

A DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

by Martin Zender

DUBIOUS SOUND VS. INTELLIGIBLE EXPRESSION

The importance of competent teaching in the body of Christ

Yet now, brethren, if I should be coming to you speaking in languages, what shall I be benefiting you if ever I should not be speaking to you either in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or in teaching? Likewise, soulless things, giving a sound, whether flute or lyre, if they should not be giving a distinction to the utterances, how will the fluting or the lyre playing be known? For if a trumpet, also, should be giving a dubious sound, who will be preparing for battle? Thus, you also, if you should not be giving an intelligible expression through the language, how will it be known what is being spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

—*the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 14:6-9*

The world is sufficiently full of dubious sounds, theories, agnosticism, and soulless suppositions that we expect respite from it all in the body of Christ. After all, to the body of Christ, God speaks. Do we not have the sacred scriptures? Are they not written to us in intelligible language? There is enough speaking into the air in this world to fill a blimp hangar (as well as the blimp inside the hangar); surely we are able to talk substantively among ourselves, especially when the Word is opened. We pray for God to give to the body of Christ qualified teachers who hold teaching above guessing, knowledge above theory, and intelligible expression above the murky surmising of the flesh. God grants this prayer, only to have some among us undermine these teachers by disparaging the very strength and conviction and knowledge that qualifies them to be teachers in the first place.

There is a disturbing trend today in the body of Christ that would put human feelings before sound teaching and the honor due qualified teachers. The mantra is: “Let us not offend.” I trust that those striving toward this will soon be ridding us of teaching altogether; it’s the only way. I will never forget the lady who told me how splendidly the members of her church got along. “We never argue,” she said. I asked how this was possible. “Well,” she said, “we never discuss doctrine.”

The fleshly desire to please everyone is distasteful enough when encountered in the world. When encountered in a man of God—especially in a teacher or an evangelist—it is not only distasteful, it is deadly. We are not selling shoes or signing people up for magazine subscriptions. For God is “manifesting the odor of His knowledge through us in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14). In the realm of evangelism, our teaching is the difference—relatively speaking—between a person’s eonian life and their eonian death: “to these, indeed, an odor of death for death, yet to those an odor of life for life” (2 Cor. 2:16). Is this any time to blow a dubious sound on the trumpet? To play indistinctly on the lyre? Did Paul worry so much about feelings when he said to a man dissuading another from believing in Christ: “O, full of all guile and all knavery, son of the Adversary, enemy of all righteousness!” (Acts 13:10)

Worse yet is when this fleshly desire to please gets cloaked in the fine-sounding shroud, “Keeping the Unity of the Spirit.” This is the name of an article by Bob Evely of www.GraceEvangel.org, and it is upon this article that I will now comment.

I preface my remarks by telling you that Bob is a friend of mine. He spoke at my conference several years ago and visited my family. He is a fine teacher on the truth of God’s ultimate Goal—the salvation of all. And yet, because this present article of his is so detrimental to the body of Christ and, by extension, to the unbelieving world we seek to reach, I must expose its weaknesses. I don’t do this for sport or “because I can,” but because anyone taking this article seriously could easily a) degenerate into agnosticism, that is, into “an attitude affirming the uncertainty of all claims to ultimate knowledge,” b) stop teaching altogether, for fear of hurting someone’s feelings, and c) fret over the unity of the spirit, which is apparently more fragile than a glass Christmas ornament.

Bob’s writing is in bold, mine as you see here.

It is becoming more and more clear to me that keeping the unity of the spirit is no easy matter, even among believers who are in agreement on many points. We tend to allow differences of Biblical interpretation to divide us. All who study the Scriptures and seek God in earnest will agree on the basics, which are summarized by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.

For I give over to you among the first what also I accepted, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was entombed, and that He has been roused the third day according to the scriptures... (1 Cor. 15:3-5).

In this article, Bob presents points of doctrine that, to him, are accepted basics. He is willing to apply logic, sound study practices, and the laws of language to these basics, but only because he believes that “everyone accepts them,” and therefore the particular basic will not endanger spiritual unity. On other matters, however, which are just as basic—*but not to Bob*—he disparages logic, sound study practices and the laws of language, claiming, “there may be a bit of a mystery involved here.” Bob’s apparent habit is to write off as unknowable any unity-endangering topic that he deems nonessential. This is a poor practice, especially as we discover that 1) not all agree upon those things that Bob assumes all agree on, 2) the unity of the spirit is not so fragile, 3) none of Bob’s mysteries are mysteries, and 4) every controversial topic deemed nonessential by

Bob touches upon a foundation stone of the evangel.

Now let me say that while some things are made very clear in God's revelation to us, there are other things that are less clear. God's purpose is not to tell us every detail concerning every matter, but it seems that we have this natural curiosity to understand every detail. And this is where we run into trouble in maintaining the unity of the spirit.

Following the apostle Paul's wordy, detailed account of his conversion and the promise God had made to his forefathers, Festus, procurator of Judea, said to him, "You are mad, Paul! Much scripture is deranging you to madness!" (Acts 26:24). Bob assumes, with Festus, that much scripture invites trouble. Seeing as how Paul wore chains as he spoke, I guess Festus and Bob Evely are right. But maybe Paul would define trouble differently than we would. Maybe Paul's definition of unity of the spirit is also unlike ours. Maybe unity of the spirit, to Paul, was something other than physical togetherness and the avoidance of argument. Maybe it's—*spiritual*. As for details, surely no one can apprehend more information than God provides. But can anyone exhaust—in a single lifetime—the details God *has* made known? If, then, there are more facets to God than I could hope to absorb in a lifetime, who will draw the line where I should stop seeking them? Who will dare say what that line is?

THE SECOND DEATH

This is where we run into trouble in maintaining the unity of the spirit. Allow me to cite a few examples. What exactly will happen to the non-believer from the time of his death? We know that immediately upon death he will find himself in hades, "the unseen place." But what about after that? Anyone not found written in the scroll of life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

I happen to know that there are three matters inciting argument these days in the body of Christ:

- 1) the literalness or figurativeness of the second death
- 2) the relationship between Christ and Deity
- 3) the relationship between God and man

Would anyone consider these minor themes? Non-essentials? Matters not worth arguing about?

