

“Prophesy Ye Not...”

Micah 1:6

Dub McClish

Introduction

The first verse of Micah’s book is ripe with several important details. The name *Micah* means “Who is like Jehovah?” and is an abbreviated form of *Michaiah*, the name of the fearless prophet of Israel, who withstood wicked Ahab and his four hundred hired prophets two centuries earlier (1 Kin. 22:8). Micah was a “Morashtite,” indicating that he was from the rural village of Moresheth, twenty-two miles southwest of Jerusalem. He was a man of the country rather than of the city.

He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, all kings of Judah, the reigns of which spanned the last half of the eighth century and the early part of the seventh century B.C. From Isaiah 1:1 and Hosea 1:1 we learn that Micah was contemporary with these two prophets. Each of these prophets had their respective spheres of service. Isaiah was God’s court prophet in Jerusalem whose message was primarily to Judah, but also pertained to other nations as well. Hosea was God’s prophet to Israel in its last evil days. Micah was God’s prophet in Judah to those outside of Jerusalem, but his message was both to Samaria and Jerusalem (i.e., Israel and Judah).

Micah’s time was a period of great political unrest. Both Israel and Judah had become very weak nations, and they were positioned between the power-hungry Egyptians to their southwest and the equally power-hungry Assyrian and Syrian nations to their north. Micah prophesied the fall of both Israel (1:6–7) and Judah (3:12) and that Judah would be taken to Babylon (4:10). It was also a time of moral and religious corruption among those in high places. The rich and powerful took unfair advantage of those not so blessed (2:1–2, 8–9). The rulers had forsaken justice, hated the good, and loved the evil (3:1, 9; 7:3–4). The self-proclaimed prophets preached errors and false “peace” and followed the money trail (vv. 5–7, 11). The priests were mere hirelings (v. 11). The corruption of their leaders had trickled down to the common people (7:2, 5–6).

The foregoing factors called for a powerful outcry against them and warnings of God’s judgments if they continued in them. Micah and his message from God were not generally welcomed: The people had their own message for him: “Prophesy ye not” (2:6a). They did not

want to hear any more of his guilt-and shame-inducing declarations. To his credit, he continued his powerful preaching, nonetheless.

Reaction to Micah's Message Not Unusual

Rather than being unusual, the reaction to Micah's exposure of their errors and evils was quite predictable. A mere cursory survey of the other Old Testament prophets reveals this reaction to be the norm. The people rejected the voice of mighty Moses on more than one occasion. Jeroboam I was not at all amenable to the Judean prophet's denunciation against the king's idolatrous altar in Bethel (1 Kin. 13:1-4). Ahab hated and persecuted righteous Michaiah, God's one true prophet in the midst of the king's four hundred hired prophets, because "...he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil (1 Kin. 22:8).

While people in the countryside were telling Micah, "Prophesy ye not," Isaiah described the Jerusalem city folk as...

...a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us (Isa. 30:9-11).

The corrupt priests and prophets of Jeremiah's day sought to kill him in order to silence him (Jer. 26:7-8). When Uriah prophesied against Jerusalem, Jehoiakim brought him back from Egypt to which he had fled and slew him with the sword (26:20-23). God warned Ezekiel that the captive Israelites in Babylon were rebellious, impudent, and stiff hearted and compared them to briars, thorns, and scorpions (Eze. 2:3-6; 3:7). The people counted his message from Jehovah as "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice...; for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (33:31-32).

Amos, God's prophet to Israel in the days of Jeroboam II, decried the treatment of the prophets ever since Israel entered Canaan:

And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah. But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not (Amos 2:11-12).

When Amos explicitly prophesied God's judgment upon Jeroboam and Israel's captivity, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel reported it to the king and then said to Amos: "O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel" (7:8-13). Jesus summarized the gross and almost universal mistreatment of the prophets who came before Him:

Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you (Mat. 5:11-12).

The Lord amplified His description of the gross mistreatment the prophets received at the hands of Israel through the centuries:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets Mat. 23:29-31).

Stephen uttered a similar summary of the abuse God's prophets received at the hands of His people through their long history:

Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:51-52).

Among the notable exceptions to the consistent rejection of the prophets and their messages were David, who repented at the preaching of Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1-15), and the Gentile city of Nineveh that repented at the preaching of Jonah (Jon. 3:4-10).

The rejection of God's message and messengers in the New Testament record follows a similar pattern. Herodias despised John for daring to condemn her ungodly marriage to Herod, influencing Herod to behead him (Mark 6:16-19). Evil men so abhorred the Lord's message and its influence that they crucified Him. The Sanhedrin arrested Peter and John and "charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). They ordered, "Prophesy ye not," but Jesus had commanded, "Preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Their refusal to comply with the ungodly order led to the arrest, imprisonment, threat of death, and beating of all of the apostles, and another order "not to speak in the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:17-40). When the Jews could not refute Stephen's powerful message of Truth, they murdered him (7:54-60).

