

MUSINGS ON “THE JOURNALISM OF HATE”

Dub McClish

The Gospel Journal (*TGJ*, henceforth) was not begun primarily to engage in direct confrontation with either periodicals or persons. However, it certainly does not contradict our published editorial aims to be confrontational when occasion demands. Such an occasion has arisen, and I cannot conscientiously ignore it, all the while striving to avoid even the semblance of any personal attack. My quarrel is not with the fellow editor himself (whose name can be gleaned from the paper he edits), but with that which he has written.

The March [2000] editorial in *The Christian Chronicle* (*TCC*, henceforth) (the most widely circulated publication among the Lord’s people) is the piece to which I allude. I encourage readers with access to that article to read/reread it along with my comments. The editorial under consideration is not an anomaly for *TCC*. It is in fact just “one more thing” to indicate its leftward prejudice. However, since it is so representative of that pervasive bias, and since it strikes out at brotherhood journalistic efforts (such as *TGJ*), I deem it worthy of special attention.

The editorial, titled “Journalism of Hate Mars Churches,” began as follows: “The announcement of a new paper positioned to the far right represents a new threat to the unity and love of the church.” This statement alone brought numerous queries to my desk as to whether or not the editor might be referring to *TGJ*. The editor of *TCC* has consistently denied (in response to several direct inquiries to him) that he had *TGJ* in mind, although those who drew this inference can certainly be excused for so doing. When the editorial was written *TGJ*, was indeed “a new paper” (I know of none other that was begun two months prior to said editorial), and from *TCC* editor’s perspective, *TGJ* would most certainly be “positioned to the far right.” The editor claims he got his information about a “new paper” from a “flyer” that “came from Houston and included no particulars” (his comments e-mailed to me March 15). In spite of diligent searching, he has been unable to find and send to me a requested copy of the flyer. But, I digress. Which paper got the editor’s dander up is actually immaterial.

The essay proceeded to describe the perceived threat: “Mean-spirited papers that promote totally unchristian attitudes of sarcasm, ridicule, disrespect, and hatred.” The writer refers to “hate” in one form or another several times (as though he were capable of judging motives flawlessly). He attacks “personal attacks.” He drops innuendoes about those who employ “innuendoes.” His assault upon “hate-filled rhetoric” is not stated very lovingly. He seeks to discredit and defame all journalism, which, in his judgment, discredits and/or defames any institution or person. His words appeared downright angry as he lashed out against journalistic “anger.” He clearly disparages using “disparagement” as a rhetorical tool. However, he doubtless had a godly spirit when he railed against the “godless tactics” of those “positioned to the far right”!

I readily agree (and have so written *TCC* editor) that hate-laced journalism hurts the church. We must not excuse it (no more from the “left” than from the “right,” incidentally): “Let all that ye do be done in love” (1 Cor. 16:14). However, the “journalism of hate” is not nearly the most detrimental threat to the faith, as the editorial seems to imply. The church surely faces several dangers, many (if not most) of which are products of the one great religious philosophy generally identified as “liberalism.” As the term liberalism implies, this philosophy takes liberties with God’s absolute and authoritative will. Ironically, it is this very deadliest of dangers that *TCC* has made a study of publicizing, coddling, and promoting since Oklahoma Christian University resurrected the paper several years ago.

“Hate-inspired” journalism is out of place and may be offensive and discouraging, but liberalism absolutely destroys. It cuts the church loose from her Scriptural moorings and leaves her adrift on the compassless seas of inclusivism and pluralism. Liberalism strikes at the very heart of the distinctiveness—the very life—of the church of Christ. I will not try to judge the motives of the self-styled change agents, but it is no difficult task to inspect their fruit (Mat. 7:15–20). They have already converted many once strong and faithful congregations into mere denominations—never mind that they still display “Church of Christ” on their buildings. They are aggressively working on many others. Such men are not merely “marring” churches. They are destroying them, whether or not intentionally!

