

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

IS THIS WHAT THEY MEAN BY *BALANCE*?

Dub McClish

The Forest Hill congregation (FH) in Memphis, Tennessee, oversees and is the home of Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP), both of which have for years commanded my utmost respect, support, and commendation. Brother Barry Grider is the FH preacher and is also on the faculty of MSOP. On February 10, brother Grider published an article in *The Forest Hill News* titled, "I Got Used to It" (see www.foresthillcofc.org/bulletinarticles.html). It is evident from his article that he has "got used to" some things that he at one time had not "got used to" and that he did not learn to "get used to" from either the New Testament or from his instructors at MSOP several years ago.

To be fair, he stated several things in principle with which no faithful brother disagrees in the least. However, in applying those principles, he also said some things with which faithful brethren **will** disagree. Among other things, he sees no difference between praising God **for** the Holy Spirit (as in "Hallelujah, Thine the Glory") and in **directly addressing** the Spirit and praying **to** Him for His direct influence upon us (as in "Sweet, Sweet Spirit").

He mentioned that "some try to legislate" regarding our songs in worship. I am glad to know that he has read my 2007 Bellview Lectures chapter, "Building up the Church Through Singing." It cannot be a mere coincidence that he specifically denies some of the principles I affirmed and even named some of the same songs I used as illustrations therein. As further indicated below, his long-held and deep-seated animosity toward me triggers his pop-off valve ever so often. It thus appears that his sweet, loving, jovial demeanor is a mere façade, covering a hateful, vindictive heart that will cause him to be lost if he does not repent. The Lord is not pleased

with "hateful birds" (Rev. 18:2).

Further, he creates a straw man of those "resistant to any kind of change" and condescendingly judges them to be of "weak faith." It is not that some of us are "resistant to any kind of change," but that some of us are still resistant to **certain kinds** of change, such as singing a Pentecostal song directed to the Holy Spirit demonstrates. Are we to infer that Grider is no longer "resistant to any kind of change"? Is this what he and his cohorts mean by their use of the word *balance* since 2005?

Even more telling than his own article is the article he printed, with obvious endorsement, immediately following his own essay. He prefaced this article, "Binding Where God Has Not," by brother Tyler Young, with the following editor's note: "The following article is an excerpt of material prepared by brother Young for the 2008 Lubbock Lectureship." It is noteworthy, however, that he failed to tell readers that brother Tommy Hicks, Lubbock Lectures Director, had *edited this material from Young's MS because of sore disagreement with it*. In spite of knowing of this disagreement, Young impudently delivered the excised passages orally at the lectureship anyway, much to the chagrin of Hicks and his elders. His doing so provoked a public rebuke by Hicks and an immediate stream of questions from various ones who heard the speech. Hicks's elders were so concerned about this lecture that they had it removed in its entirety from the recordings so that no one who heard them could infer that the Southside church endorsed Young's comments.

As in Grider's article, there is much in Young's essay with which all faithful brethren will agree. However, in his comments (endorsed by Grider, but rejected by Hicks, re-

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

NO MORE OPEN FORUMS

In Memphis, TN, Sept. 10, 1973, what bro. Garland Elkins called “one of the most important gatherings of brethren which has been conducted in this generation” convened. He reported that it lasted “between ten and thirteen hours” with some “200 preachers present” (Intro., MMHOT, p. i) The meeting pertained to the Herald of Truth (HOT) that at the time was over twenty years old and had been overseen by the Highland Church of Christ, Abilene, TX, almost from its beginning. The meeting was taped, transcribed and printed under the title of *Memphis Meeting with the representatives of the Herald of Truth, September 10, 1973 (MMHOT)* by the Getwell congregation. All quotations herein are from that booklet.

Some of the foremost influential men in the church of that day were present for the meeting. Some those associated with HOT who spoke were Batsell Barret Baxter, Jr., Art Haddox, Landon Saunders, Lynn Anderson, Edgar Orman, and Harold Hazelip. Some of the other speakers were Garland Elkins, James Willeford, E. R. Harper, Thomas B. Warren, Frank Cawyer, Frank Young, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Alan Highers, and Rubel Shelly (before his apostasy).

Due to the inroads into HOT by liberals of that day along with its “non-distinctive” preaching, much concern for the soundness of the program had been growing and voiced for several years prior to the meeting. More information concerning the background of the meeting is found in MMHOT. Suffice it to say that the representatives of the HOT knew beforehand that this meeting was going to be an “Open Forum” and would be to some extent adversarial. *To their credit on that occasion they attended and participated in the meeting*

In setting the tenor of the meeting bro. Elkins referenced 1 Cor. 14:40 as the guideline for the conduct of the meeting. He also cited 1 Peter 3:8 as to the attitude that should characterize all present. He then remarked: “But at the same time I am sure we need to be forthright.” Elkins referenced Paul’s comment in 2 Cor. 3:12 to emphasize that doing things according to the previous scriptures did not rule out engaging in “**great plainness of speech**” (p. 1). The proceedings were then opened with the HOT representatives speaking first, beginning with Highland elder Art Haddox, followed by Landon Saunders, Lynn Anderson, and Batsell Baxter. After the previously listed men, Elkins, James Willeford (former Highland elder), Thomas B. Warren, Frank Cawyer (former Highland elder) and E. R. Harper (long time gospel preacher, debater, writer, former HOT speaker, fund raiser and Highland member) spoke (p. 1, first session, p. 1, second session).

Following Harper’s speech, a number of questions pertaining to his firing from the HOT and the HOT brethren’s treatment of him were asked. In one way or another the questions related to the use of false teachers, the teaching of false doctrine in Highland and the beliefs of different persons involved with HOT.

Repeatedly, it was emphasized to the HOT representatives that no one wanted to destroy the program, but the goal was get the HOT back on a Scriptural foundation, producing only Scriptural distinctive preaching, done by faithful brethren. Many of

those in attendance and several of the speakers had fought for HOT and sacrificed much in doing so when they met the “anti” brethren who opposed the sponsoring church/cooperative efforts in the 1950s, dividing the church over it and other matters. Thus, it could not be said that they simply were opposed to the HOT on the same basis as the “anti” brethren opposed it.

Alan Highers wrote the summation of the MMHOT that closed out the booklet under the heading, “A FINAL WORD.” Of the book he penned,

This is not what someone else has said about the meeting; it is the actual transcript of the meeting itself. It is your prerogative to read these proceedings for yourself and to make up your own mind whether the conditions described have been truly and properly corrected (p. 1).

Concerning the firing of E. R. Harper by the HOT, Highers wrote:

Let us keep our facts straight. The Herald of Truth controversy is not over the firing of E. R. Harper after 28 years of service with the Highland church; it is not over differences of opinion between Highland elders and W. F. Cawyer, former elder and long-time representative of the Herald of Truth; it is not even over the amount of salaries paid to the Herald of Truth staff or the financial interest of various Highland members in the program, as important as these concerns may be. It would be a *tragic and fatal mistake* to suppose that this controversy has arisen over simple mistakes in judgment and erroneous decisions in the realm of expediency. If the reading of this transcript proves anything at all, it proves this one thing: THE PROBLEMS AT HIGHLAND IN ABILENE ARE NOT MERE JUDGMENTAL MISDIRECTIONS, BUT DOCTRINAL DEFECTIONS OF THE MOST SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES (p. 1).