It is obvious that Saul's crusade against the church, following Stephen's death, was an attempt to silence the Gospel message in accordance with the Sanhedrin's edict to the apostles to cease their preaching (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2). From Acts 13 through the remainder of the book, Paul's travels may almost be traced by the numerous attempts to silence him, including beatings, imprisonments, court trials, mob violence, being stoned, and being chased from one

place to another. With one voice they (in almost every case Jews, whether in or out of the church) were saying, “Prophesy ye not.”

With all of this history before us, why should any of God’s spokesmen be surprised at the attempts of those who would silence **our** voices? Indirectly, the explicit warnings of abuse and mistreatment the Lord told the apostles to expect apply to those in every age who faithfully wield the sword of the Spirit (Mat. 10:17–34). He even quoted some of Micah’s words to prepare them for what would come: “For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (vv. 35–36; cf. Mic. 7:6).

In the Lord’s long discourse to the apostles in the upper room, he cautioned: “Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20). In effect, he was saying, “If they seek to silence me, they will seek to silence you.” As long as time lasts, those who are determined to deliver the unadulterated Word of God will hear the voices and feel the pressures of those who demand, “Prophesy ye not.”

Some Modern Voices That Cry, “Prophesy Ye Not”

In this age, distant from the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament heralds of the Word, we still hear this demand from several directions. Among them are the following:

Brethren in Local Congregations

Doubtless, the idolatrous pagans did not appreciate the preaching of the prophets against their idolatry, assigning them to Hell. Note, however, that it was **God’s elect** that rejected and abused the prophets He sent. So it continues to be. One need not have a very long record of faithful preaching (or even teaching a Bible class) before he will encounter the cry, “Prophesy ye not.” Far too often these proscriptions have come from worldly-minded elders who care more about attendance and contribution figures than they do about the Gospel Truth and the salvation of souls by means of that Gospel.

Almost all brethren can take considerable quantities of Gospel preaching on sin and certain doctrinal issues, as long as the sermons are only generally applied. However, when one begins to get specific, some demonstrate an almost non-existent tolerance threshold for such “meddling” and “divisive” preaching.

It may take only one sermon or class in which Matthew 19:6–9 is thoroughly examined and applied to provoke the silencers. Another reliable test of faithfulness to the Truth is preaching on holiness and righteousness, if specifically applied to such things as drinking, wearing immodest apparel, smoking, dancing, and buying lottery tickets. If these subjects, faithfully discussed, do not stir the ire, especially of some of the mommas and daddies of teenagers, the congregation may need to be tested for deafness.

The urge to spring the trapdoor under the faithful preacher will sometimes surface when he dares preach the Truth on unselfishness, materialism, and giving as the Lord has prospered us. The old story about the fellow who left his billfold in his pocket before he was baptized may be fictional, but it makes a point. When the preacher suggested he remove it, the man being baptized replied that he left it there on purpose because he wanted it to be buried and rise to “newness of life,” also. It is obvious that many left their wallets not only out of their clothes, but out of their commitment when they were baptized. Some brethren get very uncomfortable when you declare the “whole counsel of God” about giving. Some may even say, “Prophesy ye not.”

If the foregoing subjects do not arouse the teeth-gnashing, out-crying, and ear stopping against the preacher, he should expound on “church discipline.” The situation usually becomes even more exciting when the elders must lead the church to practice what the Word of God teaches on this subject. Then they will say, “Prophesy ye not” to the elders **and** the preacher. I have seen brethren stand up in the assembly when an elder announced the withdrawal, challenging the right of the elders thus to lead the congregation. I have seen brethren take the withdrawn-one out to lunch in a show of support on the Sunday the withdrawal was announced. These folks are not about to do what the Bible teaches, nor do they want the elders and other members to do so, either.

Over the last four decades, “ordinary,” “pew-sitting” brethren in growing numbers have been stopping their ears and vocally registering their opposition to unequivocal preaching on such fundamental themes as the Scriptural identity of the church, authorized worship, and the necessity and Scriptural purpose of baptism. They cannot stomach the Biblical concept of the exclusiveness of God’s people. Such preaching is offensive to them because it is offensive to their lost friends and kindred, whose approval they covet more than the Lord’s. They are embarrassed by the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

Preach on the foregoing subjects and one usually does not have to wait very long to hear their caterwauling, “Prophesy ye not.” Such folk, including numerous elderships, who have thus muffled God’s messengers on these topics, have been a major force in the loss of so many congregations to liberalism over the past half-century.