TCC editorial aimed its chastening remarks only toward “conservatives” who are “positioned to the far right.” It is dead silent about even the possibility that liberals could ever engage in personal attacks or in such odious tactics as sarcasm, disparagement, or the laundry list of its other accusations. Its heaping of blame and deprecatory terms upon “the far right” and “conservatives” reminds me of the tactics of liberal politicians. It is almost as if liberals in the church have made a study of their strategies (or is it that all liberals, whether political or theological, innately operate alike?). When the policies or practices of political liberals are exposed by appeals to law or logic, they typically “answer” by attempting to intimidate—accusing, demeaning, and demonizing.

The editorial borrowed a page from the liberal politician’s handbook, containing enough of the aforementioned strategies to last a good while. For the most part liberal brethren will not engage in serious discussion, much less debate, when they are confronted either with the unlawfulness or illogic of their doctrines and practices. They are quick to demonize and demean, apparently hoping to intimidate, however. Their response consistently seems to be aimed at arousing emotions and feelings in their favor and against those who dare question them, rather than attempting a Biblical defense.

The editorial also raised the issues of pride and animosity in the church, but left the distinct impression that those on “the left” are incapable of such attitudes. Perhaps *TCC* officers have never been on the receiving end of any of the vitriolic verbiage of which a riled up liberal is capable. But why should they have heard such from the liberals? They are clearly one with them, promoting and praising them month-after-month, year-after-year! *TCC* has not published or promoted anything in the last many years of which I am aware that would make any liberal school, church, paper, or person the least bit unhappy.

If *TCC* brethren were a mind to they could easily learn how mean and bitter their “loving” liberal brethren can be (tapes and books containing such abound). (But, of course, they already know, because they are of the same blood.) Are they unaware of the sarcasm-laden, derisive speeches being given in such forums as university lectureships, the Tulsa Workshop, and the Nashville Jubilee? Or is it just “good clean fun” when liberals ridicule their pitifully “tradition-bound” brethren as “five-steppers” with

their “1950s Gospel for a 1950s church”? Is it not interesting that the self-proclaimed “objective” secular media hold political conservatives to far higher standards than those they freely allow for their liberal darlings and for themselves? If this is not what *TCC* did in this editorial, it will take some convincing for me to see it. They seem to reason, “Why those ole mossbacks deserve all that we can dish out to discredit them, and more”!

The editorial, however, does serve a useful purpose, several purposes in fact. Its writer, obviously frustrated with those pesky, hateful, “mean-spirited,” “far right” brethren (especially those ornery journalists!) may have said and admitted more than he intended. His words reveal beyond question which “side” *TCC* is on. Since the editorial states that conservative journals (e.g., *TGJ*) are “positioned to the far right,” then it must follow that *TCC*, by its own declaration, is “positioned to the far left” of that unnamed journal to which the editorial refers. Its editor has claimed in a letter to me that *TCC* merely reports events and that “reporting events is not the same as encouraging events.” That claim is now exposed as patently fraudulent. *TCC* editorial demonstrated in a superior way the very traits it railed against and set out to expose. It is, in fact, a prime example of self-righteous hypocrisy. “Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judges another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practice the same things” (Rom. 2:1).

While a student at Freed-Hardeman College (now F-HU) in 1954-57, I was privileged to study under the late Olan Hicks, founding publisher/editor of *TCC*. He loved the Gospel Truth and would tolerate no foolishness concerning it or the church that it produces. He began that newspaper in 1943 to build up, strengthen, and encourage the New Testament Church. Could he see what the paper he began and nursed along at such sacrifice for so long has done and continues to do to the bride of Christ, he would rue the day he ever thought of starting it.

I do not mean to be unkind, only frank: For the past several years *TCC* has been the foremost promotional platform for every loose and liberal person and project still claiming to be part of the church of Christ, thereby hastening the great apostasy of our time—and the division it is spawning— to its sad climax. All who have any voice in publishing and editing *The Christian Chronicle* ought to be ashamed with a capital “A”!

[Note: I wrote this MS, and it originally appeared as an “Editorial Perspective” in the July 2000 issue of *The Gospel Journal*, a 36-page monthly of which I was editor at the time.]