

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Elder J. A. Reynolds

Old Union Baptist Ministers' School
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The Greeks had an excellent word meaning "universal." That word is "catholic." (*Strong's or Thayers - # 2526*) You cannot find it in the text of the original Greek New Testament scriptures applied to the church or anything else. Don't you think if Jesus' church was meant to be "catholic" some inspired writer would have said so.

The Greeks had an excellent word meaning "people rule." That word is "democracy." You cannot find it in the text of the original Greek New Testament scriptures applied to the church or anything else. Don't you think if Jesus' church was meant to be a "democracy" some inspired writer would have said so. (* - # 1218 + # 2902)

Why then do we maintain that the government of a Baptist church should be democratic?

I will attempt to demonstrate that democracy is not the preferred mode of church rule, but is rather the "default" mode we are constrained to adopt, whenever we fail to achieve the preferred mode.

Daniel 2:44 *"And in the days of these kings (Roman emperors) shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these (pagan) kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."*

Matthew 2:6 *"And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."*

Romans 2:28-29 (identity of Israel changed to include born again Gentiles) *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ..."*

Romans 9:8 *"That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise (all who obtain the faith of Abraham) are counted for the seed."*

JESUS SAID HIS KINGDOM WAS HERE!

Matthew 3:1-2 *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (or, has drawn nigh) Matthew 4:17 *"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

Matthew 10:7 (Jesus commanded his 12 disciples) *"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

A VISIBLE KINGDOM, BUT NOT PERCEIVED BY THOSE LACKING SPIRITUAL VISION OR DEAD IN SIN

Luke 17:20 *"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they day, Lo here! or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (that is, presently within the group of you, or now "among" you - himself and his disciples)*

John 3:3 (to the unconverted Pharisee, Nicodemus) *"Except a man be born again (or, "born from above"), he cannot see (perceive) the Kingdom of God."*

John 18:33 &36 *"Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews? ... Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."*

John 17:14 & 17:16 (In prayer to his heavenly Father, Jesus said of his disciples) *"I have given them thy word: and the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." ... "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*

BAPTIST CHURCH ORDER AND RULE IS BASED ON 3 CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES:
EQUALITY → OF ALL MEMBERS IN THEIR BIBLICAL FUNCTION
FREEDOM → OF EACH PERSON TO FOLLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT
CHARITY → OBLIGATION TO LOVE AND HELP ONE ANOTHER

John 13:6-10 &12-16 *"...and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all (reference to Judas Iscariot being unsaved) ... *"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? (explanation →) Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. (FOR 3.5 YEARS JESUS HAD WALKED WITH HIS DISCIPLES AND CONTINUALLY USED HIS TEACHING TO KEEP THEM CLEAN FROM THE FILTH THEY CONTINUALLY ACQUIRED FROM CONTACT WITH THIS SINFUL WORLD. NOW THAT HE WAS GOING AWAY THEY WOULD HAVE TO DO THAT FOR ONE**

ANOTHER! HERE IS OUR AUTHORITY TO CORRECT EACH OTHER WITH HIS WORD AND DOCTRINE.)

Luke 22:24-27 (This could be a part of the above conversation; it took place at the scene of both the foot washing and the first Lord's supper.) *"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."*

Matthew 20:25-28 *"But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

Matthew 11:11 *"... Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* (is this not a humble reference to Himself?)

2nd Corinthians 1:23-24 *"Moreover I call God to record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not yet unto Corinth. NOT FOR THAT WE HAVE DOMINION OVER YOUR FAITH, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand."*

1st Peter 5:1-3 *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder ... Feed (literally - "shepherd" or "pastor") the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; NEITHER AS BEING LORDS OVER GOD'S HERITAGE, but being ensamples to the flock."*

IF ALL OF THE FOREGOING SCRIPTURES WERE FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND ADHERED TO BY CHRIST'S DISCIPLES, CHURCH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE SIMPLE, PEACEFUL, AND PRODUCTIVE OF GOD'S WILL.

Add Holy Spirit leadership from John 14-16, etc.

What is the preferred mode? Jesus is the monarch. He sets boundaries with his inspired word we must not cross and tells us therein of right principles. He times our actions according to his word by the promptings of his Holy Spirit. Adhering faithfully to these two guides we cannot go astray. All disciples who do so should continue in "one accord in the will of God." This is the preferred mode.