I reject Bob's premise concerning unity of the spirit. Bob seems to believe that disagreeing over scriptural matters will disrupt this unity by default. It's as if anyone arguing anything must strain monumentally to spare the unity. Since apparently not many people can manage such a strain (or maybe the fragility of the spirit of God is to blame), it's better not to argue. It's better to call major themes "non-essentials," and treat important scriptural themes as mysteries best left alone.

Later on in his article, Bob writes:

Can we allow one another to present their perspectives without anyone being burned at the stake?

Maybe something is going on at Bob's meetings that I'm unaware of. None of the meetings I've attended ended in non-consensual martyrdom. For instance, Phil Scranton and I totally disagree on the second death. He teaches that the second death is a second life, whereas I—radical that I am—teach that the second death is a second death. Phil taught his viewpoint at my conference two years ago, and I taught mine. I will admit to you all, here today, that I did try to ignite Phil afterward. But the day was humid and my kindling wouldn't catch. I have since learned that Phil had planned to saw me asunder in true Hebrews 11 fashion, but there was no three-prong adaptor handy for his dismembering tool of choice. So after our respective presentations, we simply repaired to the back of the meeting room for iced tea and talked about the Indianapolis Colts.

The unity of the spirit is of Divine origin. Therefore, we are exhorted to keep it, not make it (Ephesians 4:3). In other words, it's durable. To treat it like a glass sugar bowl perched at the edge of a counter is to insult it. The unity of the spirit is more like an oak tree. I'm critiquing this article not only to expose weak teaching, fight agnosticism, encourage argument over essential points, and sneak some teaching in myself, but to also put in a good word for the unity of the spirit: it can take the heat.

Back to death. Bob thinks there's a lot we can agree on here, after which things get fuzzy. But at least we can all agree on the basics, he says. For instance: **What exactly will happen to the non-believer from the time of his death? We know that immediately upon death he will find himself in hades, "the unseen place." But what about after that? Anyone not found written in the scroll of life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).**

The one thing "we know" is that, immediately upon death, the unbeliever is able to "find himself in hades, the unseen place." But this makes the individual conscious, else how else could he find himself? Thank God that the unity of the spirit is hardy, because I disagree with Bob already. I believe that death is the absence of life, and therefore no dead person can "find himself" anywhere, let alone in an unseen place. Ecclesiastes 9:5—"The dead do not know anything." I'm having a conflict already, and the fuzzy, mysterious stuff is still ahead.

We know that this is not the individual's final destination, since God will one day be All in all, and all mankind will be reconciled to Him. But during the time he finds himself in the lake of fire, what exactly will this look like, and feel like? I personally know individuals who study the scriptures very carefully and very "concordantly" but who disagree on some of these details. Those from both perspectives pay close attention to detail in the translation and in their interpretations, yet they disagree on some things. Some say that when one is cast into the lake of fire, this "second death" (as the Bible calls it) is the same as the first death. Once again, the individual experiences "dissolution" and has no consciousness, as is the case in the first death, until the consummation...when that individual is once again roused and reconciled to God.

Bob does appear to believe that the second death is a second life because, once again, the supposedly dead individual “finds himself” in the lake of fire. The lake of fire will “feel like” something, though we don’t know what. But now I’m wondering if I’ve misjudged Bob’s view of death. At the end of this paragraph, he seems to equate death with dissolution and “no consciousness.” What does Bob really believe? I’m not sure.

Others believe the second death may be different than the first, and that this may be a figurative death. The individual is conscious as he endures an unpleasant time of reformation and purification.

Now I have looked at the arguments presented on both sides, and have great respect for those who have studied this matter in detail on both sides. Let me tell you where I stand on this matter.

- **Those within the lake of fire will not be there forever**
- **The experience of the lake of fire will not be a pleasant one**
- **As a part of the body of Christ I will not experience the lake of fire**
- **I would not want anyone to experience the lake of fire, and would prefer that they believe God and be found in Christ**
- **It seems that we are not given a great amount of conclusive details about the exact nature of the lake of fire, so we cannot know definitively many details of which we are curious concerning the lake of fire**

I wonder why Bob has “great respect for those who have studied this matter in detail,” when he has made detail the thing that causes trouble and threatens spiritual unity.

The scriptures themselves define death. In Genesis 42:2, Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to get food, “that we may live and not die.” *Death is the opposite of life.*

Revelation 20:5—“The rest of the dead do not live until the thousand years should be finished.” *Dead people do not live.*

The absence of life is the *meaning* of death, and the meaning of death never changes. It does not, at any time, change from being the absence of life to the presence of life. You, the reader, need to keep this linguistic law in mind because I am now going to tell you that, yes, death is sometimes used figuratively in the scriptures. Even so, *the meaning of the word never changes.* It still means the absence of life. Only now, with the figurative usage, we’re saying that living people are behaving *as if* they have absence of life; that is, they are completely unresponsive to some outside stimulus.

For instance, in Ephesians 5:14, Paul writes, “Rouse! O drowsy one, and rise from among the dead, and Christ shall dawn upon you!” Death is obviously figurative here because the literal dead cannot be simultaneously drowsy. So if the drowsy one is not literally dead, this person must be alive. Yes. Then why is the person said to be dead? It’s a figure of speech. The person is

so oblivious and unresponsive to the things of the spirit that it's *like* that person is dead. Do you see how, in this example, death retains its meaning? The figuratively dead are not like they're alive, otherwise they wouldn't be figuratively dead.

Luke 15:24 is another good example. Here we encounter the Prodigal Son. The son returns home after wasting his inheritance on wine, women, and poor musical selections. His father throws his arms around him and says, "Bring the grain-fed calf, sacrifice it, and, eating, we may make merry, for this my son was dead and revives."

Did the Prodigal Son literally die while he was away? No. Then death must mean life! No. It still means death; it *always* means death. In what way, then, was the prodigal's trip to the far county *like* death? The boy was oblivious to the love of his father. Literal death is oblivion; figurative death is also oblivion. Oblivion and unresponsiveness are the common denominators between literal death and figurative death; they are the points of likeness.

Note this: In both examples, figurative resurrection follows figurative death. The drowsy one is challenged to "rise," and the prodigal is said by his father to have revived. This proves that responsiveness is neither inherent in literal death, nor in the figurative usage. Even the figuratively dead must figuratively come to life before the positive stimuli of the context can be responded to. In the Ephesians passage, Christ cannot dawn upon the drowsy one until he or she figuratively rises from the dead. Likewise, the Prodigal Son must figuratively experience resurrection before his moral error can occur to him and he can go home.