DAVE MILLER, FELLOWSHIP, AND SO ON

Seeing that the MMHOT did tremendous good in clarifying the true attitude and position of the HOT on the matters discussed therein, why are some of the same brethren who fervently participated in that meeting so dogmatically and unreasonably averse to the same kind of meeting pertaining to Dave Miller and his false doctrines on marriage and the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders, the fellowship extended to him by Elkins, Highers, Curtis Cates, Bobby Liddell MSOP, Getwell, Forest Hill, et al.? Some of those brethren say they are opposed to what Miller taught, but seek to justify their continued use of and fellowship with him. How would that attitude have fared in the MMHOT? *What would Elkins and Highers, et al., have said about such a view if someone had advocated opposing HOT's errors, but continuing to fellowship them, promoting the program and financial supporting it?* Furthermore, CFTF has offered a free CD containing material that is as factual as anything in the MMHOT with the only exception being the CD has far more incriminating evidence regarding Dave Miller's teaching than is contained in the MMHOT. *One would think that Alan Highers, a Christian, a preacher, a debater, a writer, an attorney and a Tennessee Appellate Judge would be objective enough to see the facts in the Miller, et al., case.*

It is interesting to note that in the 2009 MSOP Lectureship there was no Open Forum. Does MSOP have no one capable of conducting such a forum? How about using Alan Highers? Are the powers that be at Forest Hill and the MSOP fearful of answering questions—at least certain questions? It is true that to speak plainly is to be found out?

As to whether it is right or wrong is not our concern at this

point in what I am about to write, but it is interesting that Barry Grider, the present Forest Hill preacher, wrote in the Forest Hill bulletin in February 2009 that there is nothing wrong with worshipping the Holy Spirit. But, it has been taught for some time in the MSOP, of which Grider is one of the teachers, that the New Testament does not authorize Christians to worship the Holy Spirit. Well, which is it?

In the most recent MSOP publication of *Yokefellow*, former director Curtis Cates sings Grider's praises as director Liddell writes a good article about “antism,” but nothing about the latter subject—same old “sweep-it-under-the-rug” policy.

In *The Forest Hill News*, Volume 33, Number 26, Page 2, 2005, Grider wrote an article entitled “A Time to be Silent.” Obviously when he wrote and published his Feb. 2009 article, “I Got Used to It,” he had determined it was time to break his vow of silence (*See the McClish article in this issue of CFTF*).

In the Forest Hill bulletin Grider uses material from Tyler Young. It was kept out of the Lubbock, TX, Southside church lectures by its director, Tommy Hicks. Hicks says Dave Miller is wrong concerning the R&R of elders, but he continues to extend fellowship to him and those who support him. Now Hicks can continue to fellowship Grider, though Grider printed Young's material that Hicks publicly and orally condemned from the pulpit and kept out of the Southside lectureship book, though Young went ahead and preached it anyway. Thus, Hicks' elders stopped the distribution of Young's tape. Having stepped down as editor of *The New Gospel Journal*, Grider tells us he will remain available to offer his counsel to those who continue with TNGJ—one of those remaining is TNGJ board member Tommy Hicks. Clearly, Grider does not think he needs to be silent when it comes advising Hicks and the rest of the TNGJ conclave.

It is true that the kinds of errors and the amount of them differ from those involved in the MMHOT of Sept. 10, 1973. *Nevertheless, those HOT brethren were willing to meet at least one time and discuss matters and field questions.* But not so with the modern day Elkins and friends. Is it the case MSOP has decided that “silence is golden” when it comes answering question about their agenda?

What do they do best? *They malign, backbite, slander, and attack their opponents characters;* speaking volumes as to their inability to defend their beliefs and actions regarding Dave Miller, etc. Why are they afraid of being open and above board? Also, every time they backbite an opponent they advertise their own character-flawed fruit. Sadly, many rejoice in this unscriptural conduct and love to have it so, having men's personages in admiration. All of this while Truth falls from their hands to the ground, mangled and bleeding.

We hear it said from time to time regarding the Miller, et al., controversy—“*There is wrong on both sides.*” Then we watch many of those who subscribe to the “there is wrong on both sides view” jump with full force on to the side that offers them peace, safety and what they consider an advantage in self promotion. Do not such *thinkers* know that if there are two sides, both of them wrong, that *the faithful child of God can have nothing to do with either one of them?* So much for the “There is wrong on both sides” dodge. *No doubt there was “wrong on both sides” in the HOT matter too.* We have drifted a very long way from the Truth since Sept. 10, 1973.

—David P. Brown, Editor

(Continued from page One)

member), he questions whether we should have fellowship concerns about various practices that faithful brethren must question seriously. According to Young, such things as using the NIV for teaching and preaching, dismissing Sunday evening worship in favor of small group meetings or for the Super Bowl, serving coffee and doughnuts in Bible classes, or missing a meeting of the church to compete in a sporting event should not be considered signs of liberalism and should not affect fellowship. Space forbids further elaboration, but these comments indicate the “flavor” of the article. I applaud brother Hicks and the Southside elders for refusing to publish and endorse this material. I encourage readers to read the entire article.

The point just here is that Grider gave this article his imprimatur; *he is in full agreement with it*. However, he was not through. Immediately following the Young article, he printed an article that has been around for many years, titled “I Drew My Circle Again.” It mocks the concept of recognizing fellowship restrictions. While the Lord’s people should not be self-righteously judgmental, this little ditty implies that one should make no judgments at all. Of course, the only justifiable basis anyone has for drawing lines of fellowship, whether circular, triangular, square, rectangular or any other shape, is where the Lord has drawn them in His Word. I kindly suggest to brother Grider that he needs to draw that circle yet again. Over the past almost four years, it is obvious that he has considerably enlarged his circle of late. It seems to be much larger now than it was four or five years ago, and it seems to be getting larger all the time. It is certainly larger than the Lord’s “circle” (Rom. 16:17–18; Eph. 5:11; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 9–11).

The only ones I have seen publish this little “Circle” piece over the years are folks who are much more broadminded than the Lord, mostly rank liberals and denominationalists. A quick Internet search located the “Circle” treatise on the Websites of a Christadelphian, a Nazarene, two Baptists, and three other churches of Christ. Ironically, one of them is the liberal Germantown, Tennessee, congregation, which is “just around the corner” from FH/MSOP, with which they have no fellowship. I assume that Grider knew exactly what he was doing when he printed the “Circle” note.

WHAT WILL THE FOREST HILL ELDERS DO?

In light of the above, what will the FH elders do? Do they agree with and stand behind their preacher in these articles? If they do, they have seriously altered their views concerning some of the things their preacher either said in his article, endorsed in Young’s article, and/or implied in the “Circle” article. Is this what they mean by *balance*?

I had the privilege of delivering the 1998 MSOP graduation address. In my remarks, I addressed not only the students. I also specifically cautioned and reminded the FH elders to be vigilant for any drifting in their convictions and/or direction, noting that if brethren began seeing signs of compromise in them, it would destroy the school’s and the congregation’s great influence for good. They, as well as the faculty, ex-

pressed great appreciation for my remarks at the time. (The tape of that speech is probably still stuck away in some dark and forgotten corner of a cabinet in the FH media room, unless someone has remembered [since mid-2005] to destroy it.)

Will the FH elders issue a disclaimer statement relative to the Grider/Young article? If they do not, surely, many are going to have grave concerns about their (and MSOP’s) implied endorsement of it and about their sincerity and steadfastness in the faith. Their silence will only compound the sore disappointment of many concerning their fellowship compromises since the summer of 2005, and will make the cloud over the congregation and the school even darker and larger than it has already developed. I suspect the Grider material has already provoked quite a stir among alumni who earnestly want FH and MSOP to be faithful to the Truth (as we all do). Is the Grider/Young article what these “balanced” brethren mean by “balance”?