Hardly a subject of Holy Writ exists but that some, even in a small congregation, are ready to gag the preacher (as the Judeans of Micah’s time did). Those topics that spark guilt and discomfort and that challenge hearers to repent and pursue a righteous path elicited this reaction against Micah twenty-seven centuries ago. The shallow and selfish saints in our time continue to react in a similar fashion. Times and circumstances change, but human nature and behavior remain rather constant.

Liberals in the Brotherhood at Large

This class of brethren has far broader influence than Pete and Mollie Worldling or Jack and Betsy Deepockets in a local congregation. I speak of such movers and shakers as the administrators and professors who occupy the “chief seats in the synagogues” of the universities operated by brethren, coating every surface of the church they can reach with their paint of poison progressiveness. I have in mind the big-name “doctors of the law” who have their DDs, DMin, MDiv, or PhDs, but who came away from earning those degrees with less faith than they had when they began pursuing them. It is amazing the number of congregations that tolerate men who feed them a steady diet of pious poison which kills their souls – and pay them (often quite handsomely) to do so. (I do not belittle the sacrifices one must make to earn an advanced degree, but not a few have made the ultimate sacrifice in doing so – that of their faith in God and His Word.)

These folk include the “scribes” who spew out an incessant stream of books, the purpose of which is to depict the church as a denomination and to convert it to that very status with all deliberate speed. All of these proudly wear the *change agent* label. As sly and slippery serpents, they continually push their humanly originated deviations on the church of God.

In short, these are the pseudo-brethren who are clustered around and are so highly favored by the misnamed *The Christian Chronicle*, the publishers of which (Oklahoma Christian University), as did the Athenian pagans, “spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:20b). Its editors and reporters delight in nothing more than to promote, endorse, and encourage every loose, liberal, and leftist doctrine and practice the most religiously degenerate person, institution, or congregation can devise. Were they honest, they

would have years ago changed the paper's name to *The Apostasy Chronicle*, for that is exactly what it is. They have a strict advertising policy that turns down advertisements for conservative causes and publications as "too controversial," but that welcomes a full-page ad for a Bethany College lectureship (March 2009). But why should they not do so? To do so is no worse than to serve as a promotional organ for Pepperdine, ACU, LU or some of the other schools. (Who knows? In some respects, Bethany may be more conservative than they are.)

From these folk come the negative accusations that those who preach the old paths are "negative." This tribe suggests that when we preach the Truth on baptism we engage in "judging" others, apparently incapable of recognizing that their very words constitute a judgment of God Himself, of the Word of God, and of those who preach it. When we preach the Gospel plan of salvation, they ridicule us as "five-steppers." I much prefer to be a Scriptural "five-stepper" than a damnable-doctrine one-or two-stepper that many of them have become. When we insist that there are only five authorized acts of worship, again, we are "five-steppers." Also again, far better so to be than a seven-or-more-stepper that some of them are.

When we do the Lord's bidding and warn of false prophets (Mat. 7:15-20), they hurl charges of "witch-hunters" or "brotherhood watchdogs" our way. When we dare to mark the false teacher so he can be identified and avoided (Rom. 16:17-18), we are "mote-hunters" and "heretic detectors." Those who believe in the infallibility and authority of the Word of God are "fundamentalists," to be avoided, according to such enlightened folk.

All such religious riffraff in the church despises the Truth of the Lord, which means they despise the Lord of the Truth (John 14:15). Their behavior also demonstrates clearly that they despise the church of the Lord and therefore the Lord of the Church (Acts 20:28). Were the Son of God and the apostle Paul to appear on earth today, these high-octane administrators, professors, preachers, authors, and editors would not allow them to preach two minutes in their sanctimonious domains before they ran them out, crying aloud, "Prophesy ye not"!

Fellowship Compromisers

During the summer of 2005, a new breed of brethren emerged. These are folk with whom many of us worked harmoniously and enjoyably in countless endeavors for the Lord, both at home and abroad. Many of these relationships began more than four decades ago, but they came to an abrupt and very sad end as fellowship between us and them had to cease.

The brethren whom I am describing have revealed themselves to be an unusual lot, a sort of “mixed breed,” spiritually speaking. They are not “liberal” in the sense of the previously noted liberals (although some of them are perceptibly moving more and more in that direction as I will document subsequently). They would likely say a hearty “amen” to the material in the previous section. In fact, they are in most respects conservative in doctrine and practice. Many of these men have stood in the pulpits of Scripturally sound congregations (such as Bellview) numerous times in lectureships and Gospel meetings. One of them served as the Bellview evangelist several years. The question then comes, “Why are you not still in fellowship with them?” This question is a fair one, and it deserves a straightforward answer.