When we are "carnal, and walk as men," rather than as the saints (holy ones) of God, we fall short of this goal, but IT MUST ALWAYS REMAIN OUR GOAL. Men are not good at interpreting the inspired word; neither are we good at following the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The second best mode is "consensus," meaning no member dissents. Everyone agrees to the point of not objecting.

The default mode is "majority rule." Majority means one more than half. We determine this by voting. 51% of the votes is a majority, but it is not a good way for churches to determine important decisions! No decisions which matter to God should be determined by this close a vote IF it can be avoided.

Such can be avoided by proper indoctrination. Church members need to be taught that "their way" is the "way that seemeth right unto a man but the end of the way thereof are the ways of death."

Church voting power is NEVER LEGISLATIVE! (except perhaps in matters on which God is indifferent!)

We do NOT have authority to vote on what is truth.

We do NOT have authority to overrule the Holy Spirit.

The majority must NOT infringe upon the Christian liberty of the individual soul to follow the Holy Spirit, unless that person is committing such a Biblical transgression as makes it evident he is mistaken regarding God's leadership.

Church authority is EXECUTIVE authority, to carry out the laws and commands of the monarch.

Church authority must sometimes also be JUDICIAL. Why?

Who determines what is orthodox doctrine when it comes in question?

Who determines what errors are worthy of a test of fellowship?

Who determines what is the will of the Holy Spirit regarding church action?

Baptists believe that such final determination must be made by the local church. There is no higher authority on earth. Such judicial verdicts are an awesome responsibility! For the welfare and future of that church and many other people, such decisions had better be RIGHT! When members understand this, they dare not vote their wishes or opinions, but rather they humbly and fearfully seek the truth and God's will, and vote accordingly.

MAJORITY RULE EXAMPLE IN THE BIBLE:

The closest I can come to finding "majority" rule anywhere in the New Testament Bible regards the exclusion of the brazen fornicator in the Corinthian church. His deeds were described in 1st Corinthians 5, where Paul instructs them to exclude him the next time they come together. Some while after his exclusion, the man evidently repented. In 2nd Corinthians 2: , Paul says, in reference to his former exclusion, "sufficient to such a man

is this punishment, which was inflicted of many." (literally – "the more," or majority) Paul was then exhorting them to "confirm their love toward him" whom they had punished by withdrawing church fellowship "lest such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." It is particularly difficult to achieve one accord or consensus on a matter of disciplinary exclusion. In such unpleasant matters there will nearly always be dissenters, especially in such a carnal and spiritually immature church as the one at Corinth. Family members often see the church as unnecessarily harsh, although they ought to be the first ones to initiate the action. Some other folks have such bleeding hearts that they can never vote to exclude anyone, no matter what they have done.

FORCED UNANIMITY AMOUNTS TO TYRANNY (Why *majority* must rule when the preferred mode cannot be attained! – in the words of Andrew Fuller)

"It is well known to be a peculiarity in Sandemanian societies not to determine any question by a *majority*. They, like the first churches, must be of *one mind*; and if there be any dissentients who cannot be convinced, they are excluded. Perfect unanimity is certainly desirable, not only in the great principles of the gospel, but in questions of discipline, and even in choice of officers; but how is this attainable? The question is, whether it be more consistent with the spirit and practice of the New Testament for the greater part of the church to forbear with the less, or Diotrophes-like, to cast them out of the church; and this for having according to their best judgment acted up to the Scriptural directions?"

"Nothing," say they, 'is decided by vote of the *majority*. In some cases indeed there are dissenting voices. The reasons of the dissent are thereupon proposed and considered. *If they are Scriptural*, the whole church has cause to change its opinion; *If not*, and the person persists in opposition to *the word of God*, the church is bound to reject him.' But who is to judge whether the reasons of the dissentients be Scriptural or not? The *majority*, no doubt, and an opposition to their opinion is an opposition to *the word of God*!

Humility and love will do great things toward unanimity; but this forced unanimity is the highest refinement of spiritual tyranny. It is being compelled to believe as the church believes, and not only on subjects clearly revealed, and of great importance, but in matters of mere opinion, in which the most upright minds may differ, and to which no standard can apply. What can he who *exalteth himself above all that is called God* do more than set up his decisions as *the word of God*, and require men on pain of excommunication to receive them? ("Strictures on Sandemanianism," pages 636-637, Volume 2, THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ANDREW FULLER)

The foregoing from Fuller is given to express Biblical limits which must be imposed upon the quest for unanimity. Forced unanimity is NOT one accord and can amount to tyranny and persecution. It is possible for a local church to persecute and tyrannize its members as well as associations, conventions and hierarchies.