WHAT WILL MSOP DO?

Does brother Bobby Liddell, Director of MSOP, endorse these articles and all of their implications? Do Grider’s fellow faculty members at MSOP endorse the Grider/Young articles? Do they agree that all versions “are permissible for teaching and preaching” and those who oversee teachers or preachers have no Scriptural right (not to mention responsibility) to prescribe which versions shall be used? Does the school have any right to declare itself on the versions issue? A few years ago it was not bashful to do so. In the twenty-one consecutive years (1985–2005) that I spoke on the MSOP Lectures, instructions to the speakers stated explicitly that we were to use only the KJV or the ASV (1901) in both MS and presentation (a policy with which I fully concur and which I also followed for all of the twenty-one Annual Denton Lectures I directed [1982–2002]). I assume this same policy at one time obtained for the students at MSOP. Does this policy still prevail? If it does, is Grider aware of it? (Freed-Hardeman University had its versions controversy in 1977, and it has apparently all but fully relaxed its restrictions in this regard. Does the Grider/Young article signal the beginning of a version controversy at MSOP?)

At one time in recent years, all of the MSOP faculty considered as liberals those who teach and preach from such modern versions as the TEV, NEB, NIV, and others like them of more recent vintage (they even looked down their noses at those who used the RSV and NASB). They doubtless likewise labeled the congregations that had such versions in their pews and classrooms. Further, MSOP has long endorsed brother Robert Taylor’s excellent book, *Challenging Dangers of Modern Versions*, in which he exposes the perversions of several of the pseudo-versions of the Bible. Does MSOP still agree with Taylor’s conclusions on this subject (and do the FH elders still agree with them)? Do the FH elders have one versions policy for their pulpit, but a different one for the MSOP classrooms? Do the elders now allow Grider to preach from the version of his choice in the FH pulpit, but when he steps across the breezeway to teach his MSOP courses, they

require him to use only the KJV or the ASV? (If they have separate policies, lecturership week must drive them crazy as the FH pulpit is in constant use by MSOP speakers. Which policy will they follow?)

Are the students now taught that when they enter their preaching work they should turn a blind eye if the decision-makers in the congregation decide to dismiss Sunday evening worship for home meetings or the Super Bowl, as Young's article suggests? Will these young preachers allow members where they preach to forsake the assembly in favor of a sporting event without a word against it? Will Liddell issue a disclaimer statement relative to the Grider/Young article? If he fails to do so, must we not conclude that he is in agreement with its contents? Is this what these brethren mean by *balance*?

THE NEW GOSPEL JOURNAL — IMPLICATIONS

The Grider material raises some interesting questions relative to *THE NEW GOSPEL JOURNAL*, which underwent a rather drastic shakeup as of January 1. The combined November–December 2008 issue of *TNGJ* (which arrived in mailboxes in mid-March) announced the resignations of Grider and his fellow-editor (since August 2005), brother John Moore. In their place, the paper announced that brother Curtis Cates is the new editor as of January, relinquishing his role as board president, held since 1999. John Moore was added to the board, joining Ratcliff (president, treasurer, and business manager), Hicks (secretary), and Paul Sain (added to the board several months ago). In his departing editorial, brother Grider made sure readers understood his indispensability to *TNGJ* by stating that he would continue to serve as an “adviser” to the board and the new editor.

Tommy Hicks, who refused to publish Young's material because he considered it Scripturally unjustifiable, could not have appreciated Grider's endorsement and publication of Young's material. Hicks would not be the first board member to have cause for such trepidation about Grider's convictions, however. Ratcliff, Hicks's fellow board member, objected to similar material from Grider in 2003. During my tenure as editor of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL* (1/2000–7/2005), I published an article by brother Grider (9/2003) in which he made statements similar to, but not as far-reaching as, the ones in his recent F-H bulletin article. Some of his comments made me wonder at the time, but with no previous negative “vibes” otherwise from him, I decided to give him the benefit of the doubt. Ratcliff, however, did more than merely wonder about his statements. He was much displeased with Grider's article when he got the paper, so much so that *he insisted on a disclaimer in the next issue.*

I discussed the matter with brother Cates, TGJ board president and then director of MSOP, and he talked to Grider about it, suggesting he write a statement of clarification. He refused, saying he stood by what he had written as he wrote it (which then got my attention more fully). Accordingly, Cates and I worded the following disclaimer for the next issue:

Our September issue carried an excellent article, titled “Jesus’

Prayer for Unity,” by Barry Grider, whom I hold in the highest esteem as a devout and faithful brother. In his article he issued a caution about allowing undue suspicion to become a barrier to Biblical unity—a caution well taken. A few of our readers have thought that some might get the impression he was somehow encouraging the adoption of the three practices he used as illustrations (i.e., projecting hymns on a screen, moving the time of midweek service because of a holiday, or allowing a mechanical instrument to be used in the building to accompany secular songs in weddings). These few have further been concerned that *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL* might have left that impression as well by printing the article. Neither impression was intended. The point was simply made that these practices in another congregation should not, **in and of themselves**, be causes of disunity, even though we would not personally encourage their adoption. While granting that many brethren are not nearly as suspicious as they should be about various grievous errors and their purveyors, it is possible to fall into the radicalism of being overly suspicious. This was the point of the illustrations, with which *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL* agrees completely.

When Tommy Hicks proof read the October 2003 issue with the disclaimer, he sent a pre-publication copy of it to Ken Ratcliff, since he was the one who had suggested the need for a disclaimer. The statement was not strong enough to suit Ratcliff, so he submitted the following in its place:

Our September issue carried an excellent article, titled “Jesus’ Prayer for Unity,” by Barry Grider. In his article he issued a caution about allowing undue suspicion to become a barrier to Biblical unity—a caution well taken. It has been asked whether the article approves of the three practices he used as illustrations (i.e., projecting hymns on a screen, moving the time of midweek service because of a holiday, or allowing a mechanical instrument to be used in the building to accompany secular songs in a wedding). To many, a wedding ceremony is a religious service when conducted in the church building by a preacher. Even if instruments are only used with secular songs, it can easily be assumed that the church therefore approves of instruments in a worship service. Also, the changing of the time of a mid-week service because of holidays, sports activities, etc. may be an indication of our real priorities. However, the basic point of the article is that we must exercise caution against undue suspicion. While granting that many brethren are not nearly as suspicious as they should be about various grievous errors and their purveyors, it is possible to fall into the radicalism of being overly suspicious. This was the point of the article, with which *The Gospel Journal* agrees completely.

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Note that he particularly **removed the commendation of brother Grider** that brother Cates and I had included, as well as making the disclaimer much more specific. Ken's wording was OK by me, and we ran it in the October issue. (Thinking that I was behind the disclaimer and its wording, I strongly suspect that I have been in the Grider "doghouse" ever since, which animosity he has openly indicated on various occasions since July 2005. Now that he knows who was responsible for the disclaimer, will Ratcliff now be in his "doghouse"?) Obviously, Ratcliff had a considerable problem with Grider's statements at the time, so much so that he could not bring himself to commend him in the disclaimer. Hicks's objections to Young's material that he excised, endorsed by Grider, are basically the same as Ratcliff's were to Grider's 2003 article relating to the convictions expressed. Furthermore, from the foregoing material, it is obvious that Hicks was fully aware of, and apparently agreed with, Ratcliff's concerns as expressed in the disclaimer. In spite of these facts, both seemingly were content to turn *THE NEW GOSPEL JOURNAL* over to him in August 2005, demonstrating thereby either blatant hypocrisy or a drastic change in conviction. Politics indeed makes strange bedfellows, whether in government or in the church.

