

Response to
We Have A Right, Answered
by Gene Frost

Our Response to *We Have A Right, Answered*

Mike Willis and Dan King

After the appearance of the first edition of our book *We Have A Right: Studies in Religious Collectivities* (2005), brother Gene Frost reviewed it in both *The Preceptor* magazine and *Gospel Truths*. Then near the end of 2006 he published a book-length barrage entitled *We Have A Right Answered! The Truth is, They Have No Right!* We have no intention of replying to all of his false charges and quibbles, but there are a few things that we would like to further explore from this “new book.” It will be noted by the reader that brother Frost has not offered any fresh exposition of Scripture, nor has he put forward much that is different from his older writings.

We offer the following relevant points for the consideration of those who may be interested in our reaction to a few of his protestations.

What Frost Affirms

In his own words, brother Frost holds the following view:

Actually, what we affirm is that the church is the only collectivity of *God's people*, which He has *ordained and authorized*, to propagate the Gospel and conduct public worship services (*We Have A Right Answered* 9).

I believe that the *collectivity of God's people, authorized or ordained by God, for their collective action in worship or teaching, is the local church* (*Ibid.* 42).

We have repeatedly dealt with his false premise in our earlier writings on this subject, so we shall not burden the reader with an additional extensive treatment of these matters. However, these brief statements provide us an opportunity to “cut to the chase” and “get to the heart of the matter” by summarizing the major points we earlier made against his theory.

First, the reader will note that he wishes to bracket out all possible sce-

narios involving non-Christians by the delimiting phrase “of God’s people.” This is very purposeful on his part. He sees the logical incongruity of his proposition unless he adds this delimiter to his definition. But it is a two-edged sword: it cuts both ways. In other words, collectivities such as the American Bible Society or the American Cancer Society or any other such group, which in every way of viewing them qualify as “unscriptural collectivities” under his rubric, are thereby disqualified from the definition. They are thereby excised from the discussion. But this “slight of hand” which he so deftly employs will not work logically. Therefore, if we follow his thinking to its logical destination, then we would be forced to the conclusion that believers may not do what unbelievers may rightly and properly do. God has two sets of criteria for judgment: one for believers and a different one for unbelievers. This position is logically indefensible.

Second, if we have been able to show that God has authorized even one other collectivity to propagate the gospel and conduct worship activities, then his premise has been shown false and it must be rejected and sent to the scrapheap of false religious theories. This is exactly what we did when we showed in our essays that the family is a collectivity of Christians which may (nay must!) propagate the gospel and conduct worship activities. We also demonstrated that groups of individual Christians, not associated as members of the same family, may worship together and propagate the gospel as Jesus and the Twelve did, and as Paul and Silas did. Brother Frost’s hypothesis falls flat upon its face on the basis of overwhelming biblical evidence against it. Any theory that makes it wrong for us to do what Jesus and the Twelve did cannot possibly be taken seriously!

This does not say, nor is it intended to say, that the local church is not important, or that it does not occupy a significant role in the spiritual life of every Christian. Every single child of God is morally obligated (ought) to associate himself or herself permanently and wholeheartedly with a congregation of saints in their geographical area, worshipping and serving God with a band of like-minded disciples. In that relationship worship will be offered to God and the gospel will go forth and prosper through their combined efforts. But preaching the gospel and worship activities are not restricted to the local congregation.

Daniel Sommer Revisited

Brother Frost accuses us of “attempting to re-write history” in our treatment of Daniel Sommer’s opposition to the colleges among us. But, while he maliciously brands us as falsifiers, he does so cautiously making his accusation in the most tentative of ways. He writes,

3. Facts about Sommer are falsified.

Despite King's efforts to re-write history and falsify the issue, the truth remains that Sommer was committed in opposition to *church contributions* to colleges, but not to colleges free of church entanglements. . . . What Sommer opposed, as we have already shown, was "church-supported colleges". . . I find no fault in what Sommer *says* is his opposition to "Church schools." If, however, he "opposed the very existence of religious schools, colleges, and other institutions" (WHAR 26) as King asserts, I would disagree with him and I do reject the concept. However, it must be proven, not just asserted (51-52).

We must confess that this is the oddest of all claims of falsification we have ever heard or read. At the first he affirms that we have attempted "to re-write history and falsify the issue," and at the last he confesses that he is not sure of this and that it is possible that Sommer did oppose the very existence of schools and other institutions. In the event that Sommer actually *did oppose them outright*, and we can produce the quotations to demonstrate this fact, then brother Frost tells us he rejects the concept and "would disagree with him." He therefore calls us falsifiers of facts (liars), but then admits that we could be right! What are we in that case? Are we worthy of an apology? We will not hold our breath.

Well, in fact, we are correct in our representation of Daniel Sommer's opposition to colleges and other human institutions. He did oppose them outright, regardless of brother Frost's efforts to deny it. Moreover, we intend to submit ample proof of this in the present essay. Apparently brother Frost did not read the evidence we proffered, for on page 21 of our book we quoted Earl Irvin West's enumeration of Sommer's six reasons for being against the colleges in particular. According to West, they are: (1) The Christian School comes under the same category as the Missionary Society and must be opposed in the same way. (2) The second front was motivation. According to Sommer their purpose was to "glorify" man. (3) The establishment of the schools was an improper use of the Lord's money. Sommer argued that every dollar given to a human institution ought to have been given to the local church. He opposed an individual Christian giving money to a college, not just a church doing so, as Frost alleges. (4) Fear was that in time the churches would not use preachers unless they were graduates of the colleges. (5) They would create a special privileged class of ministers who would, as in former days, lead the church into another digression. (6) Finally, the campaign against Christian schools emphasized that they were church institutions, a spin off of the contention that the schools were like the missionary societies and by that, subject to the ban. All of these points may be found in: *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 3, pp. 236ff. Of

course, we agree that Sommer opposed church support of colleges, and quoting others to establish that is like trying to prove the obvious. No one denies this.

The following is a quotation from Sommer regarding giving money to what he called a “religio-secular school.” Sommer believed it was wrong to give any money at all, even privately or individually, to such an institution:

Now suppose that the Lord overpays us, or prospers us more than we need or deserve, to the amount of a thousand dollars or more. Shall we give it back to him in his own divinely appointed way, or shall we buy or build a religio-secular school with it? The reader will justly say that the mentioned professed disciple should have given the five dollars which he had been overpaid back to the man who had overpaid him. The same just judgment will decide that all disciples whom the Lord has prospered with a surplus, beyond what they need for their dependent ones and beyond what Caesar has the right to exact, *should give that surplus back to the Lord* in the way that he has directed in his word by precepts and examples therein recorded (*Sommer-Armstrong Discussion*, First Essay, p. 1).

He spoke of the “Unscripturalness of establishing religio-secular schools with the Lord’s money” (*Ibid.*, p. 5) in the context of his belief that all money held by any Christian above what was required for sustenance was in fact the Lord’s and must be put into the treasury of the local church. In the words of West, Sommer believed “that after paying taxes and supporting the needs of the family, the remainder of one’s money belonged to the Lord” (*Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 3, p. 238). That did not mean it had been given into the treasury of the church, but that *it ought to have been*. He summarized his main objections to schools on October 9, 1906 in his *Octographic Review* with the following words, “All that I have written on the subject has been under these two headings, namely, the mistake of thus using the Lord’s money, and the mistake of thus naming such institutions (Sommer also opposed the name “Bible” associated with colleges, as in “Bible colleges” - dhk)” (*Ibid.*, p. 10). Both of these were major conscientious objections of Sommer. Speaking of David Lipscomb, Sommer wrote:

Regardless of infirmities, he did much in saving much of the southern part of the disciple brotherhood from perverters that developed in the North under the leadership of Isaac Errett. But David Lipscomb as a plain and humble man, did not know what evils he introduced by what he did in advocating so-called “Bible Schools.” In the North, we contended, “Let the State teach in secular domains, and let the church teach in regard to faith. . .” (William E. Wallace, *Daniel Sommer, A Biography*, pp. 222-223).