The answer is easily demonstrable: These men decided they must support and keep in existence an institution (Apologetics Press [AP], whose executive director had been dismissed because of scandal) at all costs. Sixty men signed their names to a document of support for AP. They did so, not knowing at the time who its new Executive Director would be. Soon thereafter, AP announced that brother Dave Miller was chosen for this post. This decision created what must have been an uncomfortable dilemma for some. As early as 1990, some, if not many, among the AP supporters had rightly opposed the practice of elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation as practiced by the Brown Trail Church of Christ in Bedford, Texas. Moreover, they knew that brother Miller, one of the full-time preachers at Brown Trail at the time, led in planning and executing that very procedure. They further knew that he had never repented of his part in that unauthorized program but had continued to defend it as late as 2002.

The signers of the AP support statement now had to make a choice. They could not logically or Scripturally support AP without supporting its head, an impenitent false teacher. They could not, however, continue to oppose Miller’s error without opposing him, and they could not oppose him without opposing AP. They were at a crossroads in their convictions, and tragically, **they took the road of fellowship compromise**. They continued their support of AP and began defending Dave Miller and his error, which they had formerly opposed. Many have continued to engage in “direct” fellowship with him by associating with him in approving circumstances. Many others continue to engage in “indirect” fellowship with him by fellowshiping those who are “directly” fellowshiping him. Whether the fellowship is “direct” or “indirect,” John makes it plain that both practitioners are implicit partakers in Miller’s errors (2 John 9-11). Those who value the Truth and those who uphold it above friendship, family,

fortune, and favor cannot have fellowship with those who have compromised it. The Miller defenders have followed the myopic example of Esau, swapping their spiritual birthrights for a mess of carnal pottage (Gen. 25:29–33).

When some of us called upon them to be true to their previously declared convictions and pointed out the hypocrisy of their new course, they (and their followers) came up with numerous excuses for their decision (e.g., “we support AP, but not any errors of which Miller may be guilty” [soon abandoned because of its obvious impossibility, as noted above], “unless one was present in 1990 when these things took place, he cannot oppose them” [foolish on the surface], “Miller is being misrepresented,” “that happened sixteen years ago,” et al.). Perhaps the justification on which most have settled is that “elder r/r is not worth dividing the church over.” Note that this statement does not deny that the doctrine/practice is unauthorized. Rather, it implies that it is sinful, but that it “does not rise to the level of an impeachable offense,” a bold judgment and declaration, indeed.

In subsequent years, numerous attempts have been made to discuss these fellowship fractures openly and fairly, but to no avail. They have met all such attempts either with derision or no response at all. Ironically, the leaders among these backslidden brethren have decided on a course of silence—to say to themselves, “prophesy ye not”—and have encouraged their followers in the same course. Additionally, their words have indirectly reached us indicating that they are most displeased with our accusations. In effect, their message to us is “Prophesy ye not.” They are obviously (and understandably) weary of our continued exposé of their errors. I suppose the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees grew weary of the Lord’s incessant exposures of their errors, but He did not relent. Neither shall we cease to call these brethren, beloved in the Lord, to repentance.

They seem not to comprehend that they have involved themselves in more than one error: First, they have **cast aside in practice the Biblical doctrine of fellowship** as it relates to false teachers (Rom. 16:17–18; 1 Cor. 5:9–11; 2 The. 3:6, 14; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 9–11). By embracing the first, they are guilty of the second: By their alignment with and defense of the principal practitioner among us of the elder r/r error, **they have become guilty of teaching his error**, all their denials notwithstanding (2 John 10–11). Perhaps they still teach orally the Truth about fellowship that I have always known them to teach and preach. However, by practicing the opposite of their preaching, their “actions speak louder than their words” and demonstrate what can only be characterized as hypocrisy.

These brethren are not thus behaving out of ignorance, either of brother Miller's errors (for they formerly opposed them) or of the Word of God (the leaders among them are men well-seasoned in the faith by many decades of study, preaching, and teaching). No, their course is one of will and conscious decision, making it inexcusable. Folk who so brazenly flout one Divine mandate set themselves up to flout others. After all, if not on the conscious, surely on the subconscious level, the transgression at Point A must make it easier to yield at Point B. Then comes Point C, and so on. Have we not already seen this in several of these brethren? Their compromise with brother Miller and his doctrine has led them to embrace numerous others for whom they earlier had nothing but justifiable criticism, yea disdain. Their changed attitude and association with these brethren did not occur because the ones formerly not fellowshiped changed, but because the ones now embracing them changed. And why not? Fellowship with one false teacher naturally leads to fellowship with additional ones. These are compromises in **practice**.

