

# The Watchman

*O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me (Ezekiel 33:7).*

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## “Forging Our Moral Corruption” Thanks to Freed-Hardeman University’s Pornography

Jerry C. Brewer

Fatal false doctrines are not the only identity “forged” by “Christian” colleges. At least one has “forged” moral corruption, as did those colleges established in the 1800s. Like Texas Christian University (TCU) and Alexander Campbell’s Bethany College in Bethany West Virginia became a Disciples of Christ institution when the division came in 1906. From that point on, corruption set in until a century later alcoholic beverages are served at Bethany. In 2018, Bethany celebrated 50 years of its soccer program with three days of festivities, including a buffet dinner and booze at Old Main:

Bethany will celebrate 50 years of soccer tradition and success over a span of three days. Admission is \$60 per adult and provides a gift, two glasses of wine or two beers, and the buffet dinner. Tickets **must** be purchased in advance ([www.bethanywv.edu/event/50th-anniversary-celebration-soccer](http://www.bethanywv.edu/event/50th-anniversary-celebration-soccer)).

The Bethany College class of 1979 will celebrate its 40th reunion with a host of activities during Homecoming this weekend...From 8 to 11 p.m Friday, the class of 1979 gets the festivities rolling with the All Bethanians Concert and Dance Party featuring the Hewlett Anderson Band in Renner Too. The event is open to all alumni, students, faculty, and staff.

From 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Bloody Marys, Bubbles, and Bagels will reunite the class of 1979 in the Old Main Corridor.

On Saturday, all alumni are welcome to take part in a Trivia Contest from 1 to 5 p.m. at Bubba’s Bison Inn, a Wine and Beer Tasting event from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Pendleton Heights, and a Tailgate Party from 5 to 9 p.m. at the Hummel Field House with DJ Jeff Jaegger ([www.bethanywv.edu/class-of-1979-puts-its-stamp-on-bethanys-homecoming/](http://www.bethanywv.edu/class-of-1979-puts-its-stamp-on-bethanys-homecoming/))

Attendees at Bethany’s soccer celebration had their choice of two glasses of wine or two beers, and the class of 1979 celebrated their 40 year reunion on campus in 2019 with “Bloody Marys, Bubbles” and “Wine and Beer Tasting.”

Bethany may be in the liquor business, but at one mainstream university, operated by alleged members of the church of Christ, has taken its moral corruption to even lower depths. Consider the official sanction of pornography by a university that is supported by members, elders, and preachers of mainstream churches of Christ.

### Freed-Hardeman University

Freed-Hardeman University (FHU) in Henderson, Tenn. traces its roots to the Henderson Male Institute, chartered in 1869. Through ensuing decades, it existed in various reincarnations, such as West Tennessee Christian College and Georgie Robertson Christian College. When the latter closed its doors in 1907, N.B. Hardeman, a Georgie Robertson alumnus began a joint effort with A.G. Freed to establish a new school. They established the National Teacher’s Normal and Business College and began classes in the fall of 1908. In honor of the two men, it was renamed Freed-Hardeman College in 1919 and became Freed-Hardeman University in 1990.

From 1919 on, Freed-Hardeman’s administration, faculty and staff had a well deserved reputation for soundness in the faith. Its Bible department produced countless good men who preached the Gospel and opposed error. It remained as perhaps the last bastion of soundness among colleges and by the 1970s it was the **only college** many of us could recommend. That is no longer true—and for good reason. FHU has become so morally bankrupt that pornography

is now routinely used in its art classes.

When Kerry Sword returned to the U.S. from Ukraine after preaching there for 25 years, he met the same situation that Ira Y. Rice, Jr. found after his return from Southeast Asia in the 1960s—changes in churches who were leaving the old paths. Not only did brother Sword see strange doctrines in churches of Christ, but his family found moral corruption in Freed-Hardeman. His family settled in Henderson, Tenn. where his daughter, Christina, was a student at FHU. The immorality she found was in the form of pornographic images required in her art classes. She brought this to her father's attention and he established a website to expose FHU's immorality (<https://kteam1981.wixsite.com/fhu-uncovered>).

Christina made the initial student complaint to FHU in 2016. It is reprinted here, in full, from the website:

Between August 29th to the 31st of 2016 I first spoke to Mrs. Barbra England who is the head of the Art Department. I told her that I had heard from other students that in Drawing II students are required to draw seminude pictures and I asked if that was true. She said it was true and asked if I had a problem with that. I told her it was pornography and that I couldn't take that class. She said "It's not pornography, it is art." She also said that she understood where I am coming from and can respect that. Mrs. England then informed me that this wasn't the only class that involved seminude photos. She told me that in the Art History classes they study pictures from history of complete nudes. She said that I would have to talk to the teachers in charge of those classes to see if they'd substitute them for me. Mr. Brian Bundren is the teacher for Drawing II where you would be required to draw seminude photos and Mrs. Laquita Thompson is the teacher for Art History where there are several required classes that cover full nudes. Mrs. England told me that she would speak to them first and tell them that I wanted to speak with them. A few days later she gave me the okay to speak with the teachers and that they were aware of the fact that I would be speaking to them.

I spoke with Mr. Bundren and he said he can respect where I am coming from and that he would be willing to substitute the class for me if I got the okay from Mrs. Laquita in her Art History classes. I went to Mrs. Laquita and she asked me what the problem was. I told her that I couldn't take those classes because it was pornography and she said it was art. I said that we're supposed to be modest and that when Adam knew he was naked he tried to cover his nakedness, but even that wasn't enough, God gave him a standard or clothes that were considered acceptable before God. She said we're made in God's image and that they are just admiring the beauty in God's creation. She said I really couldn't make that argument about Adam because she could argue that we're made in God's image. She said we all interpret the Bible the way we want to and that I want to park my boat over there and that she wants to park her boat over here. She said babies are born naked, but they're not in sin and that there are naked people in Africa, but they don't know any better, but they're not in sin. She said it is a cultural thing. Mrs. Laquita said that pornography is in the eye of the viewer. When she looks at it she sees the art and the beauty in God's creation, but someone else may look at it and in may cause them to stumble. She said she's sorry if it has caused some of her students to stumble, but it's a part of our history and she can't just ignore or cover up history and what happened. She said there is a lot of pornography in history like the drawings and pictures of the sexual act, but she doesn't show those, she only admires the beauty in God's creation. She said it's a part of our history and culture and that if I couldn't handle it, and that if it caused me to stumble, then I should flee youthful lust and flee from sin or things that cause me to stumble, but that it wasn't fair to her other students and she didn't want to take away from them and all they could be learning by not going over those things for my sake. So if I couldn't handle it then I really didn't belong in the Art Department. She said I can call it pornography, but that I'm wrong. She said if I ever wanted to talk more about it then she'd be willing to.

I then went to the Bible Department and spoke with Brother Billy Smith about what happened. He said he wasn't aware of what was going on in the Art Department and that he's sorry that's happening. He said Mrs. Barbra England goes to Henderson Church of Christ and that he might pull her aside and talk to her about what they could do so that students don't have to go through that. He said there wasn't much he could do because the Bible Department and the Art Department are separate. He suggested dropping art and not being put in a position where I'd have to compromise.

Christina's father, Kerry Sword, arranged to meet with FHU art history teacher Laquita Thom-

son, Art Department Head Barbara England, and Dean LeAnn Davis of FHU's College of Arts and Sciences about the pornographic images. The meeting was held Oct. 12, 2016 and included the three women, Kerry Sword, his wife, Karla, and their daughters, Christina and Rachael. Thomson. Davis and England defended their use of the images in art classes. The meeting was recorded and later transcribed by Sword.

After presenting Bible objections to the images, Sword was told they were “art” and that no changes would be made in the curriculum:

Kerry Sword: You look at it and say “It’s art” and I look at it and say “Well no, it is pornography” and it comes down to what is your authority? What is your authority for calling this art? What is your authority? What is my authority for calling it pornography? And, I’m prepared to give my authority for why I consider it to be pornography.

Laquita Thomson: I don't want to hear it (Transcription).

Thomson, England, and Davis were members of the Henderson church of Christ. England's husband was one of Henderson's elders. As the meeting came to a close, the following exchange took place:

Kerry Sword: I will be talking to the elders at Henderson about it, because I have an obligation as a Christian to warn you sisters that what you are doing is not according to the standard. That’s my obligation. Ezekiel said we are watchmen on the walls and I am warning all of you, reconsider what you are doing because you are being a stumbling block and it’s not according to God’s standard.

Barbara England: I would suggest get in touch with the elders at Henderson.

LeAnn Davis: Absolutely. I think so.

Barbara England: They will be glad to talk with you (Ibid.).

As he promised, about five weeks later Sword and others in the leadership of the Raisy Okipnoy church in Kiev, Ukraine sent a letter to the Henderson elders:

To: The Elders of the Henderson church of Christ: Larry Bloomingburg, Shawn Bolton, Ron Butterfield, Richard England, Larry Gilliam, Mike McCutchen, Gary McKnight, Stephen Morris, Larry Oldham, Barry Smith.

We send you our love and greetings from the Raisy Okipnoy church of Christ in Kiev, Ukraine. The occasion for this letter is to express our deep concern over the promotion of nude art by three sisters, who attend your congregation, as well as to clarify and inform the leadership of details that you may or may not be aware of. These three sisters, Laquita Thomson, Barbara England, and LeAnn Davis, as we are sure you know, are faculty members at Freed-Hardeman University and oversee the selection of the curriculum to be used in both the art classes and art history courses. As recently reported to us by our brother Kerry Sword, who met with these sisters last month, these Christian sisters refused to discuss their actions in view of the scriptures. We are including brother Sword’s response to them, as well as an audio recording of the meeting. While we understand and respect congregational autonomy, the public actions of these sisters certainly have influence over many Christians and therefore touch the work and oversight of many congregations of the Lord’s people. We would therefore, with great love and concern, encourage you to look into this matter personally and to deal with the issue from a biblical standpoint without respect of persons. As we understand, Mrs. Barbara England is married to one of the respected elders of the Henderson congregation and we therefore understand the delicate nature of this matter. Nevertheless, we believe that you would agree that the Bible must be our standard in all matters pertaining to life; as it is written, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

The spiritual leaders of the Raisy Okipnoy congregation believe that to make the viewing and reproduction of nude art a mandatory practice, for those seeking an art degree at a “Christian University,” is to be in violation of numerous biblical principles. Strikingly, it also appears that the faculty over the Art Department will not listen to any objection on this topic by its students on the basis of their faith. Additionally, the staff would not allow any objections based on biblical truth or scripture references, citing that they would not listen to a “sermon” on the topic.

We are fully aware of the great reputation of the Henderson church and have great admiration for the many godly Christians who have attended in the past and who currently

attend. We are therefore puzzled as to why these sisters would risk tarnishing this good standing and the character of the spiritual leaders there. There are godly preachers among you who know the Lord and His word intently, as we trust you do as well. We would therefore encourage you to meet together with these good brethren in order to discuss this issue and correct the error before it leads to much damage to the body of Christ.

What you choose to do with this information will be between you and the Lord. Nevertheless, if the sisters in question continue to violate clear biblical principles, brethren everywhere will be informed of their actions. This is in keeping with New Testament teaching (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17-18; II John 9-11; Gal. 1:8-9). As already mentioned, the error currently being promoted is done in a public arena and therefore will be dealt with publicly.

Of course, we grant that you may not agree with the things that we are saying and would, therefore, kindly ask you for your biblical support for the practices engaged in by the sisters who attend your congregation. If you have such a position, we would also suggest a public forum for this discussion that it may be to the benefit of the brotherhood. We eagerly await your reply.

With sincere love and deep respect,

The spiritual leaders of the Raisy Okipnoy church of Christ,

[10 signatures] ( Letter to Henderson elders, Nov. 20, 2016)

The Henderson elders made **no response** to Raisy Okipnoy church. Efforts to communicate and correct blatant, high-handed, egregious sin in the Henderson church were flippantly dismissed by its elders. "Political Correctness" is the god by which their bellies are served.

Two days before his meeting with the women in the art department, Sword had sent the following email to FHU's Bible department:

Dearest brethren in the Lord,

My greetings and respect to you all in Christ. Some of you men I have met personally and others I do not know. The reason I am writing to you collectively is because I found your information on the FHU web site and, unless I am mistaken, I believe you all to be a part of the FHU Bible faculty. I am kindly writing to you and asking you for your assistance in a matter that has touched my home and that, I believe, will have eternal consequences for all those involved. I would therefore like to ask you men, whom I believe to be good representatives of the spiritually minded at Freed, if you can answer the question I will post below so that I might be clear as to where the Bible faculty stands on the issue that I will mention.

To clarify the matter, before asking the question, and for those of you who do not already know, this question deals with the Art Department and their practice of requiring students to draw semi-nude, and if I understand correctly, fully nude portraits. Inasmuch as our daughter Christina is majoring Bible and seeking a minor in Art, this does affect her studies at the university. So as not to misquote anyone, I asked Christina to write down the events and to specifically state what she was told. So here is the situation, from her own words, as I understand it:

**(Christina's Original Complaint Was Inserted Here)**

In view of these events, I have called Mrs. Laquita Thompson and asked for a personal meeting. She has just called me today (Oct. 10) and said that she'd be willing to meet on Wednesday Oct. 12. So, in advance of that meeting, my question for all of you is as follows:

What is the official position of the Bible Department at Freed concerning nude and semi-nude art and, as it relates to this question, is there a universal standard of ethics?

