

# Some Thoughts on Writing, Editing, and Publishing

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Those who write, edit, and publish material for others to read have weighty responsibilities that “go with the territory.” This is especially true of those who produce religious materials (e.g., church bulletins, periodicals, books, audio and video tapes, CDs, Websites, and other media). I expect publishing companies controlled by liberals (e.g., ACU Press, Howard Publishing Co., 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian, Sweet Publishing Co., The Zoe Group [publishers of *New Wineskins*], Oklahoma Christian University [publishers of *The Christian Chronicle*], et al.) to publish materials with a liberal bias. They exist for that purpose. However, I am baffled at how otherwise faithful brethren can rationalize either publishing or selling material that leads people astray. Is one who produces and/or sells false doctrine for profit any less guilty than one who produces pornography with the same motive? He may say, “Someone else will do it.” I say, “Then let him do it.”

Some periodical and church bulletin editors use little discretion in the articles they print and/or reprint. Brethren who would not teach error themselves profess seeing no danger in reproducing articles by those who do, if the specific article they reproduce teaches the Truth. They fail to realize that such gives the false teacher credibility in the minds of gullible and uninformed brethren when he teaches his error. An abundance of good material written by doctrinally sound brethren is available so that there is no excuse for using articles by men who have shown themselves to be otherwise. Of course, ignorance is sometimes the culprit; none of us is omniscient. However, editors, who have a conscience and who are aware of their responsibility to promote only Scriptural Truth and those who teach it, will work at being well informed.

Closely related to the teaching content of church bulletins is the announcement content of both bulletins and bulletin boards. Some have not learned that they are not obligated to publicize every activity concerning which they receive a notice. I have seen faithful congregations make announcements of programs involving liberal speakers, knowing that they would not permit those men to speak in their pulpits. Mysteriously, they nonetheless encouraged their members to go hear such men elsewhere. How can they fail to see the inconsistency and the implied endorsement of false teachers and false teachings by such behavior? Both consistency and loyalty to the Gospel should cause them to trash such announcements, and if they mention the activities at all, warn brethren **not** to attend them.

Have bookstores and book distributors no responsibility in this matter? Several brethren in the book business applaud all that the digressive change agents are saying and doing. I expect these dealers to promote such books, video tapes, and such like. Moreover, I do not expect them to be eager to handle books that plainly expose their errors and teach the Truth (e.g., the many excellent books that have come from several unquestionably sound-in-faith lectureships over the past several years). First, they do not agree with their content. Second, these books are generally priced so reasonably that they do not generate much profit.

However, what about those who claim **not** to agree with the liberal agenda, but who promote it by selling materials that advocate it? (Even if they sell materials these false teachers produced before they went astray, promotion of these items lends credibility to their present poisonous influence [as discussed above with church bulletins and announcements]). Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, Lynn Anderson, Mike Cope, F. LaGard Smith, several ACU professors, and others have written and/or published scores of books since the 1980s that are deadly attacks on the Gospel Truth and the church. We cannot force them to stop writing such books, but neither can they force any of us to help scatter their poison to the four winds.

At least one of the universities operated by brethren professes to oppose these fellows and does not generally invite them to speak on campus, which is laudable. However, its bookstore brazenly promotes their poisonous books to its customers, most of whom are impressionable students. I need help to see the consistency in such and to discover any other motive for this practice besides careless greed.

One reason most book dealers (regardless of their theology) are in business is to earn a profit from their labors, which they deserve to do for their services. But should not a nobler aim take precedence over profits—regard for the souls of those who patronize them? Have they no concern about fortifying the saints with the Truth so that they can recognize and oppose the errors of the great apostasy of our time? When my late wife and I owned Valid Publications, Incorporated (1984–2004), it pleased (and surprised!) us when we made a little profit from our efforts. However, we determined from the start of our company that we would not **knowingly** sell that which we cannot endorse, whether or not we make a profit. We viewed our book business as an additional means of preaching and teaching the Gospel. Many statements of Scripture convince us that this is the right policy (e.g., Rom. 14:19b; Gal. 1:8–10; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:1–5; et al.). To say that some have made profits their primary aim at the expense of Truth is a serious charge, but I know not how else to explain what I see at times.

One publishing house owned by brethren in Nashville, Tennessee, produces a large “co-op” catalog each year, in which it sells ads to various other publishers and/or bookstores. Each year we receive an invitation to advertise in it and to use it in our business. It promotes books by all the liberals mentioned above, plus others of the same stripe. The only way I would have even considered using this catalog to promote our business would have been to insert in each one a disclaimer concerning many of the authors whose books are listed. We were distributors for and sold many copies of the venerable *New Dickson Analytical Bible*, which, unfortunately is no longer in print. For those who do not know, this book is a King James Version with a host of notes and helps for readers (e.g., introductions to and comments on each Biblical book, concordance, Bible dictionary, Bible atlas, et al.). In a very few instances, the denominational authors of the comments strayed into premillennial and or other errors. Accordingly, every copy of this Bible we sold included a disclaimer statement calling attention to these specific entries, encouraging readers to keep it with their copy of the Bible. Biblical, editorial, and publishing ethics demanded no less.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for the “Editor’s Clippings” column, and it was published in the October 2001 issue of *The Gospel Journal*, of which I was editor at the time.]

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