If some of these brethren read what I am writing in the following paragraphs they will most likely cry aloud, "Prophesy ye not"! I say, however, that if I should hold my peace, the stones would cry out with the message (Luke 19:37-40). At least some of these are now moving into the realm of **doctrinal** compromise. Forest Hill Church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee, is the home of Memphis School of Preaching, the two of which combined wield a broad and powerful influence. In the February 10, 2009, *Forest Hill News* Barry Grider, Forest Hill preacher, and one of the instructors in the school, published three articles that contained some very questionable statements and dangerous implications (these articles are archived on the Forest Hill Website). He wrote the first of the three articles, titled, "I Got Used to It," in which he made the valid point that we should not bind matters not bound by Scripture.

At first glance, one might suppose that he was aiming his remarks at the anti-cooperation/anti-orphan home brethren, but not so. Rather, he had in his crosshairs "an element in the brotherhood who, because of their weak faith, are always resistant to any kind of change." In the examples he uses, it is clear that he is aiming at what he and others of his persuasion perceive to be a "new anti-ism," as described by Brian Kenyon, Associate Director of Florida School of Preaching in the January 2008 issue of *The Harvester* (this article may be read on the Florida School of Preaching Website). Brother Grider accused brethren of opposing some things just because they "got used to" a certain way of doing things and did not want to change. One of the changes to which he thinks we should not object is using in worship the

unscriptural, Pentecostal-flavored song, "Sweet, Sweet Spirit." This is indeed a "change" to which I object.

Are we to infer from this broad-brush indictment that any time anyone resists any sort of change, he is a weak-faith brother? Are we to conclude from his article that there are no longer any changes that our brother would not resist? I know that there is at least one, for in his article he correctly proscribed worship with instrumental music. Is he a "weak-in-faith" brother for resisting those who want to employ instruments? If nothing else can be said about his article, he needs to learn to write with greater precision and with less generalizing. Contrary to his dictum, resistance to change in this day of "change agents" on every hand demonstrates strong, rather than weak faith.

Brother Grider did not write the second article, but he used it with his full endorsement to buttress and elucidate more fully the point of his own article. The second article, "Binding Where God Has Not," was written by brother Tyler Young, preacher for the Roanoke, Texas, Church of Christ. Brother Grider prefaced it with an "Editor's Note": "The following article is an excerpt of material prepared by brother Young for the 2008 Lubbock Lectureship." That he wrote this material for the occasion mentioned is true, but brother Grider did not at random select this section from the book of the Lubbock Lectures. Brother Grider forgot to mention the fact that Tommy Hicks, Director of the Lubbock Lectures, refused to publish this section of brother Young's MS because he did not believe it was Scripturally sound.¹

As in brother Grider's article, there is much in brother Young's essay with which all faithful brethren will agree. However, in his comments (endorsed by Grider, remember), he questions if we should have fellowship concerns about various practices that faithful brethren must question seriously. According to Young, such things as what version one uses for teaching and preaching, dismissing Sunday evening worship in favor of small group meetings or for the Super Bowl, serving coffee and doughnuts in Bible classes, or missing a meeting of the church to compete in a sporting event should not be considered signs of liberalism and should not affect fellowship. Space forbids further elaboration, but these comments indicate the "flavor" of the article. I applaud brother Hicks and the Southside elders for refusing to endorse and publish this material. Please recall that brother Grider gave this article his imprimatur; **he is in full agreement with it.**

Immediately following the Young article, he printed an article that has been around for many years, titled "I Drew My Circle Again." It mocks the concept of recognizing fellowship

restrictions, implying a broad ecumenism. While the Lord's people dare not be self-righteously judgmental, this little ditty implies that one should make no judgments at all. Of course, the only justifiable basis anyone has for drawing lines of fellowship, whether circular, triangular, square, rectangular or any other shape, is where the Lord has drawn them in His Word. I kindly suggest to brother Grider that he needs to draw that circle yet again. Over the past several years, it is obvious that he has considerably enlarged his circle. It seems to be much larger now than it was a few years ago, and it seems to be getting larger all the time. It is certainly larger than the "circle" the Lord has drawn for us (Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 9-11).

