

# A Handbook for False Teachers

By Eric Hall<sup>1</sup>

## Stage One Choose Your Target

### *Sizing Up the Sheep*

Before selecting a flock to fleece, it will be helpful first to size up the sheep. In this way it will be much easier to develop allies and identify future foes. In Romans 10:2 Paul provides a very useful way to categorize Christians.<sup>2</sup> A Type-A Christian lacks knowledge and zeal; a Type-B Christian lacks knowledge but has zeal; a Type-C Christian lacks zeal but has knowledge; and a Type-D Christian has both zeal and knowledge.

### *The Type-A Christian*

This is your favorite type of Christian—no zeal, no knowledge, no problem. These people are, as someone once said, looking for a nice, light, little religion, suitable for summer. They don't care what you say and they don't care how you say it. To them the church is a country club, and the preacher is the golf pro. As Ambrose Bierce observed, this group follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin. They are creatures of habit. (Remember, Christians aren't called sheep for nothing.) The only sure bet with this group is that they will remain neutral and disinterested during any moral crisis.

### *The Type-B Christian*

Many Type-A Christians began their spiritual journey as Type-B Christians. These members, mostly young, tend to be full of enthusiasm and little else. Your greatest allies will come from within this group. They are often obsessed with "building a great church" and don't mind pushing the one that Jesus built out of the way in order to do it. If you can find an elder in this category, your job will be much easier. Such an elder

often feels that the truth is determined by a majority vote at the weekly elders' meeting and, more often than not, views the papacy with more than a little admiration.

### *The Type-C Christian*

Although Type-C Christians will not support you, neither will they cause you any trouble. They know the truth but are apathetic about it. They often complain, but they never take any action. Thus, while they certainly will not love you, you're in no danger, since they will not love the truth either. Mark Twain may have had someone from this group in mind when he once described a person as "a solemn, unsmiling, sanctimonious old iceberg who looked like he was waiting for a vacancy on the Trinity."

### *The Type-D Christian*

This group can be trouble. Fortunately, they are not very numerous and have experienced a dramatic drop in number during recent years partly due to your successful efforts to discredit them. Not only will this group notice when you twist the scriptures, they will actually complain. Even when you dismiss their complaints and denounce them from the pulpit, they still will not give up. They actually feel as if the truth is something that has been entrusted to them, something that they can know, something they must contend for. They will mimic those troublemaking, divisive Bereans from Acts 17:11 and actually check if what you say is in accord with the Bible. (The gall of such people is hard to imagine!)

How then should you select a target? Look for an opening at a church in which the Type-A and Type-B

<sup>1</sup>This handbook is dedicated to all who fearlessly pursue sophistry, and it is the author's sincere wish that those to whom it is directed will accept it with the spirit with which it is intended.

<sup>2</sup>An alert reader will notice that Romans 10:2 has nothing at all to say about Christians. Don't worry about such readers; you will rarely encounter them. One could fire a cannon through most churches (and elders' meetings) without even grazing an alert Christian.

members outnumber the Type-D members by at least five to one. Fortunately, this includes 90% of all congregations. By forming a strong coalition prior to the attack, the Type-D trouble-makers can be defeated shortly after the first volley.

### ***Sizing Up the Shepherds***

The eldership can be a problem. Some Type-A churches have elderships composed of Type-C and Type-D Christians. This can be a big problem since the sluggish Type-C's will be led about by the troublesome Type-D's. The only way around this problem is to find an eldership with a strong Type-B who can win the allegiance of the Type-C's. In this way the Type-D's can be forced out. If you can locate a church with elders on the payroll, you will often be assured of at least a few elders that will support peace (and hence, continued prosperity) at any price.

### ***Stage Two Get the Job***

The way to get the job is, quite simply, to be all things to all people. Since elders hate having to look for a preacher, they will often hire the first suit that walks in and then fight tooth and nail to retain that suit even when they discover that it is empty. If you evade difficult questions and say what they want to hear, then the job will be yours. A good example to follow during this stage is that of St. Ambrose, who after being elected bishop of Milan, felt obliged to become a Catholic.

### ***Stage Three Lay the Groundwork***

Here is where the fun begins. If you follow these steps very carefully, the battle will be won before the fighting begins.

#### ***How to Win Friends***

Your first job is to win friends, and the first place to win a friend is from among the other ministers. If you selected your target well, you should have plenty of ministers to choose from: the youth minister, the education minister, the involvement minister, the personal evangelism minister, the singles minister, etc. Choose the first Type-B minister that comes along and latch onto him. Ideally, by the time you drop your first bomb, this person should be willing to eat ground glass at your urging.