Let's make sure what Bob believes about the second death:

- **The experience of the lake of fire will not be a pleasant one**

Since scripture identifies the lake of fire as the second death (Rev. 20:14), and since Bob believes the lake of fire to be an experience, he must also believe the second death to be an experience. Since the literal dead do not experience, Bob must believe the second death to be figurative. He therefore falls into the following category that he himself has defined:

Others believe the second death may be different than the first, and that this may be a figurative death. The individual is conscious as he endures an unpleasant time of reformation and purification.

This is why Bob—and everyone else who believes the second death to be figurative—is wrong. Bob believes that a time of reformation and purification can be called "death," even though, in scripture, the term "death" is never used—in either true or parabolically true conditions—to describe a time of reformation or purification. Again, this is true of both literal and figurative usage. To demonstrate this, let us try plugging the thought of reformation and purification into our above examples of figurative death:

"Rouse! Stop being reformed and purified, O drowsy one, and Christ shall dawn upon you!"

“Bring the grain-fed calf, sacrifice it, and, eating, we may make merry, for this my son was reforming and becoming pure, but thank God he revives.”

It doesn't work, and it never will. Even if the second death were figurative, it would not reform or purify; death *never* reforms or purifies, not even figuratively. If this was the function of the second death, the second death would mirror the pre-epiphany experiences of the Prodigal Son and the “drowsy one” of Ephesians 5:14: oblivion to matters of the spirit. I think we've had enough of that during the course of this wicked eon. Shall we raise billions of people who, during their lifetimes, were oblivious to matters of the spirit, only to judge them at the great white throne and then deliver them into another lengthy era of oblivion to the spirit?

Instead of delivering people *from* death for enlightenment, purging and refinement (which is what scriptural precedent demands), Bob delivers them *into* death for that purpose. No one needs delivered from Bob's version of the second death into the hands of Christ, because the second death itself is doing the work of Christ.

You can thus see how grievously wrong this teaching is. Death, our enemy (1 Cor. 15:26) is made to be an agent of purification. DEATH IS GLORIFIED, AND PUT ON PAR WITH CHRIST. It is Christ Who enlightens, purges and refines, not death. *Never* death. Death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26) that separates *from* Christ. Bob and others make it a friend that brings people *to* Christ. People need delivered *from* death for divine help, not *into* it. But that's not the worst of it. With death glorified, resurrection is nullified; if death is figurative, then so is resurrection.

It would seem logical to me that God *could* be using the lake of fire to purge and reform with those within the lake being conscious...but I cannot depend on logic to add details to God's Word where details are not provided. I may have opinions concerning the lake of fire, but there is much that I do not know conclusively. And most importantly, where matters are inconclusive in the scriptures, we must not allow disagreements in interpretation to shipwreck the unity of the spirit. As Paul writes, endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit.

After reading this paragraph, I'm wondering now if it's even possible to know what Bob believes. First Bob said, “Let me tell you where I stand on this matter,” and he followed that with, “The experience of the lake of fire will not be a pleasant one.” Okay. So Bob believes that the second death is figurative. But wait. He confesses above that, “it would seem logical to me that God *could* be using the lake of fire to purify and reform.” Now Bob doesn't seem so sure. But at least logic points to the possibility of conscious human reformation in the fiery lake. But wait. “I cannot depend on logic to add details to God's Word where details are not provided.” Whatever grounds might have lent us insight into Bob's stand, have now fatally shifted. The same logic that told Bob God *could* purge dead people is abandoned in light of Bob's newest realization: There is no sense arguing in the first place because God has withheld the information necessary to form logical opinions, let alone convictions. Bob's “stand” on the lake of fire has turned out to be a rusty ladder, and we all fall down.

We are not given a great amount of conclusive details about the exact nature of the lake of fire, so we cannot know definitively many details of which we are curious concerning the lake of fire.

Really? How about this for a conclusive detail about the exact nature of the lake of fire: “THE LAKE OF FIRE IS THE SECOND DEATH” (Rev. 20:14). Is that conclusive enough? How much more conclusiveness could a soul ask for? God has defined the lake of fire for us in the most literal, most direct manner possible. And yet:

We are not given a great amount of conclusive details about the exact nature of the lake of fire.

THE LAKE OF FIRE IS THE SECOND DEATH —Revelation 20:14

We cannot know definitively many details of which we are curious concerning the lake of fire.

THE LAKE OF FIRE IS THE SECOND DEATH —Revelation 20:14

Could it be that Bob doesn't want to believe God's definition of the lake of fire?

THE LAKE OF FIRE IS THE SECOND DEATH —Revelation 20:14

Could it be that Bob doesn't know what death is?

THE DEAD DO NOT LIVE —Revelation 20:5

We are not given a great amount of conclusive details about the exact nature of the lake of fire...

I conclude that the meaning of death escapes Bob Evely. Nothing so far in this article suggests that he grasps the meaning of death.

I hope my friend, Phil Scranton, will not mind my using him as an example. I appreciate Phil Scranton. He presents his theory concerning the lake of fire in his book, “Journey To And Through the Second Death.” I appreciate Phil's humility and his meekness. I cannot speak for Phil, but believe he would agree that much of what he offers in his book is a theory, with at least some level of detail that cannot be known definitively from the Scriptures.

If any are interested in theories and detailed suppositions about the second death, then, yes, they should read Phil's book. If any are interested in facts, they should read the book of Revelation in conjunction with A.E. Knoch's book, *The Unveiling of Jesus Christ*.

Here, once again, is our key truth from the book of Revelation: THE LAKE OF FIRE IS THE SECOND DEATH (Rev. 20:14).

Here is a quote from Phil Scranton's book, *The Second Death*:

Death still has many needful lessons to teach to those whose life on earth consisted only of moments, and those whose eyes never beheld the light outside the womb. If it be asked, "Who would care for and nurture this vast number of infants?" the reply only is made that there will be no shortage of parents at the great white throne who have failed in parental responsibilities. And will there not be rejoicing to serve a sentence which will effectively correct the wrongs of a previous lifetime?"