Please understand, I know that the University is not the church. However, I am assuming that these women are sisters in Christ and in the very least, in my view, they are putting a stumbling block before others. This past Lord's Day we worshipped with the good brethren at Austin's Chapel near Scott's Hill. At the end of the service a young student from Freed...came forward and repented for his addiction to pornography. I do not see how that requiring students to draw nude pictures will benefit them spiritually, or bring souls closer to Christ. To the opposite, I believe it will be a stumbling stone to those who are weak. Additionally, I see problems with Christina's teacher looking to worldly definitions to justify her practice, rather than looking to God's standard of truth. Furthermore, her suggestion that, "we all interpret the Bible the way we want to" amounts to nothing less

than subjective truth and situational ethics. Is there a universal standard of ethics, or should we go to the mission field and overlook the sins of others because “they don’t know any better”? Can you imagine the apostle Paul advocating such a position at Ephesus, Greece, Corinth, or Rome?

I am not asking for a response to all of these questions as that is not my purpose here. I would just, again, kindly ask you to respond to what it is that you teach in your Ethics class on the subject of *porne*, *graphein*, “harlot, writing.”

As I mentioned, my meeting with Mrs. Laquita Thompson will be this Wednesday and I would like to know the thoughts and teachings of the Bible faculty before that time, if at all possible. She has asked that Barbara England and LeAnn Davis also attend the meeting as well, I assume for moral support.

I thank you all in advance for your attention and help in the serious matter. May God bless us all, brethren, as we stand for Christ and His holy word.

Sincerely in the love of the Lord Jesus,

Kerry L. Sword

Response to his questions consisted of a telephone call and a short email message from two persons in the Bible Department. The call came from Department Head Billy Smith who said that “he did not agree with the practice in the Art Dept. and that he did not know it was going on” (Email message from Kerry Sword, Sept. 9, 2020).

The email response came from the Director of FHU's Graduate School of Theology Mark A. Blackwelder:

Brother Kerry,

I know you talked to bro. Billy this morning and I concur with what he told you. I have my own personal convictions about this point and would not feel good about participating in a class where that is required. However, I know Mr. Bundren, and though he may not see this exactly as I might, I know he would not want to encourage a student to violate her conscience (as I understand it, he has offer[ed] to provide an acceptable alternative).

We love Christy and are happy to help in any appropriate way.

In His service,

Mark (Email from Mark Blackwelder to Kerry Sword, Oct. 11, 2016, 12:39 PM)

A second letter from Sword to FHU's Bible Department on Dec. 25, 2016 received no response.

In all of his efforts to point out the sinful practice of using pornography in art classes, those to whom he spoke danced around the issue. Their response was for Christina to take an alternate class or change her major. That was the gist of Blackwelder's response. He further tip-toed around the issue of blatant sin, saying he, “would not feel good about participating in a class where that is required,” but refused to call the pornography sinful. FHU Bible Department Director Billy Smith said he “did not agree with the practice in the art department,” but also **refused** to call it **sin**.

For the next year, brother Sword's efforts to meet with various elderships, FHU administrators and faculty about the matter were met with silence or opposition. In the meantime, the Swords had returned from Ukraine and settled in Henderson.

On Dec. 1, 2017, Sword again sent a letter to the Henderson church's elders formally asking for a personal meeting and an opportunity to debate the issue of pornography and art, but they again refused to respond to him.

After returning from Ukraine, the Sword family made a difficult search for a sound church with which to work and worship, opting for one near FHU. It was not long until they regretted their choice:

Since our return to the US in 2017 after working on the mission field of Ukraine for 25 years, we visited numerous congregations here looking for where we might work and serve the kingdom. The preaching and teaching we heard from the pulpit was sickening and a very watered down message. Many “grandpa stories” and anecdotes made up a good portion of the “lessons”...We landed at the Plainview church of Christ, a small struggling congregation about seven minutes from FHU as we thought we could help there and make a difference. It wasn't long before I was asked to teach class. Not knowing where the congregation was at in knowledge, I decided to give a test to find out what they knew and did not

know, thereby knowing where to begin and how to tailor my future lessons. For being in the “Bible Belt” the results of the survey test were shocking to me. This was the Wednesday night Adult Bible class, (the cream of the crop), in a “Christian University” community and yet you can see for yourself why the church is in trouble.

62% could not name all of the acts of worship (that they are involved in every Lord’s Day).

45% believe that culture dictates the standard for modest dress and not the Bible.

62% believe that truth is subjective.

45% believe that a person can be saved outside of the Lord’s church.

38% believe that God still works through miracles today.

34% believe that Christians can worship on the Sabbath Day.

28% believe that people are bound by the 10 Commandment laws today.

50% believe it’s acceptable for the church to support a Missionary Society.

72% could not say where the Great Commission is found.

38% believe it’s acceptable to raise money for the Lord’s work by bake sales, raffles, or similar events.

45% cannot say what book and chapter records the establishment of the church.

28% cannot name the plan of salvation.

72% cannot name a Bible verse which prohibits instruments of music in worship.

72% believe it’s acceptable to use singing groups, solos, choirs, or praise teams in worship.

45% believe it’s acceptable to participate in joint spiritual activities with denominations.

45% believe if an unbeliever divorces a Christian spouse, the believer has the right to re-marry.

55% believe there’s no universal code of ethics, but culture dictates a nation’s moral practices.

66% believe that all things in a Christian’s life are considered as “worship.” (Email message from Kerry Sword, Sept. 4, 2020).

His association with Plainview was short-lived because of their fellowship with the Henderson church and their support of FHU. The Plainview elders were upset because of brother Sword's insistence that Biblical fellowship be followed and expressed that to him:

This discussion, called by the Elders of Plainview is primarily to cover the many emails you, brother Kerry, have sent out to the brethren. We are saddened that you have used Plainview as your platform to put these emails on the internet, especially to our members without our approval...When on at least one occasion you told Brother Kenton Lancaster, who does our bulletin, to not put something in our bulletin concerning some event that was taking place in the Henderson church of Christ, Kenton came to the elders about what to do. We told Kenton to put the announcement in the bulletin. We are not withholding support from FHU nor are we withdrawing from any congregation that we know of. We told Kenton that if Bro. Sword was not satisfied to see the elders...We would like to have you and your family to worship with us if you will change and not continue to pursue (sic) these contentions with FHU and others in the way that you have. We have students, teachers, and others from FHU that may want to place membership here (Letter from Plainview elders Pat Evans and Andy Maness, and Plainview preacher, Terry Johnson to Kerry Sword, Jan. 8, 2018).

Sword replied to Evans, Maness, Kenton Lancaster, and Plainview's preacher, Terry Johnson, in part:

I am writing this letter to honestly seek clarification concerning many things that were stated in the meeting of January 21, 2018 at the Plainview building with you elders and brother Terry Johnson. Inasmuch as brother Kenton Lancaster was brought-up in that meeting in the supposed charges leveled against us, I believe it to be proper to include him in this discussion in which he can either affirm or deny anything that is stated here concerning him or the statements that have been made.

Before I address the content of your letter (posted below) I’d like to say that your comments that were obviously intended to disassociate our family as active and faithful members of the Plainview congregation were, in my estimation, very cruel, unwarranted, and not in keeping with the spirit of love and compassion that we are commanded to have one



towards another; as it is written, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Pet. 3:8).

...When it was asked, “Are you even members here?” it was cruel inasmuch as we met with you all personally in my house on August 8, 2017, after breaking bread together, to discuss our plans, as well as the problems that we have encountered with the art department teachers and their sinful practices. At that time, I informed you of all that was transpiring and gave all of you a copy of the materials that explained the situation, as well as my biblical argumentation against it. I asked all of you to read the materials when I handed them to you and, inasmuch as Terry had already read through my biblical argumentation, I asked him, “Terry have you read through my argumentation? Do you see any problems with it?” to which Terry confirmed that he had read through it and said that he saw no problems with it. Further, in this meeting I told you that we would continue in our efforts to get a meeting with David Shannon in order to deal with the problems and asked if you would join us in that effort. Brother Pat stated at that time, “I just can’t go see David Shannon!” and I followed with, “Why not, you’re an elder in the Lord’s church?” and brother Pat responded with, “Well, there’s a chain of command.” Concerning membership, I made the following statement before you all, “If you brethren are going to stand for the truth, I will stand behind you and back you 100%; if not, then we will be moving on.” I also told you that the reason that we did not place membership at Finger, and stopped attending there, was because those elders were not going to stand against this error. You brethren all confirmed in our meeting that what was going on in the art department “was not right” and encouraged me to pursue a meeting with brother Shannon. This was certainly a clear indication that we were all of one accord on the matter and that we could worship with you brethren as members of the Plainview congregation. Now, you say that you have never considered us members? You’d have great difficulty proving that in a court of law.

...Paragraph 1 - Point #1 Here you make the claim that we have sent out “many e-mails” and have used the Plainview congregation as a “platform to put these e-mails on the internet.” We are perplexed as to what you are even referring to and would formally ask you now to back-up this statement, for we deny having used Plainview as a platform in sending out e-mails to anyone. What we have done over the past year is been in contact directly with the teachers, administrators, and Presidents over these issues (yes often through e-mail), but this was direct and had no association with Plainview. After receiving no response from the teachers, administrators, and Presidents, we were encouraged by the elders at South Seminole to put-up a web page documenting our efforts and to inform brethren everywhere of what has and still is transpiring. We have sent notification of this to brethren (including Plainview members in a letter dated January 16, 2018, which letter you already have a copy of). In view of the fact that your letter to us was written on January 8, 2018, you could not possibly be referring to that letter. Nevertheless, I believe it is within my Biblical right to not only stand against sin when it is present and warn others, but most certainly commanded to do so (Rom. 16:17-19; 2 Thess. 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:5; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 John 9-11, et al.).

II. Point #2 – (Listed as #1 on your letter) Here you refer to the Webster’s Dictionary as an authority in defining pornography. Yet, as I told you in our meeting, “Webster is not our authority—the Bible is our authority.” To this Andy states, “I know. I thought you might think that. That’s a good thought, but you’ve got to say this, if this definition has any merit.” Then when I stated, “I’m trying to get clarification on whether you view these things as pornographic or not, these pictures (referring to the textbook pictures I brought).” Andy then clearly said, “I do not. I do not think that they’re pornography.”

...IV. Point #4 – (Listed as letter “d” on your letter) While this point about Kenton was discussed in our meeting on January 21, 2018 (and I hope resolved), I want it to be clear for our good brother Kenton that there was no effort on my part, or the part of Rachael, to subvert the authority of the elders. I made mention in our meeting that if this is how it was perceived, I do and did apologize for such. However, I never claimed to be in such an authoritative position to command Kenton to do anything. When I first warned him about the problem of sin going on in the art and photography classes, after hearing him announce the “sing fellowship” that would take place with Henderson, he stated that he was against what was going on in the art classes (as you all have). Later, when Rachael saw that he was again promoting fellowship with Henderson in the bulletin, she told me after services that she wanted to talk to him about it because it bothered her. I felt it proper to go with her in a “private” meeting with our brother and started by showing him the pictures from the “art” text book, which I had on hand that day. I asked him if he approved of Page 8 of 10 these

things being shown. He, once again, said that he did not. I then asked him the question, “Why then would you encourage a fellowship meeting with those who support this error?” To be honest, I do not remember how Kenton responded, but Rachael or Kenton may. Nevertheless, I (we) had made our point and the meeting ended on a friendly note. What Kenton does with this information is up to him and God, however, I know that the Bible teaches that even if an elder teaches us to do that which is contrary to His will, we must follow God and not man (Acts 5:29; Gal. 1:8-10). So, the question stands, are the elders at Henderson in error for supporting the practice of their members involvement in the art and photography classes. I have already proven such to be the case by their refusal to follow God in these matters (Sword, “Inquiry and Response to the Plainview Eldership,” Feb. 3, 2018).

The Plainview elders' email reply to brother Sword's “Inquiry and Response” was terse and final:

(No Subject) Yahoo/Inbox  
Pat Evans pevans@fhu.edu  
To: KTeam Sword  
Feb 10, 2018 at 2:44 PM

Kerry,

We are not going to send written answers to any questions you submit.

Respectfully,  
Andy and Pat

Like all mainstream elders, whose god is their belly, the Plainview elders closed their eyes to sin and cut off all communication with one who spoke the truth. That left no recourse for brother Sword and his family but to withdraw from that mainstream church of Christ—what every faithful child of God must do if he is to save himself and his family:

My dearest brethren,

I send my love and greetings to you all from the Sword family.

The matters I will address in this letter are of no small concern for my family, the body of Christ, or the body of believers who gather at Plainview. Inasmuch as we are all commanded to “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philp. 2:12), our position and where we stand on these issues will certainly have eternal consequences for which we will all give an account. I therefore plead with you not to lightly dismiss the charges that have been made, but to honestly examine the facts and “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24), without “respect of persons” (Jas. 2:1), that you may “lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12).

In 1 Timothy 5:19-21 we see the instructions “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.” As I understand these verses, it is very serious to charge an elder (or elders) with sin, yet inasmuch as “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10) and “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8), we have been given these instructions in 1 Timothy 5 for dealing with elders who are indeed in sin.