According to the Grider announcement in the November–December issue of *TNGJ*, he will remain in an "advisory capacity" to the board and the new editor, thus still closely associated with the paper and its principals. Will this latest Grider article stir Ratcliff's 2003 concerns anew, or has he swallowed those so long ago he can no longer taste them? Will Hicks be able to keep a lid on his pride at Grider's implied rebuff in printing, with endorsement, that which he (Hicks) refused to publish? If Hicks could not stand Young's material, how can he possibly stomach Grider's? Will Hicks and Ratcliff now get together and call upon new editor Cates to publish a disclaimer regarding new "advisor" Grider's article, as Ratcliff did in 2003 when Grider was only a lowly writer? Do Ratcliff and Hicks have any convictions left on these issues that they once counted grave? *Verily, the mess and maze of political loyalties and compromises that has surfaced among these brethren since July 2005 rivals the long-standing mess of advise, consent, and compromise in Washington D.C.*

If they call for a disclaimer, will the other half of *TGJ*'s board agree? Brother Moore might not take too kindly to embarrassing his former co-editor. Brother Sain has not always had the highest opinion of Hicks, calling him a "liar" in one heated phone conversation over a grievously late MS a few years ago. If the board splits on the disclaimer, will editor Cates, still closely associated with FH and MSOP, and thus with Grider, be able to palliate the understandable indignation Ratcliff and Hicks must be feeling toward Grider, and thus avoid the disclaimer? If the board fails to issue a disclaimer, must not readers of *TNGJ* rightly conclude that *the board and its new editor agree with the things both Grider and Young wrote*? Perhaps it's time for brother Cates once again to remind the board that "if they all don't hang together they will all hang separately," as he did in another crisis a few years ago. Is this what *THE NEW GOSPEL JOURNAL* folks mean by *balance*?

CONCLUSION

Brother Grider's publication of the "Circle" is but the latest symptom of religious evolution in him and his cohorts that, unlike the Darwinian sort, is *not* taking eons to continue its development. It began to manifest itself in earnest about four years ago when they decided to put monetary, friendship, family, and brotherhood political interests ahead of the Gospel Truth and its fellowship demands (Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9–11). However, the seeds of such behavior must have long been lying latent, just awaiting the right circumstance to call them to the surface. Men do not make such radical reversals of conviction and behavior instantaneously. If the FH elders, the MSOP director, and *The Gospel Journal* board observe the passover regarding the Grider/Young article, they will all have proved their utter hypocrisy by continuing to profess concern for sound doctrine and Scriptural fellowship. We will have further vivid proof of what they mean by *balance*.

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THE TRIVIALIZATION OF TRUTH (*THE CIRCLE*)

Gary W. Summers

The following piece of writing has occasionally been used by some over the years; on February 10, 2009, it (surprisingly) appeared in *The Forest Hill News*, edited by Barry Grider.

I DREW MY CIRCLE AGAIN

When I first became a member of the church, my circle was very big...for it included all who, like myself, had believed and been baptized. I was happy in the thought that my brethren were many...but—having a keen and observant mind—I soon learned that many of my brethren were erring. I could not tolerate any people within my circle but those who, like myself, were right on all points of doctrine and practice. Too, some made mistakes and sinned. What could I do? I had to do something! I drew my circle, placed myself and a few as righteous as I within, and the others without. I soon observed that some within my circle were self-righteous, unforgiving, jealous, and proud, so in righteous indignation, my circle I drew again, leaving the Publicans and sinners outside, excluding the Pharisees in all their pride, with myself and the righteous and humble within. I heard ugly rumors about some brethren. I saw then that some of them were worldly minded; their thoughts were constantly on things of a worldly nature, they drank coffee, when, like me, they should drink tea. So duty bound, to save my reputation, I drew my circle again, leaving those reputable, spiritually-minded within. I soon realized in time that only my family and I remained in the circle. I had a good family, but to my surprise, my family finally disagreed with me. I was always right. A man must be steadfast. I have never been a factious man! So in strong determination I drew my circle again, leaving me quite alone.

Some observations are in order concerning this variation of an old theme. The first is that the fanciful outlook described in these lines could just as easily go in the opposite direction. Below is an alternate version.

I DREW MY CIRCLE AGAIN

When I first became a member of the church, my circle was quite small, for it excluded all who, unlike myself, had not been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. I was happy in the thought that I had obeyed the gospel—but sad to see so many religious folks in error. I could not tolerate those outside my circle in denominations who were wrong on points of doctrine and practice. But then I noticed that some in my fellowship were wrong on certain issues, also. What could I do? I drew my circle again and placed inside all who were as righteous as we were, whose fruits were as good as ours. I soon observed that some in the church were legalistic and dogmatic; so in rebellion against such attitudes I drew my circle again to include all immersed individuals, regardless of the reason, since they at least were involved in the right action. When some brethren complained about my “liberal” attitude, I began to wonder if I were too exclusive yet. Why, there are so many who have only been sprinkled as children, and they seemed as sincere as anyone. And why should some be excluded just because they wear immodest apparel, drink socially, and take trips to Las Vegas? I drew my circle to include them. Now I felt comfortable that I had included a great number, but Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists were still outside my circle, and some of these were my friends! I have never been a “grace only” type of guy, but how could I exclude all of these? I proudly abolished my circle,

and now I love everyone.

Although both of these versions make the point not to be too exclusive or too inclusive, they are both too exaggerated and too simplistic to be of any real value. The original deserves an evaluation. **First**, it either unwittingly or intentionally mocks the Scriptures. Jesus did say that only few would seek and find the narrow gate that leads to salvation (Matt. 7:13-14). Furthermore, only two who left Egypt entered into the Promised Land (although Moses was certainly saved). Most of those who died in the wilderness lacked faith. And how many were saved on the ark when God destroyed the world with a Flood? Only eight human beings survived. Did Noah draw his circle too small?

In Jesus’ parable of the sower, three types of people who actually received the seed became Christians. Of those, two types fell away (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). The number of those who are faithful to God in any generation is always few. Therefore, to ridicule brethren who exclude from fellowship those whom God excludes makes fun of both God who gave such commandments and those who follow them (1 Cor. 5:11; Eph. 5:8-12; Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10; 2 John 9-11).

Second, the Bible tells us what to do about brethren who are erring. Whether they are wrong in a doctrinal or a moral matter, we have the responsibility to speak to them (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20). Of course, some do not want to be spoken to. They refuse to return telephone calls, e-mails, or letters; they do not want anyone to visit them, either. Usually, this type of behavior is an admission of guilt. They do not want to discuss what they have already made their minds up to do anyway. Those who are in sin know it; they have made their decision and do not want to be confronted about it. They give members of the church no choice but to draw their circle smaller.

Third, the “self-righteous, unforgiving, jealous, and proud” are in as much danger as those morally or doctrinally astray, for those attitudes will lead to the commission of a great many sins. Jealousy (envy), for example, led to the crucifixion of Christ (Matt. 27:18). Pride and self-righteousness were also problems of the Pharisees, and they led to a rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. They could not even entertain the idea that God might be concerned about the Gentiles (Acts 22). Of course, to be unforgiving is to exclude oneself from being forgiven by God (Matt. 6:14-15). However, those who possess such attitudes cannot be excluded from fellowship unless one has first discussed with them the danger they are in.