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

Given the foregoing information, several questions come to mind:

1. Do the Forest Hill elders endorse what their preacher has written and published in the February 10, 2009, issue of *The Forest Hill News*? If they do not, should they not issue a disclaimer? If they remain silent, must we not conclude that they agree with the articles?
2. Do the director and faculty of Memphis School of Preaching endorse what one of their instructors has written and published in the February 10, 2009, issue of *The Forest Hill News*? If they do not, should they not issue a disclaimer? If they remain silent, must we not conclude that they agree with the articles?
3. Do the board members of The Gospel Journal, Inc., endorse what one of their former editors and currently their advisor has written and published in the February 10, 2009, issue of *The Forest Hill News*? If they do not, should they not issue a disclaimer? If they remain silent, must we not conclude that they agree with the articles? (We know the answer to these questions relating to The Gospel Journal, Inc., at least in part. Board member Tommy Hicks so utterly disagreed with the Young article that Grider endorsed and published that he refused to allow it in the Lubbock Lectures book, which he edited and published. Another board member, Kenneth Ratcliff, was unhappy with some of these "leanings" in brother Grider as long ago as September 2003.)
4. Do the elders of the Roanoke, Texas, Church of Christ endorse what their preacher, Tyler Young, has written and which was published in the February 10, 2009, issue of *The Forest Hill News*? If they do not, should they not issue a disclaimer? If they remain silent, must we not conclude that they agree with the articles?

This Grider article with its accompaniments is fully germane to the subject of this chapter. If I did not miss it entirely, the purpose of his and Young's material was to say to those of us who have "weak faith," "Prophecy ye not"! They do not want us to expose the new direction they have taken that, if followed, will lead brethren astray. The source of their misdirection is their initial compromise regarding fellowship. After all, if one can extend fellowship to a false teacher, why not spread the fellowship "circle" to include those who preach and teach out of the NIV, those who think a ball game is more important than Wednesday night Bible study, or that the Super Bowl is excuse enough to permit the whole church to forsake the assembly?

For years the story has been told of a father back East who bought unimproved property on the frontier and sent his sons to begin making it habitable. He plotted for them where the house and barn were to be built and where the well was to be dug. As the story goes, they built the house and the barn where their father told them to, but decided he wanted the well dug in the wrong place. They dug it where they chose, instead of where he instructed. The question then comes, in what respects did they obey their father? The correct answer is, "None." They happened to agree with the specified locations of the house and barn, otherwise they would have changed those, also. We have long iterated this story to illustrate the fact that denominationalists may teach and practice some things the Bible authorizes, but they do them only because they happen to like them. The many ways in which they refuse to adhere to God's will when they disagree with it is proof that they are not obeying any part of it. Must we not now, with great sorrow, apply this to our brethren described above? Since they have found it inconvenient to obey their Heavenly Father because they disagree with Him on the subject of fellowship, one is made to wonder if they are doing other things He authorizes only because they find it convenient to do so and because they agree with them. Perhaps this attitude is what James had in mind: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is become guilty of all" (2:10).

To these brethren who would say to us, "Prophecy ye not!" concerning these matters, we reply, "We dare not cease to speak of them, and we shall not cease until they are corrected."

Forces in Education, Culture, and Government

For decades forces have been at work in our nation to say to those who still revere the Bible as God's revelation, "Prophecy ye not"! These influences have now reached epidemic proportions through various avenues:

1. The incessant and pervasive teaching of Darwinian evolutionary theory through every level of education, kindergarten through doctoral levels, has led to its almost universal acceptance. Practically all communication media repeat it as granted, unquestioned fact. This phenomenon has resulted in doubt, if not denial of the existence of God and rejection of the Bible as His revelation in multiplied millions.
2. The effect of cutting men loose from the Creator to Whom they are accountable and from His absolute, objective moral standard has been devastating to the moral fiber of our nation. It has opened the door to indiscriminate, recreational, promiscuous heterosexual unions, destroying countless marriages and homes and producing millions of illegitimate babies. It has produced the reversal of Bible-based laws forbidding the perversion of sodomy, encouraging its acceptance as “normal,” even to the point of granting such relationships the misnomer of “marriage.” It has thereby opened the door for polygamy, polyandry, pedophilia, incest, and even bestiality.
3. College and university campuses have for decades been top-heavy with atheistic and humanistic professors who delight in cramming their faith-destroying dogma down the throats of their immature charges. These include those who teach in theology and philosophy departments, including such prestigious universities as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. No department, however, from mathematics to library science, of these citadels of learning is free of the God-denying propagandists. Complicit administrations and boards have enabled and protected these God-haters for generations. Those rare administrators and boards who might prefer to keep their secular curriculum “religion-neutral” are held hostage by faculty senates that brazenly misapply “academic freedom,” invoke out-of-control and obsolete “tenure” privileges and have the leverage to send administrators packing.
 Inextricably interwoven with the anti-God, anti-Bible propaganda is the anti-American, leftist, pro-Marxist agenda of the same professors. David Horowitz has visited and/or spoken on hundreds of university campuses over the past several decades. He has interviewed countless students and professors concerning the intellectual, political, and philosophical climate of these institutions. He writes the following: “The university is an institution the left regards as its political base; its rule of engagement is to take no prisoners” (*Indoctrination*, 38). He estimates that there are as many as 60,000 faculty activists “whose agendas are political and radical” (*Professors*, dust jacket flap).
4. Besides institutionalized atheism in academia, such consortiums as the misnamed American Civil Liberties Union thrive on constant frontal assaults through the courts against anything and everything in public life that hints of “Christian” origins and/or connections. Note: The ACLU’s utter hypocrisy is seen in that it is not concerned over the furtherance of “religion” per se in the public schools or in public life. Its guns are almost exclusively trained on all things Bible-related. They have remarkable forbearance for the religions of Islam, Wicca, “Native Americans,” Buddhism, Hinduism, and every other pagan, anti-Biblical cult. It is only religion related in any way to the Bible that they despise with a purple passion. Increasingly, they are able to find God-hating judges who will rule in their favor.