Brethren, in view of the false doctrines being taught by certain members of the Henderson church of Christ and the sinful practices of certain of these members in the classes at Freed-Hardeman University, it is clear from the scriptures that these brethren have transgressed and gone beyond that which is written. The elders of the Henderson church have refused to correct their erring members and have refused to enter into discussion on the matter. Further, they have also refused to enter into public debate allowing the church the opportunity to judge in these matters.

How does this now relate to the Plainview elders and to the preacher Terry Johnson? While these men agree that the actions of the members at Henderson are sinful, they refuse to discuss these matters with them and to call them unto repentance. Further, they plan to continue to have open fellowship with them, even though they acknowledge that their teachings and activities are sinful. This is most disturbing, inconsistent, and contrary to sound doctrine, as it is written,

□ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).



¶ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18).

¶ “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 9-11).

¶ And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Th. 3:14-15).

Brethren, my family has observed sin and hypocrisy in the elders at Plainview; as well as with brother Terry Johnson. We have met with them and explained our concerns, which have fallen on deaf ears. In turn, they have stated in their January 8, 2018 letter, “Bro. Sword, may have sinned” and “we think you have crossed the line of no return.” In answer to the charges they have leveled at me and my family (through implication), I have addressed their statements only to be ignored; the elders and Terry refuse to answer open and honest Bible questions (see my letter dated February 4, 2018 and their response on February 10, 2018). Perhaps you can get them to answer the questions? In response to this, I have pointed out their sinful actions and have called for their repentance (see letter dated February 13, 2018)

Beloved, I certainly do not expect you to believe this report simply because I say it is so. As I have indicated, 1 Timothy 5:19-21 admonishes “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.” I can therefore call the witnesses against their actions who will give testimony of their failure to stand against the sin and false teaching currently going on at Henderson and among some at FHU. If you are interested in hearing the testimony of the “witnesses,” (in accord with 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and Acts 17:11), I would encourage you to contact me through the information provided below. If you have no desire to investigate these matters, your actions will indeed stand between you and God on the Day of Judgment, Who, at His appearing, will “bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts...” (1 Cor. 4:5).

This letter is primarily being sent to inform the congregation why it is that the Sword family can no longer, in all good conscience before God, submit ourselves under the oversight of an eldership (and preacher) who will not follow the Lord’s instructions to correct the false doctrines of those who practice lawlessness. They choose to reject Christ’s teachings concerning fellowship with sin, due to fear, and actively support those who promote sinful practices, for which they refuse to give Biblical authority. They display a greater loyalty to friends and an institution, rather than Jesus. Such actions are not worthy of those who profess to follow Christ (cf. Luke 6:46).

Please review the attached letters and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Logically, someone here is in error. It is either the Sword family (and a host of godly elders and preachers standing against the sins being promoted), or it is the Henderson elders (and certain of their members), along with the Plainview leadership who support these works of error. If it is my family in error (as well as the others mentioned) I would expect my loving brethren from Plainview to show us our error from the Bible in obedience to the Lord’s teachings in Galatians 6:1-2, and in the spirit of Ephesians 4:15.

No doubt, what you choose to do with this information is between you and God. Let me say, brethren, to fellowship with error is to be in sin yourselves (2 John 9-11). We may not see you again in the flesh, but as the beloved Apostle Paul has stated, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). A choice is set before us and we must all choose either to follow God or the politics and doctrines of men, but “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15). I would, therefore, encourage you all to follow the admonition given in 2 Cor. 13:5. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves....” Your eternal salvation depends on it.

Kerry Sword,

a servant of Christ (Sword, Letter to Plainview Members, Feb. 15, 2018)

Brother Sword did the right thing and publicly exposed the immorality taught and practiced at FHU. When he did so, other mainstream churches, preachers and elders slithered out of the

woodwork to defend the school.

One preacher who leaped to FHU's defense was Tony Brewer who preaches for the mainstream church of Christ in Bay, Ark. Brewer conducts a podcast called *Cogitations*, posted on Bay's website. In his podcast of May 8, 2019, he defended FHU's use of pornography:

I in no way promote men looking at pictures that are going to cause them to lust; nor do I promote women looking at pictures or reading books, that will cause them to lust. Ya ever heard of that book *50 Shades of Grey*? That's pornography. Women if you read that you're damned, until you repent. All right, men, you look at the *Playboy Magazine*, you look at the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit edition*, you do that, you're damned until you repent. That is if you're, of course, as we're going to look forward, if you're looking upon that woman **for the purpose of lusting**, or if you're reading that, that book **for the purpose of lusting** [emph. JCB] ([www.baychurchofchrist.org](http://www.baychurchofchrist.org)).

According to Brewer, it's fine to look at girlie magazines as long as it isn't your **purpose** to lust. He sounds like Dave Miller with his doctrine that a marriage is not a marriage unless the couple marries for the **purpose** of being married. Does he think Eve looked at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **for the purpose** of lusting?

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:6).

Did Eve decide, "I am going to look on that fruit for the purpose of lusting after it?" Of course not. Her lust was aroused when she **saw** it "was good for food," "pleasant **to the eyes**" and "**to be desired** to make one wise." What aroused her lust? Her **purpose** to lust **before** she looked, or her lust that was aroused **by** looking? Does Brewer **really** believe his own sophistry?

Others were not so wedded to the school that they ignored its high-handed and arrogant dismissal of the issue. In an article entitled, "Freed-Hardeman University (Uncovered)," Gary W. Summers wrote:

When Brother Kerry Sword first learned of this problem, he and his family were working in Kiev, Ukraine, where they had served the kingdom for 25 years. His oldest daughter, Savannah, had graduated from Freed-Hardeman in December 2014. His son Aaron was in his fourth year, and his daughter Christina was in her second year and minoring in Art. Fellow students showed her what she would be required to draw in Drawing 2 the following semester—nude figures. This was (rightly) not acceptable to her.

It so happened that Kerry's mother passed away that October when his daughter had learned of the course content for the next semester. Thus, he made the trip to the states for her funeral and managed to schedule a meeting with two art teachers and one department head—one of them the wife of an elder at the Henderson Church. Since they allowed Kerry to tape the meeting, one can read their actual defense of the use of nudity. Kerry presented Scriptural objections to the three women, but his protests fell on deaf ears.

Since Kerry has been supported by this congregation for most of the time he was abroad, and since they were returning in May for the graduations of his two twin daughters (a home school group scheduled their graduation in Orlando), we discussed the matter at that time. I encouraged him to pursue his efforts to effect change at FreedHardeman, and he has had many meetings—with Roy Sharpe, with the new president, and others—all to no avail. He tried unsuccessfully to meet with the elders of the Henderson Church.

Therefore, there seemed to be no other option than to take the issue to brethren so the school's policy toward acceptance of nudity in both Art and Photography might be changed. I suggested the Website, as opposed to sending out printed matter because the latter is costly, takes more time, and cannot be changed as easily. Also, it might have proved difficult to get addresses for all who needed to be informed. The history I have briefly described is available, along with the interview and other pertinent facts at <https://kteam1981.wixsite.com/fhu-uncovered>.

Viewers should not be intimidated by all the material there is to see. It was painstakingly and prayerfully gathered together by Brother Sword. Available is a pdf file with pictures from the student's textbook that are offensive. Only view these if you are not convinced you are being told the truth. Some who have seen them have become incensed—no, not at the school for making students purchase materials like these—but that they were shown to them. Apparently, they do not realize that students in these courses must view such obscenities. That a "Christian" university would require materials of this nature is unconscionable. What was the Art Department thinking? And why are people attacking Brother Sword for

exposing the situation?

Who was “the troubler of Israel”—Ahab or Elijah (1 Kin. 18:17)? The prophet claimed it was the king who had led the nation in forsaking the commandments of the Lord and in following the Baals (18:18). Who caused the problem in the first century—Herod, who unscripturally took his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias—or John the Baptizer who told him it was not lawful to have her? Of course, if you ask the guilty Herod....

In mysteries, the author often uses misdirection to draw the reader’s attention away from the murderer. When those associated with Freed-Hardeman begin attacking Brother Sword and his family (which they are doing), they are employing the tactic of misdirection. It does not matter who brought this ungodly material to light, what matters is the what—the content that has been part of FHU’s curriculum for several years.

Remember too that, when people charge Kerry (or anyone else) with “just trying to make a name for himself,” it is nothing more than an ad hominem attack. If that were his objective, he could have rushed into an all-out assault over a year ago. The fact that he took so long and talked to so many people disproves such an unfounded allegation. When you have examined all that you care to concerning this matter, please sign the petition that is on the Web.

### **1 Timothy 2:9-10**

Now we want to cover what the Scriptures teach on this subject.

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women possessing godliness, with good works.”

While brethren sometimes disagree over plunging necklines and skirts a few inches too high (both of which are wrong), does anyone have any real difficulty seeing that a woman wearing no clothes at all cannot be dressed modestly? If so, we would all like to see that definition, as well as the dictionary it came out of (Harvey Weinstein’s, perhaps?). Would it be acceptable for a Christian lady to pose naked for art students?

The reason this question must be asked is that the defense for nudity in the courses under discussion is: “But it’s art.” Really? So, will the Heavenly Father say, “Oh! Why didn’t I think of that? I should make an amendment to 1 Timothy 2:9-10”? Do brethren really want to make this argument, knowing they will face the pure and holy Jesus on the Day of Judgment? If so, it is time to quit thinking emotionally and try logic. The very idea that a Christian lady could disrobe in class while her peers draw her nude body is beyond comprehension! “Oh, but if we call it art, it’s okay.”

Does everyone agree that this would violate New Testament teaching? “Yes, but no such thing was done at FHU.” Correct. But what if the same young woman was photographed without her classmates being present—and then they were asked to draw her? Yes, she would still have violated God’s commandment concerning modesty, would she not? Additionally, is it not possible that some young men in the “art” course might lust after her, in which case they have committed sin (Mat. 5:28)? But she has sinned, also, and is a stumbling block (Luke 17:1-2).

“But the pictures in the textbook of naked men and women do not involve Christians.” Oh, so if the models were not Christians, it is okay to lust after them? Is that what makes it art—the models (live or in print) not being Christians? Seriously? It is still sinful to pose for nude pictures, and it is still sin to view them. What could not be classified as art? Why cannot Playboy be put into this category? The men who view such publications say they are very artistically done. Madonna posed for pictures a few decades ago, which were collected into a book and purchased by public libraries because it was considered art. To paraphrase Shakespeare, “Pornography by any other name would still elicit lust.”

In fact, Christina Sword posted the following observation on January 15, 2018.

“I know three students who had to view this type of “art,” for their degree, who had all admitted to me that they were seeing the campus counselor because they struggle with pornography as well as going to group sessions for students struggling with such addictions! And yet they couldn’t say anything for fear of not passing the class. The teachers requiring students to view these images are the ones causing them to stumble.”

Some of the Photography classes are just as bad. Actually shown to students is a PowerPoint presentation of nude photos. Maybe one of the instructors would like to show these in one of the evening sessions of this year’s lectures—just to prove that there is no problem

with students and their parents observing them. If not, why not?

### History

Brethren have long recognized the sinfulness of what is now being done at Freed-Hardeman University. Recently I came across an article about liberalism written some years ago. This paragraph is interesting because it shows that liberalism affects both doctrine and morality. The observation was made: “These liberals insist that a person is to look beyond the pornographic content of lewd, obscene pictures and literature, and see the art that is supposed to be there (Matt. 5:27-28).”

Hmm. The writer stated it accurately, did he not?

### Where We All Once Stood

In 2009, David Brown published Johnny Oxendine’s chapter, “THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION: Are We Dressing Fornication and Adultery in Formal Wear?” in the book, *Religion and Morality—From God or Man?* Oxendine points out the addictive effects of pornography by mentioning that David Duchovny of The X-Files “actually had to go to therapy because he was ‘hooked’ on pornography” (474). We may think of this allurements as only affecting poor lonely shlubs with poor social skills, but obviously it can conquer the intelligent, the rich, and the famous as well. Why would FHU want to possibly introduce someone to that nightmare?

According to “Pornographic Statistics” from Safe Family Media, with data from 2006, “every second there are 28,258 users viewing pornography on the Internet. Every 39 minutes a new pornographic video is uploaded” (481). But Oxendine presents more information:

“More than 12% of the total number of the websites in the world are dedicated to pornography; over 25% of the search engine (Google, Yahoo!, etc.) requests are for pornographic sites; and over 35% of all internet downloads are pornography! (481- 82).”

Plainly, we are living in a pornography-saturated society. So why would anyone want to open the door to such seediness—especially for college students? One can peruse the articles and chapters brethren have written for the last half-century and find all manner of information about Christian women dressing modestly. Can anyone imagine that, after taking issue with immodest clothing, these same brethren would then argue in favor of students at a “Christian” university being shown nude photos or having to draw people who are naked in the name of “art”?

Any brethren who fail to be upset and outraged by Freed-Hardeman’s curriculum have not been reading the New Testament and its pleas for Christians to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16). Those who would defend the materials used have obviously not cleansed themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit (2 Cor. 7:1).

Brethren need to rise up and notify the school that their course of action is not acceptable. Change needs to occur. Hopefully, it will. But in the meantime, it is disturbing that this curriculum has been operating this way for years, and all who knew about it at the university approved of it.