Fourth, the use of the phrase, *righteous indignation*, is intended to be a humorous counterpoint to *self-righteous*, as *humble* corresponds to *proud*. This contrast does not consider that the humble do truly attempt to walk in obedience to God (James 4:6, 10) and that a genuine righteous indignation exists. God has acted out of indignation on numerous occasions (Deut. 29:28; Ps. 78:49; Isa. 34:1-2; Heb. 10:27; et al.). It should be

so that, when human beings take offense, we must be certain that it is against actual sin and injustice.

Fifth, truth is trivialized in the statement that some “drank coffee, when, like me, they should drink tea.” Although this probably was an attempt at humor to indicate that brethren divide over non-essential things at times, it does not succeed because it implies that all divisions among Christians are matters of option. Perhaps the writer could define more precisely what he thinks are issues of no consequence. Below is a list of doctrines. Which ones are unimportant?

1. People can be saved without being immersed for the forgiveness of their sins.
2. Jesus built the denominations and died for them.
3. Instrumental music in worship to God is pleasing to God.
4. A Christian (one who has truly been saved) cannot fall from grace.
5. All prophecies in the New Testament (including ones in the book of Revelation) were fulfilled by A.D. 70.
6. All of life is worship.
7. The Holy Spirit operates on the Christian directly—in addition to Divine Providence or through His Word.
8. Abortion and homosexuality are not sins.

Which of these requires “circles”? Can a Christian fellowship those who are sprinkled (#1)? Can he fellowship all who are in manmade denominations (#2)? Can he fellowship

those who use instruments of music in their worship (#3)? Can he fellowship those who believe that they can never fall from grace (#4)? Can he fellowship those who hold to the Max King error (#5), the Dobbs’ falsehood (#6), or to the Deaver doctrine (#7)? Are there any moral issues upon which he must take a stand (#8)? Do these things involve the difference between drinking coffee and tea?

Sixth, “I was always right.” Although the statement is made out of sarcasm, how many people, including the writer of this “circle” bit would affirm, “I am usually wrong”? Don’t most of us operate under the assumption that we are right? Do we desire to follow the Lord and NOT be right? Were those who “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42) right? Is being right attainable or not? If the author answers, “No,” is he certain that he is right?

Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb were alone in their insistence that they go up and conquer the land. Stephen stood alone against the Jews (Acts 7). All men fled and left Jesus alone. Should all of these have started drawing bigger circles? Doing what is right is not determined by the majority; it is determined by truth. The fact that Jeremiah was ignored while the false prophets were heeded did not prevent Jerusalem from being destroyed. To be sure, some men invent their own traditions (Matt. 15:8-9), but such cannot deter us from taking a stand for the truth when it ought to be defended.

—5410 Lake Howell Rd.
Winter Park, FL 32792-1097



THE CAMEL'S NOSE

Lynn Parker

Draw the circle bigger, boys!
It's just too small, you see.
We're caught up in yesterday's thinking,
And it's way too narrow for me.

Add another room, please
For my brothers here and there,
I'll even change my teaching,
And preach it round or square.

Be it faith or be it opinion,
I get the two confused.
And when brothers contend earnestly,
I'm more than a little amused.

If it's not too much trouble,
Can we cancel Sunday night?
The Super Bowl at six—
It should be “super” fight.

And I won't be at Bible class,
Next Wednesday, that's for certain,
My softball team needs me to pitch,
If I don't, we'll be hurtin'.

And whoever said that it was wrong,
Forsaking worship to go and play?
Why that's so 1950's friend,
That was great in Grandpa's day!

I'm still against every error,
And false doctrine I won't preach
But I won't withdraw from those that do,
Regardless of what they teach.

Re-evaluation and Reaffirmation
That just won't go with me.
I think it's wrong, but I'll go along
With my friends at MSOP.

We all just need to loosen up,
Let the tree grow as it's bent!
And all the while that breeze I felt,
Was the camel's nose — underneath my tent.

—1650 Gander Slough Rd.
Kingsbury, TX 78638

True or False

A man cannot compromise his own convictions and adopt things that he believes to be wrong without loss of moral power and without dishonoring his own true spiritual manhood. A man cannot compromise and set aside what he believes to be a command of God without dishonoring God before the world, without destroying his own reverence for God and usefulness for his service. To set aside a law of God for the sake of union with others is to prefer union with them to union with God – is to hold their teaching above the word of God. If we sacrifice God's word to please others, it is because we wish to please them rather than to please God. —David Lipscomb

(Queries and Answers, pp. 432-433, as quoted by Alan E. Highers in HOW DO YOU SPELL (F)(f)ellowship? A Reply to the Teachings of Rubel Shelly on Fellowship and Unity, p. 32).



Churches that change, add to, or take away from the commandments of God are not churches of Christ; it is sinful to so call them. There ought to be a clear and wide distinction between those who follow God's laws and those who depart from them —David Lipscomb (Ibid, Highers, p. 33).



Never Too Old

Sonya West

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of the year we are able to view the wonderful beauties of autumn. The red, orange, and yellow leaves are so beautiful during this particular time of year. In the springtime, we see the newness of life in the young green leaves, but the most beautiful time of a leaf's life is when it reaches the end of its time. That is how we should view our Christian life. We should not feel that when we get to a certain age that it is time to give up and not show our true beauty.

When we speak of one being old, we picture wrinkles, gray hair, and one that is stooping—someone that we say is on their “last leg.” Paul states in Titus 2:1-5,

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Here Paul uses the word “aged” to speak of the older women teaching the younger women. The word “aged”

means “advanced in years.” We think this means someone that is very old. However, if we are alive we are all “advancing in years” every day. We should be proud that we are advancing. The only other alternative is death. Relatively speaking we are all OLD. We are older than we were last week, last month or last year. We are all OLD to someone. And someone is looking to us for training and for an example. Whether it is our children, our grandchildren, our brothers or sisters, or whoever it may be, someone needs us to pass on our knowledge and experience.

In this lesson we will take the letters of the word OLD and draw some applications for each of us.

OFFER TO HELP

Galatians 6: 2 states, “**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**” If we see someone that needs our help—we need to help. We should not say that we have nothing to offer. Everyone has lived and has experienced something in their life. We may have been through the same trials as someone else and may have wonderful words of wisdom for that person. After experiencing three miscarriages, I feel that I can relate to those that are experiencing that type of crisis now. It helped me for those both young and old to express how they made it through this dif-

difficult time. A lady in her seventies put her arm around me after one of my miscarriages and said, “Honey, times will get better, but I still do think about the children I lost by miscarriage.” I could see in her eyes the sincere empathy she had for me. This is true concern for someone else.

When we give words of wisdom, we give helps that are those “tried and true” tips. Not everything we do will help some one, however, we all like to know that there is someone that understands what we are going through at that time. For the first five years of our daughter’s life I lived away from my own mother. It was so refreshing to have older ladies help me deal with the new aspects of motherhood. When our daughter was two months old, I had a teacher ask if I wanted her to sit in a carrier in the two and three year old class (there was not a nursery class at that time). Not only did this give me a break, it gave our daughter an opportunity to start learning how to go to class and how to interact with other children. And by the way, she also learned Bible songs and Bible stories. They can’t learn from a young age!

When our daughter was six months old we moved to a new place. Since we lived away from our parents, we had no babysitter. A seventy year old grandmother in the new congregation adopted our daughter and eventually our son as her own grandchildren. I don’t know who enjoyed it more, our children or the babysitter. To this day they still talk about all the things she did for them.

There is always something we can do to help someone else. We may have a wonderful recipe that we can pass on. We may have an ability to teach, or sew, etc. We must not keep it to ourselves, we must pass it on.