Quotations abound in the writings and speeches of Sommer to show that he opposed the existence of schools on different grounds than Frost asserts. For reason of brevity, we shall quote the following words from Sommer and his opponent in one of the few written debates that is still extant. This single source alone is quite sufficient to demonstrate that we have not mischaracterized Sommer:

Now, that is what our discussion is about, and thus it is about the existence of the institution commonly called “Western Bible and Literary College”, as it has been projected and as it has been advertised, as it has been pleaded for, and as it has been presided over (*A Report of Skirmishes Between a Religious Journal and a Religio-Secular College*, p. 12; from Sommer’s first speech).

Daniel Sommer, in his first speech defined the difference between himself and B. F. Rhodes as having to do with the “existence of the institution.” He was not opposed merely to church support of the school (which was not an issue between himself and Rhodes since the school did not seek support from church treasuries), but to the very existence of such a school. At this point in his career, Sommer was opposed to all of the schools, every single one of them, on the ground that they had no right at all to exist. Note also how Rhodes framed the issue:

This is a discussion with reference to the Biblical right to establish schools in which—chiefly secular—to teach the Bible. . . .The Biblical right in this discussion is to test the Biblical right to have a college (*Ibid.*, p. 16; from Rhodes’ first speech).

Rhodes knew what the debate was about. Sommer opposed *the very existence of a college*. Therefore, this was the point of contention between the two of them. It was not a question of churches sending contributions to the school. That was not the issue. Moreover, in his second speech in the same public discussion, Sommer stated his case for the proposition. In doing so, once more he argued that Christians have no right to found such a school as the one immediately in question, or any like it. He said,

The debate is concerning the BIBLICAL RIGHT to establish an institution of learning which is chiefly secular, in order to FURNISH AN OCCASION TO TEACH PUPILS THE BIBLE; also, the BIBLICAL RIGHT in advertising such an institution, to call on Christians to pray for it, patronize it and give money to establish and support it, and yet DENY THAT IT IS A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION! Likewise, the BIBLICAL RIGHT to have such an institution presided over by a man who, after loading himself with pompous, worldly, absurd titles, confesses that he is yet in

his SPIRITUAL BABYHOOD. MY PROPOSITION FOR DEBATE IS THAT SUCH AN INSTITUTION IS UNSCRIPTURAL (*Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19; all capitals appear as they did in the original text; Sommer was fond of using them—dhk).

What may have confused brother Frost, and perhaps others as well, is Sommer's own double talk on this issue. Here is a quotation taken from the *Octographic Review* which puts him squarely on both sides of the issue at once, or at least appears on the surface to do so. It is characteristic of his writing on the subject. He appears to be a "conflicted" man:

This journal favors and advocates all schools, colleges and universities, which do not oppose the Bible, nor disregard the physical health and mental temperament of their pupils, and it contends that the Bible, or certain parts of it, should be used as a text book in every school, college and university.

But this journal is set in opposition to the New Testament Church establishing schools, or colleges, or universities, from either wholly or partly secular, as institutions separate from the church, and with money which should be placed in the treasury of the church. Such an institution, even if wholly religious, is as much of an innovation as a man-made missionary society... [Daniel Sommer, "The *Review's* position in regard to Education and Colleges," *Octographic Review*, Vol. 48, No. 30 (July 25, 1905), p. 6].

His point is that schools which teach the Bible are fine as long as members of churches of Christ are not involved in the work. Anytime Christians are involved, the New Testament Church becomes involved, and they are wrong and it is wrong. Like brother Frost himself, Sommer was constantly issuing self-contradictory proclamations on this subject. He had to meet a few of them in the debate he had with B. F. Rhodes. Rhodes accurately made this point about Sommer:

He says it is not a question as to establishing a school to make a living, neither is it to object to the teaching of the Bible in that school. . . . In this, now, I agree with my friend and brother, that that is true,—that it is not a question with regard to the right of Christians to establish a school, nor teach the Bible in that, and he says he believes in that. It is admitted (reading from the chart) that "Christians may band themselves together to teach secular knowledge. They may teach the Bible a part or all the time. They may do this to make a living or as an act of charity" (*Ibid.*, p. 15).

The reason Rhodes could quote the words of Sommer contradicting his own proposition against the existence of such schools is because of the na-

ture of the admissions which Sommer had made in other places in his own writings. Sommer had admitted the things quoted by Rhodes, nevertheless he opposed all of the existing schools on account of the reasons cited earlier. He was against the existence of schools in principle, even though he admitted that under a specific set of circumstances a school wherein the Bible was taught might be able to exist. It was just that *this set of circumstances never, ever existed in any situation where Christians were concerned!* So, in reality he was opposed to all of the schools, period.

Writing in *The Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, Ed Harrell commented on the college question as follows:

By the 1930s, several well-defined views existed about the scriptural relationship of churches and colleges. A fairly small minority, mostly in the North, questioned the existence of religious colleges. Generally called Sommerites, because their view was associated with Daniel Sommer and his magazines, the *Octographic Review* and the *American Christian Review*, they argued that colleges operated by members of the churches of Christ were de facto church institutions. Sommer opposed “the church going into the school business,” insisting that such institutions robbed the church of its glory. Sommer was sometimes misrepresented and he mellowed through the years; in 1933 he visited Nashville, spoke at David Lipscomb College, and left persuaded that the school was not a church institution. Veteran *Gospel Advocate* staff writer F.B. Srygley believed that he and Sommer had reached a meeting of the minds; Sommer recognized that schools had a right to exist and Srygley agreed that churches should not contribute to their support (76).

The “Sommerite” position is not used to describe his later position (after 1933), but his earlier position when he opposed the very existence of the colleges. That view was the view associated with his name which was passed down to two of his prominent mentors—Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. Both men engaged in debates about Bible colleges. Here are the propositions for the Wallace-Ketcherside Debate which were used for both the Paragould, AR , (1952) and St. Louis, MO (1954) debates:

The organization, by Christians, of schools such as Freed-Hardeman College is in harmony with the New Testament Scriptures.

Affirm: G.K. Wallace

Deny: W. Carl Ketcherside

The organization, by Christians, of schools such as Freed-Hardeman College is contrary to the New Testament Scriptures.

Affirm: W. Carl Ketcherside

Deny:G.K. Wallace

The *Humble-Garrett Debate* had similar propositions, but in this instance the topic centered around Florida Christian College (Florida College). Its propositions read as follows:

The organization, by Christians, of schools such as Florida Christian College is in harmony with the New Testament.

Affirm: Bill J. Humble

Deny: Leroy Garrett

The organization, by Christians, of schools such as Florida Christian College is not in harmony with the New Testament.

Affirm: Leroy Garrett

Deny: Bill J. Humble

Richard T. Hughes (*Reviving the Ancient Faith*) made these comments about the difference between those who opposed church support of human institutions and the Sommerite position:

By the 1940s and 1950s, the anti-institutional movement among Churches of Christ sounded remarkably like Daniel Sommer. Indeed, representatives of mainstream Churches of Christ routinely sought to discredit the movement with the label “Sommerite.” But did the proponents of that movement really stand in that tradition? Were they latter-day Sommerites? The anti-institutional people themselves typically denied any organic connection with or descent from the Sommer tradition. And on the whole they were right.

In the first place, the anti-institutional people of the 1940s and 1950s hailed, by and large, not from the Midwest but from Texas, Tennessee, and points in between, and they had little connection with the older Sommerite churches. And in the second place, they framed the issue in terms that differed significantly from Daniel Sommer’s chief concern. Sommer questioned the very legitimacy of church-related colleges throughout most of his career; people in the anti-institutional movement of the 1940s and 1950s seldom pressed that issue. It is true that they often were suspicious of colleges and college-bred preachers, but their chief concern in this regard involved the question of how church-related colleges should be supported. As Roy Cogdill put it in 1947, the real issue was a matter of “whether or not it is right for a congregation of the Lord’s church to contribute to a college or a school in which the Bible is taught when that school is organized as a human institution doing a secular work under a board of trustees.” Churches of Christ had supported colleges for many years, but often that support derived—in good democratic fashion—from interested individuals rather than from congregations. Many believed that placing colleges in congregational budgets would involve those congregations in supporting institutional structures comparable to the missionary societies of the nineteenth century (230).