So far, the reaction to a legitimate protest concerning the use of nudity has been met with stonewalling, ad hominem attacks, and shoddy defense mechanisms. The Henderson Street church’s elders have fared no better in dodging the issue, and several others have refused to say anything (does anyone remember “Curse Meroz!” from Jud. 5:23)? Only hearing from right-thinking brethren will probably make an impact. (1).

Immediately following the above article was another by brother Summers in the same issue:

In the previous article, we apprised brethren who may not have known about Freed-Hardeman University’s use of nudity in both their Art and Photography Departments. Because of Brother Sword’s website and perhaps criticism from others, the new president of Freed-Hardeman, David Shannon, felt compelled to respond by making a statement in chapel on Ground Hog’s Day. Below is his speech in its entirety, transcribed by your congenial columnist:

“Students, you are the reason Freed-Hardeman exists, and your faculty and staff are dedicated to helping you develop your God-given talents for His glory. We realize the responsibility and privilege we have of empowering you with an education that integrates Christian faith, scholarship, and service. This is the core as you grow in the ways to serve God and your community.

“Recently the university and some faculty and staff, alumni, and students have been publicly challenged and at times attacked regarding the study of nude and semi-nude human

forms in sculptures, paintings, pictures within the art program. Your confidence in the academic and spiritual integrity of the program is critically important. Your instructors continually assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of curriculum and even use opportunities such as this one to again review your degree program in light of FHU's mission. Following these recent challenges, faculty, staff, and administration have again concluded that these studies of the human form are necessary and appropriate in a large number of academic disciplines, programs, and courses at this university, including the art program. It is crucial for an Art graduate from a liberal arts university to be able to draw the human and therefore understand the body. It is believed that Michelangelo even autopsied bodies because he wanted to see layers of muscle, veins, and bone structure.

"While FHU students do study the human form, FHU art students do not and never will work with nude, live models. Perhaps drawing the human form or studying semi-nude or nude art violates your conscience. If so, you have informal and formal mechanisms available to request modifications to your curriculum. Your request will be evaluated based on its reasonableness and its impact on the academic integrity of your studies.

"Several allegations made recently have been disappointing, including intimidating students, faculty, and staff over personal convictions and falsely using the word pornography, erotica, to describe art that is studied here. No instructor will ever seek to incite vulgarity or lack respect for God's creation—the human body. This is a good opportunity to discuss roles in all of our careers as we decide daily if we will walk with the Lord or follow the world. Part of our role as FHU faculty, staff, and administration is to make you aware of the challenges you will face in your career, provide you with guidance, instruction, and encouragement to reflect Christ within your career. Our goal is to provide you with Christian instructors, mentors, and even a safety net as you consider choices that you will face in your journey after college. We are called to honor our Creator with how we live in our bodies and how we interact with others and their bodies. With respect for others, a pure heart and God-seeking actions, your work will bless those around you.

"Thank you for making spiritual, intellectual, and social choices that will honor our God today and in the future. If you would like to see me about any of this, I would be glad to visit with you."

### **Crossing the Rubicon**

Is it really necessary to respond to this weak attempt to justify nudity? Probably not, but let us call attention to crucial points. In making this statement, Freed-Hardeman has crossed the Rubicon. This matter no longer remains what an Art teacher or Department Head has done in the classroom. It has now become a matter of what the entire faculty, staff, and administration at Freed-Hardeman believes. Paragraph 3 says that all three groups have concluded that "studies of the human form are necessary and appropriate." Unless one of these (and that includes the Bible department) says he disagrees, it should be assumed that he backs up what the president said.

Even if Freed-Hardeman should ever come to its senses and (due to pressure) change its policies regarding nudity, how can brethren ever trust their young people to them again, knowing that this is the way they truly feel about it? Frankly, they have shown themselves unworthy of either students or financial support, and even though we have highly recommended them in time past, that day is finished.

They have made it clear that they will continue to require that students study "nude and semi-nude forms in sculptures, paintings, pictures within the art program." How is that possible in a Christian university? And the president is disappointed that brethren find fault with this? Really? It would be grievously disappointing if Christians were not appalled.

### **"Feel Good" Statements**

The speech contains several statements calculated to make students and all others feel good about the school—that they are looking out for the students' interests. However, this is window dressing—to cover up the nakedness. In the very next sentence, after saying students will continue to study nudity, he has the temerity to talk about the academic and **spiritual** integrity of their art program. Dr. Shannon apparently does not see the conflict between the spirit and the flesh (Gal. 5:19-23).

He avers that it is absolutely **crucial** (an odd choice of words since it refers to the cross) for their graduates to be able to draw the human form. Many who have majored in art disagree. Also, since when is Michelangelo a greater authority than the Word of God? Readers, have you noticed that Shannon did not use one Scripture to justify students studying nudity? The reason is that none exists! Lack of Scripture to justify what they are doing should have told

him that no Biblical principle can justify this curriculum.

Shannon went on to say: “We are called to honor our Creator with how we live in our bodies.” That may be the truest line he spoke all morning, but it works against him—not in his favor. How do we “serve God” by dwelling on nudity? How do we “honor our Creator” with this emphasis? What does the Bible say? Does 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ring a bell?

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

So is it a sin and a shame to remove one’s clothes to pose nude? Does that honor God? “Oh, but we wouldn’t do that,” Shannon protests. Good, but is it right for you to look upon and draw the body of someone else who has shamed himself or herself? Adam and Eve experienced shame when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They covered themselves (Gen. 3:7). Had a Freed-Hardeman art teacher been present, she might have suggested they draw each other’s perfect bodies for future art students to use before covering up! Would this be respecting “God’s creation—the human body”?

Yes, God did create the human body—but not for public display—either in sculpture, paintings, or photographs. Respect for one’s privacy is lauded in the Scriptures. Ham did not honor his father when he lay drunk within his tent. “But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both of their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness” (Gen. 9:23). Oh, but at Freed-Hardeman it is crucial for students to study “nude and semi-nude human forms in sculptures, paintings, pictures within the art program.”

### **What is Sin?**

Have none of the instructors in the Bible department ever preached Matthew 5:28: “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”? If so, how can they reconcile the philosophy of the Art Department with what Jesus said? Do they not want the young men who attend Freed-Hardeman to be pure in their thoughts toward women? Do they not want young men to treat young women with respect? Then why are they in agreement with the faculty, the staff, and the administration that young men taking art must view nude and nearly nude bodies? Can they explain that Scripturally to anyone? If not, they should refrain from preaching against what they will not oppose. What a terrible position to be in. Worse yet will be having to justify this position to a holy God on the Day of Judgment.

Here are the facts made as simply as they can be put. First, it is wrong to uncover oneself and pose naked or nearly naked in front of others. Second, it is wrong to view such a person naked or nearly naked. Third, it is wrong to draw a person who is naked or nearly naked. “Oh, but you don’t understand, Brother Summers. That’s art.” No, that is sin! And I defy anyone at Freed-Hardeman or the Henderson Church to prove that this is righteous behavior. David was one of the most godly and spiritual of men, a man after God’s own heart. Yet he was drawn into sin by viewing a naked woman bathing. How can those in the Bible Department not recognize the destructive nature of this sin?

### **Attacks**

President Shannon slanted the situation just a bit. Neither Brother Sword nor myself have attacked anyone personally. He and I have challenged only the issue itself. Shannon has stated he is disappointed that the words pornography and erotica were used. I am not sure that they are incorrect terminology—especially since one of the textbooks uses the word erotica, but just for his benefit, we omitted their use from this article and only used his own description of what is being done.

In 1 Kings 15:13, King Asa removed “an obscene image of Asherah” and burned it in the fire. Why? Why was this sculpture not regarded as “art” and maintained so art students could draw the human form with accuracy? Was it that it was a statue of a pagan deity, or one that displayed nudity? What made it obscene?

Brethren, we need a healthy dose of sanity when discussing this subject. We cannot continue to turn away our eyes and conclude that nakedness is all right because it is art. Someone at Freed-Hardeman needs to step forward and say, as in the story of “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” that the pictures are of naked people. Should we not all “cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1)? Should we not try to be holy, as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16)? Brethren should compare the Scriptures with Shannon’s speech. What think ye? (Ibid., 5).

Money is one of America's major national gods and as Canaanite idolatry corrupted Israel, so mainstream churches of Christ and their “college affiliates” have been corrupted by Mammon. That some FHU administrators, faculty, and perhaps members of its board, will sell their souls for money is shown from a telephone conversation between Kerry Sword and Pat Evans, who was a Plainview elder and Math teacher at FHU. The following is a transcription of that conversation with times listed on the audio file:

**Kerry Sword:** ...you agreed and Terry agreed on Sunday that the pictures that are being shown are sinful. Now if there's sin involved then that means someone's gonna lose their soul if it's not repented of, and this is a concern for all of us (20:53-21:17).

**Pat Evans:** Kerry, you are right (21:16-21:18).

**Kerry Sword:** ...you even mentioned about, the girls and their immodest apparel and you can look on the Facebook profiles and see the sports team wearing very immodest shorts at Freed Hardeman and they're not following the student handbook. There's a current student handbook that has a dress code that either needs to be followed or the dress code needs to be changed or you know, even like in the caption for the student handbook talks about pornography; it says “pornography in any form will not be tolerated.” And yet the very pictures they're showing in the art class use terms like, “erotic...work,” “sensual work”. There are two lesbians embracing that are nude. I mean, this is pretty sensual stuff! (23:35-25:25).

**Pat Evans:** I understand, Kerry (24:24-24:28).

**Kerry Sword:** So they're going against their own their own policy! They're going against the student hand book. And how can you criticize the students being caught with a pornographic magazine when you can see the same thing in their art book that they give out? That they make their students pay for? (24:28-24:41).

**Pat Evans:** I was in a faculty meeting the other day...and I'll tell you this, the students have more power than the faculty. You know what I am, I am a line item on a budget...But a student pays to go to school there. They really have more power than I do (24:40-25:48).

**Kerry Sword:** Didn't you tell me, as I recall, you said that you were in a meeting where they basically decided that they would not follow the dress code in the student handbook? (25:28-26:00).

**Pat Evans:** Well, yeah. Kerry please don't share this with anybody, because they'll fire me. They can fire me, they can't fire students, because they pay quite a bit of money...okay, they're in financial problems and what happened was like um, three years ago, or four, all of a sudden an email came out, and they said that they had decided to relax the, the uh dress code, to where they will allow them to wear shorts to class (26:02-26:48).

**Kerry Sword:** Do you know why they're not changing the student handbook, then; why they're not changing that and taking that out? (26:48-26:53).

**Pat Evans:** I do not know. Uh, Kerry, all I know is that they are probably in need of it...Joe Wily fired so many people and he had to because this school is hurting as far as what they call unrestrained giving. That's money that flows day by day to carry on the operations. They are hurting. And so the board came out, whenever it was and they said that they hated to do it, but they said the other schools were doing it...Before that time, if they came to my class with shorts, I asked them to get up and go and change (and they did) and come back. Kerry, It's out of my hands, I don't know what's going on, I'm just telling you the truth (26:56-29:02).

**Kerry Sword:** Well here's the irony, you know, while Freed Hardeman administration is concerned about their financial situation, which you know, of course that's fair and honest, but you know if godly parents throughout the U.S. that have been sending their kids here know about what's going on... (49:38-49:56).

**Pat Evans:** You, you're right (49:56-49:56).

**Kerry Sword:** ...they're going to stop supporting it. They're going to stop sending their kids here. So it's a lose situation for Freed Hardeman...So I mean, come on! Let's clean up the school and let's restore their honor (49:57-50:10).

**Pat Evans:** David Shannon has had some tremendous influence here. Let me tell you what happened, and please don't share this with anybody...but it...came out in the faculty meeting, he said he was looking at the budget the other day and Freed Hardeman does not have the endowment we need. Five years ago they owed four hundred million dollars



endowment; it's more than that now. Harding has tremendous endowment. Lipscomb has more than obviously than we do, but they have more what we call...non-it's non-committed spending. See, when you build buildings, and you see these buildings layout, what happens is you still have to heat 'em and maintain 'em. And what it is, is Freed Hardeman has a lot of restricted budget, but they don't have much unrestricted. And so David Shannon told us the other day... (51:14-52:21)...He said that, uh, "We're a million and eight-eight hundred thousand dollars in debt that we built up over" I forgot the last six or seven years...Kerry, yes...you're right. What's going on is wrong; it's sin (52:25-57:49).

Like all other colleges founded on noble principles, once- stalwart FHU has become **another** mainstream wreck littering the road we have traveled over the last two centuries. It wrecked itself by forging moral corruption contrary God's Word, arrogantly defending pornography as "art" and thereby besmirching and assassinating Christ's holy character before the world—a position defended by mainstream churches of Christ, their elders and preachers. "There is no new thing under the sun."

No right-thinking, godly parent would ever send his children to the moral cesspool that Freed-Hardeman University has become. Nor would any faithful child of God send FHU a dime of financial support.

Reprinted from the *"The Thing That Hath Been..."*, *The Cycle of Apostasy Vol. 2*.