The definition of "theory" is: "a proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural, in contrast to well-established propositions that are regarded as reporting matters of actual fact."

God plainly states the lake of fire to be the second death. The lake of fire is the second death, and death is the absence of life. These are God's definitions of both the lake of fire and death. Being God's actual definitions, these things are matters of fact. But wait. Phil Scranton has a theory. Phil Scranton's theory—which, as Bob Evely attests, contains at least some level of detail that *cannot* be known definitively from the Scriptures—is that the lake of fire is not death at all, but rather a second lifetime consisting of a nursery-type arrangement, full of rejoicing, where millions of babies will be taught many needful lessons by millions of formerly irresponsible parents who will receive—thanks to the wonderful teacher known as THE SECOND DEATH—a second chance to love and suckle orphaned offspring—and hope to get it right this time. And what, we ask, could be more apt a name for such a beneficent, blessed place of redemption, other than: THE LAKE OF FIRE.

Here is a quote from A.E. Knoch's, *The Unveiling of Jesus Christ*:

The divine definition of the lake of fire is "the second death." The law of the lexicographer is this: the unknown must be put in terms of the known. No true definition should need defining. It may be necessary for us in these days of apostasy to define what death is, but this has been done long ere we reach these final scenes in human history. If the lake of fire is not actual, physical death, then the abolition of death at the consummation is impossible, for there is no death to abolish. Christ was literally made alive, the saints will be actually vivified in His presence, hence the rest must be really given life at the consummation. This can only be if the lake of fire is literal death.

CHRIST AND DEITY

Christ's essence is another issue often debated. As a matter of fact, believers have been condemned since about the 3rd century for holding certain views concerning the essence of God. I was raised in the church and knew only the interpretation referred to as the Trinity. God the Father, Christ Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three in one. When I came to see God's plan to save all mankind, those whose writings I studied also presented the Biblical evidence that led me to see Christ Jesus as God's first created being. More recently I learned of another interpretation that I had never been exposed to before...that God the Father and

Christ Jesus the Son are one in the same, but appearing in different modes at different times. This has been referred to as “modalism” or “one-ness.”

Without getting into the fine details of these varying perspectives, let me ask this. If Christ Jesus is the first created being...or if He is of the same essence (that is, He is the same being) as God the Father...what are the practical implications? In either case, Christ Jesus is high above *any* of God’s creation, and worthy to be praised. If Christ is the same person as God, but has been spoken of in the Scriptures at times as being less than God the Father, will God not understand if we have concluded that Christ is indeed a separate being apart from God? And if Christ was created by God, but is spoken of in the Scriptures at times as being the same as God, will God not understand our misunderstandings?

Could it be that there is a bit of “mystery” concerning God’s being that we will never fully understand? Even if we can use multitudes of Scriptures that seem to prove one perspective or the other, does it matter?

Jesus Christ is God’s Son. But maybe He’s not. Maybe Jesus Christ isn’t *really* God’s Son because He’s actually God Himself. Who cares? I doubt that it makes much difference. God’s Son/not God’s son; a minor technicality. Scripture says that Christ Jesus is the first creation of God (Rev. 3:14), but we ought to entertain the theory (we all need more theories) that maybe He’s not, since He very well may be a creation of God *and* God. If this is the case, then He created everything, including Himself. If this is the case, then Revelation 3:14 would be a lie...but so what? I doubt it matters. What would be the practical implications of Revelation 3:14 being wrong? None, probably. Jesus Christ is commissioned by God to finish the work given Him by His Father (John 17:3-4), but that might not be true either because Jesus Christ may very well be the Father Himself—not that it matters. But if Jesus Christ is the Father Himself (and He might be) then He can’t be commissioned because if Absolute Deity (Jesus) is commissioned, then what Absolute Deity above Him is commissioning Him? That’s the God *I* want to know. I doubt that the following matters much either, but what are the practical implications of Jesus claiming that, “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), when the Father may in actuality *not* be greater, since the Son and the Father are probably (but we’re not sure, who can know?) the same Being?

In this article that asks more questions than it answers, and confuses more people than it could possibly enlighten, Bob Evelyn unconsciously effects the very thing he seeks so zealously to avoid: upsetting the unity of the spirit.

“Now stupid and crude questionings refuse, being aware that they are generating fightings” (2 Tim. 2:23).

Here is a perfect example of a stupid and crude question, excerpted from Bob’s words above:

If Christ Jesus is the first created being...or if He is of the same essence (that is, He is the same being) as God the Father...what are the practical implications? In either case, Christ

Jesus is high above any of God’s creation, and worthy to be praised.

“In either case, Christ Jesus is high above any of God’s creation.” It doesn’t matter which case is true? Really? Both cases are equally scriptural? Equally sensible? Let’s test this by plugging each case into “Christ Jesus is high above any of God’s creation,” and see what happens.

CASE 1: Christ Jesus is the first created being (Rev. 3:14).

Plug in: The first created being is high above any of God’s creation.

ASSESSMENT: Logical statement. Agrees with scripture (Phil. 2:9).

CASE 2: Christ Jesus is of the same essence (that is, He is the same being) as God the Father.

Plug in: God the Father is high above any of God’s creation.

ASSESSMENT: Illogical statement. Nonsense. No scriptural support because it’s stupid. (I am not being mean; “stupid” is a sound, scriptural word.)

If Christ was created by God, but is spoken of in the Scriptures at times as being the same as God, will God not understand our misunderstandings?

Why would God countenance anyone who, seeking His revelations, *settles* for misunderstanding? Is God out to confuse the saints? No, He’s out to enlighten them. Bob Evely is out—unwittingly—to confuse them. This article is one continuous account of Bob Evely throwing up his hands at “the Unknowable God.” He is coming across no wiser than the Athenians who erected a shrine under that very banner (Acts 17:23).

What of those wishing to convey God’s Word to others? Does God understand *their* misunderstanding? I suppose He would if they were unqualified, lukewarm “workmen” playing both sides of a fence in order to accommodate feelings. But He certainly would neither countenance nor expect it of one who endeavors “to present [himself] to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). This type of person works to determine truth. When scripture appears to contradict itself, the unashamed worker searches out the matter to reach a firm conclusion that satisfies every context. This allows the worker to “herald the word” (2 Tim. 4:2), rather than ask stupid questions concerning it (2 Tim. 2:23).