Hughes is writing from the institutional perspective, but we believe he and brother Harrell gave a fair assessment of the Sommer movement in contrast to the legitimate opposition to church support of human institutions. How could brother Frost have so seriously misconstrued the record here? Was he ignorant of this history, or has his memory slipped, or did he fear it was self-incriminating to acknowledge Sommer's real position? Whatever the answer, in his determination to defend his theory, *he has distorted historical facts*.

These are the facts of the case. It is sad to read such shoddy scholarship from the hand of brother Frost, while he accuses others of falsifying history. Clearly the facts of history are against him.

The Synagogue

Brother Frost argues that the church is the only collectivity through which individuals can function in teaching the Bible and offering worship (such as prayer and singing). This poses a problem for him because first century saints participated in prayer and Bible teaching in the synagogue. Obviously, this is another collectivity teaching the Bible and offering worship in which both Jesus (before his death) and his apostles (after his death, burial, and resurrection) participated. The participation of Jesus and the apostles in the synagogue is proof that the arrangement is not wrong, as brother Frost himself admits. But brother Frost responded to this argument by making some intriguing and rather surprising statements.

He argued that the synagogue was not an optional arrangement for teaching, but one that was established by divine instruction. This is quite a claim. It is also one that requires proving. Assertions and speculations will not suffice for proof. Here is what he wrote:

Jesus considered the Jews to be on solid ground scripturally, in building and maintaining the synagogue, because they had authority from God. The synagogue itself is the approved example. Approved examples are a means of determining authority. If an example is approved of God, it means that God must have authorized it. Authority is not issued in silence. God must have instructed those who first formed it. The fact that Jesus accepted it demonstrates that it was approved of God—Jesus knew; He is God. *We do not know the prophet through whom God spoke, only that He did so on the basis that man could not have acted without His instruction* (emphasis mine).

This is a very telling paragraph. It tells us he is willing to make every effort to force the facts of history as well as statements found in the Word of God to fit his pet theory of collectivities—even when they are both foursquare against him. Consider the following:

1. *The synagogue was established by divine authority.* That is true. But it does not address the main issue, namely whether it was started as an authorized, but expedient, arrangement or a mandatory arrangement. All of us agree that the synagogue was established by divine authority; but brother Frost argues that the synagogue was mandatory, founded and built in obedience to a particular prophet's command. Let's note the difference. Whether or not to have a church is not an optional matter because the church is a part of God's divine will. Christ planned and then founded the church (Matt. 16:18). Whether or not to build a church building, on the other hand, is entirely optional. A church building is authorized, but it is an expedient, not something mandatory or even essential. Only a *place* is essential, and that may be almost any place that will accommodate the congregation. Likewise, building a school or starting a paper is authorized of God, but neither one is mandatory. Whether or not to start a periodical or school in which the Bible is taught is optional. Both the church and the church building are authorized, but one is mandatory and the other is optional. Brother Frost argues that the synagogue was not an optional arrangement, but a mandatory one. What verse of Scripture did he quote to prove his point? What is the name of this prophet? In what period of Israelite history did he live: in the time of Moses, of Joshua, of David, or as late as Ezra and Nehemiah? He gives no answer to any of these questions, because he has no answers for them. He does not know. What he does seem to know, or at least claims to know, he has concocted on the basis of his own reasoning. Human reasoning devoid of Scripture evidence is a weak basis upon which to sustain a proposition. It is a bruised reed upon which, if a man leans, it will only break and pierce his hand through (Isa. 36:6). Will he continue to divide and alienate brethren from one another over such feeble logic?

2. *He argues that the synagogue was established because a prophet of God gave the divine commandment for it to be established.* Who was that prophet? Brother Frost said, "We do not know the prophet through whom God spoke" (127). He has no record of the prophet or the prophecy but he knows beyond all doubt that God must have commanded the synagogue to be established. What is it that gives brother Frost this certainty? Is it something that he has read in the Word of God? No, for had that been the case he would have cited the passage and set forward the biblical proof. It is crystal clear that there is another, and far less dependable foundation upon which he sustains his belief. Simply put, *it must be true, otherwise his position on collectivities would be wrong and, to his mind, that is just unthinkable and impossible! Therefore, he invents a prophet and a prophecy to sustain his position.*

In his desperate attempt to find Old Testament evidence of a synagogue,

brother Frost argues on the basis of the KJV translation of Psalm 74:8 that the synagogue existed in the Old Testament era. Showing that the synagogue existed in the Old Testament era proves nothing more or different than showing that the school of the prophets existed (2 Kings 6). For brother Frost's thesis to survive, he has to prove, not that the synagogue existed or was merely authorized under the Old Testament, for that is a matter that we all agree to, but he must establish by scriptural means that it was a divine institution, created by divine mandate like the Tabernacle/Temple and the church. But, we have affirmed before, and continue to affirm now, that neither the school of the prophets nor the synagogue was divinely mandated, although both were certainly authorized. However, the text of Psalm 74:8 reads:

They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

Let's assume, for sake of argument, that the KJV is the correct translation of the text and that the verse is actually referring to synagogues, as we presently know them, being in existence in the sixth or fifth century B.C. Does this unequivocally prove that the synagogue was created by divine mandate in contrast to the possibility that it was merely an authorized expedient, such as the school of the prophets? The fact of the matter is that even this verse does not help brother Frost to establish that proposition.

Where the word "synagogue" appears in the KJV and ASV, the other translations render *kōl mō'ādē 'ēl* as "meeting places of God." Brown, Driver, and Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 417) lists this as the only place in the whole Bible where it can be used to refer to the "synagogue," with other places so described being translated "appointed place" such as the temple (Lam. 2:6; Zeph. 3:18). Brother Frost alleged in his exposition of the passage that, "Modernist theologians have sought to change the text from the edifices to the persons assembled" (128), but the truth of the matter is that modernist theologians *want* this to refer to the synagogue, just as brother Frost does, but for a different reason—because in their minds it is proof of the late date of the canonization of the book of Psalms. Those who argue for the words to refer to the synagogue give this psalm a Maccabean date (165 B.C.; see for example, Delitzsch II:331), a date much too late for most conservative scholars to accept. G. Rawlinson defends synagogues by arguing that "synagogues," literally, "sacred meetingplaces" "for worship, other than the temple, always existed in Palestine, both before and after its erection" (*The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms*, 83). Rawlinson's comment means that he is convinced that there were synagogues throughout Israel's history, although there is absolutely no external evidence of such

synagogues. However, there is evidence of other groups assembling for prayer and teaching the Torah (for example, the schools of the prophets), but neither of these was created by a documented divine mandate.

Later scholars reject the KJV translation of this particular passage and think that this should instead be rendered “meeting places of God” (NKJV, RSV). The “meeting places of God” in v. 8 parallels (synonymous parallelism) “thy congregations” in v. 4, so whatever one of them means the other means also.

3. *Brother Frost argues that animal sacrifice could appropriately be offered in places outside the Temple (presumably including the synagogue) when one could not attend Temple worship.* We deny this allegation. He explains his view, “Israel was permitted to offer sacrifices in worship to God outside of the Temple and Jerusalem, not as an option, but when it was not possible to go to Jerusalem” (129). He cites Deuteronomy 12:21 as proof, which text is not at all speaking about animal sacrifices, but of the slaughter of animals for food. The text says,

When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after (Deut.12:20-21).

During the wilderness wanderings, animals for food were slain at the Tabernacle. After settling permanently in the land of promise, this law changed. Note the context of Deuteronomy 12:

Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee. Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart (12:13-15).

For additional instructions about eating meats see 12:22-25. The author specifically limits the offering of animal sacrifice to the place which God had chosen (first the tabernacle and later the Temple) (12:13-14, 26-27). (Given the fact that brother Frost thinks animal sacrifice was not limited to the Tabernacle and Temple, we fail to see what opposition brother Frost

could give to sacrifices on the high places so routinely condemned by the prophets. Were all of these references merely “much ado about nothing”? Cf. 1 Kgs. 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs. 12:3; 14:4; 15:4; 16:4; etc.)