## The Elders are Betraying the Bride of Christ and Treating Her Like a Harlot!

Richard Guill

A woman dressed in filthy and tattered attire and who obviously was dirty and defiled and who had been abused repeatedly stood as a slave on the auction block. One man immediately loved her and determined to make her his bride. He paid the highest possible purchase price for her, took her and cleansed and purified her, and set her apart as his espoused bride. Before the marriage he had to make an extended journey into a far country and while there promised to build her a mansion in which to dwell. He promised to return and receive her unto himself in a great marriage ceremony. He expected his chosen bride to remain pure and undefiled until he came for her. In order to help protect her from those who would abuse and defile her, he selected chosen men to care for her and guard her. When he returned, they would give account of how they had done their job. The man is Christ, the Bride is the church, and the men chosen to care for and protect her are called elders, pastors, or bishops.

I tell you this even weeping, the precious Bride of Christ is being raped repeatedly, not by strangers from without, but by those whom she has known and loved as "family". And to add to this shame, many of those men chosen to protect her from such shame not only do not seem to care, but many of them are among the number raping her!

I am grateful for all good and courageous men who are trying to sound the alarm and stem the tide of liberalism which threatens to so pollute the Bride of Christ that He will not be willing to receive her as his Bride.

This lesson emphasizes the role that some elders share in this hideous spectacle. I emphasize **"their share"**, for wherever there is digression, many must share the blame, and not just a few. This lesson could be entitled "Elders—The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly."

There are still many **good** and godly elders and I commend all that are such and pray for them to continue and for their number to increase greatly. However, we also have the **bad**—those whom by their performance show that they either cannot or will not do the job God has given them to do. Others I classify as **ugly**, not referring to their physical appearance, but to their attitudes and conduct, and even their morals! Remember that Paul warned the Ephesian elders to take heed unto yourselves (Acts 20:28). Need I cite you examples of elders who have been sexually involved with women in the congregation or community? Or those who will lie? Or those who are so drunk on the sweet wine of authority and power that they have become bullies with a mean spirit? I shall approach this lesson in the following manner: First, pastor problems of the past and present, then three great deficiencies in pastors, and thirdly some suggestions of how we can improve the situation.

### **Pastor Problems of the Past and Present**

**Pastors in Israel** were greatly responsible for the downfall of God's people long ago. Israel had their "pastors" or "shepherds" who had virtually the same responsibility as elders in the church today have—feeding the flock and watching for their welfare. In Jeremiah 2:8 they are mentioned and listed as being separate from those who handled the law, the priests, or the prophets. The priests said not, Where is the Lord? And they that handle the law know me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

A part of their job was to feed with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15). Ezekiel 34:1-10 and Isaiah 56: 9-12 both contain scathing indictments of these shepherds. They are charged with ungodly personal behavior and with failing to **feed** the people and **watch** for their well-being. I hope that you will read these passages. As a result of such, God, through his prophet Hosea, cried out, "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land...My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4: 1, 6).

### **Pastors in the New Testament Days**

We know that most, if not all, congregations in the first century had elders. Specifically mentioned are Jerusalem, Ephesus, Philippi, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and all the cities in the island of Crete. However, we also know that many of those congregations had major problems which threatened to destroy them. Where were their elders? Why had they not already acted? Corinth had internal division, incestuous fornication, abusing the Lord's Supper, etc. Ephesus had those who were teaching false doctrine...Paul sent Timothy there to deal with them. (1 Tim. 1:3) "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." And, look at Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31. Galatia had many who had already fallen from grace because they followed those who had taught a perverted gospel. (Gal.1:6-9; 5:4). Pergamos was harboring them that hold the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate (Rev. 2: 12-17). Thyatira also was charged with thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols (Rev. 2:18-29).

By the end of the first century many congregations were having such major problems that the congregations were in danger of being destroyed...God warned, I will remove thy candlestick (Rev. 2:5). The candlestick was the church (Rev. 1: 20). Could anyone successfully affirm that the elders of these congregations were doing their job? Into the second century and beyond the digression and apostasy continued until the church, except for a small remnant, was swept away to the eternal ruin of millions. A major portion of the digression was led by **elders** who sought prominence and power.

### **Pastors in the Late 19th Century Apostasy**

The last half of the 19th century witnessed the spectacle of a divided brotherhood due to a great digression wherein eighty percent (80%) of our congregations were lost—**much** not all—of the blame can be traced to the lack of elders; either congregations who had none, or those who had unqualified men who did not do their job.

### **Pastors in the Current Apostasy**

In the latter half of the 20th century we witnessed the spectacle of a great apostasy and a divided brotherhood. And again, the major portion of blame can be placed upon the shoulders of the elders. Are there any among us who cannot see that the major share of the blame for the terrible digression and division produced by the notorious Nashville "Jubilee" must be laid first at the feet of the elders at the Madison and Antioch congregations? **Then**, subsequently at the feet of elders that continued to support and encourage this notorious event.

What about the elders at Woodmont Hills who have allowed Rubel Shelly to lead that congregation and multitudes of other precious souls into apostasy? Now those same elders have been bold enough to openly declare that they invited Billy Graham to come to Nashville and promised their support and promotion of his "crusade".

Time will not permit me to take a tour of this nation in order to notice so many congregations where the elders are not only permitting, but actually encouraging, such digression to flourish. As sad as this is, perhaps even sadder is the spectacle of hundreds of congregations, both small

and large, where the elders do not have the knowledge and/or the courage to stand and say, “We will have nothing to do with such things.” They cannot or will not watch diligently and warn the flock of the danger of such wolves.

### Three Great Deficiencies in Pastors Today

By no means are these the only deficiencies, but they are three of the major ones I see:

**First**, they are deficient in knowledge. Before they are appointed, they are supposed to be men who are apt to teach and who are capable of holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught so that they may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers and shut the mouths of such before they subvert the whole church (Titus 1: 9-11). Too many **elders don’t know the truth well enough to recognize false doctrine when they hear it** taught by preachers with their good words and fair speeches (Rom.16:18). Their deficiency in knowledge also prevents them from confronting such fellows when they recognize that he is teaching error. They are not capable of exposing his error with a “thus saith the Lord”.

They are also woefully ignorant of what is happening in the brotherhood and are thus unaware of the dangers threatening God’s people. How many elders attend lectureships or receive and read publications where such dangers are exposed? I wrote an article a couple of years ago entitled *Ignorant Elders and Lockjawed Preachers* in which I noted the fact that elders are ignorant of such things and that they often have preachers in their pulpits who will not open their mouth to warn the elders nor the members about such things, neither publicly nor privately. Elders are too often ignorant of how to establish scriptural authority for a practice. Since they are responsible for seeing that what is done by the congregation is authorized, and since everything we do and teach must have the authority of Christ behind it or it is vain (Col.3:17), **How can they do their job** if they don’t know how to establish scriptural authority?

Too many elders are also deficient in knowledge of the flock over which they are made overseers. Heb.13:17 says that elders are to watch for the souls of the members. One example will have to suffice to illustrate this point: John begins to miss services. Someone asks, “What’s happened to John?” **but no one knows**, including the elders. Do you remember the illustration Jesus used of the lost sheep in Matt. 18:12-14? There were supposed to be 100 sheep in the flock, but when they counted those in the fold, there were only 99. **One** was missing, but the shepherd **knew** it was missing and left the 99 who were secure and sought the **one lost sheep** till he found it and brought it back to the fold. How many elders today **do not** know when a sheep is missing, and seemingly do not care enough to go looking for it?

**Second**, too many are deficient in courage. Though courage is not specifically listed among the requirements for the appointment as an elder, who can deny that it is implied because of the nature of the work he is to do? Under the figure of shepherds, they are to watch and guard the flock against wolves who will devour the flock. Jesus talked about “hirelings” who would see the wolf coming and leave the sheep and flee (John 10:12). **Contrast** this with David’s description of his conduct as a shepherd:

And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear (1 Sam.17:34-36).

Truly, the job of a shepherd is **not** a job for the faint-hearted and cowardly! It is not easy to stand against a well-liked preacher, or a prominent member of the congregation, or a member of one’s own family, but it sometimes must be done! An elder is unfit to serve if he does not have the courage to stand firm in such cases.

**Third**, too many are deficient in love. That love must include love for God, for Christ, for the church, and for the lost. Like indulgent fathers who “love” their children too much to administer firm and consistent discipline, many elders neither understand nor have the kind of love for those under their care that the job demands. After giving the qualification of one that ruleth his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (1 Tim.3:4), Paul asks, For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? We know that the Bible clearly teaches that a father who does not love his children will not discipline them, but one who loves his children will. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13: 24). Just so, elders who will not administer

consistent, firm, and fair discipline to the members under their care **do not love them** as they should. **And**, a failure to love them is a failure to love Christ! “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him (1 John 5:1). We have congregations filled with false teachers, adulterers and adulteresses, and a host of other sinful souls because elders **did not act** to discipline one or more involved and the little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (1 Cor.5:6).

### **What Can be Done to Improve This Situation?**

**First, stop** appointing unqualified men to this position. It is far easier to put such in than to get them out. The **two key words** in the list of qualifications for elders are “**must be**”. **Must be** is an imperative term. It cannot be replaced by “may be, should be, it would be better if they were.” **Must be** applies to **all** the qualifications, not just a few.

**Secondly**, do a better job of training men to be elders. Good elders are made by training, they are not born with such abilities. Why have we as a brotherhood recognized the need for adequate preacher training and yet have been so slow to insist for such training for our elders? Preachers must get involved in improving the knowledge level of the elderships where you preach. First make sure they are informed, then exhort them to perform their job, and then, when they sin or fail, rebuke them. “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:19-20). Members of a congregation must develop the sense of responsibility and muster the courage necessary to remove an elder who has so sinned and will not repent.

No greater need exists in the Lord’s church than having strong, courageous and qualified elderships in **all** congregations. Since God put them in charge, gave them oversight of the congregation with authority to see to it that all work and worship is conducted according to His word, the major share of the responsibility for all problems which threaten the continued faithfulness of the congregation and the salvation of souls under their oversight must be laid at their feet. May each of us fervently support and uphold every good and godly elder and pray fervently that God will raise up many more such godly leaders.

Finally, let us start now with our younger men to try to encourage and train them to be the kind of future elders which the church so desperately needs.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Brother Guill is correct to blame our current apostasy at the feet of elders. If elders do their jobs as Paul outlined in Acts 20:17-31, apostasy could be stopped in its tracks. But there are too many men *called* “elders” who have no business overseeing the church. A current example is the Pauls Valley, Oklahoma church of Christ elders, Jess Brewer and Charles Goldsmith. Their neighboring elders are hunkered down making any excuse not to tell Brewer and Goldsmith that the Pauls Valley church is sinful in sponsoring the school’s prom. They are as culpable as the Pauls Valley “elders.” Many of Pauls Valley’s neighbors would rather just forget it, but the judgement is coming and they must give an account to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, when they say, “Let’s wait a while” they should remember that “today is the day of salvation” not “wait a while.” Will they act on their God-given responsibilities to withdraw fellowship from Pauls Valley, or will they just dwaddle until they hear the trumpet announcing the judgement? That will be too late for all of them.

William Wallace wrote,

The elder is a watchdog. He must be able to handle his charges gently where needed, firmly in admonition, sternly in discipline. He must be rigid and uncompromising in warding off the intrusion of error. Some men serving as elders will fondle the members but will wilt before the onrush of error, sulk at the preaching of sound doctrine. Such disqualifies the man as an elder. The greater portion of the apostolic epistles has to do with correcting misconceptions and situations and warns against false teachers. This is the larger responsibility of an elder—and he must be prepared to meet it in knowledge, personality and character. A “Casper Milquetoast” a “Mr. Peepers” or a “Dale Carnegie” has no place in the eldership (“Problems in the Eldership”).

Those, “Casper Milquetoasts,” “Mr. Peppers,” and “Dale Carnegies” in Pauls Valley should to resign.

**A Special Thank You — To Holley Rebekah Brewer, my daughter and the “apple of my eye.” She is an English teacher at Southwestern Oklahoma State University and every month she proofreads all of the articles for *The Watchman*. Her work lends a professional look to the publication.**

# Marketing The Gospel Through Polishing the Pulpit

Matthew Johnson

It's well established that religion is big business and has been for many years. But it seems like the practices in the church are trending toward what I call the 'monetising' of the gospel—which I characterize as growing the church like a business by treating the gospel, fellowship, and other biblical knowledge as products that are in effect marketed and sold in a format similar to how other products and services are promoted and sold. It's important to understand the principles in God's Word and ensure that our zeal to spread God's Word does not take us away from His truth and will about how we fund the works of the Kingdom.

The method to collect funds for the church is fairly well described, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This passage is clear as to the frequency (weekly), contingent upon and in proportion to how each individual has been prospered. The way in which we give is spelled out in 2 Cor. 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). The word translated *necessity* literally means *constraint*. Jesus himself made it clear our giving is not to be seen of men, and it is to be in secret, without fanfare, so that we'll receive our reward from the Father (Matt 6:1-4). Some congregations use pledge cards for the purported reason that it helps for budgeting purposes. While this may be the case, it's hard to see how that practice would not constrain an individual by asking for commitments prior to them being prospered. I have not heard of anyone being forced to meet their pledge legally (as you typically would if pledging to a charitable organization and failed to pay), but it certainly seems incompatible with God's plan for giving and possibly puts folks in a position of either violating their pledge, or giving out of necessity to keep the pledge.