LEAVE WISDOM TO THE NEXT GENERATION

The Bible says in Hosea 4:6:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Israel was destroyed for a lack of knowledge. This should never be said of any congregation. We need to teach and to study ourselves. We don’t have to know all the answers. We as adults should know more than our children, but if we don’t know the answer, look it up. A concordance, bible dictionary and a good commentary should help us with any Bible questions. Do not let it be said of us what Peter said in 2 Peter 3:5 **“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:”** They were **“willingly ignorant.”** Why would anyone want to be ignorant especially when it comes to God’s Word—the same Word that will judge us in the end? We have lost the acclaim that we are “Bible Tote’n, Bible Quote’n” people. We are failing to teach the art of study. There are many congregations where teenagers and adults alike, do not know the books of the Bible. This is a fundamental aspect of the Christian life. Some think that once we reach a certain age

that gaining Bible knowledge ends. We can still learn no matter what the age. Remember: (1) If we don’t use it, we will lose it. (2) We need to continue to teach until we die. We do not have to be a Bible Class teacher to teach. We can teach our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews or any one that is willing to listen. It is our duty to pass it on. We need to show our love for God’s Word by teaching others.

Rachel Howard explains it this way:

One is as young as her faith and as old as her doubts; as young as her hope, as old as her despairs. Years wrinkle the skin; but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Whether sixty or sixteen, there should be in every human being’s heart that lure of wonder; the sweet amazement of the stars and of star like things and thoughts; the undaunted challenge of events; the unfailing, childlike appetite for “What’s next?” To the child of God, it is seeking truth and learning about God and the joy of living.

DEDICATION UNTIL DEATH

I have had so many people tell me that their time of service is over. They say, “I have done my duty, now it is time for the younger generation to take over.” There is no retirement in the service of the Lord!! Our duty never stops. Young and old should work together for the cause of Christ. However, we have a sad misconception that we should segregate the ages. E. Stanley Jones said: “It is a sign of maturity when you can be at home with all ages: a sign of immaturity when you can be at home with only one age group—your age.” We should want to stay involved in every aspect of the work as long as we are alive. We will do what we want to do. If we want to stay active in the Lord’s work, we will, if we don’t, then we will give up and let someone else do our work. Example is always the best teacher. If we are active, others will follow after us. Remember someone is always looking up to us no matter what our age. Proverbs 16:31 says “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.” It is an honor only if we remain serving God.

Oscar Lowry speaks of the power of woman in the following statement:

A good woman is the best thing this side of heaven: as bad woman is the worst thing this side of the pit. A woman touches the limit both ways; she rises higher and falls lower than man.

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The most degraded human being on earth today is a woman. Woman either blesses or curses everything she touches. Nothing can hurt woman like sin, and nothing can destroy sin like woman. Christ and woman can save the world; the devil and woman can damn it. The women of our country will settle the destiny of our nation both morally and religiously.

CONCLUSION

It is up to every one of us to use our God-given talents

for the service of our Lord. There is never a time when we are allowed to stop serving God. We should use every day to pass on what God has given us, so that His kingdom will grow. No matter what our age, remember someone NEEDS us to show them Christ. My question to you: “Will you wear out or will you rust?”

—22823 Red Leo Lane
Spring, TX 77389



Here's What Happened

“DERIVATIVE MARKETS”: AN UNDERSTANDABLE ANALOGY

Heidi is the proprietor of a bar in Detroit. In order to increase sales, she decides to allow her loyal customers – most of whom are unemployed alcoholics – to drink now but pay later. She keeps track of the drinks consumed on a ledger (thereby granting the customers loans).

Word gets around about Heidi's drink now pay later marketing strategy and as a result, increasing numbers of customers flood into Heidi's bar and soon she has the largest sale volume for any bar in Detroit.

By providing her customers freedom from immediate payment demands, Heidi gets no resistance when she substantially increases her prices for wine and beer, the most consumed beverages. Her sales volume increases massively.

A young and dynamic vice-president at the local bank recognizes these customer debts as valuable future assets and increases Heidi's borrowing limit. He sees no reason for undue concern since he has the debts of the alcoholics as collateral.

At the bank's corporate headquarters, expert traders transform these customer loans into DRINKBONDS, ALKIBONDS and PUKEBONDS. These securities are then traded on security markets worldwide. Naive investors don't really understand the securities being sold to them as AAA secured bonds are really the debts of unemployed alcoholics.

Nevertheless, their prices continuously climb, and the securities become the top-selling items for some of the nation's leading brokerage houses.

One day, although the bond prices are still climbing, a risk manager at the bank (subsequently fired due to his negativity), decides that the time has come to demand payment on the debts incurred by the drinkers at Heidi's bar.

Heidi demands payment from her alcoholic patrons, but being unemployed, they cannot pay back their drinking debts. Therefore, Heidi cannot fulfill her loan obligations and claims bankruptcy.

DRINKBOND and ALKIBOND drop in price by 90%. PUKEBOND performs better, stabilizing in price after dropping by 80%. The decreased bond asset value destroys the banks liquidity and prevents it from issuing new loans.

The suppliers of Heidi's bar, having granted her generous payment extensions and having invested in the securities are faced with writing off her debt and losing over 80% on her bonds. Her wine supplier claims bankruptcy, her beer sup-

plier is taken over by a competitor, who immediately closes the local plant and lays off 50 workers.

The bank and brokerage houses are saved by the Government following dramatic round-the-clock negotiations by leaders from both political parties. The funds required for this bailout are obtained by a tax levied on employed middle-class non-drinkers.

—Place First Published and Author Unknown

[Though different from most of our articles, in a unique way the previous one sets out man's abuse and misuse of material gain. It is about the result of covetousness which is idolatry running and ruining the lives of millions of people—including the governments of men (Eph. 5:3, 5; 1 Cor. 6:10; Col. 3:5; 2 Tim. 3:2). It points out a people's failure financially to do things “**decently and in order**” (1 Cor. 14:40); the consequence of living to “**enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season**” (Heb. 11:25; Matt. 6:24; 33, 34; 1 John 2: 15-17); the repudiation of the great principle of “**if one does not work neither should he eat**” (2 Thess. 3:10); the failure of God's “bread winner” to take care of his own (1 Tim. 5:8); the consequence of repudiating the divine directive to pay one's debts (Rom. 13:8); and of man's desire of something for nothing. In furnishing us “**unto every good work**” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), the Bible teaches us much about stewardship—*taking care of that which belongs to someone else* (1 Cor. 4:20).

The article pertains to a spiritually and morally bankrupt society—the works of the flesh permeating it through and through (1 John 2: 15-17; Gal. 5:19-21). It describes a people whose God is their belly (Phil. 3:19), rebellious children who cannot cease from sin, running “**greedily after the error of Balaam**” (Jude 11); having no sense of accountability to God for misusing and abusing a sound economic system (Ecc. 12:14). As it pertains to the previous article, please notice the terms in Romans 1:18-32 that not only show us the consequences of ruling God out of morality, but also the impact of immorality on secular business, economics, finances, government, etc. (James 4:1-4).

God never condemned the kings of Israel or Judah for their bad economic policies, but he did condemn them for their moral and spiritual corruption. They never learned *that if a nation can be kept on a biblically moral footing, it will be what it ought to be financially, economically, etc. Thereby, the heart-soil is best made ready for receiving the seed of the Kingdom, the Word of God* (Luke 8:11, 15). In attempting to correct financial and economic matters without correcting our morals, we are putting “the cart before the horse,” and it will never work (Matt. 6:33). —Editor]

“...a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God ...”
(Titus 1:7)

ELDERS: Who Are These Men?

Rulers – Forceful But Loving Leadership (4)

W. N. “Bill” Jackson

“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” — 1 Peter 5:3

We have said a number of things about elders and their work, and involved in that would be some interaction with the congregation. To be sure, the Lord intended that all these, working together, should be promotive of His will, and should make for harmony. Sadly it is so, that through the fault of men, congregations know disharmony and turmoil. Sometimes it is the fault of members, and sometimes the fault of elders, and very often the fault of both. In this article beyond the matters of oversight, feeding, watching and protecting, we will look at elders and the congregation, their relationship together, and under several headings.

THE ELDERSHIP IS MEANT TO EXPEDITE THE WORK

It is known by all that our God did not make any foolish moves, and in His planning for elders the purpose is the service of, and the furtherance of His cause. When we find congregations served by elders who are Scriptural, sound, faithful, dedicated and serving, the kingdom and the gospel will prosper. The congregation’s work progresses under the faithful direction of the elders. Here is success for God!

On the other hand, if the elders are not what they should be, they still have the *title* and the work is to proceed through them, but in their sluggardness the work is hindered rather than helped! How sad that what God intended to help would serve rather to hinder, with the effect being the pleasing of Satan rather than God!

ELDERS ARE GIVEN AUTHORITY AND RULE!

Let us not be fearful to state this, for it is New Testament truth. It is amazing, and yet that which would be expected of Satan, that we would be hearing today that “*elders have no rule,*” “*elders are not in authority*” and that elders “*can only rule by example,*” Those who would thus argue reveal that they have not studied their New Testaments. Two or three things in this regard:

(1) *The New Testament uses the word “rule” regarding the elders, and members’ relationship to them, in Hebrews 13:7,17, 24.* In the broadest meaning and usage, the one who thus rules “*leads, goes first, is a leader, is a guide, is chief, commands and has authority over.*” The fact that one is to be an example in no wise prohibits his having rule and authority if the one in a position to grant such rule and authority so authorizes, and GOD DID SO AUTHORIZE!

In a congregation of 300 members, if each and every matter was thrown out to the 300 members, there would

likely be a dozen different wills and opinions on each matter. The “*all having equal authority*” advocates would then encourage a dozen decisions, when only one will suffice. In any organization on earth, someone must make the decisions! In the New Testament church, matters of policy and expedience are determined by the elders who, being men of spirituality and Christian character, loving the Lord and the Kingdom, will use wisdom, discretion and the very best possible judgment in all things.

(2) *Loving leadership produces loving followship.* We cannot see that there should be any more problem in the Kingdom, regarding elders and their rule, than in the marriage relationship, where the leadership and headship role has been given to the man (Eph. 5:22-25, 28-29). If the marriage union is within the Lord’s blessings, the man exercises that leadership, but it is loving leadership: the wife submits to that leadership, willingly giving loving followship. She, if she is spiritual, is not envious of his role, nor desirous of seizing it for herself. It is the same within the Kingdom. Godly elders exercise loving leadership, and godly members provide loving followship. The elders act in their best interest, placing the concerns of the Kingdom first, and that’s exactly what every Godly member wants! The elders show the congregation their love and care, with the supreme measure of love given to God, the Christ, the Word and the church, and spiritual men are both comforted and delighted!

(3) *Elders do not lord it over.* Very clearly, it is not the Lord’s intention that elders see their position and work as that of being dictators and tyrants. They are charged that they not be “**lords over God’s heritage**” (1 Peter 5:3). Surely most members are not resentful over the day-to-day decisions that elders make (or allow to be made under some delegation they have made to a deacon or other member, etc.), but rather are relieved. All should be happy that it does not require a congregation meeting to decide on new erasers for each classroom. Members know that the elders see over the work, and will routinely make decisions that are best for the work.

But the charge that they are *lords* usually does not come as regards some minor and routine matter. In recent years, it has come from extremely liberal sources who are rebellious against authority—*all authority!* They have attacked the eldership because they in the eldership are in positions of authority, just as they have attacked the preachers because their proclamation is of an authoritative

Word (Titus 2: 15)! In seeking to accomplish their ends, they have invented the idea of *ruling by example only* with both points being equally ridiculous. We are charged with obeying elders (Heb. 13: 17), and yet we do not OBEY examples: we can follow examples, but we do not obey such. We obey INSTRUCTION, COUNSEL, TEACHING, and such stated will that would come from those who RULE.

But for all of it, elders are to be spiritual men, and the idea of a Diotrefes (III John 9-10) would be as repugnant to them as it would be to any member of the church. Elders must speak, and they must lead, and they must make decisions and lead the congregation in following through, and they do so with a manner, demeanor, spirit and attitude that encourages the members to follow suit. The idea is this: *Here is a great and spiritual work. It is an opportunity for us to serve God, and we should do it. Let us rise up and do it, and now, FOLLOW ME!* In all things, elders still realize that while they lead and direct, they also remain servants. Elders should be among the first to pitch in and work in every capacity wherein the church is called upon to act—*elders are to be WORKING LEADERS!*

THE AREA OF THE ELDERS' DECISION-MAKING

May we all remind ourselves that the elders are not in the business of creating matters of faith. The Word furnishes us completely (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), and thus matters of faith are already fixed and determined. The elders are indeed in a position to speak out, calling attention to the *thus saith the Lord*, administering the necessary reproof and rebuke as needed, but they do so under the leadership

role given them as the congregation's overseers!

This means that the elders' decision-making rests in the realm of judgment and expediency. They must wrestle with dozens of suggestions, recommendations, appeals, criticisms and options, fitting that which is helpful and proper into the work of the local congregation as it is able and capable of doing. In every matter presented, there may be a range of options as to participation. Someone must make the decision, and elders are those someones.

"THEY SPEAK TO US ONLY WHEN IN SOME TROUBLE"

Perhaps we have all heard that criticism, and perhaps sometimes made without justification, but no doubt made in truth in some instances. We are not suggesting that elders cannot act without passing all matters before the congregation. Most elders are wise enough not to make huge commitments as to selling and buying property, taking on hundreds of thousands of dollars in new work without some counsel with the congregation.

Wise elders also know that it expedites their work, and the goodwill of the congregation, if there will be periodic meetings with all the men to report on the work and hear their comments, inquiries and/or criticisms. Wise elders also meet with some regularity with deacons, and we will yet deal with that.

The major point is that, depending on conduct and attitude, there can be a suspicious and resentful spirit develop when a congregation feels left out of all consideration *except when the elders are in trouble (often financially) and then desire our help*. Information freely given, in various meetings, in the bulletins, and from the pulpit goes a long way in keeping that spirit down to a minimum!

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**"The judge is condemned when the criminal is absolved"**

—Publilius Syrus, 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C.

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# THE WORLD REFUSES TO LISTEN

Alton W. Fonville

I heard it again this very morning: “we should be thankful for the many different faiths in the world.” This is one of the many similar statements which have been made since I can remember. It goes along with the statement: “it does not matter what a person believes, just as long as he is sincere.” All this sounds real nice and makes a person “feel good” about himself, but is it the Truth which God has given us? Can we place our trust and confidence and salvation in it? Each of us has at least one copy of God’s Holy Word available to us, so let us see how that idea compares with what God wants for the world which He created for his glory and pleasure.

Do you have a love for the Truth of God? The Bible shows what HE said, and what HE wants. This is not just one man’s opinion or interpretation. Common words with which we are familiar will be used, as recorded in Scripture. How you respond to it will show your real self and will answer that question. Remember, Jesus said “if you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). For those who do not love the Truth of God, listen to what He said: “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Paul said almost the same thing in Romans: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:28).

It is vital that we love and receive the Truth in order to be saved. But, God will not force anyone to do different than what their heart is set on doing. We still have a free choice and what we do in life determines our judgment. For the most part, the world is going full speed against what God wants. Jesus told us that in the story of the many who would be on that broad, easy road and the few who would be on that narrow road which leads to life eternal (Matt. 7:13-15). He concluded that story, warning of false prophets which would come to deceive many. Well, they

came and are still coming and deceiving many today. So, we must have a love for the truth of God first and foremost, or we may be deceived also. Now, let us turn to the Scriptures and see about the “many faiths” which are in the world today.

The Holy Spirit directed Paul to write for our benefit: “glory was to be in the church by Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:21). Notice, “the church” is singular—not churches. He said specifically, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Now, read the next few words. He gave us seven things and said of each: “there is one” (Eph. 4:3-6). “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Did you see what inspiration said about how many “Faiths” there were? There are just as many Gods and Lords and bodies (churches) (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) as there are faiths. Now, a big part of the world agrees there is only one God and one Lord, but, they refuse to listen to there being only one faith in the same verses. Why? It all goes back to having the love for the Truth of God or not. Are we going to accept what God said, or will we give heed to what false prophets have said and continue saying? In order for us to be saved, we must submit to that one faith, obey it and be part of that one body. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). Why not determine now to learn and love the Word of God, accept and obey it? It will be our judge on that last day (John 12:48).

—337 Madison 4605  
St. Paul, AR 72760



*“It is the rare fortune of these days that one may think what one likes and say what one thinks.”*

—Cornelius Tacitus  
A.D. c. 56–c. 120  
Histories, bk. I, 1

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# THE RESTORATION\*

Paul Vaughn

In America the Restoration of New Testament Christianity had its beginning in the latter part of the 1700's and the early 1800's. It was at this time that men throughout the country began to reject the doctrines of men for the simplicity of the New Testament pattern. Some of the early restorers were Rice Haggard, James O'Kelly, Abner Jones, Elias Smith, Barton W. Stone, and Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

In August, 1794, a meeting was held to devise a plan of church government. This was an open meeting for all to attend. Among those in attendance were James O'Kelly and Rice Haggard. "They determined to lay aside every manuscript, and follow the Bible as their guide, and have no government besides the Scriptures as written by the apostles."<sup>1</sup> Rice Haggard stood up with the New Testament in his hand and said,

Brethren, this is a sufficient rule of faith and practice. By it we are told that the disciples were called Christians, and I move that henceforth and forever the followers of Christ be known as Christians simply.<sup>2</sup>

This was a major step in the move to restore New Testament Christianity.

It was June 28, 1804, when the *Last Will and Testament* of the *Springfield Presbytery* was written. It was signed by Barton W. Stone, Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard M'Nemar, John Thompson, and David Purviance. This is one of the great documents in the history of the Restoration. Below are a few excerpts from it.

We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling .... We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible .... We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell ....<sup>3</sup>

In 1809, Thomas Campbell wrote the *Declaration and Address*. It is another great document in the history of the Restoration of New Testament Christianity. The *Declaration and Address* is, "based upon the express declarations of the Bible and the latter, upon things about which the Bible is silent."<sup>4</sup> Thomas Campbell believed that Christian unity could only come about by adherence to the Bible.

The goal of the early preachers and teachers in the

Restoration was to go back to the Bible and practice original Christianity. The church whose pattern is in the New Testament was precisely what Jesus built. Those who follow that pattern would be only Christians and nothing more. This does not mean that the restorers were trying to restore the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Galatia or the church of the Laodiceans. But, they were trying to follow the design and pattern of Christianity that is rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus. To accomplish this, they went beyond the denominations that followed creed books and manuals of men, and were governed by the Bible alone. This approach is as ancient as the prophets who admonished Israel to return to her roots in following God's Word. Elijah, the Tishbite, cried out against the idolatrous men of his day, those who had left God's pattern and blamed their trouble on him as the following words of wicked Ahab reveal. "**And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?**" (1 Kings 18:17). The early restorers had the attitude of Micaiah as he stood in defiance of the King of Israel. "**And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak**" (1 Kings 22:14).

This is needed today! Let us simply speak what the "Lord saith" because nothing more or less is acceptable in the sight of God. "**And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him**" (Col. 3:17).

## End Notes

\* Bobby Liddell, Editor, *Changes In The Church of Christ*, 19<sup>th</sup> Bellview Lectures, Austin McGary&Company, Pensacola, FL, 1994, pp. 20-22.

1. Pressley Barrett, *The Centennial of Religious Journalism*, Christian Publishing, Dayton, 1908, p. 264.

2. Ibid, p. 264.

3. Hoke S. Dickinson, Editor, *The Cane Ridge Reader*, The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone, J. A. & V. P. James Publishers, 1847, p. 52.

4. Earl Irvin West, *The Search For the Ancient Order*, Vol. 1, Gospel Advocate, Nashville, 1974, p. 49.

—1415 Lincoln Road  
Lewisport, KY 42351



"The disadvantage of men not knowing the past is that they do not know the present."

—G. K. Chesterton

## Directory of Churches...

### -Alabama-

**Holly Pond**—Church of Christ, Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 796-6802, (205) 429-2026.

### -England-

**Cambridgeshire**—Ramsey Church of Christ, meeting at the Rainbow Centre, Ramsey, Huntingdon. Sun. 10, 11 a.m.; Wed. (Phone for venue and time); [www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org](http://www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org). Contact Keith Sisman, 001.44.1487.710552; fax:1487.813264 or [Keith.Sisman.net](http://Keith.Sisman.net). Research Website of 1,000 years of the British Church of Christ; [www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org](http://www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org) and [www.Myth-and-Mystery.org](http://www.Myth-and-Mystery.org).

### -Florida-

**Ocoee**—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516, [ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com](mailto:ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com), [www.ocoeecoc.org](http://www.ocoeecoc.org).

**Pensacola**—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

### -North Carolina-

**Rocky Mount**—Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

### -Oklahoma-

**Porum**— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: [lawson@starnetok.net](mailto:lawson@starnetok.net).

### - Tennessee-

**Murfreesboro**—Church of Christ, 837 Esther Lane, Murfreesboro, TN, Sun. Bible class 9:00 a.m., Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship meal 11:00 a.m., Devotional 12:00 p.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. For directions and other information please visit our website at [www.murfreesborochurchofchrist.org](http://www.murfreesborochurchofchrist.org). evangelist, Steve Yeatts.

### -Texas-

**Denton area**—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 12, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: [northpointcoc@hotmail.com](mailto:northpointcoc@hotmail.com). Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 6:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.323.9797; [tgjoriginal@verizon.net](mailto:tgjoriginal@verizon.net)

**Houston area**—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. [www.churchesofchrist.com](http://www.churchesofchrist.com).

**Hubbard**—105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines; [DJGoines@Valornet.com](mailto:DJGoines@Valornet.com).

**Huntsville**—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

**New Braunfels**—225 Saenger Halle Rd. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. [www.nbchurchofchrist.com](http://www.nbchurchofchrist.com).

**Richwood**—1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.

### -Wyoming-

**Cheyenne**—High Plains Church of Christ, 421 E. 8th St., Cheyenne, WY 82007, tel. (307) 638-7466, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tel. (307) 514-3394, evangelist: Roelf L. Ruffner