4. Brother Frost writes, “What was authorized from the beginning of Old Testament worship was the liberty to come together to pray, study, etc. There was not a set or established system or order, so obviously, the need could adapt to the situation. The *synagogue* (meetings and meeting places) became extremely important when they were far removed from the homeland. However the nation adapted their meetings to their needs is immaterial to the fact that the synagogue was authorized. Jesus recognized them as legitimate meeting places. That fact is evident” (129). What brother Frost said about the Old Testament era is equally true about the New Testament era, as evidenced by the fact that the inspired apostles participated in the synagogue, a collectivity other than the local church which engaged in worship (prayer) and conducted Bible study. Whatever these verses prove about the authority for another collectivity in the Old Testament era, they prove about another collectivity during the New Testament era. This is true inasmuch as the apostles of Jesus Christ actively and conscientiously participated in synagogue worship after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Let us see what we can learn with some degree of certainty about the synagogue as an institution in Judaism. Though some few have made arguments based on verses in the Old Testament to attempt to prove the existence of the synagogue during the Old Testament era, a consensus among history scholars has developed to the effect that the synagogues in fact did not exist during the period of time represented by Genesis-Malachi. They are very much against the view espoused by brother Frost in his material. The best scholarly opinion holds that synagogue developed in the intertestamental period. In the following lines, we shall summarize the factual justification for that opinion.

The Origins of the Synagogue

The origins of the synagogue are hidden in obscurity as is true of the embryonic stages of most ancient institutions and movements. First century writers attributed the origin of the synagogue to Moses (Acts 15:21; cf. Josephus *Against Apion* 2:17; Philo *Vita Moses II*, § 39), but no modern scholars take the idea seriously. Prior to the 1970s, scholars generally accepted that the synagogue began in Babylon during the Babylonian exile. Starting in the 1970s, this theory was questioned and by the 1980s, a full scale debate raged over the issue.

In his book *The Ancient Synagogue*, Lee I. Levine lists seven theories about the origins of the synagogue and documents those asserting each

position, which may be summarized as follows:¹ (a) An increasing number of scholars have focused on the First Temple period as the context for the origin of the synagogue. These scholars emphasize Josiah's reforms in 621 B.C. which removed altars outside of Jerusalem, giving impetus to a new form of local worship without altars. (b) Most scholars over the years believe that the synagogue began in the sixth century B.C. as a response to the Babylonian exile, basing their conclusion on misinterpreted words of Ezekiel (8:1; 14:1). This understanding of the synagogue's origins became the dominant scholarly opinion until the 1970s.² (c) Another group of scholars think that the synagogue began when Ezra and Nehemiah led the return of the exiles to Israel. Regarding these three positions, Levine comments, "All three relate to the synagogue primarily as a religious institution, the first two as a worship context (prayer, prophetic discourse) in lieu of sacrifices, the last as a liturgical-scriptural context, with the Torah-reading ceremony as its focus."³ Others did not look at the synagogue as originating primarily to replace the Temple but viewed it as a community center. (d) Some proposed a fourth century date suggesting that the synagogue was not a religious gathering but a town meeting for Persian-Hellenistic Judaea. (e) Others have proposed a Hellenistic Egyptian setting for the synagogue largely because the earliest evidence for the synagogue is third century B.C. Egypt. (f) Another has proposed that the synagogue was created by the Pharisees in the Hasmonean era because it reflects many of the trends of the Hasmonean era. (g) Finally some have proposed that the synagogue originated in late, post-Maccabean Judaea. Levine lists the different concepts without stating which of them he prefers.

Some of these theories about the origins of the synagogue are based on no tangible evidence (especially those which suppose a pre-third century B.C. origin). Urman and Flesher summarized the evidence for all of the pre-third century theories of the origin of the synagogue saying, "It should be clear, then, that the idea of the Babylonian origins of the synagogue has very little support in solid evidence."⁴ The earliest evidence available pertaining to the synagogue comes from third century B.C. Egypt.

In 1987, J. Gwyn Griffiths presented the earliest evidences of a synagogue in third century B.C. Egypt.⁵ A limestone slab from Schedia (some twenty miles south of Alexandria, near the modern Kôm el-Gize) now in the Alexandria Museum bears an inscription that must have been displayed in an Egyptian synagogue (referred to as a "House of Prayer," *oikos tes proseuches*) which pays tribute to Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.). Also from the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes comes the dedication of a synagogue in Arsinoë-Crocodilopolis, an important city in the Fayûm. The opening lines of the dedication are identical to the one found at Schedia and both refer to

the synagogue as a “house of prayer.” More inscriptions have been found in the second century B.C., not only in Egypt but also in Antioch, Syria, and Delos in the Aegean. Though one may not know when the synagogue first originated, he can know that the earliest tangible evidence available for the synagogue is the third century B.C. Egyptian evidence. Griffith develops his material to affirm that the third-century Egyptian culture influenced the worship and function of the synagogue. Among Griffith’s conclusion is that the synagogue originated in the diaspora, not in Palestine.

In 1989, Lester L. Grabbe wrote an article summarizing the Palestinian evidence for the origins of the synagogue.⁶ Grabbe protests those theories about the synagogue which have no solid basis or only flimsy evidence to support sweeping generalizations and calls for scholars to carefully examine what the evidence is saying. He affirms five theses: (1) Synagogues originated in the Diaspora, probably in the Greek period. (2) The synagogue in Palestine is a post-Maccabean phenomenon. (3) There is nothing particularly Pharisaic about the institution of the synagogue. (4) Considering the lateness of the synagogue in Palestine, the immense superstructure of scholarly hypothesis which has been erected on this basis should be treated with considerable caution. (5) The rise of the synagogue was a fortuitous but vital development which paved the way for a post-temple Judaism. Regarding the synagogue in Palestine, Grabbe summarizes, “But when we look at Palestine itself, evidence for the existence of synagogues is lacking before the first century BCE and perhaps even until the first CE. The earliest literary references (the New Testament) put the synagogues as a flourishing institution in Galilee by about 30 CE as well as the existence of them in Jerusalem by about this time.”⁷

Also in January 1989, Paul V.M. Flesher presented a paper at the Midwest Society of Biblical Literature meeting entitled “Palestinian Synagogues Before 70 C.E.: A Review of the Evidence”⁸ which, building on the research of Gwyn and Grabbe, shows that the synagogue first appears in Galilee, away from the Temple in Jerusalem. He argues that the synagogue was an alternative expression in first century Judaism to that which was offered by the Temple cult. Flesher’s article relies on the literary evidence provided in the New Testament and Josephus, the Theodotus inscription, and archaeological evidences of first century synagogues (two in Judaea: Masada and Herodium; four in Galilee: Migdal, Chorazin, Capernaum, and Gamala). Flesher’s summary of the archaeological evidence is this: “. . . the data points to the existence of synagogues in Galilee prior to 70, but provides no firm evidence concerning Judaea.”⁹ His conclusion is as follows:

The evidence, little as it is, also suggests that the synagogues known to

have stood in Jerusalem belonged to or provided services for Jews from outside Palestine. This reinforces the hypothesis that the synagogue originated outside Palestine—according to Griffiths, in Egypt. When Jews from abroad permanently resided in Jerusalem, they brought their foreign institution—the synagogue—with them. They apparently established it in their own sub-community, but there is no evidence to indicate that it spread throughout the native Jerusalem population. Although the synagogue became naturalized in Galilee after its introduction, that does not seem to have happened in Jerusalem.¹⁰

Flesher's position is a good summary of what current scholars are saying about the origins of the synagogue.

In surveying the archaeological evidence about the synagogue, one is impressed by the paucity of the evidence for first century synagogues in contrast with the volume of evidence for later centuries. Scholars continue to struggle to interpret the scarce evidence available from the first century. It ought to be noted that brother Frost bases his doctrine upon a theory for which there is almost no evidence internally in the form of biblical information (and even what he is able to produce is highly questionable), and none whatsoever externally in the form of archaeological information. Apparently he wants us all blindly to accept his unproven assumptions and simply trust him on the matter.