The next two groups to which you must endear yourself are the singles and the young marrieds. Your strongest allies will come from the Type-B members in these groups. When you first arrive, you should volunteer to teach their classes. In addition, a good step at this point is to encourage members from these groups to approach the elders with a request that you know will be turned down. In this way you can build a general feeling of unrest that will be quite useful during the latter stages of your mission. These groups will already be pushing for change for the sake of change when you arrive. Your job is to work them into a frenzy.

The third group from which to gather friends is from within the elders themselves. Again, if you can make an ally out of a dominating Type-B elder, your mission will be much easier.

#### ***How to Influence People***

As you win friends, you should also work at influencing people. Your best platform from which to do this is the pulpit. When you signed up as a minister, you joined a very select group of teachers who can teach for 30 minutes at a time without fear of interruption. You never have to stop and answer any questions. No matter how ludicrous your message is, no one will speak up. Even when the lesson ends, no one will make any pointed comments or ask any difficult questions. Instead, your entire audience will simply stand and sing. Truly a unique teaching position!

#### ***What to Preach About***

You should preach about love at every opportunity. Your motto during the first few months should be the Beatles' refrain: "All you need is love."<sup>3</sup> Of course, it goes without saying that you should not delve very deeply into this subject. Don't mention what it means to love God; just mention that it is something everyone should do. Don't leave anyone with the impression that to love God we must obey God and that to obey God we must study his word. Instead, equate love with happiness and comfort. If you are happy, you must be loving; if you aren't happy, you must be unloving. To really stress the importance of happiness, you might come up with some new terms to describe the worship service: the communion is a "love feast"; prayers are "heart chats"; the Bible is a "love letter," etc. Be creative. Keep everyone off balance. Whatever you do,

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<sup>3</sup>Some congregations might let you use this as the invitation song, but it would be wise not to push your luck.

don't dwell on the prophets; they are so depressing.

The next subject to preach about is criticism. Within a few short months every Type-B Christian in the place should feel that a critic is only slightly better than a child molester. Critics are unloving; critics are divisive; critics should be marked and avoided; critics are regressive; critics are out to destroy the church; Will Rogers never met a critic. The easiest way to achieve this goal is to equate critics with Pharisees and legalists.<sup>4</sup> Critics are spiritually immature and need to grow up and become enlightened. Although it takes time and careful preparation to convince a large group of people that a 20-year-old recent convert is spiritually more mature than a 60-year-old elder, it can be done.

#### **What Not to Preach About**

First, note that all negative sermons should be directed toward the evil critics who are out to destroy the church. Never

direct a negative message toward the Type-A's or Type-B's. Your purpose is to keep these people coming. Any suggestion from the golf pro that they might need to change their life-styles will only serve to

drive them to another country club. A safe approach is simply not to preach about moral issues such as drinking, gambling, or adultery. A more dangerous but often more effective approach is to take a "progressive" stance on these issues. That is, moral issues are not important if we love each other; only a legalist would think otherwise. Again, be sure you don't mention what it

means to love God—just stress that it is important.

Never preach about the distinctiveness of the church. Remember, we are all just one big, happy family, and if we are not happy then we must be unloving. Never say that we must reach out to those who

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**The truth would become more popular if it were not always stating ugly facts.**

**Henry S. Haskins**

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have not obeyed the gospel. Instead, we must reach out to the "unchurched."

Remember, to be saved you must repent and be "churched" for the remission of your sins (if you have any). Your only goal is church growth and your philosophy is that of a cancer cell: growth for the sake of growth. Pluralism promotes this agenda perfectly.

Never leave anyone with the impression that we can know the truth. Anyone who claims otherwise is arrogant, intolerant, and puffed up with knowledge. Such a person must think he or she is inspired. You should constantly stress our inability to be completely sure about anything. Remember, everything is just a matter of opinion, and your opinion is as good as the next person's. Be sure you never leave anyone with the dangerous impression that the Bible is a source of authority that can be understood. If you handle this part of the plan correctly, you will, in the words of Chesterton, end up with a group of Christians who are too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication table.

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**Sophists are the more subtle sort of liars, who are always careful to tell the truth, or the wrong half of the truth. They can always be trusted to point out that there is a green that is very nearly blue and a blue that is very nearly green, applying the argument to men and monkeys, or morals and manners, or anything else that may be convenient to the people who have the money to hire them.**

**G. K. Chesterton**  
**January 6, 1923**

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Never preach about the qualifications of elders. Those who are least qualified will be your biggest allies

when you make your move. Also, when the time comes to force out the Type-D elders, you certainly don't want any questions regarding qualifications or scriptural authority to muddy your plan. Whatever you do, don't mention Titus 1:9. It might be a good idea to mark through it in your Bible so you won't read it by mistake. In this way you will be able to preach

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<sup>4</sup>We know that most legalists and Pharisees in the Bible were critics. You simply turn this around to mean that most critics are Pharisees and legalists. Although a logician will catch the error, he or she will not be able to expose the error without providing confirmation for your position! Anyway, if you have done your job correctly, then your flock will be safe from such reasoning, since "against logic there is no armor like ignorance."



against those terrible, divisive people mentioned near the end of Titus without having to explain why Titus clearly did not put elders who confront error into that category. Remember, ugly, unloving, inconvenient facts should be avoided at all cost.

