God's people. My first sermon,<sup>7</sup> "What Shall I Preach?" was the dawning of my dogmatic, partisan, factional, biased, and sectarian views concerning other believers. Even though I quoted the Word of God verbatim; nevertheless, my application of the Word was not in harmony with the context. I. Howard Marshall (1924-2015, former Senior Lecturer in New Testament Exegesis University of Aberdeen) correctly states an exegetical principle concerning interpretation that we should read and reread:

First, in interpreting a passage a number of different lines of investigation must be followed. Textual [based on a piece of writing] and linguistic [relating to word or vocabulary] study, research

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<sup>5</sup>I started my public ministry on January 21, 1951 in LaGrange, Georgia under the leadership of E.H. Miller (1909-1989), my uncle.

<sup>6</sup>This was not intentional on the part of the ones who taught me. These godly men devoted their lives to God with immense zeal. I still thank God for their efforts to instill into me a belief in the trustworthiness of the Scriptures as God's inspired Word. They were children of their culture, as we all are. They taught me as they themselves had been taught. Because of different circumstances in life, I have been exposed to other writers who helped me to develop principles of interpretation that they had not been exposed to.

<sup>7</sup>My first sermon was delivered during the chapel service at the Montgomery Bible College, now known as Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama. In 1949 (I was about 15 years old.). Later, I moved to LaGrange, Georgia. On January 21, 1951, I delivered this same sermon at the Murphy Ave. Church of Christ.

into the background, study of sources, form and context—all these have their vital part to play in exegesis.<sup>8</sup> (Emphasis mine)

If anyone disagreed with my exposition of the Old and New Testament writings, he or she was anathema. In other words, for one to depart from my so-called mental sharpness, or understanding, meant that one did not have a clear insight into the truths of God, so I thought. I labored under the impression that I knew all the answers about the supposed prescribed five acts of a ritual worship service. If one failed to observe these rituals in a specific way, we refused fellowship with the one who rejected our views. I struggled under the impression that fellowship could not be extended to those outside our four walls. As a result of this mind-set, I identified my particular odd fellowship with the “true” church of Jesus Christ. As a result of this frame of mind, I excluded all other believers from belonging to Jesus.

In order to describe my spiritual journey of faith, it is necessary to discuss the inner workings of my mind as I endeavored to walk in the ways of God. To do this, I will probe certain areas to give emphasis to my reasoning that led me out of my sectarian spirit. **In my earlier ministry, I went to the Scriptures to prove what I already believed**, but eventually, as a result of further studies, I went to the Word to see what it taught. This intense study is what got me into trouble with the fellowship that I was associated with in the early stages of my ministry (1951-1972). This odd movement demanded the use of “one” drinking vessel in the observance of the communion. If one used individual cups, he or she was considered anathema.

My downfall in this movement resulted from my acceptance of M. S. Whitehead who was a devoted follower of Jesus and, at the same time, accepted individual cups and Sunday school. He did not make a so-called confession of error as required by this particular body of believers that I was associated with for twenty-one years. Therefore, according to this group, he was still a child of hell for his practice of drinking of the fruit of the vine from individual cups. In spite of the negative criticism he received, he remained in the one-cup fellowship in Montgomery, AL until his death. As a result of my acceptance of this devoted follower of the Messiah, E. H. Miller (1909-1989), my uncle, sent letters to the one-cup churches, which letters brought about my dismissal from the one-cup movement. Even though I continued to use one cup and rejected Sunday school, nevertheless I was told that that practice was not sufficient to insure my fellowship with God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. According to my uncle, we had to know that individuals would go to an “eternal burning hell” if they worshiped any other way than the way the one-cup movement practiced.

## THE LONE-RANGER MENTALITY

As a young boy, I listened to the Lone-Ranger and Tonto with excitement. Tonto, whose name means “dimwit,” seldom spoke, except for his meaningless phrase “kemo sabe.” He was seen as a projection of his white leader, and the Lone-Ranger never seemed to take the time to

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<sup>8</sup>I. Howard Marshall, “Introduction,” in I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, Edited by I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 15.

listen to him. Today, there is still a type of the Lone-Ranger mentality with the teacher and his student within the one-cup fellowship of God's people. The teacher never takes time to listen to his "Tonto." Tonto only projects his Bible teacher. Bible study is often done by the Lone-Ranger, even in private, in the same sort of meaningless company with Tonto. Tonto (student) looks to the Lone-Ranger (teacher), his hero of the faith, for the correct interpretation of the Scripture without questioning. For many Christians, it is a disgrace or scandal to question the status quo.

When I interrogated the status quo of my offbeat fellowship, the wrath of the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship dealt me a heavy blow; I was thrown out of the synagogue as an apostate.<sup>9</sup> These are just two of the issues that divided this godly fellowship. The role of women is still an issue within this denomination. I was so accustomed to reading the Bible as I had been taught by generations of interpreters that for me to question the traditional interpretations was tantamount to my questioning the Word of God itself.

The tendency, on my part, was to identify what Scripture said with what I had been taught. This identification was one of the main obstacles that I encountered in trying to liberate the Bible from our traditions. In my search for truth, I did not initially understand the basic principles of exegetical studies. Instead of doing exegesis, I did eisegesis. Eisegesis involves one reading into the text his or her own ideas, biases, preconceptions, and so on. What does exegesis mean? The following comments by Ralph Martin (1925-2013, former Professor of New Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California) are on target:

Exegesis means interpretation and as we apply the term to the books of the New Testament we may begin with a provisional definition of the task. To practise exegesis in regard to the New Testament literature is to enquire [as to] what was the meaning intended by the original authors. **The process is one of uncovering that meaning, and the technique is known as heuristics**, i.e. the study which explains how to discover the sense of a passage of Scripture. This is to be the interpreter's primary aim, requiring that his approach to Scripture be one of honest enquiry and a determined effort to find out the intended meaning of the author for his day.<sup>10</sup> (Emphasis mine)

In short, **exegesis** means that we draw out of Scripture what the author intended to convey in what he wrote. In my early ministry, I confused our long-held traditions of explaining the Scriptures with the text itself. I had to learn how to reevaluate and reinterpret what had been handed down to me.<sup>11</sup> When I was about sixteen years old, the "faith of the fathers" became the

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<sup>9</sup>For an excellent study on the lone-ranger philosophy of Bible study, see Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 48-68.

<sup>10</sup>Ralph P. Martin, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. Marshall Howard I. (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1977), 220.

<sup>11</sup>When we exercise this prerogative of discernment, we must be prepared for the wrath of the ecclesiastical party and its preachers to wreak havoc on our character and accuse us of dishonesty. In my own personal journey of faith, I was thrown out of the Synagogue overnight. It was as if I no longer existed. Letters were sent out to alert Christians that I was no longer "sound" in the faith, even though I was still a part of the one-cup and non-Sunday school faction. Relatives and friends no longer considered me faithful since I could not support the sectarian attitude manifested by the one-cup and non-Sunday school philosophy.

watchword of orthodoxy for me. Their interpretation became normative and was passed on as authoritative. For me, the Christian Scriptures had been turned into another law, a law that was more stringent and more damning than even the first Law set forth by Moses.

One of the most difficult obstacles in my pilgrimage of faith was to approach the text without my strong personal biases.<sup>12</sup> I studied the Bible with “colored glasses,” which led to distortion. I tended to give preconceived beliefs the same authority that I gave to the Bible. In other words, my preconceived authority was equal to that of the Scriptures. My own personal journey of faith made it very difficult for me to view the Scriptures without prejudice. My understanding and interpretation made it difficult to sift out the truths of God in dealing with the text. **I allowed the context of my culture to control the text of the Bible.** It became necessary for me to exercise a self-critical stance toward the tendency to impose my own agenda upon the interpretation of Scripture. I am still conscious of how difficult it is to block out a person’s cultural heritage in interpreting the ancient text.

Hopefully, this record of my own personal journey with its struggles and heartaches will give others encouragement to reexamine their own traditions in the light of the context of Scripture. **Christians should never forget that their own journey occurs within a vast architecture of preunderstanding—no thinking takes place in a vacuum.** I was so used to reading the Scriptures as my uncle and many other godly men had taught me that any questioning of their interpretation amounted to questioning the Scriptures. The hand-me-down explanations made it almost impossible for me to read the Bible accurately. I had to relearn and to reassess and to reinterpret what others had passed on to me.

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Not one of the so-called faithful preachers contacted me to see why I changed my views on fellowship. When I applied Romans 14 and 15, along with 1 Corinthians 8, I was castigated, or hauled over the coals. I remember sharing 1 Corinthians 8 with one of my first cousins (Alton Bailey, 1932-2014). After paraphrasing 8:1-3, he responded by stating that that statement was NOT in the Bible, even though he had read that Scripture hundreds of times. He had eyes to see, but he could not see; he had ears to hear, but he could not hear. Why? His traditions did not allow him free access to the Word of God. His preconceived ideas did not permit him to approach the Bible without his spectacles. **His understanding was not out of rebellion on his part, but rather an honest mistake of the heart.** He was a saintly man who was dedicated to God. For many years, I, too, had read this same Scripture but failed to see the implications of Paul’s admonition.

<sup>12</sup> Because of my earlier training, I found it difficult to deal with a number of Scriptures in context. I struggled to find answers in harmony with the whole of God’s Word. Since this “Introduction” is about my pilgrimage of faith, it is necessary that I quote from those who helped me the most in my study of the Scriptures. I am thankful to M. S. Whitehead for the many papers that he mailed me concerning a multitude of controversial issues that I struggled with for such a long, long time. I am also grateful to Whitehead for introducing me to the writings of Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989) and Leroy Garrett (1918-2015).

But even prior to my acquaintance with these various authors, I was very fortunate to have had some guidance from Ervin Waters (1918-2019) in the field of hermeneutics (science of interpretation). As a result of his assistance, I became aware of many problems in my handling of the Scriptures. The books recommended by Waters prepared me to digest the writing of M. S. Whitehead, Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989), Leroy Garrett, F.L. Lemley, and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). I met Whitehead for the first time in the late fifties at the Lowery Church of Christ (one-cup and non-Sunday school), where I preached on a regular basis (at least once a month), while he was attending a Gospel meeting conducted by J. D. Philips (1904-1981).

## WE SPEAK *WHERE* THE BIBLE SPEAKS

As a part of my former training, I was taught “to speak *where* the Bible speaks and be silent *where* the Bible is silent.”<sup>13</sup> This slogan is still cited by many well-meaning Christians to justify their separation from other believers. On the surface, this cliché appears to express that which every Christian strives toward. The “catch phrase” sounded excellent and still has a nice ring of truth, but, there is a problem in quoting this group of words—no one adheres perfectly to this catchy construction. First of all, there is a difference between speaking *as* the Bible speaks and speaking *where* the Bible speaks.

God’s people may cite Scripture as Satan did in his encounter with Jesus, but just as Satan did not give the intent of the Scripture cited, so today, many Christians refer to certain “pet” Scriptures, and at the same time do not speak *as* the Bible speaks. **Even though Satan quoted Scripture, he did not interpret Scripture in light of its context.**<sup>14</sup> It took me a long time to learn this basic rule. To interpret any text faithfully, the interpreter must endeavor to transfer himself from the present era to the historical situation of the author, look through his eyes, observe his surroundings, feel with his heart, and catch his emotions if he or she wishes to accurately apply the Word of God to the twenty-first century church. This means that the interpreter must guard himself or herself carefully against transferring the authors of the first-century to the twenty-first century and then interpret their words in the light of his or her own twenty-first century understanding.

## CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

*The Bible is affected and influenced by the cultural environment from which each human writer wrote. **This means that the Bible interpreter needs to give attention to cultural matters. An ignorance of certain cultural customs may lead to faulty interpretations.*** These cultural areas include, among others, agricultural, architectural, geographical, military, and political aspects of life.<sup>15</sup> (Emphasis mine)

The first step in explaining Scripture is to read the text.<sup>16</sup> To fathom a passage involves the *immediate* context, the *remote* context, and the *larger* context. The *immediate context* includes verses preceding and following the Scripture that one is studying. The *remote context* may take in the entire book in which the text is found. Also, the *larger context* may embrace the whole of God’s written Revelation. This understanding of contexts helps to determine the meaning or meanings that we attach to a distinct phrase. If the various contexts are not

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<sup>13</sup>For a thorough investigation of this phrase as to its original meaning and its history, see Dallas Burdette, “Where the Scriptures Speak,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 87-152.

<sup>14</sup>For a detailed study on the fallacy of citing Scripture verbatim to uphold certain traditions without consulting context, see Chapter 3 (“Wooden Literalism: Abuse of I Timothy 2:12.”)

<sup>15</sup>Donald K. Campbell, “Foreword,” in *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*, ed. Craig Bubeck Sr. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1991), 64.

<sup>16</sup>For several examples of misapplied Scriptures, see Dallas Burdette, *Old Texts through New Eyes: Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009).

considered, the interpreter may impose his or her conjectured convictions on a text without due reflection upon what the author means by what he says. Without a conception of a context, a person's own particular context tends to shape his or her understanding and interpretation of the message.

**Merely reciting Scriptures that draw attention to certain party dogmas is not sufficient to determine the sense of the text.** No one denies the truth of passages often enumerated to maintain the *status quo*, but we may deny the conclusions often reached by certain individuals. The following comments by Arlie J. Hoover (Professor of history at Seaver College of Pepperdine University) on *status quo* is superb: “These ideas account for much of the decadence in the *status quo*—which is Latin for ‘the mess we’re in!’”<sup>17</sup> Every Scripture citation is the Word of God, but we must not equate our interpretation with the Word itself. Remember that the context is the determining factor in trying to arrive at a correct insight. We must not employ Holy Scriptures in a way that the Holy Spirit did not employ them. Dr. Leroy Garrett (b. 1918, professor and author) points out, with justification that interpreters must distinguish between God's Revelation and his or her interpretation. Listen to Him as he pinpoints this thought-provoking perception:

People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. **Revelation** is what God has given us in scripture. **Interpretation** is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.<sup>18</sup> (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

“Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent” became the battle cry for the birth of the Reformation movement initiated by Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). This slogan became the impetus for a movement that resulted in three distinctive bodies: (1) Churches of Christ, (2) Christian Churches, and (3) Disciples of Christ. All three bodies subpoena this cliché to call attention to their reliance upon the Bible and the Bible alone for their faith and practice. The Campbells did not intend to start another denomination, even though this is what eventually happened in their quest for unity among God's people. Even though all three movements rely upon the same motto, none can agree upon the exact blueprint, or exact pattern, for a so-called worship service supposedly set forth in the New Testament.

These three ecclesiastical organizations cannot agree over the scripturalness of missionary societies, Bible colleges, located preachers (A located preacher is one who assumes the role of pulpit minister for the local church.), orphan homes, kitchens in the purported church buildings, and so on. These groups, as a whole, cannot agree upon a corporate worship pattern to be observed in the self-styled worship service; For example, they cannot agree on whether to have or not have Sunday school, individual cups or one common cup, instrumental music or vocal singing only, wine only or grape juice only, to *break* the bread or *pinch* the bread in the Lord's Supper, and so on.

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<sup>17</sup>Arlie J. Hoover, *Ideas and Their Consequences*, The Way of Life Series, No. 129 (Abilene, Texas: Biblical Research Press, 1976), 1.

<sup>18</sup>Leroy Garrett, “It Means What It Says,” in *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 69.

## RE-EVALUATION OF MY STUDIES

What caused me to re-evaluate my understanding of the Scriptures? Approximately fifty-two years ago, J. Ervin Waters (1918-2019),<sup>19</sup> a well-known evangelist, writer, and debater) suggested that I read a book on biblical hermeneutics by Dungan,<sup>20</sup> which I did. Later, I read another monumental study in this same field by Milton S. Terry (1840-1914).<sup>21</sup> Both of these writers had a profound influence on my re-evaluation of my long-held cherished beliefs. Waters also introduced me to *Christianity Restored* by Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) and to Robert Milligan's book on the *Scheme of Redemption*. In addition to these works, he sent me five books by the famous Greek scholar from Moody Institute, Kenneth Wuest (1893-1962) to assist in my spiritual growth. The writings of these authors contributed toward leading me out of my sectarian spirit.

Soon after this exposure to the science of interpretation (in the early sixties and early seventies), I started reading the writings of Thomas (1763-1854) and Alexander Campbell, M. S. Whitehead,<sup>22</sup> Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989), Leroy Garrett (1918-2015), and F. L. Lemley.<sup>23</sup> These men sought to recapture the original intent of the Word of God. They called upon Christians to reexamine their long-cherished traditions. They addressed the subject of fellowship with its ramifications upon Christian unity. They also tried to bring back the original meaning of the word *ekklesia* (commonly translated "church") and its implications toward a broader fellowship of believers. They questioned the practice of rebaptism and its devastating effect upon the Christian community for unity.<sup>24</sup> They investigated the distinction between Gospel and doctrine and its implications upon our understanding of fellowship. What they wrote shocked me to the point that initially I thought they were all a little nuts.

But as I read more and more of their writings, I began to reinvestigate my earlier teachings. As a result of their writings, I had to re-evaluate many of my former convictions. For example, I had to reflect upon the original meaning of the word "church" (*ekklesia*), the concept

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<sup>19</sup>Ervin Waters (1918-2019), at the time of his death, was still associated with the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement, even though the major faction in this movement refuses to recognize him as in good standing with the group known as the *Old Paths Advocate*—a religious journal published by the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship.

<sup>20</sup>D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Co, n.d.).

<sup>21</sup>Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).

<sup>22</sup>M. S. Whitehead, a few years after our meeting in Lowery, AL., placed membership with the Vonora Ave. Church of Christ in Montgomery, AL. Vonora Ave. is still a one-cup and non-Sunday school church. Even though he met with the one-cup group, he did not believe that the use of individual cups was sinful.

<sup>23</sup>I quote extensively from the writings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Carl Ketcherside, and Leroy Garrett in this chapter. Why? It is simply that these men are the writers with whom I started reading after my initial studies in the field of hermeneutics. Immediately, after reading their books, I recognized the same principles in their literature that I had read from Dungan, Terry, and Berkhof's works on Hermeneutics.

<sup>24</sup>For a detailed study of this subject (rebaptism), see Dallas Burdette, "Rebaptism in the Stone/Campbell Movement," in *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 196-235. My studies on "baptism" are now available on this website: [freedominchrist.net](http://freedominchrist.net).

of limited knowledge about God's Word as the norm within the church, the meaning of the word "*Gospel*" as being "Good News," the correct use of the word "*doctrine*" as employed in the New Testament, rethink the roots or causes of divisions within the Body of Christ, and to confront squarely the question of so-called "brothers and sisters in error."

As a result of my in-depth studies, I had to alter, or rethink, my position on many doctrinal conclusions. **For the first time in my life I went to the Bible to see what it taught rather than to prove what I already believed.** I learned that one must transfer himself mentally into the minds of the first-century authors and stand upon their threshold and look through their eyes and see things as they saw them, rather than transfer the writers of the first century to the twenty-first century and then interpret their words in the light of my present day understanding.<sup>25</sup> Even when we present the teachings of the Holy Spirit in context, truth still requires the capacity on our part to receive it in spite of those who refuse to examine the context. When we teach God's Word, we too must be open to learn. We must be willing to listen and to learn from others. The words of Richard Baxter (1615-1691, English Puritan Church leader, poet, hymn-writer, theologian and controversialist) captures the mind-set of so many Christians as they seek to understand God's Word:

Not one in ten people ground their faith in the Scriptures; rather, they base their understanding on the credit of their teachers. Therefore, they think that if they can bring you to suspect your teachers and reject them, then you will be like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>26</sup> (Emphasis mine)

### **Assemblies of the Anointed One**

One of the most difficult questions that confronted me in my early years of ministry had to do with the so-called name of the church. My spiritual teachers taught me that one could read about the **churches of Christ** in Romans 16:16, which is true. I could quote Romans 16:16 by memory. From this kind of literal citation of Scripture, without regards to the context, I developed my theology about the name of the church, which just happened to be the "Church of Christ" that came out of the Stone/Campbell Movement. We reasoned like this: Where in the Bible do we read of a Baptist Church or a Methodist Church or a Presbyterian Church? We can read about the Church of Christ Church in Romans 16:16, but we cannot read about the others.

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<sup>25</sup>L. Berkhof (1873-1957), *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 115.

<sup>26</sup>Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor: A Pattern for Personal Growth and Ministry*, originally published in 1656 (reprint 1982, Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press), 9. **Richard Baxter** (1615–1691), one of the great English pastors and theologians. Though without a university education, and always sickly, he acquired great learning. In 1633 he had a brief experience of court life at Whitehall (London), but turned from the court in disgust and studied theology. In 1638 he was ordained by the bishop of Worcester and preached in various places till 1641, when he began his ministry at Kidderminster (18 m. S.W. of Birmingham), as "teacher." There he labored with wonderful success so that the place was utterly transformed. When the Civil War broke out (1642) he retired temporarily to Gloucester and then to Coventry because he sided with the parliament, while all in and about Kidderminster sided with the king. He was, however, no blind partizan and boldly spoke out for moderation and fairness. After acting as an army chaplain he separated from the army, partly on account of illness, and returned to Kidderminster.

On the surface, the argument appeared to have some validity, but the dilemma in this kind of dialectic was/is that Christ was not our Lord's name, but rather, His official appellation (title). Matthew (1:21) tells us that His name was Jesus. For some reason, we never cited Romans 16:4 that speak of "the **churches of the Gentiles.**" Is "churches of the Gentiles" also the name of the church? Also, we never called attention to Galatians 1:22: "I was personally unknown to the **churches of Judea** that are in Christ." Is the "churches of Judea" the name of the church also? To advance the notion that Romans 16:16 is the name of the church is to outrun the evidence in the text. **The position of women in the church is also based upon the fallacy of failure to read the biblical text in context.** Chapters 5 through 7 in my book on the role of women<sup>27</sup> in the church will investigate the role of women as set forth in First Timothy.

After spending considerable hours in the science of biblical interpretation, I resolved to go to the Book of Romans to see what it said, rather than to prove what I already believed. After studying Romans 16:16, I discovered that the name *Christ* is simply the transliteration of the Greek word *Christos*, which is equivalent to the Hebrew word *Messiah*.<sup>28</sup> Christ was a designation that God gave to prophets, priests and kings. Prophets were "christ," priests were "christ," and kings were "christ," but Jesus was not just one Christ among many christ; He was "the Christ," that is, the Anointed One of God. According to the Greek text, what did Paul write in Romans 16:16? Since the word *christ* means "anointed," and since the word *church* means "assembly," then, the correct translation is: the assemblies of the Anointed One salutes you." **This verse is simply referring to the various assemblies as belonging to the Anointed One of God, not simply the Churches of Christ as a distinctive denomination.**

The question that confronts every Christian, as it did me, is: does Paul designate the denominational Churches of Christ in Romans 16:16 as the Churches of Christ today? In the beginning of my ministry, I was taught that the Churches of Christ that Paul addressed in Romans 16:16 were the one-cup and non-Sunday churches with which I was associated.<sup>29</sup> The true Church of Christ had to do with my particular fellowship, no one else, all others were digressive.<sup>30</sup> In fact, we taught that everyone who disagreed with our brand of orthodoxy was on the way to "hell."

This philosophy is still advanced by many sincere and devout believers within the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement.<sup>31</sup> Today, many within the Churches of Christ (not just

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<sup>27</sup> My book (Women's Role in the Christian Community) is now available in a PDF format on my website: [freedominchrist.net](http://freedominchrist.net) for free.

<sup>28</sup> See Carl Ketcherside, "The Name of the Bride," *Mission Messenger* 19, no. 4 (April 1957): 9-10.

<sup>29</sup> For the benefit of those who may not know about this fellowship, see Dallas Burdette, "A Brief History of the One-Cup and Non-Sunday School Movement," in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 27-54

<sup>30</sup> The word *digressive* is employed to denote those outside the boundaries of one's own tradition(s).

<sup>31</sup> Today (2-5-2021), many within this movement are rethinking their traditions. In 2006, I conducted two seminars on how to read the Word of God more accurately. I had several preachers from the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship to attend. These preachers came under the cover of darkness, so to speak. I am still in contact with some of these men of God; they also still continue to read my writings. Many believers within this group are just now learning about God's grace. One of my second cousins (Wayne Bowen) was accused of being a "false teacher" for preaching on grace. He is still a part of the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement. This congregation has been disfellowshipped by many within this same movement, especially those

one-cup and non-Sunday school churches) do not recognize any other fellowship of believers as members of the Lord's church. On the other hand, the one-cup and non-Sunday school Churches of Christ do not even recognize those within the Churches of Christ as Christians who use multiple cups in the distribution of the fruit of the vine and utilize Sunday school in their curriculum for teaching both children and adults.

Almost without exception, the Churches of Christ do not accept Baptists as Christians. Don King, son of the late Homer L. King (1892-1983) and editor of the *Old Paths Advocate*, republished just a few years ago (February 2006) an essay written in 1969 in the *Old Paths Advocate* by J. Wayne McKamie concerning "The Baptist Church."<sup>32</sup> Many within the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement do not recognize anyone as Christian who do not subscribe to the narrow views of their distinctive fellowship. For example, as a result of this same mindset, King's son, Don King, now editor of the OPA, writes: "Listen, brethren: we believe it is wrong to use more than one cup. We believe people are going to be lost for using more than one cup."<sup>33</sup> By quoting individuals, I am not attacking the person, but I am seeking to set forth the different viewpoints set forth by other Christians, which differences often result in divisions within the Community of Christ.

In the earlier years of my ministry, I never questioned the truthfulness of this line of reasoning. However, years later, I did speculate about where the Church of Christ was when Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the castle in Wittenberg in 1517. Also, I wondered where the Church of Christ was when Pope Urban II (1049-1099) launched the first Christian crusade in 1095.<sup>34</sup> The truth of the matter is, there was no such ecclesiastical organization known as the Church of Christ as a distinct denominational body. Now, it is true that Christ's church was in existence, but not the denominational Church of Christ; it did not exist.<sup>35</sup> This particular group did not come along until the time of Alexander

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associated with the *Old Paths Advocate* journal, which journal is one of the major papers within this body of believers..

<sup>32</sup>J. Wayne McKamie, "The Baptist Church," in *Old Paths Advocate*, Vol. LXXX, no. 2 (February, 2006): 8, 9.

<sup>33</sup>Don L. King, "Editorial: Proper Perspective," *Old Paths Advocate*, Vol. LXVII, no. 9 (September, 1995): 2.

<sup>34</sup>I am indebted to Leroy Garrett for calling attention to the origin of the Church of Christ Church with his article, "Is August 17, 1889 the Birthday of the Church of Christ?" in *Restoration Review* 17, no. 1 (January 1975): 6-9.