The Functions of the Synagogue

What was the function of the synagogue? Did the synagogue originate as an alternative to Temple worship for those in the diaspora or was it more nearly like a community center? Scholars are divided over whether the synagogue was a religious institution that increasingly became involved in secular activities or a secular institution that included prayer and Torah study. Placing the evidence in its proper context rather than imposing anachronistic interpretations on it is important. One begins with the earliest evidence, the evidence which may be gleaned from Egyptian sources.

The synagogue was a place of prayer and the study of Torah. That it was a place of prayer is seen from the early Egyptian sources which refer to the meeting place as a place of prayer (*proseuche*).¹¹ The word *sunagoge* is not the preferred word used in Diaspora Judaism to refer to the synagogue. As mentioned earlier, among the earliest words used to describe the synagogue is the word *proseuche*, the description of it as a “house of prayer.”¹² Josephus refers to the synagogue as a *proseuchen* saying, “The next day there was a general assembly (*sunagontai*) in the Prayer-house (*proseuchen*), a huge building (*oikema*), capable of accommodating a large crowd.”¹³ In another place, he asserts that Moses built the earliest prayer houses saying, “Mo-

ses, as I have heard from old people, in Egypt, was a native of Heliopolis, who, being pledged to the customs of his country, erected prayer-houses (*proseuchas*), open to the air, in the various precincts of the city, all facing eastwards; such being the orientation also of Heliopolis.”¹⁴ Since *proseuche* is the earliest word used to describe the synagogue, we certainly and safely may assume that prayer took place in the synagogue.

Since there can be little doubt that prayer was offered in the synagogue, at least to that degree the synagogue served as a place of worship. The Egyptian Jews also built Temples in Egypt. Onias IV built a temple at Leontopolis after the pattern of the one in Jerusalem. It included an altar for sacrifices.¹⁵ Another temple was built in Elephantine to support the colony located there. Both of these temples defied the Deuteronomic rule that sacrifices could only be offered at Jerusalem. Though the synagogue did not include sacrifices, it must have been given the same sacred status as temples based on references to it as *hagiotate Gerasa* and *hagiotate sanagogeton Hebraion*.¹⁶ Philo refers to the “houses of prayer” as sacred places.¹⁷ He asks, “. . . and if they are destroyed from among us, what other place, or what other manner of showing that honor (honor to the house of Augustus, mw), will be left to us?”¹⁸

The synagogue was also a place for the study of Torah. The witnesses which may be marshaled to establish that the synagogue served as a place to study the law are as follows: (1) Josephus. In *Against Apion* II.175, he writes, “He appointed the Law to be the most excellent and necessary form of instruction, ordaining, not that it should be heard once for all or twice or on several occasions, but that every week men should desert their occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it, a practice which all other legislators seem to have neglected.” (2) Philo. Philo contributes the following remarks, “And would you still sit down in your synagogues, collecting your ordinary assemblies, and reading your sacred volumes in security and explaining what is not clear and devoting all your time and leisure with long discussion to the philosophy of your ancestors?” (*de Somniis* II.127).¹⁹ In *DeLegatione Ad Gaium* (Embassy to Gaius) 156, Philo writes, “Therefore he (Augustus) knew that they had synagogues, and that they were in the habit of visiting them, and most especially on the sacred sabbath days, when they publicly cultivate their national philosophy.” In *Apologia Pro Iudaeis* 7,12 (Hypothetica), he says, “What then did he do on this Sabbath day? He commanded all the people to assemble together in the same place, and sitting down with one another, to listen to the laws with order and reverence, in order that no one should be ignorant of anything that is contained in them.” He describes what happens when they assemble, “And then some priest who is present,

or some one of the elders, reads the sacred laws to them, and interprets each of them separately till eventide; and then when separate they depart, having gained some skill in the sacred laws, and having made great advances toward piety” (7, 13). Reading the sacred volumes was a part of the activities of the synagogue assembly. (3) The New Testament. In Acts 15:21, Luke writes, “For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues” (Acts 15:21). Earlier in Acts, he described the assembly at Antioch, Pisidia, “And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, ‘Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it’” (Acts 13:14-15). Luke describes a synagogue assembly in Luke 4:16-22. (4) The Theodotian inscription. Though contested by some, this inscription is generally dated prior to A.D. 70. It reads:

Theodotus, son of Vettenos, a priest and *archisunagogos*, son of *archisunagogos*, grandson of *archisunagogos*, built the synagogue for the reading of the law and for the teaching of the commandments. . . .²⁰

Reading Torah was a core part of the activities carried on in the synagogue. Levine suggests that reading Torah became a fixed part of the activities of the synagogue between the fifth and third century B.C. and was a motivating factor in the translation of the LXX.²¹ By the first century, the weekly reading of Torah at the assembly had become a fixed part of liturgical practice.

In conjunction with the reading of Torah and *haftarah* (a selection from the writings of the prophets) in the synagogue, a sermon was also delivered by some qualified person. Concerning the punishment for the one who violated the Sabbath by picking up sticks (Num. 15:32), Philo explains what happened on the Sabbath:

. . . for it was invariably the custom, as it was desirable on other days also, but especially on the seventh day, as I have already explained, to discuss matters of philosophy; the ruler of the people beginning the explanation, and teaching the multitude what they ought to do and say, and the populace listening so as to improve in virtue, and being made better both in their moral character and in their conduct through life; in accordance with which custom, even to this day, the Jews hold philosophical discussions on the seventh day, disputing about their national philosophy, and devoting that day to the knowledge and consideration of the subjects of natural philosophy; for as for their houses of prayer in the different cities, what are they, but schools of wisdom, and courage, and temperance, and justice, and piety, and holiness, and every virtue, for which human and divine things are appreciated, and placed upon a proper footing?²²

In *Apologia Pro Iudaeis* 7, 13 (*Hypothetica*), Philo says, “And then some priest who is present, or some one of the elders, reads the sacred laws to them, and interprets each of them separately till eventide; and then when separate they depart, having gained some skill in the sacred laws, and having made great advances toward piety” (7, 13).

The earliest evidences point to the synagogue being a place of prayer and reading Torah. At some point unknown to us, perhaps even from the beginning, reading Torah was accompanied by a sermon. So the synagogue was also a place of preaching. In fact, it might be generalized that all of the earliest evidence points toward the synagogue being a place of worship. In addition, interestingly enough, the synagogue was also viewed (as in all sacred precincts in temples and shrines) as a place of asylum²³ and slaves were manumitted there, precisely as they were in the pagan temples which stood nearby.²⁴

These evidences suggest that the synagogue was viewed in ancient Egypt as a holy place, a place of prayer, a place of worship. Slaves were manumitted in the synagogue as they were in the pagan temples precisely because this was a holy place where one could, in a manner of speaking, be sold to the God worshiped in the synagogue.

By the first century, the synagogue had become a community center for conducting Jewish affairs. Whether or not this was so from its beginning is unknown, but first century sources bear testimony to the fact that the synagogue was used for a number of activities other than just religious ones. The Theodotos inscription, quoted previously only partially, is here given in its entirety:

Theodotus, son of Vettenos, a priest and *archisunagogos*, son of *archisunagogos*, grandson of *archisunagogos*, built the synagogue for the reading of the law and for the teaching of the commandments, and the guest-house and the rooms and water facilities, (to provide) lodging for those from foreign countries who need it. His fathers and the Elders and Simonides laid the foundations.²⁵

Josephus also mentions secular uses of the synagogue. He records the letter received from Lucius Antonius which includes this statement:

Those Jews that are our fellow-citizens of Rome, came to me, and demonstrated that they had an assembly of their own, according to the laws of their forefathers, and this from the beginning, as also a place of their own, wherein they determined their suits and controversies with one another.²⁶

Later, he quotes a decree of the people of Sardis saying,

. . . in accordance with their accepted customs, come together and have a communal life and adjudicate suits among themselves, and that a place be given them in which they may gather together with their wives and children and offer their ancestral prayers and sacrifices to God,²⁷ it has therefore been decreed by the council and people that permission shall be given them to come together on stated days to do those things which are in accordance with their laws. . . .²⁸

Pre-A.D. 70 synagogues were used for several non-religious activities.

Synagogues were used as courts (*beth-din*) where disputes at law were decided, as the previous quotation from Josephus demonstrates. Evidence of this is also found in the New Testament.

Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles (Matt. 10:17-18).

But take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them (Mark 13:9).

But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake (Luke 21:12).

And I said, "Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in thee" (Acts 22:19).

The synagogue functions here as a court and even as a place for the infliction of punishment decided upon by the court.

Synagogues were used for communal meals. Josephus quotes a decree from Julius Caius, praetor of Rome, saying,

Now it does not please me that such decrees should be made against our friends and confederates, whereby they are forbidden to live according to their own customs, or to bring in contributions for common suppers and holy festivals, while they are not forbidden so to do even at Rome itself; for even Caius Caesar, our imperator and consul, in that decree wherein he forbade the Bacchanal rioters to meet in the city, did yet permit these Jews, and these only, both to bring in their contributions and to make their common suppers.²⁹

The edict guarantees two rights: (1) To assemble according to their ancestral traditions and (2) to collect monies for communal meals. The evidence that communal meals occurred in the synagogue rests on this citation. Based on this evidence, the fact that the Qumran community had communal meals, and communal meals were part of the activities at pagan temples, Levine concludes,

Thus, it would appear that Jewish communities throughout the Empire were adopting (and undoubtedly adapting) widespread practices of the Hellenistic and Semitic worlds, incorporating them in one way or another into their organized communal life. So central were these meals in Jewish life that they, along with several other activities, became subjects of controversy and hostility between the Jews and their neighbors.³⁰

The conclusion that the pre-70 synagogues were being used for communal meals rests on these quotations from Josephus.

The synagogue was used as a hostel for transients. The support for this conclusion rests solely on the Theodotus inscription (cited above) and depends upon it being a pre-A.D. 70 inscription.³¹

The synagogue was also used for a wide range of charitable activities. This conclusion rests on the statement in Matthew 6:2—“Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.” Jesus’ statement indicates that charitable giving occurred in the synagogue. Levine suggests, “In all likelihood, these funds were kept somewhere on the synagogue premises, and the actual distribution of monies likewise took place there—again, as was the case later on.”³²

Levine suggests that the synagogue was used as a public school, but the evidence cited is post A.D. 70. Any pre-A.D. 70 evidence is negligible, though he says, “some sort of educational system may already have been formalized in this pre-70 period.”³³

Z. Safrai states that the synagogue was used for public meetings but his evidence is based on a reference to a meeting which Josephus conducted at Tiberias³⁴ with reference to which the Bavli (the Babylonian Talmud) says that it occurred in the synagogue.³⁵

Lee I. Levine believes that the synagogue began as a community center and evolved into a place of worship over several centuries. “The syna-

gogue evolved from a community center with a religious component into a house of worship that included an array of communal activities,” Levine writes.³⁶ He is of the conviction that the synagogue was born to replace, not the Temple, but the city gates.³⁷ His conclusion is based on the various functions associated with the synagogue.

In summary, the earliest synagogues were places of prayer and used for the study of Torah and interpretation and application of Torah. By the first century they were also used as *beth-din* (houses of judgment) and communal meals. If the Theodotus inscription is pre-70, the first century synagogue was also used as a hostel for Jews visiting from foreign lands. Later rabbinic evidence shows that the synagogues were used for conducting community secular business, schools, etc. Levine suggests that the synagogue was the replacement of the early city gate where similar activities were also conducted, ranging from worship to conducting community affairs to other activities. Most of the evidence for the communal affairs is later than the early evidence of the synagogues being used as houses of prayer.

Conclusion

This brings us back to the original problem with which brother Frost must wrestle. So far as we know, the synagogue did not exist during the period when the Old Testament was written (1,400 B.C.-500 B.C.). When the last page of the Old Testament closes, there is no evidence of the existence of a synagogue. The consensus of biblical and historical scholars is that the synagogue was developed in the period between the two testaments. Since it was developed in the intertestamental period, the synagogue was not organized because a prophet of God commanded that it be built, such as was the case when the Lord commanded Moses to erect the Tabernacle. The synagogue was an authorized institution, but not a mandatory one. Therefore, the synagogue was a human institution, not a divine institution; it was an authorized liberty, not a mandated arrangement. How many times have you heard preachers say, “There are only three divine institutions: the home, the government, and the church”? They are absolutely right to say this. The synagogue was neither the home, the government, nor the church. It was not given a pattern of organization (if so, what were the qualifications for those who wanted to be rulers of the synagogues, for example?). It was not given a pattern for mandatory worship, although it could offer any form of scriptural worship not limited to the Tabernacle/Temple. It was not given a divinely revealed name. It was not given divinely revealed conditions for membership (many God-fearers participated in the synagogue and even built synagogues for the Jews).

Scholars are not even agreed that its main purpose for being founded was for worship. Most recent scholars believe that the synagogue developed to

replace the assembly at the city gate where various business affairs were conducted, but this is not certainly proven. Obviously, the first century synagogue was used for several non-religious functions, but one function was worship. Most Jewish scholars whose expertise is in the area of synagogue history emphasize that the synagogue was never a Jewish counterpart to the church because its function was much broader than worship and study of the Bible.

The evidence presented proves the following conclusions to be true beyond all doubt. In the synagogue, we have a human institution that had prayer and Bible study. It was a collectivity of individuals who pooled their resources under common oversight and engaged in public prayer and Bible study. Moreover, Jesus before his crucifixion and the apostles after his resurrection participated in synagogue activities which included Bible teaching and prayer. In the New Testament era, the apostolic example of the apostles demonstrates that one may participate in such activities without incurring the wrath of God or being guilty of sin. That being the case, the thesis which brother Frost teaches—the church is the only collectivity in which Christians can work together to teach the Bible and worship—is false on the very face of it. The Bible is wholly against his theory, as is the historical evidence.

Luke 8:1-3; John 12:5-6; 13:29

And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance (Luke 8:1-3).

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein (John 12:5-6).

For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor (John 13:29).

These passages of Scripture become extremely important in studying the issue of collectivities. Brother Frost asserts, “The only collectivity of God’s people, authorized of God for worship and service in the gospel, is the local church” (*Gospel Anchor* [October 1977]). Yet here is an example of Jesus, his apostles, and other disciples doing the very things he denies that they have the right to do.

He denies that they formed a collective body, but he never yet has told us what they would have had to have done in order to form a collective body. Here is a group of people pooling their resources (contributing funds over which Judas was treasurer) under common authority (Jesus) to do a common work (help the poor and support the apostles). Yet, brother Frost says, “They did not form a collective body that acted as a single unit.” But if several do what these did, they form a sinful collectivity, according to brother Frost. He said, “While the apostles were together, they acted independently and concurrently as learners. They held no office; they had no vote. They were subservient to Jesus.” Yet, brother Frost had just spent pages arguing that the Twelve were a special group—the apostles. But another group (the women) was contributing funds into a common treasury to support this group of men. And, what does the fact that “they had no vote” have to do with anything? Is the only form of organization possible a democratic organization? If so, the Roman Catholic Church is not an organization! If those in New Testament times could pool their resources under a common authority to do collective works without forming a separate and somehow unscriptural body, then we can do the same today. What did this group need to do to form a body which they had not already done? If they were not a body, organization, or institution—according to the Gene Frost definition of such—then pray tell us what were they?

Brother Frost went on to say, “There is no evidence of any organizational structure in their relationship. That is, while Jesus was the authoritative figure, He established no order, such as appoint John, Peter, or James, as vice-presidents, and others of the Twelve as a board of directors, and the Seventy as the staff” (94). So we can scripturally pool resources under common authority (one man) to do a common work, so long as we do not appoint subordinate positions! If many individuals pooling resources under common oversight to do a common work (helping the poor and supporting the Twelve) *does not constitute creating a collectivity* then why can’t we do the same thing they did without forming an organizational structure today?

After arguing that there was no organization, but stating that the Twelve were subservient to Jesus (organization?), brother Frost says, “Jesus was in control of the funds” (93). Doesn’t “in control” imply oversight, and thus organization? However one wishes to define this, the fact is that the ones who contributed the money were no longer in control of the funds they had previously controlled. As Peter said to Ananias and Sapphira, “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?” (Acts 5:4). When the funds were contributed, they no longer were under the control of the givers and they were not yet in the control of

the recipients. In spite of the fact that brother Frost denies there is an organization in between the giver and the recipients of the gift, it still exists.

Brother Frost writes, “When King and Willis ask, ‘Can we do what Jesus did?’ NO, you neither *can* nor *may* do what Jesus did! ‘Why not?’ *Because you are not Jesus!*” (95). Finally, brother Frost draws his conclusion, “Only Jesus, a divine Being, Himself God, could do what He did.” Here is brother Frost’s answer to Luke 8:1-3; John 12:5-6; and 13:29. What Jesus did was only possible because he was the Son of God. *Yet, Jesus was not the only one who acted in this particular arrangement.* This situation involved concerted action. There were the Twelve who were recipients of some of the funds. Brother Frost replies that you cannot do what they did either because they were Apostles. But, there were also the women who contributed the funds in this arrangement and the poor who were recipients of some of these funds. Can we do what they did? Brother Frost denies that we can.

But the fact of the matter is that Jesus was not acting in obedience to a compulsory commandment of the Torah (such as would be the case when he was circumcised or observed the Sabbath) when he, the Twelve, and the women pooled their funds under common oversight to do a common work (support the Twelve and help the poor). His actions were not proof of his deity (otherwise another doing the same thing would prove that he was deity). They had nothing whatever to do with his deity, and the fact that he was able to do them without guilt or sin was not related in any way to his being divine. Under the same or similar circumstances others could have done the same thing. And under the same or similar circumstances we could do the same thing. If not, why not?

Let’s consider another problem that brother Frost has created for himself. Were anyone other than Jesus to do what Jesus did, he would be guilty of sin, according to brother Frost. Try that on other sins and see how well the argument works. “Because Jesus was deity, he could commit _____ (fornication, theft, violate the Sabbath, etc.)” No one else could do these things with impunity, but Jesus could do them because he was Deity. This answer is not only fallacious but also ridiculous.

Brother Frost is forced into the unenviable position of denying that we can or may do what Jesus did by his position on collectivities.

The Family

A third proof that individuals can and do pool their resources to teach the Bible is the family. Brother Frost struggled to answer this argument. He said that “the family is not a ‘collectivity of God’s people’” (96). Sometimes

circumstances prevail, as was the case in my family, where the husband, wife, and all of the children were Christians. Did the fact that we were all Christians mean that we were not a collectivity? In many families, both husband and wife work. They pool their resources together and from these common resources pay their bills (house payment, car payment, food, etc.) and do various good works (make a contribution to the poor, donate to the local church, help an evangelist, send relief to disaster victims, etc.). In some families, what the children may earn from their employment is also pooled under the father's oversight to help provide for the family (as was the case temporarily with my older brothers when our family's circumstances were dire).

Brother Frost, however, said, "The family, as God ordained it, is not a religious body, and does not operate as a unit." We understand the family is not the church, but there is no denying that it is a unit. We recognize that many families are not composed entirely of Christians, but some are. But brother Frost, defying all logic to the contrary, denies that they are a unit. Has brother Frost never preached that there are three divine institutions—*the home*, the church, and government? He argues, "There is teaching in the family, but it is not determined and overseen by the family (all members in unified action). . . . There is no democratic rule in the house. . ." (97). Once more we are forced to inquire: Is democratic rule the only kind of government brother Frost knows? The family is under the oversight of the father, just as the church is under the oversight of Christ and neither of them is a democracy. If the fact that the family is not a democracy proves that it is not functioning as a unit and, therefore, is not a collectivity, then the church is not a unit and cannot function as a collectivity because it is not a democracy either.

The fact is, God charges the father with the responsibility to teach his children the word of God (Eph. 6:4). The father cannot discharge that obligation acting alone. He must have children whom he teaches. He commands the children and they are to obey his charge so that he can teach them. Brother Frost's efforts to reduce this to some sort of "concurrent individual action" is almost comical, but *is assuredly forced upon him by his anomalous position which assumes that the church is the only collectivity which can teach the Bible and offer worship*.

Many families act together to do various spiritual works. During the time our children were growing up, we would invite area teens (both Christians and non-Christians) into our home once a month for a period of Bible study. As head of the family, I (mw) made the decision for all of us to do this. My wife pooled resources with mine to make this possible.

The whole family worked together to prepare for its monthly occurrence (cleaning, inviting people to come, etc.). Those who came brought food and drink. So, they made a financial contribution to the effort. When that evening arrived, we sang together, prayed together, and studied the Bible together. When we sang, we did not sing concurrently (as would be the case if every individual sang a song of his own choosing in his individual space); rather, we sang under the direction of a song leader (group action), just as we do in the congregational assembly. When we prayed, we did not pray concurrently (as would be the case if every individual said his own prayer); we asked someone to lead us in prayer (group action), just as we do in the congregational assembly. When we studied the Bible, we did not study concurrently (as would be the case if every individual studied a subject of his own choosing); rather, we were taught by a teacher (group action), just as we do in the Bible classes at church. These studies were not in competition with the church, nor did they make participation in the local church optional. They did not demean the church or relegate the church to an inferior status. This was not an effort to put the local church out of business or challenge its place in the plan of God. In fact, every Christian present was a member of a local church in good standing, supportive in every way of the work the local congregation did, and fully cognizant of the unique place the local body of saints has in the scheme of human redemption.

It appears to us that brother Frost's position, if taken to its logical and necessary destination, forces him to say that such activities are sinful. If not, why not? His hairline distinctions may satisfy his conscience, but they are not convincing to us. He may be satisfied to stop where he does, but will others who occupy his positions be so inclined? We shall await further developments.

Bible Translation and Publication

Brother Frost also suggests that we are guilty of "a deceitful, dishonest claim of inconsistency" when we pointed out that he and others who share his view make use of Bibles which have been produced by the various Bible societies and have borne huge expense in the translating and production of Bibles. Here are his words:

If we take the second meaning of "gospel work" (i.e. the activity of collating, translating, publishing, distributing the text of the Bible), then we must note that God never assigned this "work" to either the individual Christian or to the local congregation. As he notes, no congregation has either the expertise to produce and format the text or the means to "pay the inordinate cost of Bible publication, production, and distribution."

And, we may add, neither does the individual. Therefore, this facet of “gospel work” God never assigned, either to individual Christians or to a congregation of Christians. The equivocation can serve only to create a forced, fictitious, inconsistency . . . and as the argument is pursued, it becomes a deceitful, dishonest claim of inconsistency (*We Have A Right Answered* 116).

We do not intend to pursue this matter in great detail or at great length, for it is our conviction that his point is so shallowly made, and his inconsistency on this so evident, that it does not require much in the way of refutation. To begin with, he takes the unbelievable position that God has given the responsibility of circulating the Bible neither to the church nor to the individual. This he says, in spite of the fact that he is aware that churches frequently spend money from their treasuries to buy Bibles in bulk for distribution in places where Bibles are not easily obtained. Individuals do the same with money from their pockets. He readily admits that neither the local church nor any individual Christian has the financial ability or the special expertise to accomplish every facet of this important and necessary work. This part we pointed out in our essay. So, he grants that it is true. But he goes on to argue that it is neither the work of the Christian individual nor is it the work of the church. That is another matter altogether. We pointed out in our essay that all of us will grant that this work must be done. Furthermore, we noted that only a cooperative of individuals, a combine, or society—however you wish to say this, has the capacity to get the work done. No single church can do it. No single individual can do it.