Never preach a sermon from Jude. Any book that talks about false teachers who creep in unnoticed, talks about clouds without water carried by the wind, or talks about those who use great swelling words and flattery to gain an advantage is definitely not going to further your agenda. Titus 1 and Second Peter 2 also fall into this category.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, don't feel that you have to actually believe what you are preaching. Feel free to preach about Titus 3:10 and ignore Titus 1:9 or preach about the first half of Romans 16:17 and ignore the second half of the verse. Most people will never notice and those who do won't be on your side anyway. Twisting scriptures in this manner will promote a very useful illusion of knowledge among the Type-A's and Type-B's. Say whatever is required to achieve your goals. Be extremely dogmatic. Never back down from a position. Whether or not you actually believe or can even support your message is not important. Your true followers will neither notice nor mind. A good example to follow in this regard is that of Dr. Cumming, the minister of the Scottish Presbyterian Church in London. He predicted the end of the world would occur on a certain day in 1867 yet was later found to have renewed a 21-year lease on his house only days before the great event.

### **Stage Four Drop the Bomb**

Ideally this stage should occur between six months and a year after your arrival. Of course, it should only

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**Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think.**

**John Stuart Mill**

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**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.**

**2 Timothy 4:3-4.**

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occur after you have laid the proper groundwork as discussed above. Remember that your purpose at this stage is to straighten out those poor, misguided legalists who think they know something about the Bible. In accomplishing this objective it will help if you can be extremely condescending. You should give the impression of stepping down from "The Mount" after a recent conversation with God. Be dogmatic, but don't feel that you have to support everything (or anything) that you say. Only a legalist would request that you actually prove something using the scriptures. Instead, talk about new hermeneutical principles and ecumenical paradigms; your allies will nod with their standard, stupefied approval and only later think to reach for a dictionary. By the way, it is a good idea to run the sermon containing your bomb by one of the other ministers before your deliver it. In this way you can deflect some of the criticism toward an unsuspecting dupe.

The actual subject of your bomb is only a secondary concern. Some have used instrumental music;

some have used baptism; some have used the role of women in the church; others have used the Pauline privilege. Be creative.

Use your imagination. Hit them where it hurts. Remember Psalm 11:3. "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" As you drop the bomb, be sure to blur the line effectively between matters of faith and matters of opinion. Use (or misuse, to be precise) Titus 3:9 to categorize all disputes over doctrine as unprofitable. Quote (or misquote, if you prefer) reformation leaders as much as possible. In this way you will be able to steer the argument away from the Bible. Reverse the old (and hence, regressive) method of interpretation. Twist difficult passages as

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<sup>5</sup>A good use for Titus is to twist chapter 2 to teach that sound doctrine simply involves caring for others. Again, be sure you steer clear of chapter 1, where Paul makes it clear that such is not the case.

suggested in Second Peter 3:16 and ignore the easier ones. Don't feel that you have to answer any possible objections that your audience might have while you deliver your message. Did Moses answer any objections when he stepped down off the mount? Arrogance is an art: practice, practice, practice.

Finally, in dropping the bomb don't feel that you must be consistent in your interpretation or misinterpretation. With many Christians contradictions in logic are never noticed. Type-A and Type-B elders who have believed and taught an opposite view will stand by their former position yet support your contradictory viewpoint with great vigor. (Such guardians of the truth leave very little for you to do!) Finally, remember Oscar Wilde's maxim: Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative.

### ***Stage Five Run for Cover***

If you have done your job well, most members who disagree with your message will initially remain silent after the bomb due to their fear of being labeled evil, regressive, divisive, hypercritical, unloving, hate-filled, intolerant, narrow-minded, hypocritical legalists. The first stage in dealing with those who do not remain silent is to divide and conquer them. When one first approaches you, respond to his questions or comments by smiling, thanking him for his interest, and giving him a figurative pat on the head. Make each critic who approaches you feel that he or she is the only person in the entire congregation who disagreed with you. Never give any indication that others have voiced similar concerns. Later you can come down hard from the pulpit against those evil hate-mongers who are puffed up with their own knowledge. If you play this right, each critic will think you prepared

the entire sermon just for his or her benefit. Don't ever underestimate the power of the pulpit. If you receive letters or written questions during this stage, just ignore them. Maybe they will go away.