Having outlined the preferred, second, and default modes of church decision making, let us examine orderly procedures for reaching those decisions.

When our forefathers were designing the framework of our republic they were very conscious of the pitfalls inherent in democracy. They had examples of failed attempts to compare with to Rhode Island's 140 year old fairly successful adaptation of New Testament liberties to secular government. They had a prevailing Baptist influence over Virginia at the time, which had long successfully employed democratic principles in their religious affairs. All of the architects of the American republic seemed to understand the tendency of democratic rule to descend into chaos whenever the people ceased to be guided by some more noble principle than their own selfish desires. Elaborate safeguards were designed into the workings of government to prevent this.

In the Baptist mode of pure direct democratic proceedings no such elaborate impediments are allowed. Rather, descent into "mobocracy" (the word used by Methodist debator Ditzler to ridicule J. R. Graves and the Baptist idea of church government) has only two preventive measures. They are: Christian attitudes must always be maintained by members, and they must be taught the fact that their liberty to vote demands their duty to find and vote God's will rather than their own!

Books on parliamentary procedure have been compiled, based on observance and analysis of years of experience of parliamentary bodies in their actual functions. General Henry M. Robert (first published in 1876) is perhaps the best known such author. Robert's rules, however, were not specifically designed for the needs of Christian deliberative bodies. A number of Baptist manuals have included procedures more adapted to church needs. J M. Pendleton's Church Manual is probably the best known to us. These books are no more than wise suggestions for orderly procedures of reaching group decisions. We must always remember that it is the maintenance of God's business "in decency and in order" that is scripturally demanded, NOT man's rules wisely adopted toward achieving that goal.

A search of the New Testament will yield little regarding an assembly vote, and says nothing at all of the procedures of "motion" and "second," moderator, clerk, or even a business meeting. Yet we use these methods because they have been proven to work well toward achieving scriptural goals when properly used with right attitudes. However, **ALL OF THE RULES IN THE WORLD WILL NOT DELIVER A CHURCH FROM CONFUSION AND ERROR WHEN ATTITUDES BECOME UNCHRISTIAN!** Some rules, such as the moderator's call to order, can be used to moderate or squelch behavior provoked by unchristian motives.

A search of various Baptist manuals and guides designed to aid us in such procedures reveals two important points. (1) They all differ on certain emphases. This fact should forever keep us from drawing lines of fellowship between churches over such procedural, but not doctrinal, differences. (2) There are some important common points of agreement. These we will attempt to summarize.

R.H. Boyd's National Baptist Pastor's Guide (1900 – 1983 revision) well explains (p.46), "When men are congregated in a deliberative assembly for the purpose of transacting business, it is highly essential for the sake of harmony and progress, to have certain well-defined rules and regulations according to which business is to be transacted ... Men have deliberated together for so long a period that experience has enabled them to come to an agreement, practically, as to what are the best methods of conducting the business of deliberative assemblies. In this volume we seek to give a bird's eye view of what men have generally found to be the best modes of procedure, and this is all that is

allowed of any writer of parliamentary law. He does not create rules of action, but gathers them together and presents them in concrete form to his readers. This volume is constructed with a view to rendering it especially acceptable as a more or less complete guide for the deliberations of religious bodies ..." This excellent explanation is quoted so as to discourage all Baptists from ever attempting in any way to USE parliamentary rules to impose their will upon others, to overthrow church authority, or to deny any individual their Christian liberty. Some technicality may void the verdict of secular courts, but only violation of God's law or will can void decisions of children of God and the churches they comprise.

The following is a composite of various manuals, some exceptions being noted:

Churches must schedule regular business meeting times, so that every member can know when they will occur. It is the duty of all members to be present at as many as possible. Any unscheduled meetings NECESSARY to transact urgent business must be called in such a way as to fairly inform all members, to enable their presence as best as possible.

The pastor acts as moderator unless other provisions are made by the church. An able clerk should be elected to faithfully record all decisions made by the church during all business meetings. The moderator calls the meetings to order at the appointed times. It is his duty to keep order by calling out of order any member who speaks or behaves in an unchristian manner, or who deviates from the ordered path of procedure. All members ruled out of order should have the right to appeal that ruling to the assembly whose majority vote can overrule the moderator. This should be a rare occasion! Any member has the right to call a "point of order" when they feel that the moderator has failed to do so appropriately. If the moderator disagrees, that member may also appeal this to the assembly. In such cases the moderator should bow to the will of the assembly.

Baptist business meetings should all be opened and closed with prayer. After a call to order the minutes of previous business yet unapproved by the assembly should be read and approved with corrections as necessary. Many churches give an invitation for new members early in each business meeting, but the time of doing this is only a custom and may vary from church to church. Many churches allow reception of new members by vote of the members present at any regularly scheduled meeting of the church as well. Scheduled business may be taken up without a motion to do so at the appropriate time. Unfinished business, including committee reports, should claim the body's attention before any new business is introduced. Correspondence read to the assembly may introduce an item of business requiring disposal. New business *requiring church action* is properly proposed by motion and second from members. Strict parliamentary rules forbid any discussion of debate on any question until after it has been formally introduced by motion and second. This strictness is not wise in all cases in Baptist churches. Most parliamentary bodies consist of parties which craft proposals far in advance of assemblies. Not only are they written out, but strategies for maneuvering their passage are planned. Assigned committees can then sometimes kill these proposals before they ever reach the assembly floor where they can be debated. All such "politics" is discouraged or forbidden in the Christian realm, although unfortunately, it sometimes does occur. Rather, much business when first introduced before churches is new to some if not most of the members. An explanation of the question and some questions in

response and ensuing discussion are often needed in order for members to form an idea of a proper motion to present for the action of the church. Much confusion can sometimes result from an inappropriate or ill crafted motion which catches everyone by surprise. Christian courtesy, meekness and charity requires that Christians be hesitant to vote down the motions of their beloved brothers. Consequently, many motions of this type may pass as a result of this hesitation which are neither wise nor reflective of the will or seasoned judgment of the church. *I have yet to experience any Baptist church in which the idea of no discussions prior to a motion and second was not often violated.*

Many writers of manuals have prefaced their remarks on parliamentary procedures with statements like this: "Where the spirit of Christian love and courtesy prevails, very few rules are necessary in the transaction of church business." (J. M. Pendleton's manual, p. 163) Pendleton's four and a half pages on parliamentary law, which totals one-third of the book's "appendix," occupies 2.5% of the content of his 182 page church manual. By contrast his section on church discipline, a fundamental almost totally neglected by churches today, consists of 29 pages of the text. That is more than three times as much on discipline as on parliamentary procedure. The 144 page manual of Edward Hiscox (1890, 1965 revision), a standard for northern Baptists in the United States, gives no separate treatment of parliamentary procedures. What he states in this regard is interspersed throughout the more important sections of the book. J. Newton Brown's 36 page manual (1853, 1967 printing) gives six pages on rules of church order which also contains more points than simply parliamentary procedure. J. E. Cobb's 212 page manual (1941, 1975 printing), a standard for Baptist Missionary Association churches, included eight pages on procedures. R. H. Boyd's 62 page National Baptist Pastor's Guide (1900, 1983 edition) includes 17 pages of "parliamentary rules." Boyd, in making perhaps the strongest case for set rules, and after having stated on page 47, "No question is properly before an assembly until a motion placing it before the body is made, seconded, and stated by the chair. Prior to such action all debate upon a question is out of order," stated on the same page, *"sometimes questions are decided by common consent without the formality of a motion." This describes what I have called "consensus," which is better than a majority vote, and is exceeded in value only by "one accord!"*

None of the foregoing is meant to discourage the use of parliamentary procedures where they are appropriate and tend to advance the Lord's business. In fact, ALL ASPIRING PASTORS NEED TO FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH AS MANY OF THESE MANUALS AS POSSIBLE. Seeing the similarities and differences embraced by different writers gives one a feel for both *the importance and the proper limits of procedures.*

Matters of discipline ought to be dealt with, whenever scripturally demanded, at church business meetings. Personal offenses are in order before the church only when the first steps of Matthew 18:15-18 have already been attempted without success. Public offenses may be brought before the body at any time, but must be investigated whenever concrete proof is lacking before any charge of misconduct is made. It is the duty of all members knowing of public misconduct of other members to introduce the matter. While it is not required in such cases that they go privately to the offender beforehand, often it is in the interest of Christian charity to make such an attempt. However, even if such private attempts succeed in a behavioral correction, where the offense is publicly known,

acknowledgement to and repentance toward the whole church as well as to God is still owed and should be required by all who know of the offense.

Any political maneuvering, covert campaigning, etc. preceding ANY business meeting which is designed to win the vote by stealth or surprise is wrong. Decisions effected in such a manner, if they do not reflect the will of the majority or more, ought to be in some manner overturned. The vote of a majority in one business meeting is neither the law "of the Medes and the Persians," much less of our "immutable" God.

A motion to "reconsider" is appropriate for this purpose if it is done on a timely manner. Robert tells us (p. 53) that this motion is not in order after the session is past in which the original motion was voted on. On the next page he tells us that any motion which "has been partly executed," or "if anything that the assembly cannot reverse has been done as a result of the vote," it "cannot be reconsidered." It requires only a majority vote to carry, after which it puts the original motion before the assembly again exactly as it was before the first vote was taken. Pendleton agrees that a motion to reconsider must be made and seconded by members who voted with the majority. Boyd agrees to this, and also agrees with Robert that the motion to reconsider must be made on the same day as the vote being reconsidered.

A vote which was lost can also be reconsidered if one who voted with the majority changes his mind and makes such a timely motion.

None of the Baptist manuals mention a motion to "rescind." Robert briefly mentions it (p. 52) as an option to annul some action formerly voted after it is "too late to reconsider." He declares that "it stands on an equal footing with a new resolution," therefore it is assumed that any member can make the motion. Robert also says, "any action of the body can be rescinded regardless of the time that has elapsed." Still, common sense tells us that if an already executed action cannot be reconsidered, neither should it be rescinded, because of the impossibility or correctly reversing the already executed agreement.

Obviously, judging by the rules accompanying it, the reconsider motion was meant to be used by persons who have experienced a change of mind immediately after they cast a vote. These rules prevent a potential seesaw of vote reversals from one meeting to the next which could hinder church fellowship.

However, no citizen should be deprived of an honest effort to reverse an approved action he sincerely believes is wrong even after the time for reconsideration is past. Rescind is a possible avenue for such a reversal. Some parliamentary bodies may wisely make a rule for a 2/3 majority to rescind, lest the disrupting seesaw before mentioned become a reality, but all motions requiring more than a simple majority should be agreed upon by the church. **ALL MOTIONS TO "RESCIND" OR "RECONSIDER" ARE OUT OF ORDER AFTER THE APPROVED ACTION HAS BEEN EXECUTED.** You cannot properly "rescind or reconsider the act of receiving" a member months or years after he has enjoyed your church fellowship any more than the United States could rescind the act of dropping an atomic bomb on Japan. While you might thereby officially deprive a fellow member of church membership who in good faith entered your church fellowship, it is a TREACHEROUS act against that person unworthy of Christians, regardless of the supposed reason. Sometimes this is done to please the coercive efforts of a sister church

which dislikes the manner in which that member was received. If that member has truly misrepresented himself while entering into the church, he may be charged with falsehood and proper discipline may take its course. If he repents and makes amends he may remain a member. If he does not he may be excluded for cause.

Neither "motions" nor "seconds" can be found in scripture. Nor are church business meetings as we know them specified or described in the sacred text. However, there must be some orderly way of arriving at the will of the church regarding any matter of church action. Parliamentary procedures have been formulated for all deliberative bodies to use for such purpose. Every rule therein has a reason for being there, which is aimed at good order in achieving either one accord, consensus, or majority rule. We must remember however, that most democratic bodies are *legislative*, while churches are not. Therefore, some parliamentary rules do not work well with the Lord's churches. Adjustments need to be made.

Most of our churches traditionally require unanimous consent for passing some motions. The most common of these regards reception of members. The logic here in favor of unanimity is this: negative votes to receive a member begin his membership with broken fellowship in the church. One accord, so crucial to our success, may not henceforth be possible. If consensus is not obtained (that is, no negative votes) much effort should be exercised to remove the difficulty. Dissenters owe an *explanation* to the majority. Their explanation may justify their vote in the minds of the majority, in which case the person is refused for good cause. If most of the members feel strongly enough that a dissenter is manifesting an uncharitable attitude, they have a right to use discipline, if necessary, to eliminate unreasonable dissent. However, much caution and genuine love must be used in all such difficult cases. All Baptists however, have not always agreed with this unanimous vote. J. Newton Brown says, "No person shall be received as a member of this church, to whose admission five members object." (p.27) On page 29 of the same manual he writes, "nine members shall constitute a quorum to do business." Even if that quorum was eleven or twelve, anyone can readily see the problem of his five objector's rule. It is much better to remove the dissent to preserve one accord.

A few motions, may justify votes in excess of a simple majority to pass. Each church must decide on which ones and make those rules, but they need to do it very wisely. J. Newton Brown, in his church manual, expressed belief that pastor and deacon elections, and licensing of preachers, should require ¾ majority, and that motions to ordain elders should carry unanimously. Certainly we agree that a pastor called by a simple majority has a great task ahead of him to win the confidence of the dissenters in his quest for the one accord so vital to church success, and also that licensing and ordaining motions need the support of most or all of the church, but most Baptist traditions away from the northeast United States has not put such emphasis upon the ministry as did Elder Brown. Elder Boyd lists quite a number of motions which he thought ought to require 2/3 majority to pass. Among these was the expulsion of a member. If there is any action the Bible justifies passing by a simple majority it is exclusion, as already explained in an earlier section, according to 2nd Corinthians 2:6. A

member whom more than half of the members cannot in good conscience fellowship should not be retained without proper amends.

All manuals and parliamentary rules list some "privileged question" because they take precedence over all other questions. Most of these are subsidiary motions, meant to dispose of the main motion already on the floor. Pendleton lists "adjourn," "lay on the table," "have the previous question," "amend," "commit," and "postpone." However, these motions can easily be abused in churches whenever any member decides to use them in an attempt to thwart the will of the church majority by preventing a needed vote, or to deprive another member of their rights to equal voice in the church. It is easy to see that a motion to adjourn, privileged at ANY TIME according to parliamentary rules, is not right if it is made to stop a vote which cannot be carried out after the next business session. It is equally easy to see that a motion to postpone indefinitely, essentially killing the motion, instead of allowing a vote on the main motion is not in the spirit of Christian courtesy. Neither is it Christ-like to move to "put the previous question" simply to prevent others from speaking their views on an issue. When or if these kinds of efforts are made, Baptists need to be uncharacteristically ready to VOTE THE PRIVILEGED MOTION DOWN, to stop its misuse.

The latter privileged motion is so misunderstood that it needs explanation. A custom has evolved in our associations and some of our churches for any member to yell "question" as a means to stop discussion on an issue immediately and force a vote. This is a total misuse of procedure by any rule book. This is a perversion of the motion to call for the "previous question." The mover should be made to rise and address the moderator and be recognized by him. He should state his motion and be seconded by another. The moderator has a duty to then explain to the whole assembly that this is a motion to immediately end debate and bring the main motion to a vote. It is NOT a vote on the main question. While the previous question is said to be non-debatable, those who wish for the discussion to continue must vote it down, or the discussion is abruptly ended and the main vote must be immediately taken. If the previous question motion is voted down by a majority, the debate goes on. It is easy to see how the use of these privileged motions can be very unchristian!

In summary: Standard parliamentary rules have been proven to work well in all deliberative bodies, including churches with scriptural congregational rule. There is, however, a much greater need for courtesy and charity in church business than in other deliberative bodies. Both of these qualities are helpful to the ultimate success of all deliberative bodies, but in the Lord's churches, the desired success is highly dependent upon this. The rules are meant to facilitate good order, fairness, and efficiency. It is the deliberate misuse of the rules which normally cause the most confusion.

Scheduled business meetings, moderators, clerks, motions, seconds, requiring the moderator to state the motion clearly, standing to speak one at a time only after being recognized by the moderator, simple majority rule except in cases where each local body has a rule requiring a higher majority, etc. etc. are all intended to produce good order, and will do so when rightly used. Our pastors need to study these procedures thoroughly and teach them appropriately to the people. A thorough comprehension of parliamentary law will also help a pastor to discern which rules DO NOT lend themselves to enforcement upon the Lord's churches. Never ever forget however that these are methods are not Biblical doctrine and that attempts to enforce them to that degree are wrong.