- Christ is God’s “creative Original” (Rev. 3:14).
- “The living Father commissions Me, I, also, am living because of the Father” (Jn. 6:57).
- “I am giving them the glory which Thou hast given Me” (Jn. 17:22).
- “He who is not honoring the Son is not honoring the Father Who sends Him” (Jn. 5:23).
- “I cannot do anything of Myself; I am not seeking My will, but the will of Him Who sends Me” (Jn. 5:30).

- “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28)
- “The Son Himself shall also be subject to [God]” (1 Cor. 15:28).

Could it be that there is a bit of a “mystery” concerning God’s being that we will never fully understand? Even if we can use multitudes of Scriptures that seem to prove one perspective or the other, does it matter? I have friends on both sides of this debate that study the Scriptures carefully and concordantly, yet they come to different conclusions. When this happens I tend to think there may be a bit of a mystery involved in the issue, and that perhaps things are not as conclusive as either side tends to conclude.

No, Bob. There is no mystery. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The simple matter is that some of your friends study the scriptures more carefully and more concordantly than others.

I have seen the few scriptures that purportedly undo or contradict all of the above verses clearly showing Jesus Christ to be God’s Son. The one put forward most often is John 14:8-9, and it is representative of the rest: “Philip is saying to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficing us.’ Jesus is saying to him, ‘So much time I am with you, and you do not know Me, Philip! He who has seen Me has seen the Father.’”

Not everyone who studies the scriptures “carefully” and “concordantly” understands identification versus representational likeness, nor will most attempt to understand it. It sounds too hard. But it’s not.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Jesus Christ is called, “the image of the invisible God.” No one will ever see God; Jesus Christ is His visible image. He represents His Father to a T. He is such a perfect representation that He is worthy to take the names and titles of God, and even to be worshipped as God. This no more makes Him identificationally God (that is, the same being as God) than a photo of my wife makes the photo identificationally Melody. And yet I rightly hold up the photo and say, “This is Melody.” Is it really Melody? No; it’s her image. The statement is figurative, relative, and representational, as opposed to literal, absolute, and identificational.

Likewise, it is perfectly right to look at Jesus Christ and say, “This is the Father.” It was perfectly right for Jesus to say, “He Who has seen Me has seen the Father.” Does this make Him identificationally the Father? No. He is representationally the Father; He is God’s *image*. Just as the photo represents my wife and I say that it *is* my wife (it’s her *image*), so does Christ represent God, and we say that He *is* God. It is in this sense only—the representational sense—that He is God. Identificationally, the Father is the Father and the Son is the Son. They are literally separate beings.

I told you it was easy. It’s easy when applied to the photo of Melody. Everyone understands the photo example. When I hold up the photo and say, “This is Melody,” no one says, “Hi, Melody!” Well, I take that back. Those who hold to Modalism might be tempted to. These Modalists tend, however, to think normally in the regular world. It is only upon theological topics that they lose their way and their regular minds. *We’re talking about God and Christ now; the real world is*

vanished. It is time now to put on our “spiritual” minds and become pleasantly daft.

It would be much more entertaining, I think, to watch Modalists retain their “spiritual” inanity in the everyday world. For instance, watch what happens when I plug elements of Bob’s “mysterious God” comment into the regular-world example of Melody’s photograph.

“Here is a photo of Melody. I took this yesterday. If you’ve seen this photo, you’ve seen Melody.”

Bob: “If this is actually only a photo *of* Melody, then why do you come here saying that this *is* Melody? If I start talking to this photograph, will you not understand my misunderstanding? I tend to think there may be a bit of a mystery involved in this issue. Some people who have studied this issue carefully and concordantly say that the photo is the photo and Melody is Melody; they’re two separate entities. But other people who have also studied *extremely* carefully and are *sure* of their position say that Melody and the photograph are the exact same thing. This is why I am now talking to the photograph; these people could be right. But why isn’t the photograph answering me? I’m so confused. Who, or what, is the true Melody? Does it really matter? Why did you have to come here today, hold up the photo and say, ‘This is Melody.’ I used to know that Melody was Melody, but now you’ve destroyed my worldview with your bizarre statement. I feel like I’m losing my mind. Perhaps things are not as conclusive as either side tends to conclude. Surely you understand my misunderstanding. This whole thing is one big mystery now. Can *anything* be known? I’m tired of all the arguing. Who cares who’s right? The important thing now is that we all just get along.”

Could it be that there is a bit of “mystery” concerning God’s being that we will never fully understand? Even if we can use multitudes of Scriptures that seem to prove one perspective or the other, does it matter? Whichever interpretation we adhere to, does it affect the following key facts?

- **Christ has died**
- **Christ is risen, the Firstfruit; and**
- **God is in the process of reconciling the entire universe to Himself**

Let’s see if the interpretation that Jesus Christ is literally, identificationaly, and absolutely God the Father, affects the first key fact.

- **Christ has died**

(Alarms.) We seem to be experiencing a large and very serious “affect” here. If Christ is the Deity Absolute, then who—or *Who*—was running the universe while Absolute Deity was dead? May we all agree that there can be no Absolute Deity above Absolute Deity? Very well then. The road is now paved to conclude that Absolute Deity cannot die; I hope I will not endanger the unity of the spirit by insisting on this. If we have safely come thus far in our sane and scriptural conclusions, I will venture the following: If God cannot die, and if Jesus Christ is God, then

Jesus Christ *did not die* on the cross, and our first key fact from 1 Corinthians 15:3 is, um, seriously affected.

And so is the second key fact. A Christ Who has not died cannot rise from the dead. At this point, who cares about key fact number three?

Bob has two choices. He can either accept the proposition that Jesus Christ is absolutely God and conclude that Jesus really didn't die on the cross, or he can agree with scripture concerning the death of Christ, reject Modalism, and recant of his proposition that "it really doesn't matter" how one believes concerning Christ and Deity.

I take it back. Bob has a third option. He can shrug and call the whole thing a mystery.¹

FREE WILL

I wish to talk about just one additional issue, since I have not yet offended everyone. How much free will does man have? I was raised in the Methodist tradition, and always believed I had a free will. After reading extensively outside of the Methodist tradition, I encountered the position that there is no such thing as free will, and that all is determined by God. It seems that in every debate on this issue there are two extremes:

- **Man's will is free, and if it were not man could not be held accountable for his actions, or**
- **Man has no free will, and all things are determined by God. If this were not the case, God would not be sovereign**

Both sides point to the Scriptures. Some focus on those passages showing man's will being exercised, or in those passages calling upon man to exercise his will in a certain way. Others focus on those passages showing God's total control of the events of history.

I believe that man has a will, but it is not free. It is influenced by his environment, his hereditary makeup, and at times by God Himself (as in the case of Paul on the Damascus Road). But I do not believe God controls and determines every event, as He did so powerfully with Paul on the road to Damascus. I believe man is called upon to exercise his will, though it is not a free will, but an "*influenced will*." And I believe God is sovereign in that nothing man can do in exercising his will can overcome God's will. It is God's will that all men be saved. Man can make whatever decisions he would like, but none of his actions can thwart God's will to save all men. The salvation of all is going to prevail.

¹ The two teachers in the ecclesia now teaching that the Son of God is also God Absolute—and who are disturbing and confusing Bob Evely and others—are Rick Farwell of South Carolina and Ted McDivitt of Ohio. Beware of their teaching. Hold fast to your regular, everyday minds, even when considering things divine—no, *especially* when considering things divine.

Now if you believe God determines all actions of man, or if you believe man has a will and can make decisions without being fully micro-managed by God, does either perspective change anything? God is sovereign, without a doubt. But as to how God exercises that sovereignty and takes us to the point where all is reconciled to Him, does that change how we are to live today? If my every action is controlled by God, or if I have the ability to exercise my human will to take certain actions, does that change the fact that I am called to “walk worthily of the calling?”

Once again, Bob takes a topic made certain in Scripture, and drapes it in mystery. Where God would reveal, Bob Evely conceals in the name of unity.

So basic and simple is the truth that God gives everyone everything, Paul teaches it to the heathen at Athens, “[God] gives to all life and breath and all” (Acts 17:25). This is the action from God’s perspective. Paul follows up with the human side of this divine activity: “In Him we are living and moving and are” (Acts 17:28). Since God actively gives life to all, all are living in Him. Since He actively gives breath to all, all are moving in Him. And since God actively gives all to all, our very existence is in Him.

But man doesn’t like this truth of divine control, no, not even men in whom dwells God’s spirit. The Athenians booed Paul off the stage. Bob doesn’t go that far, but he does dismiss Paul’s teaching:

I do not believe God controls and determines every event, as He did so powerfully with Paul on the road to Damascus.

“God is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11).

I do not believe God controls and determines every event...

“For I am El, and there is no other! Telling from the beginning, the hereafter, and from aforesaid what has not yet been done, Saying, *All* My counsel shall be confirmed, and *all* my desire shall I do” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

I do not believe God controls and determines every event...

“God gives to all, *all*...In Him we are moving...” (Acts 17:28).

I do not believe God controls and determines every event...

“All abiding on the earth are reckoned as naught; according to *His* will is He doing in the army of the heavens and with those abiding on the earth” (Daniel 4:35).

**I do not believe God controls and determines every event...
...as He did so powerfully with Paul on the road to Damascus.**

Look at the case of Paul, Bob Evely exhorts. God determined and controlled *that* event, Bob believes, because there was power. Other events, Bob does not believe God controls. Why? He does not behold the power.

[God's] invisible attributes are described from the creation of the world, being apprehended by His achievements, besides His *imperceptible power* and divinity, for them to be defenseless, because, knowing God, not as God do they glorify or thank Him, but vain were they made in their reasonings, and darkened is their unintelligent heart.

—Rom. 1:20-21

Bob Evely, like many others, invents a line between God's powerful, visible acts and his powerful, invisible ones. Note:

I believe that man has a will, but it is not free. It is influenced by his environment, his hereditary makeup, and at times by God Himself (as in the case of Paul on the Damascus Road).

- Sometimes man is influenced by his environment, sometimes by God Himself
- Sometimes man is influenced by his heredity, sometimes by God Himself
- Sometimes God powerfully controls an event, but **I do not believe God controls and determines every event...**

God's divinity is carried on in the world—every moment and in every place—by His invisible power. There are times when this power is overt, as in the case with Paul on the road to Damascus, and there are times when it is manifested in a quieter way, as in my case, when God brought me to my knees in 1979 after I watched Part 2 of the miniseries, *Jesus of Nazareth*. Was God's use of an intermediary to reach me not a display of His power? Truth be known, God used an intermediary in the case of Paul, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. Was my calling less of an intervention than Paul's?

If Bob had said that God controls some events in a startling, visible way, while other events are not so visibly *controlled*, I would have believed his testimony: **"I believe that man has a will, but it is not free."** As it is, I do not believe this testimony.

Bob's belief system is in a state of hypocrisy. Due to the influence of strange winds of teaching², Bob can no longer accept the fact (as once he did, before the strange winds came) that all is determined by God. He will allow that all is determined by influence, but if influence is not determined by God, then by whom—or what—is it determined? Bob's answer is, **"man has a will and can make decisions without being fully micro-managed by God."** This is the definition of free will.

² Brought to the ecclesia, once again, by Rick Farwell and Ted McDivitt, who currently disturb God's people with the strange teaching that only *some* things are absolutely of the Deity.

To remove doubt as to what Bob believes, let's put two and two together:

- **I believe man is called upon to exercise his will...**
- **If my every action is controlled by God, or if I have the ability to exercise my human will to take certain actions, does that change the fact that I am called to walk worthily of the calling?**

Bob believes that man is called upon to exercise his will. I believe this as well. I also believe what Bob *states* to believe, that even though a man makes decisions, the decision-making is not free. Bob and I both believe that man makes decisions based on influences. But here is where we part, and the parting is significant. I believe that influences, even though not overtly effected by God, are still determined and controlled by Him. Bob, however, does not believe this. This is apparent from his two statements quoted above. Please note them.

To Bob, the opposite of believing that man is called upon to exercise his will, is the belief that every action is controlled by God. In other words, according to Bob, a person can either believe that his every action is controlled by God, *or* he can believe that he has the ability to exercise his will. Bob plainly states his belief that a person has the ability to exercise his will. Therefore, in accord with his own axiom, Bob does *not* believe that his every action is controlled by God. This confirms our assessment of his earlier statement, "I do not believe God controls and determines every event, as He did so powerfully with Paul on the road to Damascus..."

Influences are composed of events. Events are things that happen to us. Our heredity is an event, in that it happened to us. Environment is an event, in that it happens to us moment by moment. Something happened to Paul, and Bob says God determined it. A million things happen to us every day, but Bob says some of these things God determines, others He does not. If it is an outwardly powerful event, then God probably determined it. If it seems mundane, God probably did not determine it, and neither is He controlling it.

Two major questions arise in the wake of this strange wind:

MAJOR QUESTION #1: If God does not determine and control every event, and thus every influence (for influences are events), then who determines and controls those other events and influences?

MAJOR QUESTION #2: If God does not determine and control every event or influence, how do we determine which events and influences He determines and controls, and which He does not?

Bob's answer to the first question seems to be, "the human."

Now if you believe God determines all actions of man, or if you believe man has a will and can make decisions without being fully micro-managed by God, does either perspective change anything?

Once again, Bob presents us with an either/or proposition: We either believe that God determines all actions of man, or we believe that man can make decisions “without being fully micromanaged by God.”

We have already determined that Bob does not believe God determines all the actions of a man. Therefore, by his own axiom, Bob believes that a man *can* make decisions, “without being fully micro-managed by God.”

Dress it up however you will, this is the definition of human free will.

How man despises God’s control! Even those who supposedly know Him rebel against the very thought that “in Him we are moving” (Acts 17:28). It is regrettable that Bob would borrow the profane term, “micro-management”—used of pathologically controlling employers—to describe a God Whose spirit and mind would dare infuse all. And yet: “God is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11). What is this but micro-management, though I would never use such a dirty term to describe it. Let us rather say, “God gives to all, all” (Acts 17:25).

Bob’s article is masterful in its subtle displacement of Deity. He makes room for human freedom, all while disclaiming belief in it. When one cuts through the fog and the good intentions, however, one finds this:

I believe God is sovereign in that nothing man can do in exercising his will can overcome God’s will. It is God’s will that all men be saved. Man can make whatever decisions he would like, but none of his actions can thwart God’s will to save all men. The salvation of all is going to prevail.

Bob lauds God here for knowing where He is going—but this fails to impress me. Because what follows is the insinuation that the process is up for grabs. God will get what He wants—in the end. The end is assured, but the process is not. Man thus has breathing room, that is, a smidgen of beloved independence. The unconscious result is that God’s goal is divorced from His process, and man gets free will.

“I am El, and there is no other! Telling from the beginning, the hereafter, and from aforetime what has not yet been done, Saying, *All* My counsel shall be confirmed, and *all* my desire shall I do” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

Let us all wake up to our creaturehood. He is El! Everything was set in stone, by Him, from the beginning. He gives us the freedom from *perceiving* His control, but if we think that eliminates it, our pride has ensnared us. The future is as set as the past to Him, and everything that we *will* do—everything—was told before the eons. We ought to walk in our perceived freedoms so as to learn of His lessons by experience, but never at the expense of creaturehood. He gives us all; in Him, we *move*.

If my every action is controlled by God, or if I have the ability to exercise my human will to take certain actions, does that change the fact that I am called to “walk worthily of the calling?” And does either perspective change the key facts that:

- **Christ had died,**
- **Christ is risen, the Firstfruit; and**
- **God is in the process of reconciling the entire universe to Himself?**

MAJOR QUESTION #2, REVISITED: If God does not determine and control every event or influence, how do we determine which events and influences He determines and controls, and which He does not?

What concerns me more than Bob’s personal belief is his suggestion that, whether one believes God controls all, or believes that “certain actions” of the human can occur independently of Him, makes no difference. Oh, but it does! These views differ critically. At stake is nothing less than a foundation stone of Paul’s evangel of grace, namely, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”

Bob has left out a vital portion of his first point above, “Christ has died.” The following is from 1 Cor. 15:3-4: “For I give over to you among the first what I also accepted, that *Christ died for our sins* according to the scriptures, and that He was entombed, and that He has been roused the third day according to the scriptures.”

Paul accepted not merely that Christ died, but that Christ died *for our sins*. Our Lord Jesus Christ answered sin’s case at the cross:

For what was impossible to the law, in which it was infirm through the flesh, did God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sin’s flesh and concerning sin, He condemns sin in the flesh, that the just requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who are not walking in accord with flesh, but in accord with spirit.” —*Romans 8:3-4*

God, through Christ, condemned sin in the flesh. The result is that, “we are reckoning a man to be justified by faith apart from works of law” (Rom. 3:28).

There is an enemy of this truth, and I do not mean the law of Moses. The enemy is the false teaching of human free will, which negates Christ’s sacrifice by retaining sin and laying it to man’s account. Why else would we hear, “Believe or be damned for your sins?” Even in the wake of Calvary, the heresy of free will makes every potential penitent hell-bound by default. It is only a free, undetermined decision that can rescue a man from sin. Christ’s sacrifice? Incomplete. The Savior saved no one. The supplicant saves himself by believing.

This is why the words, **I have the ability to exercise my human will to take certain actions**, rouses my defense of the cross. I distrust the phrase, “certain actions.” None of those who give man a limited amount of freedom tell us where this freedom ends and God’s control begins. And what are, “certain actions?” At what point, and with what things, does God finally take the reins? Does God’s control begin before “the critical decision,” or after it? Bob may apply limited

freedom to inconsequential events only, but is anything inconsequential on the path to Christ? Do Bob and others intend guarding their theory to keep hardcore free-willers from hijacking it? How will they do that, seeing that limited free will and hard-core free will are in essence the same things?

The holders of the limited free will theory imagine themselves in the best of all worlds. They say they avoid extremes. They claim to offend neither those who hold to free will, nor those who promote God's sovereignty. They're having their cake and eating it too—or so they suppose. In reality, by mixing foreign ingredients (human freedom/divine control), they have ruined the whole cake. If only they had chosen between man's freedom or God's control. Wanting both, they wind up with neither. Seeking to offend no one, they serve up an unpalatable mess and offend everyone. As they are neither hot nor cold, God has spit their theory from His mouth. And so have we.

VITAL TRUTH ASSAILED

If I have misjudged or misstated any of Bob's positions, I apologize. Bob is hard to pin down. Just when I think I see him, he moves. Just when it seems the sun might emerge, in rolls the fog. I have based my conclusions on reading between Bob's lines, for more can be gleaned there than in the lines themselves.

My biggest beef with Bob's article is the assumption that none of the current controversies touch vital, evangelical truth. I have shown throughout that *every* controversy touches vital truth.

- The “second death as purifier” theory substitutes Christ's enemy—death—for resurrection and Christ Himself.
- The “Jesus is the Father” theory denies both the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The “limited free will” theory leads to the abrogation of Christ's sacrifice for sins.

Some may object to all I have said, stating the importance to expose and rebuke teachings counter to the Scriptures. I would agree wholeheartedly in matters that are expressed clearly in the Scriptures.

My objection to this is that those matters deemed unclear by Bob are, in reality, distinctly stated. They are simply not clear to Bob or to those stirring up these contrary winds. Those disturbing the ecclesia—especially Rick Farwell and Ted McDivitt—seem less rooted and grounded with each succeeding theory. It is not that they are insincere, but that they are fatally reckless with figures of speech.

But remember that the apostle Paul focused his energies primarily on those denying the resurrection, and those attempting to integrate the law into grace.

I remember.

I do not believe we are to expose and rebuke on every minor difference of opinion relating to the Scriptures, especially when doing so leads to a destruction of the unity of the spirit. And we must be sure the matters we decide to expose and rebuke are truly clear in the Scriptures.

I agree.

* * *

Now I am entreating you, brethren, to be noting those who are making dissensions and snares beside the teaching which you learned...

—Romans 16:17

The word translated “dissensions” in this passage from Romans is the Greek word *dichostasia*. The literal elements of this word are *dicho*=TWO and *stasia*=-STAND. A dissension, then, is a two-standing. It is a putting forward of two opposing thoughts, or opposing truths, as equally viable. Dissentions keep company with snares.

Those who make them are to be noted.

* * *

IN CONCLUSION

It seems that in every debate on this issue there are two extremes.

Bob Evelyn speaks here of the free will issue, but tacitly implies the “two extremes” argument in every issue his article addresses.

I would hope that, in every debate, there would be two extremes. There must be two extremes for there to be debate. The extremes in our considerations have been those of “correct teaching” versus “erroneous teaching.” Throughout this article, Bob has discouraged the reader from searching scriptural detail, claiming there to be no such detail available. Those who stubbornly keep seeking it and somehow find it, risk entrenching themselves not only in their original position but in the details of that position. This is known in scripture as becoming “rooted” and “built up in Him, and being *confirmed* in the faith according as you were taught, superabounding in it with thanksgiving” (Col. 2:7).

“Now you be remaining in what you learned and verified, being aware from whom you learned it...” (2 Tim. 3:14)

To Bob, this is an undesired risk. When strange winds of teaching blow, those rooted to their positions stay there, as opposed to those shallowly planted, who drift. Disagreement then ensues between the rooted and drifting parties, which Bob fears above all.

The apostle Paul warns against strange winds of teaching. In the same “unity of the spirit”

context in Ephesians, Paul writes of attaining “to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception” (Eph. 4:13-14).

Later in his article, Bob feigns a warning against the heeding of strange doctrinal winds. That the warning is cosmetic is evident from his text:

Let us not rest on our own conclusions, thinking they are final and conclusive. Surely we should not rush to change our opinions with every wind that blows a new understanding our way, but we should be open to hearing the perspectives of others without thinking our understanding is complete and accurate.

And so. We can never be rooted. Not even those conclusions reached by scriptural evidence can hope to be confirmed, let alone rested upon. We must never assume accuracy, for that leads to convictions, which offend. Convictions must be abandoned for the sake of those holding perspectives. The most we should strive for are opinions. When the winds of teaching blow—as surely they will and have—we should not rush to abandon our opinions, but must open ourselves to every wind, be it demonic, angelic, or otherwise.

Convictions can withstand this; opinions cannot.

The last days are upon us. We are living in a perilous period. Too much stress can be laid upon having fellowship with all. There are those whom we should *shun* (2 Tim. 3:1-9). Men are selfish, money-mad, proud, calumniators, stubborn to parents, ungrateful, etc. But we are especially concerned with God’s truth, and those who are seeking to make it known. Even some of these are to be shunned. We have much sympathy with the desire to give everyone a chance to air his opinions. But that is not in accord with God’s Word for this time, for there is a peril of involving ourselves with those who should be shunned.

Being in the last days, we realize that the truth must be withstood. So it is written. Even those who are always learning will withstand truth. They calumniate those who remain in what they have learned and verified (2 Tim. 3:14). They are not for the exactitudes of divine revelation. They lay themselves open to every error, for they hold that no one can have the truth. They are continually involved in morbid questionings and controversies. The only safety lies in God’s Word. Not in reasoning about it.³

—A. E. Knoch

Excerpted from an editorial,
Unsearchable Riches, Volume 35.

³ This is my footnote: Bob Evely’s annual conference in Wilmore, Kentucky, is founded on his philosophy that every wind of teaching has a right to be heard. At Bob’s conference, anyone can air anything, whether theory, opinion, or scriptural fact; fact and theory carry equal weight here. In this, the conference is no better than the philosophical conclaves of Mars’ Hill, where the people “had opportunity for nothing different than to be saying something or hearing something newer” (Acts 17:21). Anyone wishing to remain in what he or she has learned and has had verified by competent teachers (2 Tim. 3:14,15), would do well to shun this assembly.

Bob Evely is the victim of his own brand of political “correctness.” By allowing strange winds into his conferences and into his mind, his God-view has turned from contrasts and “extremes” (right and wrong) to the gray mists of agnosticism; he has drifted. Under the misappropriated banner, “unity of the spirit,” he has abandoned knowing. All that matters is physical fellowship. We expect such relativism to infect the world, but it is not ours to judge those outside. Within the ecclesia, that is where we expose, rebuke and entreat.

Political correctness has crippled our earthly legislators. It will not, on my watch, cripple the ecclesia of God.

I remain vigilantly yours,

Martin Zender

“God gives teachers (Eph. 4:11) not roundtable discussions.”

—A.E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, Vol. 36