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**As scarce as truth is, the supply has always been in excess of the demand.**

**Henry Wheeler Shaw**

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fense. For those that do, there is a second stage in which you play the role of a wounded servant of God who is battling with the evil Pharisees. Your standard, patent-pending grin should at this stage be replaced with a sack-cloth-and-ashes demeanor. Make it clear that those who wrote letters and approached the elders should have come to you in private as Aquila and Priscilla did

with Apollos.<sup>6</sup> If anyone mentions that Paul rebuked Peter in front of everyone, or that in all likelihood Aquila and Priscilla publicly corrected the public error that Apollos had taught, simply say that any response to such a statement would be futile due to the critical, unloving attitude of the interrogator. Remember, no one says you have to answer difficult questions; just ignore them. By the way, during this stage you can't be too overly dramatic. Weeping and ripping up imaginary hate mail from the pulpit can be a very

effective ploy, at this point, to unify the Type-B's behind you.

At some point during this procedure you might be

called upon to write a letter. This should only be done as a last resort since a paper trail can be very dangerous. Your letter should be condescending without arguing specifics. Whatever you do, don't get into a written discussion of the issues with someone who appears to be familiar with the Bible. Instead, put yourself in the position of a spiritually mature Christian who has been wounded by some rash, unloving, spiri-

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**God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please; you can never have both.**

**R. W. Emerson**

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<sup>6</sup>If Apollos had read this handbook and not caved in so quickly, we would have churches out there today preaching the baptism of John. What a waste!

tually immature legalist. You might picture yourself as a Pharisee writing a letter to Jesus after he cleansed the temple or picture yourself as a member of the circumcision party writing to Paul after he had kindly suggested in Galatians 5:12 that you castrate yourself. Suggest in your letter that if the recipient were spiritually mature, he would never have done or said such a thing. Remember, the church is nothing to get that excited about. If you have set everything up properly, most of the congregation should at this point be wondering why those crazy Type-D's are so worked up.

Never answer hypothetical questions that are designed only to pin you down on a particular issue. If someone asks how you would explain a difficult passage to someone who asked for counseling, respond by saying that you would simply read the passage and then would let that person determine the meaning for himself. You will be surprised at how many people will actually accept such an absurd response. Note that this method is much safer than that which Philip used when the Ethiopian eunuch asked him to explain Isaiah 53. The Ethiopian was clearly Type-D, and thus Philip shouldn't have wasted his breath answering his obviously loaded question. Do whatever it takes to avoid studying the Bible with a Type-D Christian; he or she will only cause you trouble. If such a person corners you in a class or writes a letter both to you and the elders, you can offer to meet with him or her in your office privately. On the surface this looks very gallant. (Hopefully, no one will notice that while you are able to speak to your critics publicly, they must speak to you privately.) Of course, when the meeting takes place, you should respond to your critic in private just as you have so far been responding to your critics in public; just ignore them and hope they go away.

Some of your best sermons on division should be saved for this final stage. It is very important that those who have complained about your teaching be labeled as divisive. While it is true that division in the New Testament is always attributed to those who teach error and never attributed to those who confront error, most of your audience knows nothing more about the New Testament than that in most Bibles it follows the Old Testament. Thus, you may misquote passages with abandon in order to label your critics as divisive. After all, you simply preached a sermon as you are being paid to do. Your critics are the ones causing the trouble.

If they would just let it all drop, the rest of the church could go on its merry (and hence, happy and loving) way. Blame everything on division. (One imaginative Type-B even taught that Paul's thorn in the flesh was division; it was ridiculous but nevertheless effective.)

## **Stage Six**

### **Mission Accomplished**

Finally, don't despair. If you follow this plan, then the congregation (or what is left, anyway) will be yours. As John Stuart Mill said, "The dictum that truth always triumphs over persecution is one of those pleasant falsehoods that all experience refutes." When the dust settles, you will have a building full of zealous know-nothings and an eldership that will jump through hoops if you threaten to leave. Keep everyone jumping for awhile and then move on.

However the battle is ended,  
Though proudly the victor comes  
With fluttering flags and prancing nags  
And echoing roll of drums,  
Still truth proclaims this motto,  
In letters of living light,—  
No question is ever settled,  
Until it is settled right.

Though the heel of the strong oppressor  
May grind the weak to dust,  
And the voices of fame with one acclaim  
May call him great and just,  
Let those who applaud take warning,  
And keep this motto in sight,—  
No question is ever settled  
Until it is settled right.

Let those who have failed take courage;  
Tho' the enemy seems to have won,  
Tho' his ranks are strong, if he be in the wrong  
The battle is not yet done;  
For, as sure as the morning follows  
The darkest hour of the night,  
No question is ever settled  
Until it is settled right.

O man bowed down with labor!  
A woman, young, yet old!  
O heart oppressed in the toiler's breast  
And crushed by the power of gold!  
Keep on with your weary battle  
Against triumphant might,  
No question is ever settled  
Until it is settled right.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox