

Answering Aaron Erhardt By Dan King

As briefly as possible I would like to respond to some of the allegations and false accusations of brother Aaron Erhardt. His article, “Can Christians Work Together to Preach the Gospel through a Secular Business?” appeared in *Gospel Truths* (August 2006) on page 4. I am sure that Aaron is sincere in his beliefs, but I am absolutely positive that he is wrong on these matters, and that his position, if taken to its logical ends will lead to conclusions that even he will not dare to entertain. The following are some of his rather startling accusations:

1. “The Guardian of Truth Foundation has become a missionary society.” This is not true. GOT has never supported a single missionary. If so, let our brother name him. In the churches of Christ, we opposed the missionary society of 1849 on the ground that it was an attempt at activating the church universal. A missionary society is a confederation of churches. Those of us at GOT still oppose this sort of thing. It took donations from local churches, met with representatives of all of the churches, and made corporate decisions on behalf of all the churches – in order to send out missionaries to preach the gospel. That was the basis of our opposition to the society. GOT does none of these things, and has never done any of them.

2. “They have started conducting gospel meetings.” This also is a falsification. GOT has a yearly lectureship. It has never conducted a gospel meeting. If we were to do so, we would announce it as such, and we would call it that. Our series of Bible studies is called the “Truth Magazine Lectures.” What is wrong with a secular business conducting a series of Bible studies? If you owned a hardware store, would it be sinful for you to have a series of Bible studies in your employee break room?

3. “Christians cannot work together to preach the gospel through a secular business.” This is a summarization of several of his sentences. If his position is true, then Paul and Aquila and Priscilla sinned against God (see Acts 18:1-4). These three individuals used their working relationship as a basis for weekly preaching of the gospel in the local synagogue. A synagogue is not a church. It is a religious institution. Funding came from the secular business. The preaching was done by Paul in a religious institution other than the church. If only the church may teach the gospel, then funeral homes, colleges, web sites involving several men, services at

old folk's homes, Florida College camps, R.J. Stevens' singing schools, preaching at a prison, preaching to a Kiwanis Club, and many other things would be sinful. If a logical position leads to absurd conclusions, the position itself is absurd.

4. "God's plan is for elders to oversee gospel meetings, not human boards (1 Pet. 5:2)." Gospel meetings are not mentioned in Scripture. They are an expedient method for arranging preaching services in a local church. May individuals working together arrange for comparable services outside the sphere of the local church? If his contention is correct, and the answer to this question is "no," then the brethren who have pooled their resources yearly to preach at a tent meeting near Burkesville, KY have sinned grievously against God. A "board" of two men oversaw this event, not an eldership. This is precisely equivalent to Paul's preaching in Arabia (Gal. 1:17). No church sent him there, and no elders oversaw his work there. He went there in an effort to establish churches in a region unknown to the church. This Paul and his traveling companions did often. Sometimes there is a "sending church" involved, and sometimes the preacher goes out on his own initiative.

There is nothing in the Bible that requires that preaching must be overseen by the elders of a local congregation. Brother Aaron is binding where God has not bound. Only the apostles of Christ were given the authority to bind on behalf of the Lord (Matt. 18:18). Our brother is the kindred of the Pharisees, he binds heavy burdens "grievous to be borne" but "will not move them with his finger" (Matt. 23:2-4). He published his article in *Gospel Truths*, a product of Gospel Truths, Inc., a human institution overseen by a board of directors. It is not the work of a local church. It is not the work of one man. It is the product of a human collectivity overseen by a Board of Directors. Its purpose is to teach the gospel. Perhaps brother Erhardt can explain to us why it is scriptural for a Board of Directors to oversee the teaching of the Bible in written form but wrong for it to oversee the teaching of the Bible in oral form!

5. "Would it be okay for churches to send the GOTF money? Then it is not equivalent to individuals working together, for they can be supported by churches!" Churches cannot send money to the foundation because it is a human institution engaged in a secular business. Churches should not send money to *any* secular business unless they are paying for a service. However, because we oppose a local church sending money to them, does

not make them wrong in and of themselves. We oppose sending money as a donation from the church to the American Red Cross, but that does not make the institution itself sinful. An individual could donate to the Red Cross, for it is a human institution doing benevolent work. But the church should not do so. A church ought not to send a donation to the local electric company, either, but certainly should send a check every month to pay the electric bill. It is one thing for a church to purchase and pay for a service; it is another thing for it to make a gift of money to such a human institution.

6. “Mike Willis wrote a 15 page open letter to the Brown St. Church of Christ in which he attacks the elders and members for opposing the foundation. Who does he think he is writing that?” This also is a ludicrous charge. Mike wrote an open letter because of a sermon that was preached by Bob Dickey and a decision made by the Brown Street elders to disfellowship any preacher who speaks at the Truth Magazine Lectures. Mike Willis has been associated with that church in various ways for forty years. Two of his brothers preached for that church. He has held two meetings for that congregation. Connie Adams and Weldon Warnock, both members of the GOT board of directors, served as local preacher for that church. Furthermore, the condemnation of the Guardian of Truth Foundation by name identified him and several of the rest of us as teaching false doctrine. He needed to respond to the false charges against him. Has brother Aaron determined that what is preached in a local pulpit and practiced by any local church is not subject to review by others from the outside? What Bible verse teaches this? If this is true, then we cannot criticize the Pope, or the local Baptist preacher!

7. “GOTF has labeled those who oppose them doing the work of the church as ‘Sommerites.’” GOTF has not labeled anyone anything. Dan King and Mike Willis labeled them “Sommerites.” That is because they are Sommerites. Daniel Sommer split churches and alienated brethren from one another all over this country over his pet theory about “Bible colleges.” He said they “do the work of the church.” Aaron makes this charge and in that very sentence reveals himself a Sommerite. If one makes the same arguments as Daniel Sommer did regarding secular businesses, then he is a Sommerite. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it is a duck!

Preaching the gospel is not exclusively the work of the church. Where does the Bible say that it is? Individuals preach the gospel. Families preach the gospel. Christians should preach the gospel in every situation wherein they

find themselves, whether it is secular or not. Aaron cannot prove that anything GOTF does is exclusively the work of the church. In addition, if a church started doing the works that the GOTF does, he would undoubtedly condemn the church for stepping beyond the limits of authorized work for the church.

8. “Willis and King recently wrote a book in which they attack Gene Frost and others, specifically naming Frost hundreds of times!” What is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander: Aaron Erhard recently wrote an article in *Gospel Truths* in which he attacks me and others, specifically naming us in that article (I suppose the number of times that one mentions another’s name is only a matter of human judgment). Apparently it is also appropriate for Gene Frost to “attack” us in *Preceptor* and *Gospel Truths* magazines and mention our names repeatedly, but inappropriate for us to answer him in a book and mention his name. Brother Aaron, have you counted the number of times brother Frost mentioned our names in *We Have A Right Answered*? We shall wait for you to do the counting and post that number for us.

9. Aaron quotes Roy Cogdill, falsifying his words against the GOTF. In fact, Roy Cogdill helped to establish the foundation. He wrote often for *Truth Magazine* and spoke often at the FC lectureships. He was not opposed to the foundation or to a lectureship held by a secular enterprise. This is a misrepresentation of brother Cogdill. Roy Cogdill believed every word that he said; but his words are being misappropriated and misused. Brother Aaron should repent.

10. Where is brother Aaron’s article about the Florida College Lectures? We have not seen it. FC has been having a lectureship yearly for over 50 years. FC is a secular business. FC has a lectureship. Why has Aaron not spoken out against the FC lectureship? We shall be watching for his article, but pardon us if we do not hold our breath in the meantime.