The Bible does not authorize churches to charge fees. But we have examples of fee based services aside from free will contributions. Jesus strongly condemned those who apparently were taking advantage of widows by charging or constraining them as they served them, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matt. 23:14). He also judged the Pharisees as covetous (Luke 16:14) so it seems as if this type of behavior was evidence of that sinful trait of their hearts. It was clear that when Simon willingly desired to enter into a fee arrangement to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, it didn't go over very well, "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20). When Jesus sent out the twelve to preach, he explicitly denied them the option to charge a fee, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt 10:7-8). There are only two examples I'm aware of where fees were charged and accepted for goods or services related to worship of Christ. One was when Jesus saw the buying and selling of items to be used in sacrifice and worship, He didn't want them in the temple and said, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" (John 2:16). In Matt. 21:13 the practice had made it "a den of thieves" so perhaps Jesus went even further and judged their behavior as taking advantage through these sales to the point of thievery. The other example was only service for which money was charged and accepted, (and ironically refunded), which was Judas Iscariot for the betrayal of Christ (Matt. 26:15, 27:4-5). It's hard to believe any of these fee based examples are given to us to emulate.

So what about our practices in the church today? It's not uncommon to attend a gospel meeting or lectureship and see or hear about books or other items for sale. We often like to talk about the simplicity of the gospel and the sufficiency of the Word but promote a variety of commentaries for sale that are apparently designed to help fill in whatever gaps may exist between what God has given through the Word and understanding (2 Tim. 2:7, Pro. 2:6, Jas. 1:5). If we really need them aside from the inspired Word, I'd hope they'd be free, and if I have Bible based knowledge or understanding to share, I don't desire to profit from it through sales.

Another practice that is becoming more prevalent is what I call 'fees for fellowship' whereby participants are charged for attendance. One of the most popular, is **Polishing the Pulpit**. With



about 5,000 participants and growing, it is quickly becoming a nicely branded event for which only certain preachers or others can go based on their ability or willingness to pay a registration fee. Participants are also sternly reminded that sharing some of the materials purchased in a digital format (DVDs, CDs, etc.) is prohibited. Without getting into a lot of details, there is a fairly lengthy explanation by the elders who oversee the work about the registration fee and they cite the cost of the event and that the gathering is more of a workshop like a school and continuing education for preachers, elders, and other ‘kingdom workers’. It also goes to great lengths to highlight its non-profit nature and that many are given ‘scholarships’ to be able to attend. Its stated purpose is to educate and edify. I’ve never been, and have no doubt that much good fellowship, study, and encouragement is available to those who go; but in my opinion, unfortunate (at best) the church charges money to accomplish such a work.

I’m certainly not judging those who write and sell books based on knowledge freely received and given by God, or those who charge for others to benefit from their fellowship or edification. It’s clear that those who preach the gospel can be paid from the free will contributions of the saints, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14) It’s not required but permitted, and the amount is one of judgment. Paul chose not to take money (vs 15, 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:8) but worked to support himself while he preached. My prayer is the work of the Lord, whatever it’s called, does not require a fee for fellowship or to learn God’s Word, and that I am able to freely give as I’ve received. Perhaps Jesus left a better way, and that was to preach the gospel to the thousands who came to him, and rather than charging them to come, he fed those who were hungry. He invites the weary and heavy laden to Him (Matt. 11:28); His promise is that if we gather in His name, He’ll be there (Matt. 18:20). No fees or copyright warnings attached!

## Kerry Sword on Fellowship in a Letter to Mike Bonner

May 24, 2019

My dear brother in the Lord,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Kerry Sword and I currently live in Henderson. TN. I have been a member of the Lord’s church since August 10, 1986 when the Lord added me to His kingdom upon my obedience to the Gospel in accordance with His divine will (Mark 16:16).

I have taken note of the ongoing Facebook discussion started on May 22, 2019. It is entitled: *I Sure Miss the Old Wesley Simon* and deals with this year’s speakers at the *Polishing the Pulpit* lectureship that is to be held later this year. Apparently you are scheduled to be a part of this lectureship series with some brethren who are known either to teach error directly, practice error, or fellowship with those who are in error.

From many of the comments that have been made, it appears that you have built a good reputation among the saints of God and clearly there are some who hold you in high esteem (which is proper among the saints of God – Titus 2:6-8; Rom. 13:7).

From what I understand from the thread posted, and the numerous comments that are made, your actions and decision to speak at the upcoming lectureship has sparked quite a controversy and brought your character into question. This fact alone should cause you to ponder and reflect upon your decision to be involved with such a work. Philippians 2:15-16 teaches us that we are to be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke”

As I’m sure you know, *Blameless* means one who is not subject to just criticism, or not deserving of being censured (cf. Luke 1:6). “Harmless” carries the idea of purity or freedom from evil. We are to be such so as to be those who are “Holding forth the word of life” (v. 16).

While it may be painful to hear that are actions are not in keeping with the will of Christ, I call you into remembrance of Proverbs 27:6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

As you (no doubt) are aware, no man is infallible (Rom. 3:10, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10). A Christian’s life involves constant evaluation, constant change, and forward progression (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Pet.

2:2; Eph. 4:22-24; Philp. 3:13-14, et al).

Now I have read your response to those who have called you into question on your decision to fellowship with some who are in error. Your basic response has been “**I know of some of the things that’s happening and am doing my part to rid the problems**” and “**we will have conversations with brethren while being there!**”

Brother, let me say here that this is commendable and I do not question for a moment your honesty or integrity in this. However, I just wonder about the logistics of what you are proposing. I say this because there are numerous speakers that are known to be in error or compromisers of the faith. The fact that there are those in sin who have been invited to speak, puts everyone’s reputation at risk and could lead them into compromise. Unless, of course, they do as you are suggesting and confront those in error. Yet, how possible is this, really? For example, just a few names on the lectureship that I know about personally:

- Will you speak to and correct **Ben Giselbach** for advocating that Christians can smoke cigarettes and use tobacco products because there is, “no Bible verse that is against it” (I have his written correspondence on this and will send it to you upon request)?
- Will you speak to and correct **Glenn Colley** for not correcting the error of his son-in-law (Ben Giselbach) over the smoking issue, or for his fellowship with Ukrainian churches who fellowship with denominations and who fellowship with a Christian man who lives in open adultery and who has been withdrawn from (will send information upon your request)?
- Will you speak to and correct **Tony Brewer** who supports the pornography being promoted at Freed Hardeman University (will send information upon your request)?
- Will you speak to and correct **Mark Teske & Don Blackwell** (if he is able to attend) for using Dave Miller at GBN regardless of his false doctrines on *Elder Reaffirmation* and *Marriage Intent*?
- Will you speak to and correct **Rod Rutherford** for his error on supporting female translators and female evangelists?
- Will you speak to and correct **Steve Higginbotham** for his fellowship with those erring brethren who participate in the Affirming the Faith Lectures?
- Will you speak to and correct **Phil Sanders** for his role in the pornography cover-up at Freed-Hardeman University?
- Will you speak to and correct **Tim Pyles** for his involvement and fellowship with false teachers from the *Tulsa Workshop*? The Tulsa Workshop, as I hope you already know, hosted denominational preachers and such false teachers as Max Lucado, Rubel Shelly, Mile Cope, Jeff Walling, Rick Atchley and others who have led the Lord’s church into digression and apostasy. They advocate that the Lord’s church is no different than denominations and support the innovations of instrumental music in worship and female preachers. I would be surprised to find you in support of such errors, given your reputation for soundness.
- **Randy English** is reported to have been withdrawn from (as far as I know) from Rod Rutherford and Jim Dearman and some 48 congregations of the Lord’s people, yet he is also scheduled to speak at *PTP*. Will you speak to and correct him as well?

Brother, these are the ones that I know of personally, yet after being out of the country for some time, I admit that I am not on top of all of the error going around or who is involved. Yet, even a casual search and inquiry can yield this information without any difficulty. Especially for a preacher of the Gospel who is concerned with whom he fellowships. Do you see my point?

Now let me give you the benefit of the doubt, brother, and assume you will do as you say and correct all those that I’ve mentioned above that are advocating, practicing, or fellowshipping with error (yet, as I’ve mentioned above, that will be quite a task); inasmuch as their errors have been done publicly, should they not be reproved and rebuked publicly? As I recall, one brother on the thread mentioned that no one from the assembly would be aware of any “private conversation” that you may have. Therefore, your reputation will be in question.



Furthermore, in all honesty, and I speak in a spirit of love (Eph. 4:15), your track record doesn't seem to fit with what you are now proposing; does it; in all honesty? Consider:

In October-November of 2014 you spoke at the *Cold Harbor Lectureship* alongside of such men as Dave Miller and Steve Higginbotham did you "speak to" and "correct" these men for their errors at the time?

At that time, were you aware of the fact that a month earlier, Dave Miller was alongside of Stafford North at the *Bear Valley Lectureship* in September of the same year? Bear Valley instructors are well-known among the Ukrainian churches to fellowship with erring congregations and those promoting fellowship with denominations. Director Denny Petrillo has no problem putting women into positions of leadership when it comes to using female translators and basically told me in person that he'd have no problem using a women for the distribution of the emblems of the Lord's Supper in the assembly (as long as she started from the back and worked her way forward).

Were you aware of the fact that six months earlier Stafford North was on the *Affirming the Faith* lectures with John deSteiguer (president of Oklahoma Christian University) who also appears on Pepperdine's lectures and supports the nude art at OCU? If you spoke to these men, what was the result of your persuasion? Was there any discussion at all? Honestly, can you share the truth of the matter?

Brother, it is my hope and my prayer that you have learned something from the recent discussion on the above mentioned "thread." That is, that your actions and intentions have brought conflict to the church. From the pursuing argument that followed there is an obvious disagreement and division over your actions. Some are now starting to question your soundness and reputation and I hope you can see that clearly.

While there may be some prestige among men to be invited to such a big event as *Polishing the Pulpit*, if the activity has been compromised (which I believe is easily shown), is it worth losing your reputation through your participation? Will the church be better off or the Lord be pleased? Will you risk losing your soul?

Regardless of what Christians think about your actions, we are still forced to ask for the authority from God's word concerning your plans and actions. Col. 3:17 still reads, "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."

You are a faithful preacher of the unsearchable riches of Christ, do I really need to remind you of these verses?

And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather **reprove them**" (Eph. 5:11).

Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine** which ye have learned; and **avoid them**. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and **by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple**" (Rom 16:17-18).

**Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ**, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. **If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed**: For **he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds**" (2 John 9-11).

...for **what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?** and what communion hath **light with darkness?** And **what concord hath Christ with Belial?**

...Wherefore **come out from among them**, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and **touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you**, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Brother, with all the love that is within me, I exhort you to consider well your actions and the effect they will have upon you, your family, and the Lord's people. To continue in fellowship with those in error will destroy your sterling character. Therefore, with all due caution, I say, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor.15:33). Be fully aware, lest when the Lord's people speak of those who have compromised the faith for fear of being "put out of the synagogue" (cf. John 12:42) that you are not counted among them. Our loyalty

to God and His word must be greater than our love or loyalty to any other (Matt. 10:32-39).

There is probably much more I could add, but I pray that what I have written will be sufficient for you to seriously reflect upon the situation that you have put yourself in and, with all due haste, seek the will of the Lord in this matter giving yourself fully to His instruction. I shall sincerely pray to this end.

Let me close by reminding you, once again, of the instruction that Paul gave to Titus in Titus 2:7-8: **“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you”** (emphasis added – KLS).

With all love and due respect, your concerned brother in Christ,

Kerry L. Sword

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## **“Senior Minister,” “Youth and Family Minister,” “The Executive Minister,” “Outreach Minister,” “The Children Minister,”—The Craze for Degrees is Never Ending**

E.A. Elam

There seems to be a craze among young college preachers for the glittering degrees of universities in which they themselves say the Bible is discredited and the divinity of Christ is denied. I take their word for it.

Let me say again, all things being equal, one cannot be too well educated in the true sense of education. But these university courses require a great deal of time and no little money—namely, four years in college after leaving high school, and four or more years in the university. And I ask, what better preachers of the gospel are they afterward than before? What better preachers are they than hundreds who never saw the inside of a university? I am of the firm conviction that nine out of every ten of them have been ruined in this way as true gospel preachers and effective teachers of the truth.

There are reasons. The sedentary habits formed during long college and university courses unfit these preachers for the active life of going; they have been stopping too long. In order to preach the gospel to the whole creation men must go.

Not only do the sedentary habits of these preachers unfit them for going into all the world in order to preach the gospel; but also the trend of their thoughts (for “as one thinketh within himself, so is he”) the kind of learning they love, their worldly ambitions and aspirations, and their desire for preferment and place and recognition unfit them for preaching the gospel to the poor, for going into the highways and hedges, into the lanes and hills and hollows in the country, and among the unlearned and common people of towns and cities, “to seek and to save” the lost. Jesus says, “and the poor have the gospel preached to them”; and of him it is said, “And the common people heard him gladly.”

More still, they have acquired a vocabulary quite different from the Bible and that of every day life and contrary to the “sound speech” which God commands preachers and teachers to use. They forget how to preach the gospel in its simplicity and power, beauty and glory. They fail, if they do not even refuse, to follow the example of the educated and learned Paul—that is, determine to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, to preach not themselves, and to become all things to all men if by any means they may save some.

Have they not lost the true purpose of preaching the gospel? Do they not despise the day of small things? Are they not reaching out after big things? Big crowds, big meetings, big sermons, big salaries, great displays, large numbers of additions are far more attractive and fascinating to many than to preach and work as did Jesus and Paul. There is danger in display and concentrated **yearly big meetings**.

The first thing to be accomplished by a preacher in preaching the gospel is to save himself. Paul had to struggle against his own body and bring it under in order to be saved. The one thing with him was to so live as to attain unto the resurrection of the just. He said by teaching the truth Timothy would save both himself and his hearers. Preachers cannot lose sight of their own

salvation and the power of example. Paul told Timothy what to preach, what not to preach, how to preach, and why to preach, although, at the time, Timothy was inspired. Not only so; but Paul charted Timothy and Titus to be examples in all purity and holy living; to treat old men as fathers, old women as mothers, and young women as sisters (1 Tim. 5:1-2). Some preachers now do not hesitate it seems, to set aside God's law in these respects; rather, they seem to feel licensed to do so.

Brethren Lipscomb and Harding filled the young preachers who attended school with burning zeal for preaching the gospel to people where there were no congregations. In this way many new congregations sprang up every year. Some Bible Schools now too much fill young preachers with the aspiration for worldly wisdom and, therefore, university degrees. After obtaining these degrees, if they continue to preach at all, do they not aspire to become *the minister* of some town or city church? They really seem unable to see anything in the word *minister* except some sort of *modern pastor*.

*Minister* and *evangelist* were not intended by the Lord to be used as titles, but to express work. The one who serves—prepares meals, makes fires, sweeps floors, waits upon tables, washes feet, attends to the wants of the poor, visits the sick, teaches others, etc.—is *a minister*. Any one who preaches the gospel is an *evangelist*. To do the work of a preacher of the gospel is **to do the work of an evangelist**. It is just as scriptural to accept the **modern pastor** as the modern **evangelist** or **modern minister**. The more highly educated one is, the more clearly one should understand the meaning of *minister* and *evangelist* and the more efficient servant of God and men or preacher of the gospel one should be. True education does not blind one to the truth.

Education, as it is commonly understood, never makes men and women Christians. It only quickens, brightens and polishes what is in them, whether good or bad. It is only a tool or a means. There are educated thieves, religious rascals, and polished scoundrels. So education and great learning never make preachers. The love of God and men and a deep and lasting sense of obligation make preachers. The New Testament tells sinners what to do to be saved no more plainly than it tells how preachers are made and all Christians how to live.

It seems difficult to induce some to study this question of how preachers are made, or how they should live. Let the matter be put to the test. What preachers have gone out into the world and have led the greatest number of sinners to salvation in Christ; have built up the greatest number of congregations or have encouraged the greatest number to continue faithful unto the end? What preachers have made the sacrifices in order to do this?

While Paul was educated, and the other apostles were not ignoramuses, it is most significant that Jesus did not go to the learned and great men of earth to select his apostles.

Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world that he might put to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world and the things that are despised did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to naught the things that are; that no flesh should glory before him (1 Cor. 1:26-29) (*Gospel Advocate*, 1923).

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## ***“The Thing That Hath Been....”*** **The Cycle of Apostasy**

**The Book and Postage are FREE For a Paperback Copy**  
**Send Your Mailing Address To:**  
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# Apostate Flotsam From “Mainstream Churches of Christ”

(Flotsam: Floating wreckage of a ship or its cargo; floating debris)

Jerry C. Brewer

Here are some examples of “goobledagoop” that mainstream churches of Christ set forth to readers on their websites. This floating debris is from the Canyon church of Christ in Phoenix, Ariz. Notice that their “mission” has nothing to do with preaching the Gospel.

Their “Mission” is “to lead people to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.” They love that word **relationship**. They **cannot find a single apostle of Jesus Christ in the New Testament** who ever told anyone who needed a *growing relationship* with Jesus Christ—unless it is in **First Opinions 93:2-4**.

Their word play is inanity gone to seed in “Loving God, Connecting People” and “Unleashing Compassion.” In their attempt to say something profound, they forgot to mention that Jesus gave the Great Commission in Mark 16:15-16 and charged them to **preach the Gospel to save men's souls**.

On their website, they have some men's pictures and say, “Canyon church is led by a group of men we call elders.” I am sure that what they say is completely true—“**we call elders**.” We are sure that the Word of God would never call **Jay Carter, Don James, Michael Jenkins** and **Steve Schmidlap Elders!**

## OUR MISSION & VISION

### OUR MISSION

Our Mission is to lead people to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ...

**Loving God – Connecting People – Unleashing Compassion.**

### OUR VISION

To impact the Kingdom of God through continued growth at the Canyon church while establishing campuses that will build relationships and reach souls in Phoenix – Arizona – the World.

(<https://www.canyonchurch.org/beliefs>) The Canyon church of Christ, Phoenix, Arizona

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The Hamilton Street “church of Christ” in Olney, Texas (if it can be called a *church of Christ*) is more like a Russian Orthodox Church under the Soviets. They obey the **government's dictates about their worship**.

As ordered and directed by our State and Local Governments, we continue to worship away from large gatherings. FACEBOOK WORSHIP SERVICES will be available and can be heard on Castbox on Sundays and Wednesdays. Please also let us know if you are interested in being on our list for Zoom Bible classes. If you do not have this availability, a printed copy of the service can be mailed. DON'T FORGET to mail in your contribution! P.O. Box 736, Olney, TX 76374. Our Elders are so grateful to each of us for supporting the work of the church so generously.

COMMUNION SUPPLIES are available and can be delivered to your home by request. (Olney, Texas, <https://hamiltonstreet.churchofchrist.info/#section6>)

The Elders **Sam Spurlock** and **Cully Williams**, of the Hamilton Street church of Christ, should be ashamed to bow before the state and local governments and allow them to “order and direct” their worship. Have those men ever read Peter's statement to the Sanhedrin? “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). How did they **ever** become elders? Certainly not by the New Testament! **Spurlock** and **Williams** need to grow backbones and stand up for the Word of God. They sound like a Russian Orthodox Church under the Soviets.

In connection with obeying the government to direct their worship, they also have a “drive in” communion: “**Communion supplies** are available and **can be delivered to your home by request**. Then they say, “**Don't forget** to mail in your contribution! P.O. Box 736, Olney, TX 76374. Our Elders are so grateful to each of us for supporting the work of the church so generously.” Have **Sam Spurlock** and **Cully Williams** ever read Paul's instructions on how to collect the contribution? “Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2). Here it is again: “**Upon the first day of the week**” (as Rush Limbaugh would have said, “For elders in Rio Linda that means on **SUNDAY**”) when the **church is assembled**—not “mail in your contribution.” That goes for the Lord's Supper, too. “And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

In Heb. 10:25, we find this statement: “Not forsaking our own **assembling** together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.” In this statement there is the command to **assemble**. Failure to **assemble** or **teaching that it is unnecessary to assemble is a violation of Bible authority...**

The command to observe the Lord's supper is found in 1 Cor. 11:24, “this do in remembrance of me”. Acts 20:7 teaches that the first day of the week is the day upon which it is to be observed. “And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples **came together** to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” This verse also teaches that we are to assemble to observe it. Hence, the New Testament teaches that the church is to assemble upon the first day of the week to observe the Lord's supper. This

we do by divine authority (Thomas F. Shropshire, "By What Authority Do We Assemble?", *The Gospel Guardian*, Oct. 9, 1958). [Emph. Ed.]

They already conduct their religion by Zoom and mail "to obey the government" in violation of the Bible to assemble to eat the Lord's Supper and collect the contribution. Why not just close the doors?

Here is something from the July 2023 *HomeMission Newsletter* right out of the First Baptist Church:

**"Heaven was rejoicing with North Main (Mt Airy NC) church of Christ Monday, July 17th and so were we!! ... It was an Ahhh-mazingly blessed day as Edgar Flores repented of his sins, asked for forgiveness, accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior and was baptized!!!"** This notice says that Edgar Flores was saved in this order:

1. "Repented of his sins"
2. "Asked for forgiveness"
3. "Accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour"
4. "And was baptized"

**If the Mount Airy church of Christ does not know what the plan of salvation is in The New Testament, we can help them. Here it is:**

1. Hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).
2. Believing in Jesus Christ and the Father (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6).
3. Repentance of sins (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38).
4. Confessing Jesus Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37).
5. Being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4).

Maybe next time the North Main Church of Christ in Mount Airy, North Carolina will study the New Testament, instead of *The Hiscox Standard Baptist Manual*.

**The 2nd and Adams Church of Christ, in Elk City, Okla. is now in fellowship with the St. Matthew Catholic Church in that city.** Both denominations practice the **Social Gospel** and are partners with The Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. The Social Gospel can be found in Chapter 11 on page 183 of *The Thing That Hath Been": The Cycle of Apostasy*. The Social Gospel is a merger of the infidel Robert Owen's brand of socialism with 19th century religion. That early form of religious socialism came to full fruition in the early 20th century and has been a dominant religious force ever since. **The Social Gospel is a False Religious Practice. Jesus didn't die for a soup line.**

### **Second and Adams Church of Christ In His Hands Food Pantry**

Our monthly food pantry is every 4th Friday of the month. **We are a partner with the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma**

Bible study is available at 5 pm before pantry begins.

If you are in need of grocery, household items, hygiene products, etc., We can help you!

Arrive at our food pantry by 6 pm. Please bring with an ID with you and there will be a form to fill out.

We also give out Thanksgiving and Christmas boxes during the holidays.

(<https://www.2acoc.org/in-his-hands-food-pantry>)

**St. Matthew Catholic Church, Elk City, Okla.**

**St. Matthew Food Bank**

Open every 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m

(<https://stmatthew.weconnect.com/foodbank>)

Bear Valley's tentacles stretch around the world. BVBI has extension schools in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Europe, and Oceania (New Zealand). That arrangement is diocesan in structure and foreign to the structure of the New Testament church. How do the Bear Valley elders oversee all of those schools? They don't...The Lord has no organization higher than the local congregation to do His work. This arrangement is unknown in the New Testament and is structured after the pattern of Catholicism. Jesus did not die for schools.

**(From "The Thing That Hath Been...": The Cycle of Apostasy, p. 183, 184)**



# More Cowardly Than Ahab

Charles Pogue

Ahab, of course, was one of the worst kings Israel ever had. This idol worshiping husband of Jezebel was worse than all the kings of Israel who came before him. There is something curious, though, about Ahab that arose when he met Elijah, as the prophet of God was on his way, by God's instructions, to show himself to Ahab. When Ahab met Elijah, and falsely accused him of troubling Israel, Elijah turned the accusation right back on Ahab, who was actually the guilty one for forsaking the commandments of the Lord and worshiping Baal (1 Kin. 18:14-18). At that point of the confrontation, Ahab is mindful of some brethren who falsely accuse others of being troublemakers, when it is actually they who have caused trouble by ignoring and disobeying some aspect of the law of Christ. The king responded with stone-cold silence.

If Ahab even attempted to answer Elijah, when he correctly turned Ahab's charge back upon him, we are not told. Apparently, he never said a word. Ahab reminds us of some who take a false position, or who do things that are out of harmony with the doctrine of Christ. At least in the mind of the accuser, an accused who will not answer has done little more than admit guilt. As the old saying goes, silence means consent. Well, it may or may not mean consent, but it certainly is a demonstration of arrogance!

Why once faithful brethren will not even attempt to defend their compromises in fellowship is not only a mystery, it stands in defiant rebellion to 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." "Answer" is the Greek word, *apologia*, which means to make a defense. If one is willing to extend fellowship to those who teach error, fellowship those who fellowship those who teach error, or (as one brother has said to have done) claims that the instructions Jesus gave for handling a personal offense against a brother does not apply in an academic setting, he ought to be willing to defend such actions. A failure to do so screams loud and clear that he knows he is in the wrong. Sadly, one has to give credit to Ahab for one thing that cannot be extended to some brethren today. Verses 19 and 20 of 1 Kings 18 says:

Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

Even though we are not told that Ahab even tried to answer Elijah's truthful statement about Ahab and his Father's house being the real troublers of Israel, when Elijah extended the Carmel challenge (equivalent to a public debate today), Ahab apparently did not try to weasel out of the challenge, make any excuse about why he should deny the challenge, nor trivialize the issue by calling Elijah a mote picker or heretic hunter. Instead, we are simply told that Ahab gathered the prophets. Ahab was dead wrong in his idol worship, but he was more willing to have the debate than some brethren are over the extremely important issue of fellowship.

Any persons who are willing to concede that fellowship is a crucial New Testament doctrine, and it is, as the epistle of John, and other passages bear out, should be willing to defend themselves when charges are made that they have in some way violated the commands given on the topic. But our brethren are not only unwilling to engage in a public discussion, they are mostly unwilling to have private conversations about the issue without a host of strings (such as vows of silence) attached.

We can only come to a number of possible conclusions when brethren are unwilling to discuss a matter. They know they are in the wrong, but will not admit it, they are aware they will suffer negative consequences when they lose the discussion, they are just plain arrogant, or they are more cowardly than Ahab. None of these possibilities speak well of those who are unwilling to talk, but it would be especially worrisome for one to face the fact that he is more craven than a king in Israel, who was more wicked than all of the others who came before him.