<sup>35</sup>Many Christians object to the word denomination as applicable to the Church of Christ; many within the Churches of Christ identify their movement as the Lord's church in order to distinguish it from other denominations. For an excellent analysis of the meaning of the word "denomination," see Carl Ketcherside, "The Name Pattern," *Mission Messenger* 32, no. 3 (August 1970): 113, where he says,

The very word denominate, from the Latin *de* and *nominare*, to call by a name, means, "to give a name to; designate by a name or title; to call by a distinctive name or designation." Any group which selects and appropriates to itself a specific name, title or brand, is a denomination, whether the title it selects is from words found in the Bible, or composed of words not even mentioned in the sacred volume. The *ekklesia* of God had no specific name in its inception. The saints were corporately designated only by simple nouns. All of these describe a relationship. Not a one was used as an exclusive title. (Emphasis mine)

Campbell in the 1800s. In the premature part of my ministry, I rejected the concept that the Church of Christ is a denomination, but this was not the case with its founder, Alexander Campbell. As early as 1840, Campbell wrote a letter to a Baptist scholar, Andrew Broaddus, whom he called brother, about his concern over the written history of the Reformation Movement:

Whenever the history of this effort at reformation shall have been faithfully written, it will appear, we think, bright as the sun, that our career has been marked with a spirit of forbearance, moderation, and love of union with an unequivocal desire for preserving the integrity, harmony, and co-operation of all who teach one faith, one Lord, and one immersion. In confirmation of this fact **I am happy to add that no Baptist of good character for piety and morality has ever been, because of a diverse theory or opinion, excluded from our communion or communities.** We, as a denomination, are as desirous as ever to unite and co-operate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant (emphasis mine—underlining and bold).<sup>36</sup>

We, in the Stone/Campbell movement, have made the mistake of identifying the “church” with the Church of Christ that came out of the nineteenth-century Reformation Movement initiated by the Campbells and Stone, thereby excluding all others from belonging to Jesus. The truth of the matter is, there is only one church. There is no such thing as a Baptist Church, a Methodist Church, a Presbyterian Church, or a Church of Christ Church. There is only one church, and that one church consists of all those who have put their faith in Jesus as the redeemer. Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989) uses the following pregnant words to describe the current dilemma of the Churches of Christ today.

I do not believe there is any such thing as either “The Christian Church” or “The church of Christ.” There are religious parties designated by these titles, but there is only one church. There never was but one. There will never be another. “The Christian Church” does not have all of the Christians in it, and “The Church of Christ” is not the church of Christ. Both of these parties which have been allowed to grow out of an American restoration movement launched by some ministers in the early part of the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> (Emphasis mine)

This article by Ketcherside was the beginning of my re-evaluation of the nature of God’s church. Thus far, I have continuously employed the term *church* to describe the people of God. As stated above, I had a rude awakening when I discovered that our English word *church* was not an accurate translation of the Greek Word *ekklesia* and that the word that Paul uses in Romans 16:16 merely meant an “assembly.” In other words, God’s assembly consists of those who put their faith in Jesus as God’s Anointed One. As stated above, there is no such thing as a Baptist Church, a Methodist Church, a Presbyterian Church, or a Church of Christ church; there is only one *ekklesia* and that body includes all believers. Unfortunately, God’s people meet behind various labels that they have inherited from the church fathers. It is significant that the

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<sup>36</sup>Alexander Campbell, “The Editor’s Response to Mr. Broaddus,” *Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, 4, no. XII (December 1840): 556.

<sup>37</sup>Carl Ketcherside, “Fear and Suspicion,” in *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 2 (February 1963): 27.

word *ekklesia* appears eighty-one times in the Greek Old Testament (LXX), but it is never translated “church” in our English translations.<sup>38</sup> Garrett says it best: “It is as a family that we must come to see the church. It is not an institution or organization, but a family community of brothers and sisters.”<sup>39</sup> Thomas Campbell, in 1809, penned the following words in his Declaration and Address:

**Prop. 1.** That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.<sup>40</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Both Ketcherside and Campbell sought to capture the true essence of the Christian church. Thomas Campbell, too, focused upon the nature of the church. When he wrote these words (Proposition 1), there was no such thing as the Church of Christ Church. In fact, Campbell was Presbyterian during this period of transition. **For him the church of Christ consisted of all who put their faith in Jesus as Lord.** His objective in writing this *Declaration and Address* was to set forth biblical principles upon which fellowship is founded, not the traditions of men. **He admitted that the church of Christ in his day comprised people from all denominations.** He wrote in his second proposition the following succinct statement about the divisions existing in his day:

**Prop. 2.** That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable

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<sup>38</sup>Carl Ketcherside, “The Name of the Bride,” *Mission Messenger* 19, no. 4 (April 1957): 9 where he says:

The title “Church of Christ” as used by a large segment of believers today is employed in a denominational sense, just as the terms Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Christian Church, etc. This is very difficult for many to see, for they have been taught that their salvation depends upon the name “The Church of Christ” although that expression is not once found in the sacred scripture. The idea that a wife should wear her husband’s name as he means it, is not a scriptural one. No married woman in Bible times was ever called by her husband’s name. That practice is a fairly modern one and by no means universal even now. The word “church” is not a name at all. It is a common noun like “house” or “wife.” His name was Jesus, and that is what he was called at birth, but “God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Christ is no more his name than is the word “Lord.” The word “Christ” is merely the Greek form of the Hebrew “Messiah.” It isn’t a name at all: it is an office which God made him to occupy. (Emphasis mine)

I read this article in July 1964. This essay caused me to rethink my position on the name of the church. At this time I was still associated with the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement. In fact, I did not leave that movement until the early seventies. Even though all my so-called Gospel meetings and preaching engagements were cancelled, I continued in the movement until about 1972 or early 1973.

<sup>39</sup>Leroy Garrett, “The Catholicity of the Church,” *Restoration Review* 15, no. 3 (March 1973): 45. The writings of Garrett are also available on the Internet. His website is: <http://www.leroygarrett.org>.

<sup>40</sup>Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address* (St. Louis, Missouri: Mission Messenger, 1975, reprint), 44 [page numbers are from the reprint edition].

divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.<sup>41</sup> (Emphasis mine)

**Proposition Two** set the stage for his comments on “**inferences and deductions**” from Scripture. Even today, it is not uncommon for Christians to try to force agreement based upon their **inferences and deductions** from the Word of God. This practice of forcing conformity as a condition of fellowship was also prevalent in my early ministry—my uncle (E. H. Miller) carried debate propositions with him in his coat pocket, ready to debate at the drop of a hat about differences that contradicted his interpretation of God’s Word. Thomas Campbell captured my attention when he forcefully dealt with the philosophy of enforcement over one’s “inferences and deductions” as essential to Christian fellowship. Thus, I had to deal with his comments in light of Scripture. **Proposition Six** goes to the very heart of this mind-set:

**Prop. 6.** That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God’s holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church’s confession.<sup>42</sup> (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

## **Fellowship and Agreement**

Through my studies I came to understand that **no individual** possesses absolute knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Since all Christians possess limited knowledge, then, do we come into communion by agreement upon all Scripture? Common sense tells us that we do not! **Fellowship is not a fruit of agreement but agreement is a fruit of fellowship.**<sup>44</sup> As a result of this revelation, I had to wrestle with the following question: If we do not enjoy flawless insight into the Scriptures, does God condemn us to an eternal burning hell? The answer to this question is an unqualified NO!