5. The God-hating professors have churned out God-hating graduates, many of whom have become schoolteachers and the next generation of school administrators, professors, lawyers, and so-called "journalists." They have also become congressmen, jurists, and in some cases, presidents, in positions to make and/or enforce the laws of the land.

The Terrorism of Political Correctness

One other extremely potent factor that has brought our nation to this crucial point in its history is the implementation of "Political Correctness" (PC), which has been used effectively by all of the foregoing channels of influence. Many joke about "PC," but it is hardly a laughing matter. Conservapedia.com defines this phenomenon as

...restrictions on what we can say and how we say it [that] have been imposed by liberals. These restrictions enforce a regime...similar to that of the Nazi and Communist regimes of Europe. Some are linguistic, but all are ideological.

The enforcement of Political Correctness is Orwellian in the fullest sense. In his classic novel, *1984*, George Orwell described the concept of limiting free thought by means of implementing a new language ("Newspeak") imposed by a tyrannical regime. According to the Conservapedia Website, Paul Weyrich, late founder of the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank, described PC as an "ideology" that "is using every type of cultural institution in our country to achieve its purpose, which is the destruction of traditional Western culture and the Christian religion." Those who violate the dictum of the PC enforcers are judged as "Politically Incorrect" undesirables.

The roots of this destructive movement are found in a group of German Marxist Jews (i.e., "The Frankfurt School") in the 1920s who decided they could not topple Western democracies through force, but only through causing them to self-destruct. They devised a plan to undermine the culture (i.e., nationalism, religion, morals, individualism) of these nations, creating a climate of victimhood for various groups. Initially, they targeted women, blacks, and homosexuals as the "oppressed" through whom they could work. White heterosexual men became the primary evil oppressors to be demonized and figuratively emasculated, joined secondarily by all others who dared resist the PC agenda. With time other groups of "victims" have been added, including Hispanics, animals, even the environment. The "oppressed" were to be given special privileges as pay-back for perceived oppression, and the wicked oppressors were to be correspondingly punished. By this means various classes were aligned against and divided from each other.

PC is the father of liberalism's gross double-standards and shameless hypocrisies. Those of the alleged oppressed groups are not held to the same standards of decency, morality, or even law as are those among the alleged oppressors. In his valuable and frightening book, *Death of the West*, Pat Buchanan stated: "Political Correctness is Cultural Marxism, a regime to punish dissent and to stigmatize social heresy as the Inquisition punished religious heresy. Its trademark is intolerance" (p. 89). The great irony is that PC hides behind the mask of hyper-tolerance, but only toward those who toe its line of "correct" speech, of course.

The Frankfurt School principles began to be utilized in colleges of education as early as the 1940s, but did not begin to make a serious impact on academic campuses until the 1960s. Certain feminists began to insist that neutral pronouns (i.e., *he, him, his*) be replaced with gender identifying ones, such as *he or she, him or her, or them*. This was the beginning of a massive infringement of First Amendment rights that by the 1980s was already practically out of control and that continues to erode free speech, and with it, free thought. PC has given us our own "Newspeak" national language. Cripples have become "Physically challenged." One can no longer speak of a "negro" or "colored person," but "person of color" is the current PC designation. City dumps are "sanitary landfills." Homosexuals are "gays." Bums are "homeless persons." Short people are the "vertically challenged." One is not bald, he is "focally challenged." To find the origins of "sensitivity training," "multi-culturalism," "values clarification," "affirmative action," and a host of other left-wing social/cultural agendas, look no further than the Marxist Frankfurt School agenda. And so the madness goes.

The implications of Political Correctness are bad enough as they apply to cultural and political issues. Of special concern to God's people is their implications relating to the work He has given us to do. The Bible defines homosexual behavior as an "abomination" (Lev. 20:13) that, if unrepented of, will send one to Hell (1 Cor. 6:9-11). It has become Politically Incorrect to openly oppose homosexual behavior, even though the Bible clearly does so. Several European nations, Australia, and Canada already have "hate speech" laws and the chilling effect upon free speech has been predictably enormous. Denominational preachers in those nations who have dared to defy the law have been stiffly punished, usually by some bureaucratic commission rather than in actual courts. In one Canadian case a man was arrested and fined for merely buying a small newspaper ad in which he printed nothing but some Bible statements about sodomy. In another case, a Canadian preacher was not only fined several thousand

dollars but was forbidden to say another word publicly in opposition to homosexual behavior for the next ten years.

Several states have already enacted “hate crime” laws that call for more severe punishment for crimes perceived to be motivated by hatred against certain classes (e.g., race). Attempts have been made by liberals in every Congress since 1999 to enact a federal “hate crime” law that will include homosexuals, transvestites, and transgenderites. Thus far the measure has not made it into law.² When it is passed, the next step will be “hate **speech**” laws, making it a crime to preach against what God demands we preach against. That day could well come soon, given the agenda of those who now control the executive and legislative branches of our government. The forces of godless immorality, unrighteousness, and bigotry are shouting ever more loudly, “Prophesy ye not”!

The grave danger posed by Political Correctness, not only to our nation, but more so to the Lord’s people, was forcefully set forth in a speech delivered in 2000 by Bill Lind to an Accuracy in Academia convention:

For the first time in our history, Americans have to be fearful of what they say, of what they write, and of what they think. They have to be afraid of using the wrong word, a word denounced as offensive or insensitive, or racist, sexist, or homophobic.

We have seen other countries where this has been the case. And we have always regarded them with a mixture of pity, and to be truthful, some amusement, because it has struck us as so strange that people would allow a situation to develop where they would be afraid of what words they used. But we now have this situation in this country. We have it primarily on college campuses, but it is spreading throughout the whole society....

We call it "Political Correctness"...We tend still to think of it as only half-serious. In fact, it’s deadly serious. It is the great disease of our century, the disease that has left tens of millions of people dead in Europe, in Russia, in China, indeed around the world. It is the disease of ideology. PC is not funny. PC is deadly serious.

My message today is that it’s not funny, it’s here, it’s growing and it will eventually destroy, as it seeks to destroy, everything that we have ever defined as our freedom and our culture.

The Lind speech, “The Origins of Political Correctness,” is well worth reading in its entirety on the Accuracy in Academia Website.

The net effect of all of such factors has been to turn a nation founded by men who believed in God and in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and who employed Bible principles in drafting our Bill of Rights and Constitution, into a nation dominated by irreligion, immorality, and secularism. The loud and powerful voices in our nation are growing ever louder and more frequent against those who are determined to proclaim the message of God. They are crying,

“Prophesy ye not”! When we are forbidden by men to preach the Truth, then we shall know the real, rather than merely the hypothetical meaning of Peter’s words: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). May God grant us the courage to faithfully fulfill His charge to us, regardless of the cost.

Conclusion

From time immemorial, wicked men have sought to silence those who bear God’s message to a sin-sick and Hell-bent world. Their common theme in opposition to those thus sent is “Prophesy ye not”! So if these restrictions are forced upon us by law, and not merely by Politically Correct thought police, we must react in the same way the prophets of both the Old Testament and the New Testament reacted.

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Endnotes

1. The Tommy Hicks-Barry Grider relationship has taken on an added dimension with brother Grider’s publication of the Young material. From August 2005 through December 2008, brother Grider served as co-editor of *The New Gospel Journal*. Brother Hicks is on the board of directors of The Gospel Journal, Inc., which owns said paper, making him one of brother Grider’s employers during that time. Although he ceased his editorial role as noted above, he has continued to serve as an “advisor” to the board and the new editor, brother Curtis Cates. So here we have brother Hicks refusing to print material by brother Young because of its unsound implications, but we have brother Grider publishing Young’s excised material with endorsement. We wonder if brother Hicks has done any “advising” to his former editor regarding his “in-your-eye” behavior.
2. Note: Shortly after publication and presentation of this MS (10/28/2009) President Obama signed into law the “Hate Crimes Prevention Act.”

[Note: I wrote this MS on assignment for and I delivered it at the 34th Annual Bellview Lectures, June 13–17, 2009, hosted by Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, FL. The MS was also published in the book of the lectures, *Preaching from the Minor Prophets*, ed. Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ.)

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