How sad, as well as incredibly wrong, it is to accuse those of us who see many instances of compromise in fellowship of just being troublemakers. No, there are very real wrongs in this regard, and the only things we would hope to seek corrected are the offenses that have been

committed against God, and for the breach of fellowship that has occurred to be healed. Anyone who is not willing to at least try to resolve those matters is certainly more cowardly than Ahab.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: I sent the following email message on Sept. 16, 2023 to Hank Lawrence who preaches for the Curry Street church of Christ in West Plains, Mo. His non-reply to me illustrates what brother Pogue wrote.**

Brother Lawrence,

It has been a long time since we corresponded—its been 3 years. I hope you are well. I have a question for you.

On May 11, 2020 I mailed you 10 copies of my book, *"The Thing That Hath Been": The Cycle of Apostasy* which you requested. When you received them and read the book, you responded: **"I can't thank you enough for your extensive work on this. I wish I could get this into the hands of every Christian out there."** I then printed your own words of commendation on the back cover of Volume 2, and I was very grateful for your kind words.

Now, brother Lawrence, **you are doing what you condemned with your commendation of my book.** Those who are speaking on the 39th Street Lectureship in Independence are in violation of the inspired John in 2 John 9-11 and many of them are in my book. In fact, many of those men have been marked as false teachers and you and the others are partakers of their evil deeds by bidding them God speed. Did you mean what you wrote about the book, or were you lying?

In The One Faith,  
Jerry C. Brewer

## Then and Now—"That Which is Done is That Which Shall be Done"

Michael Hatcher

We have the God-given obligation to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Each Christian is to be "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phi. 1:17). We know during "the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1). There have been many through the years that have departed "from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1). We thus have the need and obligation to "try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). However, those false teachers leading precious souls away come not only from without but also from within the Lord's church. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

When brother Ira Y. Rice returned from the Far East, he noticed the liberalism that had begun to infiltrate the church and the educational institutions among our brethren. This lead him to sound out a warning by writing three volumes of *Axe on the Root* from 1966 to 1970. Those three books were not enough so in January 1970, he came out with the first issue of *Contending For The Faith*.

During those early years of *Contending For The Faith*, brethren for the most part could recognize error. All that was needed at that time was the documentation (which brother Rice knew very well how to do) and say this is what they are doing. Generally, most brethren would then recognize the error and reject it. Brethren (elders, preachers, and most saints) knew the Scriptures and knew how to properly ascertain Bible authority and then properly apply that authority to specific situations and doctrines. There was a respect for God's Word and its being authoritative so when brethren would introduce innovations, those innovations were rejected and the brethren introducing them were marked.

However, the liberalism continued to make headway into the church. Our society became more liberal and disrespectful of authority and those attitudes were slowly accepted by members of the church. Additionally, **the social gospel that had been accepted by the denominational world also had its influence on congregations.** The influence of the colleges, which brother Rice had warned about, were having their influence in congregations. The students at the colleges studied under men who had little respect for the Word of God and they were going into



congregations and slowly becoming deacons and later elders in the church. However, the influence of their teachers had made its mark upon them.

Another cause of the liberalism in the church was the conversions of those who were denominational with a failure to ground them in the truth. Many of these were baptized into Christ from the denominational world, but they retained their denominational thoughts and ideas. These, like those college graduates who had been influenced by their liberal teachers, eventually became deacons and later elders.

In conjunction with these things, there was a continuing weakening of the pulpit. Preachers were called upon to do other things and have their time spent in temporal matters instead of spiritual matters (studying and preparing for classes and sermons). Elders and members often did not want anyone to be offended and the desire for more community church concepts grew.

Additionally, there has been the softening of fundamental matters both from the pulpit and from actions of preachers, elders, and members. There was not an insistence on living a life separated from the world and denominations so they continued to influence the church. We slowly compromised our convictions and refused to practice the fellowship and the withdrawing of fellowship demanded by God.

The result of these, and other matters, is that **now** things are different. As mentioned previously, when brother Rice began exposing error through his books and then *Contending For The Faith*, all that was needed was to document the error because as a general rule everyone knew the things he discussed were wrong. Now, however, that is not the case. One can **point out errors now and the majority of brethren do not know it is wrong**. Thus, today it is simply not sufficient to show or document someone's error. Today, it is still important to document such, but then it is also important to teach brethren why it is wrong.

In the long ago, God, through the prophet Hosea, stated of Israel, "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" (Hos. 4:6). Sadly, to a great extent, this can be said of the church today. So many fail to actually study God's Word anymore (2 Tim. 2:15) and simply rely on preachers or elders to do all the study for them and to do all their work. The churches of Christ today are not what they were at one time and are rushing headlong into total apostasy.

Things can be turned around, but **we must get back to God's Word** and doing only those things that God in His Word has **authorized**. This demands having respect for that Word and demanding such from others. It also means that each member of the church must get back to being like the noble Bereans who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). Only then can this growing apostasy be reversed.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Brother Kerry Sword was asked to teach a Wednesday evening adult class for the Plainview church of Christ in Henderson, Tenn., in the very shadow of Freed-Hardeman University. He gave the class a survey test and the results were shocking. You can read those results on page 6 of this issue. Those kinds of Bible-illiterate people are elders, preachers, deacons, and Bible class teachers in "Mainline Churches of Christ" and they are driving the Lord's church into the cesspool of apostasy today. Brother Hatcher's warning needs to echo across the world!**

## The Church and Young People

Franklin Camp

There are more young people in the world today than ever before. We have many fine young people in the church that are loyal and dedicated to the truth. We also have some that are using the young people in an attempt to restructure the church. Campus Evangelism was the first major effort to lead the young people away from the truth. Campus Evangelism was only a name to cover up what its real aim and purpose was. It was never designed to reach students on the universities with the truth. Campus evangelism no longer exists by name, but it is not dead. It has just gone underground. The principles and the practices of campus evangelism are still being advocated by many that are leading our young people astray. When Campus Evangelism threw in the towel many thought that was the end of the problem, but when seeds of error are planted, they are not so easily rooted out. Many of the errors of Campus Evangelism are still

being advocated. These errors and practices will corrupt the young people in the same way that Campus Evangelism was doing.

The problem among young people in the church did not develop overnight. Some of the things that we have allowed to happen opened the door. The beginning of this problem was parents rejecting their responsibility of bringing their children up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). Parents got so involved in the materialism of our day that they did not have the time or the inclination to do any teaching at home. The church was having classes, so just let the church take care of the teaching of the children. It is fine for the church to have classes for young people. This will never take the place of the responsibility of parents. God never intended for the church to take over the responsibility of mothers and fathers. The church cannot do this even if it tries. It is time for the church to refuse to accept the responsibility of parents and put the parents back to seeing after their God-given responsibility! I hear and read that the church is losing its young people. I deny that it is the church that is losing its young people it is the homes that are responsible for it. We need to put the blame where it belongs. The church cannot be saddled with a responsibility that God did not give it. How can the church be blamed for the failure of a responsibility that God never gave it? In our efforts and urging to get people to Bible classes, we have forgotten to teach parents to do some homework. It is time that we sent parents home to do some of this work.

The church, in allowing parents to put their responsibility off on it, found a load it could not carry. Elders began to look for ways to try to do the work. This is where youth directors, youth ministers, and retreats for young people came in the door. In addition to the church trying to take over the work of parents in teaching the Bible, it was now ready for the next step. It must provide recreation for the young people. The church found it was unable to do the teaching necessary when parents gave up their responsibility, and so, to try to hold the young people, it had to get into the recreation and entertainment field. Church-sponsored basketball, baseball and softball, and you-name-it teams—where is the verse of Scripture that even intimates, much less states, that this is the responsibility of the church. Timothy and Titus were young preachers associated with Paul, but with what stretch of the imagination can one conceive of Paul leaving Timothy at Corinth to organize a track team or race with the church at Ephesus, with Titus as their youth director? Or is it possible to picture Timothy carrying the young people at Ephesus on some retreat, then reporting in the Ephesus bulletin the following:

The young people at Ephesus have just experienced a new high in spirituality. Saturday night at 11:30, we blew out the lights and started spontaneous prayer, with the girls leading as well as the boys. We held hands while we prayed and you could feel the Holy Spirit working. At five minutes past twelve, we observed the Lord's Supper. It had never been so meaningful at Ephesus. Instead of passing the trays, in the old folk's way at Ephesus, we were asked to pass by the table in single file. Each passed by the table, partook of the bread and wine, then returned to his seat. Titus led us in singing while we were observing the supper. That communion service was so meaningful! Every heart was touched. Each communicant experienced renewal and forgiveness! It was beautiful and we praise God for "a full cup of blessing"! The highlight of the retreat was the speeches made by Hymenaeus and Philetus. Both of these men really know how to turn young people on! Hymenaeus discussed the subject: "Church Traditions" and Philetus discussed the "Holy Spirit and Spontaneous Worship Services," and really got things going. Both of these speakers really know how to talk to young people and they really laid "The Establishment" low. We are looking forward to our next retreat, to be at the Moonside Motel, on the Sea of Galilee.

-s- Timothy,

Youth Director for the church at Ephesus

Lest you think that I just made this up, let me say that the report of the Ephesus bulletin was taken from bulletins that I have received. I just changed the congregation, the youth directors, and the names of the speakers at the retreat.

If we are still in earnest about following the Bible, it is time that we stopped and gave careful consideration to some of these things. Does the church have special interest groups? When will the elders employ a "Lonely Hearts Director," a "Minister for the Sick," and let him do the visiting for all the church? When will the church get a minister for the over-thirty group and one for the old folks? If retreats for the young people produce a spiritual high, by turning out the lights and observing the Lord's Supper at five minutes after twelve, would not a little of this be

good for the old folks? To listen to some of the youth directors and speakers on these retreats, the old folks need it worse than the young. If having the Lord's Supper at five minutes after twelve makes it so much more spiritual and meaningful than at ten or eleven a.m., why not arrange for the whole church to meet regularly at five minutes after midnight and observe the Lord's Supper?

Another practice that has developed is to take the young people off somewhere on Sunday night following the regular service and have some kind of devotional. Is it out of order to ask what was wrong with the regular service? Why is the regular service good enough for the old folks, but not for the young? What scripturally takes place in these devotions that provide spirituality that does not in the regular service?

The church is the body of Christ. There are no special interest groups in the church whether they are young or old, male or female, black or white. To promote a special interest group in the church violates the unity of the church as taught in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 1:10). There is no more Scriptural basis for special interest groups in the church than there is for clergy and laity. Anything that promotes special interest groups in the church, whether it be young people, old people, or anyone else, violates the spirit of unity as taught in the New Testament.

Why cannot we let our young people be just simple Christians like all the rest? The young people can make a contribution to the cause of Christ just as older people do. They can work beside and along with others in the church. They can grow spiritually in the same manner as the rest of the church. John said, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14). It is not significant that not a single letter in the New Testament is written to young people as a group and dealing with their problems as distinct from other Christians? There are no special youth epistles in the New Testament. The instruction given to the young is right alongside the instruction given to all other Christians.

I am not opposing young people. I would be just as opposed in an effort to make a special group out of old people and corrupt them and leading them into error. If I had no interest in young people, I would never have written this article, as I know before it is ever printed that it is not going to win me any popularity, but the church and the spiritual and eternal welfare of the young.

**Editor's Note:** The young people that brother Camp wrote about are now grown and they are the ones who are now leading the church. That possibly gives us an understanding as to why the church is heading at break-neck speed into apostasy.

## Drifting?-No! The Church is Going Full Steam Ahead!

George E. Darling, Sr.

Every time you pick up one of "our" Gospel papers you read of the **great** workshops, seminars, retreats, training programs, lectureships, forums, enrichment series, each one of them preparing for the attendance of thousands of Soul Winners and Personal Workers and thousands do attend! They hear lessons that stir their enthusiasm, but old brother J.D. Tant used to say, "Brethren, we are drifting." I wonder what he would say today if he could see all the gimmicks and clap-trap methods that are being used by some of my brethren **under the guise of "Evangelism."**

We have brought up a generation of church members who are ignorant of and unconcerned about the distinctive doctrine and practice of the New Testament church. We ridiculed the preachers who preached Faith, Repentance, Confession and Baptism, and started telling people to "accept Jesus as their personal Savior." Today we have many who claim membership in the Lord's body that cannot tell you what they did in order to be saved! (If you doubt it hand out paper and pencils and ask them to write down the gospel plan of salvation. See how many blanks you get back.) We became tired of hearing about **the one church**, so we started talking about our denominational **friends**, our **Baptist neighbor** and our **Methodist brethren**. Now we have gone so far that at least one has joined the Ministerial Association and another is teaching in denominational **Growth Seminars**.

In many places we are having serious trouble with men who once proclaimed the truth but are today proclaiming error. Some of us try to follow the scriptures and "mark them" but others continue to lend their full endorsement and financial support, and on, and on, and on. What brought all this about? I believe the principle thing is that we failed to "feed the flock" on proper food. We fed them on a constant diet of **love, enthusiasm, tolerance, fellowship**, but we allowed them to literally starve spiritually, concerning the New Testament distinction between **truth and error, between the Lord's church and denominationalism**. When distinction between truth and error vanishes from the teaching, it will not be long until that distinction is lost in practice. There can be no doubt that teaching, in some places has already lost its distinctiveness, and in those places, distinctiveness in practice is already dying.