What is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit concerning this question? The Apostle Paul goes right to the heart of the issue when he writes: “We know that we all possess knowledge.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 44-45.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>43</sup>This statement does not deny that God’s Word is absolute, but rather, that our knowledge of God’s Word is relative. This relativity of knowledge is one of the reasons that Paul rebuked the Corinthians and the Romans for not making allowances for differences. In the dawning of my ministry, I violated the principles laid down by Paul. I did not make a distinction between my interpretation of God’s Word and the Word itself. In other words, I equated my interpretation with God’s Revelation. I do not know why this never occurred to me in the earlier part of my ministry. In this perception, for lack of a better term, I was brain-dead.

<sup>44</sup>See Carl Ketcherside, “Thoughts on Fellowship,” *Mission Messenger* 20, no. 2 (July 1958): 2. The writings of Ketcherside are available through the Internet. His website is: <http://www.unity-in-diversity.org>. There are also audio files available on this website.

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God" (1 Corinthians 8:1-3).<sup>45</sup> Again, Paul writes, "Accept him whose faith is weak . . . who are you to judge someone else's servant? . . . Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:1a, 4a, 5b). Paul is saying that believers ought not to denounce one another as dishonest guides when they do not dot every "i" and cross every "t" in the same way.

Tolerance toward differences is the subject of Paul's admonition for unity, not absolute conformity in belief with other believers. But someone may ask, "**Are we in fellowship with error?**" **No, we are in fellowship with fellows.** The question is often asked, "Are you in fellowship with brothers and sisters in error?" My answer is yes, because this is the only kind of believers that I know about.<sup>46</sup> For some reason, my inconsistencies never became visible to me until the late sixties; it was then that I recognized that I was one of those brothers in error.<sup>47</sup>

How do we deal with truth and error in the church? This question confronted me head on. **I finally came to the conclusion that all truth is true, but not all truth is essential to our salvation; all error is error, but not all error will condemn our souls. Absolute freedom from error is not a condition of salvation else all of us would be damned.**<sup>48</sup> We are not saved by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge, but by faith in Christ Jesus. All truth is essential to our well being, but some truth is essential to our being. For example, let us consider the physical body for an analogy. All the members of my body are for my wellbeing, but if I lose a leg, an arm, or a finger, I would be only handicapped or incapacitated. But if, on the other hand, I should lose my head, I would be dead. The same analogy may be applied to Jesus. We may be wrong about some doctrinal point(s) and still be saved, but if we are wrong about Jesus, we can be lost. On this particular point, Alexander Campbell has captured this truth and is well worth citing:

The Apostle says, 'There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one immersion, one God and Father of all.' But nowhere is it said in the sacred book, "There is one opinion." If, however, unity of opinion were desirable, to attain it, we must give the greatest liberty of opinion; for though once theory with us, it is now matter of experience, that the more stress is laid upon unity of opinion, the less of it, and the more division; and the less regard paid to it, the less emphasis laid upon

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<sup>45</sup>As stated earlier, on February 21, 1969, I remember very vividly sharing the eighth chapter of 1 Corinthians with a relative of mine (He also was a preacher; he is now with the Lord in glory). There was utter rejection of what was stated about "knowledge puffs up." In fact, he even denied that that particular teaching was in the Bible. The amazing thing is that he had read that Scripture dozens of times, but, for some reason, it never registered with him as to what Paul was saying. The reason, perhaps, is that that specific Scripture did not coincide with his theology. It seems to me that the words of Jesus are very appropriate here: "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).

<sup>46</sup>See Carl Ketcherside, "Fear and Suspicion," *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 2 (February 1963): 27 concerning an analysis of this mind-set of fear toward those who do not concur with your views.

<sup>47</sup>For an excellent treatment of the distinction between fellowship and endorsement, I highly recommend Carl Ketcherside, "Thoughts on Fellowship," *Mission Messenger* 20, no. 2 (February 1957): 3-6.

<sup>48</sup>See Carl Ketcherside, "Another Gospel," *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 1 (January 1965): 7.

it, the more we will have of it. This is founded in a law of the human mind, on which it is unseasonable and unnecessary to expatiate [to expound].<sup>49</sup> (Emphasis mine)

In the early phases of my ministry, **I did not distinguish between fellowship and agreement.** I had never fathomed the idea that fellowship does not come as a result of our agreement upon matters of opinion and interpretation, but rather our ability to reach agreement upon these things may come as a result of our fellowship. **We are not one in opinion; we are one in Christ.** It is not our study of Holy Scripture, our acquisition of knowledge, our learning of the Law, or our ability as teacher or expounder of God's Word that makes us children of God. **We become children by procreation, not education.** Ketcherside does well to remind us:

Jesus died for persons and not for their opinions or ideas, right or wrong, and those for whom he died must be more important to us than anything for which he did not die. As God accepted us in our weakness, with mistaken ideas, warped views and unhealthful attitudes, so we must accept each other in the same state or condition. We must not make the kingdom of heaven to consist of our convictions, attitudes or opinions, but of citizens who must be tolerant of each other in such matters, else there can be no kingdom of heaven at all.<sup>50</sup> (Emphasis mine)

### Gospel and Doctrine

Next, we need to distinguish between *Gospel* and *doctrine*, a distinction drawn by the writers of the new covenant Scriptures—a distinction that I did not make in the olden days of my ministry. At a later date, I did come to realize that there is as much difference between the Gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine as there is between the sperm from which a child is begotten and the food that he or she eats after one is born. **Through my reexamination of Gospel and doctrine, I came to understand that Paul knew the difference between the seed from which life came and the daily bread upon which the children fed.** He knew the difference between Gospel and doctrine and between faith and knowledge. He knew that the Gospel brought us into being while the doctrine was/is essential to our growth and well being, and he did not make a test of fellowship out of spiritual digestion. Ketcherside brought this point home to me, when he wrote: “Those who confuse chastisement of a child with begettall and cannot distinguish between correction and conception are in a sad predicament.”<sup>51</sup>

In my early preaching I looked upon the Gospel as being composed of twenty-seven books. But, after investigating the word *Gospel*, I discovered that the Gospel may be epitomized in three saving facts: namely, the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The Holy Spirit does not identify the Gospel as everything recorded in the Bible. The fellowship of believers with whom I associated did not differentiate between Gospel and doctrine; therefore, for one to disagree on doctrine was tantamount to preaching another Gospel,

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<sup>49</sup>Alexander Campbell, “To Mr. William Jones, of London, Letter IV,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6, no. 3 (March 1835): 111-112.

<sup>50</sup>Carl Ketcherside, “Contrary to the Doctrine,” *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 3 (March 1965): 35-36.

<sup>51</sup>Carl Ketcherside, “Gospel and Doctrine,” *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 2 (February 1965): 23.

for which a curse must be pronounced on the perpetrator. It is true that we must be correct concerning the Gospel, but an individual does not have to be accurate on every doctrinal teaching in the Scriptures to be saved—as I had previously been taught and advocated for several years. But in this philosophy, we were not always consistent. We made allowances for other differences, but we did not make concession for our ritualistic pattern of “five acts of worship” on Sunday morning.<sup>52</sup>

It appeared, so it seemed to me, that God made a separation between “**Gospel**” and “**teaching**.” As stated above, there is as much difference between the Gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine as there is between the sperm from which a child is begotten and the food that he or she eats after birth.<sup>53</sup> **The purpose of the Gospel is to enlist men and women into the army of Christ; the doctrine (teaching) constitutes a manual of arms and a book of discipline to develop the soldiers of Christ into a fighting force.** I confused chastisement of a child with begetting and did not distinguish between correction and conception. I discovered that it is the Holy Spirit that inducts a subject into the one body, not precise knowledge of the five acts of worship, as we commonly called them. Every sincere baptized believer is brought into the fellowship of the saints in spite of his or her inadequate understanding of God’s Word.

### **Fellowship and Endorsement**

Having arrived at a better comprehension of “Gospel and doctrine,” I turned my attention to the subject of endorsement. In my early years of preaching and teaching, I did not differentiate between “**fellowship** and **endorsement**,” which was one of the major “hang ups” in the brotherhood then, as well as it is today (2015). I labored under the impression that to have fellowship with someone with whom I disagreed was to endorse whatever the other person believed. After much soul searching, I finally came to the judgement that **fellowship** and **endorsement** could not possibly be the same. For example, who would be so naïve to give credence to the idea that God sanctions all things we perform, believe, or voice? Surely no one would hold to such a preposterous notion. Yet, we all maintain that we are in fellowship with God, in spite of our shortcomings in our lives and with our beliefs.

Many Christians do not think this lack of knowledge or failure in perfection affects their relationship with God—it just applies to other people. I had to struggle with the question: does fellowship with God indicate that God endorses everything we believe, do, and say? Surely, the answer is NO! For us to be in fellowship with God does not indicate that God puts his signature to the whole shebang of what we believe, perform, or pronounce. Since this is so, then, why can we not be in fellowship with others and not necessarily endorse the many things that the other person gives approval to or practices?<sup>54</sup> Ketcherside drew my attention to the fact that

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<sup>52</sup>For an explanation of this type philosophy, see Dallas Burdette, “Oddities in Pattern Theology,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom*, 55-86.

<sup>53</sup>I am indebted to Carl Ketcherside for this perceptive insight.

<sup>54</sup>Carl Ketcherside wrote one of the most informative articles that I have read about fellowship and endorsement. In his article, “Reply to Brother Thomas,” in *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 4 (April 1963): 51-59. He nails the coffin shut, as it were, on the view that fellowship and endorsement are one and the same. I call attention to this perceptive essay on fellowship, because this response to Brother Thomas helped me to rethink

The fellowship of the new covenant is not based upon unanimity of opinion, interpretation, or even understanding of scriptural doctrine. It does not imply nor indicate endorsement of the position of one with whom we may differ. Fellowship is one thing; endorsement of a position taken by another is a wholly different thing. Fellowship of Christ, and in Christ, is a state or condition into which we are called by God through the gospel; endorsement of an interpretation or idea of one in or out of that fellowship is a rational act of our own minds.<sup>55</sup> (Emphasis mine)

In my travel of faith, I came to grasp that I cannot make togetherness, or fellowship, dependent upon education. What I eventually came to understand about fellowship, later in my ministry, I also discovered that Alexander Campbell had written about these same issues in 1830—**fellowship** and **endorsement**. Alexander Campbell also faced the same kind of “know-it-all attitude” in the nineteenth century that I manifested in my earlier training. He said it best when he wrote:

It is cruel to excommunicate a man because of the imbecility of his intellect. We have been censured long and often for laying too much stress upon the assent of the understanding; but those who have most acrimoniously censured us, have laid much more stress upon the assent of the mind, than we have ever done. We never did, at any time, exclude a man from the kingdom of God for a mere imbecility of intellect; or in other words, because he could not assent to our opinions. All sects are doing, or have done this.<sup>56</sup> (Emphasis mine)

My postulation of perfect knowledge of every detail of God’s Word required inerrancy and infallibility which I myself did not possess. This demand of perfection in knowledge, on my part, required that I be God. How are we reacting toward others today whose knowledge does not always agree with ours? Are we excluding men and women from the kingdom of God for mere feeble-mindedness of intellect? In my earlier ministry, I excluded every person from God’s kingdom who did not agree with our group. But thank God, I came to understand, through other godly men, a clearer perception of what Christianity is all about. **It is a popular error to suppose that what I believe is the Word of God, but what you believe is not.** In seeking to call attention to neglected truths, repetition is unavoidable. Leroy Garrett is perfectly right when he insists:

People tire of our equating our understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. Revelation is what God has given us in scripture. Interpretation is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.<sup>57</sup>

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the subject of biblical fellowship that is in keeping with the tenor of the Scriptures. This article is what I call common-sense interpretation.

<sup>55</sup>Carl Ketcherside, “Thoughts on Fellowship,” in *Mission Messenger* 20, no. 2 (February 1957): 4.

<sup>56</sup>Alexander Campbell, “Millennium. – II,” in *Millennial Harbinger* 1 (5 April 1830): 122-123.

<sup>57</sup>Leroy Garrett, “What Kind of a Book Is the Bible? . . . ‘It Means What It Says,’” *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 69.

## Unity in Diversity

In the beginning of my spiritual journey, I denied unity-in-diversity. Unity-in-conformity was the battle cry. If one did not conform to the traditions of the church, he or she faced expulsion, which is what ultimately happened to me. It never once occurred to me that Christians can no more all think alike than they can all look alike. This is just plain common-sense interpretation. A more excellent way of expressing the truthfulness of this philosophy is Ketcherside's comments about observation:

But we learn from observation, experience and the sacred scriptures that we do not all have the same degree of knowledge. God has made us all to differ in the intellectual realm as we do in the physical. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. No two of us upon earth attain to the same identical degree of knowledge about everything at the same moment. Any attempt to secure unity upon the basis of uniformity of knowledge or conformity in deductive or inferential process (e.g., doctrinal interpretation) is doomed before it begins.<sup>58</sup>

This article, by Ketcherside, helped me to crystallize my thinking in this area of "uniformity of knowledge." I saw division on every street corner. We were divided into approximately twenty-five warring factions. Each was claiming to be the "true" Church of Christ. In fact, the congregation that I helped to establish in Montgomery, Alabama had a sign that read, "The loyal Church meets here."<sup>59</sup> We had set up a system by which fellowship is conditioned upon alleged equality of knowledge, and, as a result, we created a state in which strife, division, and confusion prevailed. This fellowship of believers created an atmosphere in which no one dared to express an original thought.

**If one dared to think, one would be sent to the chopping block—agree with the status quo or face excommunication.** Before I was disfellowshipped from the one-cup fellowship, I asked some questions that put doubt into our traditions. I remember very distinctly receiving a stern rebuke from Lynwood Smith (1924-2007) about my inquiries concerning certain interpretations that we were advancing, which interpretations shut out other believers not in our camp. I was informed that I was never to ask questions like that again. He was sincere in his actions and a man dedicated to God, but I did not adhere to his advice. Since I refused to deny what I thought the Scriptures taught about toleration, I was eventually cut off from those Christians when I could not conform to their way of thinking. At the time, we were not in fellowship, so we thought, with "wine only" brethren,<sup>60</sup> with "bread breaking" brethren, with

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<sup>58</sup>Carl Ketcherside, "Gospel and Doctrine," *Mission Messenger* 27, no.2 (February 1965): 17-18.

<sup>59</sup>This congregation was started in my mother's (Thelma Haygood, 1913-2000) and step-father's (Teddy Haygood, 1904-1978) home on Madison Avenue (1952). This church still exists and is known as the Vonora Avenue Church of Christ. The congregation continues to advocate the use of the common cup and no Sunday school. Raymond Miller (1932-2010), my first cousin and son of the late E. H. Miller, preached for this local fellowship in Montgomery, AL until the day of his death.

<sup>60</sup>Some Christians in the one-cup and non-Sunday school advocated the use of wine in the Lord's Supper, not grape juice. As a result of this belief, the wine only brother or sister would not fellowship the grape juice only group and the grape juice only group would not fellowship the wine only group.

“individual cups” brethren, with “Sunday school” brethren, with “instrumental music” brethren, and so on.

For some reason, it never occurred to us that in the primitive community there were *diversity* of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-6), *diversity* of functions (Romans 12:4-5), *diversity* in knowledge (1 Corinthians 3:1; 8:1-13; Romans 14:1—15:1-7), a *diversity* in understanding (1 Corinthians 8:2), and *diversity* in customs (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 10:31-33), and *diversity* in opinions (Romans 14). The writings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell helped to call attention to diversity in the Christian community. I cite Alexander Campbell once more because of his unique insight into the human predicament. Since our minds are affected by the traditions of the church that prevail in Christendom, by which vital truths of Christianity are secretly undermined or openly denied, we need to reflect upon the growth in the spiritual life of every believer. Campbell (1788-1866) drew attention to the fact:

**Amongst Christians there is now, as there was at the beginning, a very great diversity in the knowledge of the Christian institution.** There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the Apostle John. This, from the natural gifts of God, from the diversities of age, education, and circumstances, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural to excommunicate one another, because our knowledge is less or greater than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion on matters of speculation?

Indeed, in most cases where proscription and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy, (of which, however, for consistency's sake, he must be accused,) is, in truth, the real cause of separation.

**If God has bestowed better gifts or better opportunities on one man than another, by which he has attained more knowledge, instead of thanking God for his kindness to the community, they beg God to take him away;** and if he will not be so unkind, they will at length put him from among them under the charge of heresy. In most instances the greatest error of which a brother can be guilty, is to study his Bible more than his companions –or, at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ.<sup>61</sup> (Emphasis mine)

## Believers in Error

In my pilgrimage of faith, I became aware that in Christ Jesus all believers are in error on many doctrinal points. Through common-sense interpretation, I came to the realization that absolute freedom from error in all doctrinal problems is not a condition of salvation else all men would be damned. **We are not saved by attainment to an unmistakable degree of knowledge but by faith in Christ Jesus.** I came to realize that the only Christians we have are saints in error. In my earlier phases of changing, Christians often asked me if I were in fellowship with error. To this inquiry, I answered no! **I am in fellowship with people, not error.** Ketcherside expressed the basic problem well in his discussion of “Another Gospel.”

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<sup>61</sup>Alexander Campbell, “Christian Union,” in *Christianity Restored* (Rosemead, California: Old Paths Book Club, 1959), 127. I read this book in May, 1964.

Those who were in Christ in the days of the apostles were in error on many points. They were mistaken about a lot of things but they were not charged with ‘preaching another gospel.’ Freedom from error is not a condition of salvation else all men would be damned. We are not saved by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge but by faith in Christ Jesus. It is by belief of facts related to him, and not by grasp of abstract truth, that we are justified before God. Certainly it is neither by performance of meritorious deeds nor by legalistic conformity. When we postulate a program of justification by knowledge we hang ourselves on the gallows we have constructed to rid ourselves of others, unless we are prepared to make ourselves even more ridiculous by affirming that we know as much as God.<sup>62</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Through my studies, I came to the realization that we must make a separation between “one’s faith” and “one’s opinion.” It is not “**What** do you believe?”—the eager and sole inquiry of modern religious parties—but rather, “**In whom** do you believe?” This was the question addressed by Christ to one who sought to know the truth: “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (John 9:35; Matthew 16:13-20). It is not WHAT but WHO! Campbell captures this truth when he writes:

But the grandeur, sublimity, and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this, that THE BELIEF OF ONE FACT, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of ONE FACT, and submission to ONE INSTITUTION expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.<sup>63</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As we explore the role of women in the church, we need some background into the field of biblical interpretation. In order to learn how to interpret the Word of God more accurately, my first chapter deals directly with the principles of “How to Interpret Scripture” in order to prepare us for a correct reading of First Timothy. My second chapter will focus upon the “Role of Women in the Great Commission,” which study examines Chapter 24 of Luke’s Gospel. Chapter 3 surveys the philosophy of interpreting the Word of God with literalism and isolationism of a particular text. This chapter (“Wooden Literalism: Abuse of Holy Scripture”) criticizes this mind-set as far back as the seventeenth century among the church fathers. Following this chapter, we will respond to the question: “Are Women to Announce the Good News of Salvation to the World?” Chapter 4.<sup>64</sup>

My INTRODUCTION to *Women’s Role in the Christian Community* is written to help Christians to avoid the many difficulties that many believers encounter when they do not know how to read the Word of God in context. Our study of the role of women should not become a test of fellowship among God’s people. Without knowing how to read the Word of God

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<sup>62</sup> Carl Ketcherside, “Another Gospel,” *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 1 (January 1965): 6-7.

<sup>63</sup> Alexander Campbell, “The Foundation of Hope and of Christian Union,” *Christian Baptist* 1, no. 9 (April 1824): 177.

<sup>64</sup> To see this book in a PDF format, please click on the icon (BOOKS) to read or download this book for free.

correctly, countless Christians will continue to hold on to the traditional views concerning the role of women in ministry. In concluding my remarks about my growth and travel in my spiritual journey of Faith, **I remind each reader that whenever we demand a program of justification by perfect knowledge of God's written Revelation, then, we hang ourselves on the gallows that we have constructed to rid themselves of others, unless we are prepared to make ourselves even more foolish by affirming that we know as much as God.**

My prayer is that we will weigh carefully the concepts presented in this chapter and the following chapters so that we will not plummet into the same pitfalls that I myself made in the earlier part of my spiritual voyage. In this "introduction," As stated above, I have purposely introduced divergent views on many subjects that have divided God's people. These areas of disagreements are presented in order to assist God's people in the proper methods of hermeneutics. The role of women in the Body of Christ is just one of the many issues that have created warring factions within the Christian community. As stated earlier, Chapter 1 (in my book) of our study will focus more on how to interpret the Scriptures more accurately. Without a proper understanding of how to study the Bible, we will continue to create havoc among God's people.