Bible societies, or publication companies, entirely unrelated to local churches, have been the historical answer to this dilemma. Groups of religious individuals associate themselves together in companies to provide these essential books. Any individual who owns a Bible today, somewhere down the line in the process of the production of that Bible, has become the beneficiary of their work. Moreover, in the opinion of our brother, what these people are doing is a sin against the God of heaven. They are associating together under a common oversight, pooling their resources, and asking for charitable contributions into a common treasury. We aver that they have not sinned. If they request and receive donations from local congregations of saints, that is quite another matter. Then they have become a parachurch organization. We are opposed to everything and everyone who encourages this sort of activity. Until and unless they are guilty of this, however, they are merely an association of good people who are engaged in an altogether worthwhile enterprise. There is nothing wrong with what they are doing. That was the point we were trying to make. Our brother, though, says that,

if they are Christians, members of the church of Christ, it is wrong for them to act in this way. They have offended heaven. If our brother is right, then two standards of judgment exist: one for the unbelievers, and another for believers. Unbelievers may rightly and properly do what believers may not. It is a sin for the believer, but not for the unbelievers. It is difficult for us to take seriously such a position.

One final point: For our opponent to act as if there are no Bible texts which speak to this issue is clearly disingenuous. Note the following:

And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea (Col. 4:16).

I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren (1 Thess. 5:27).

The distribution and subsequent reading of the epistles of Paul “to all the brethren” is commanded in both of these passages. Who will deny that it is necessarily inferred by this requirement that Bibles be translated, reproduced, and circulated to the masses? These passages and others like them tell us that our brother is definitely wrong when he says, “God never assigned this ‘work’ to either the individual Christian or to the local congregation. . . . Therefore, this facet of ‘gospel work’ God never assigned, either to individual Christians or to a congregation of Christians.” Whether it was to be done by Christians in their congregational capacity, or in their several families, or even as individuals, is not specified. That much we will grant. It is our conclusion that God has placed the requirement upon all of us, in all of these capacities. If there is a need for this work and we have the capacity to do it, then we are expected to do it. We are therefore grateful for the work that is done by the Bible societies, translating committees, publishing enterprises and printing houses. Bibles are easily obtainable and available at very low cost to one and all because of the important work that they do. Churches and Christian individuals are able to buy great numbers of Bibles for distribution among those who cannot afford them because of their efforts. Any doctrinal position that condemns this essential work, along with the sacrifices and labors of these dedicated people, exposes its own folly, so long as they do not intrude into the inner workings of local churches or vie for contributions from their treasuries. Our brother cannot honestly and consistently say this. *If he is consistent with his own views, these people are transgressing God’s law, and meddling with the patterns of New Testament Christianity—or else, two standards of acceptable behavior exist: one for the believer and another quite different one for the unbeliever.*

Move Into Greater Extremism

From the beginning, we have tried to press brother Frost to apply the logical conclusions of his thesis to the broader spectrum of things to which they naturally appertain: If the church is the only collectivity through which Christians can function in teaching the Bible, this premise must be applied to other arrangements. Specifically we have asked him about Florida College. For years, brother Frost has avoided answering whether or not he believed that Florida College was sinful in sponsoring its daily chapel services, its lecture programs, and its summer camps. Finally in *We Have A Right Answered*, brother Frost admits that he believes the lecture program at Florida College is sinful. He writes as follows:

. . . I am not opposed to Florida College as an educational institution, any more than I am opposed to the Guardian of Truth Foundation as a business enterprise. But I am opposed to any human institution arrogating to itself rights for which they have no authority. Florida College is right until it practices something wrong; the same is true of the Foundation. The fact that they have a right to exist and function in their lawful capacity, however, does not grant a right for either to do any and every thing someone may persuade them to do. The Foundation is wrong to sponsor public collective worship and to usurp the role of the church in disseminating the gospel. To the extent that this is what Florida College does, it is wrong. As this is descriptive of their lectureships, then it is wrong for the College to sponsor them (140).

He persisted by saying, “Our hope, and one shared by others who are ardent supporters of Florida College, is that the lectureship, as it is presently, be discontinued” (140).

This is a most interesting development, and would be thought ludicrous were it not so serious! Brother Frost has spoken at the lectures at Florida College (see *Gospel Guardian* X:606 [January 29, 1959]; topic “Unifying Gifts”; *Great Bible Doctrines: Florida College Annual Lectures 1975*, “The Nature of Miracles,” 126-142). I (mw) have been in attendance at the lectures on several occasions when I saw brother Frost there also. I did not sit beside him to see if he participated in the singing and prayer that occurs there in conjunction with the lectures, but I have no reason to believe that he did not. Hence, he sat as a participant in the “public collective worship” conducted at Florida College. In all of these years, none of us has ever heard of him making a public confession of having committed sin in participating in these events. We have never before read that he even disagreed with the Florida College lectures in any way, shape or form. Even in these brief paragraphs, brother Frost makes no accusations against Florida College, to the effect that they are establishing an individually supported missionary

society, has not charged them with creating an arrangement that does the work of the church, has not accused them of making the church an optional arrangement for worship and dissemination of the gospel, does not assert that Florida College has become a human arrangement that belittles the local church, has not charged that Florida College is a worship society designed to do what God gave the church to do, does not say that Florida College supplants the church, and does not aver that Florida College is falling into the very liberalism they formally opposed. Rather, he only *hopes* that Florida College will discontinue its lecture program. This he says meekly and glibly. In fact, you would never know this to be true about his conscientious objections unless you turned to that particular page in his new book. We cannot attest that it has been written anywhere else before. Can it be that he has been just now forced by weight of logic to this radical extreme? Yet even so, he has no “fire in his bones” to oppose it. His opposition is as meek as a lamb; all of his fiery rhetoric is missing. Is this the same Gene Frost that we who have a part in the Guardian of Truth Foundation know so well? One would not think so!

When brother Frost speaks about the Truth Magazine lectures, he writes like a man who has “fire in his bones,” prepared to strike down the idol of Baal:

The Foundation, on the other hand, is not limited to a specific community or locality. The Foundation is unlimited by God as to what constitutes its entity, the source of its income, or the place of its activities. In fact, it may go into communities where the gospel has been successful in years past, and churches are numerous relative to other places in the world, and there conduct meetings of Bible discussions practically in the backdoor of established churches of Christ. The Foundation appeals to hundreds from afar to converge on the area to attend the meetings, which are advertised as the work of a human organization. If any credit is to be given, it goes to the Foundation with which the name of Christ is not connected. (For this, I am thankful that the unbelieving community can see by the advertising that the meeting is not the product of the churches of Christ.) And yet—let not the churches of Christ nor unbelievers doubt it—the Foundation regards this as a work of God, authorized and sanctioned by Him as a kind of “parachurch” enterprise (156).

But let the collectivity be Florida College and let the lectureship be in Tampa and then brother Frost is not only as silent as a tomb on the evils of the collectivity, but is even willing to participate as a speaker, travel hundreds of miles to attend, and participate heartily in its activities, even though it is at the backdoor of dozens of churches! Such verbiage leaves us breathless, with the distinct impression that brother Frost is not so much

concerned about consistently applying a divine truth which he has discovered in Scripture but *is on a crusade and a vendetta against the Guardian of Truth Foundation*. Otherwise, how does one explain his inconsistent application of his own principles?

Let us be sure that we understand precisely the circumstances of brother Frost's situation. Florida College has been conducting lectures for over fifty years without brother Frost uttering a word of objection until now. They openly appeal for contributions from their patrons and friends to support their various projects and publish the names of those who make significant donations to their work. With reference to none of these contributors or to Florida College begging for donations has brother Frost ever made any sort of public objection until now. The attendance at the Florida College lectures at the present approaches 2000.

By contrast the Guardian of Truth lectures have been going on for three years. Attendance at the Truth Magazine Lectures ranges from 250-400. Despite his outlandish and unproven statements to the contrary, the Guardian of Truth Foundation has not campaigned for individuals to make donations, although we have received some donations at various times through our history. For the years that I (mw) have worked with the Foundation, we have conscientiously worked to make our business a viable and self-sustaining business. There have been a few special projects during the over thirty years of association I have had with the foundation for which we have received donations from individuals, but for the most part we have conducted our business without donations. Without any proof whatever, though, brother Frost enters the picture and makes the most unsubstantiated claims one could imagine. He asserts,

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been donated, with which the Foundation has paid full and partial salaries of those who have produced the materials, as well as for the materials themselves. I know of no business enterprise that operates on the basis that contributions are solicited with which to support its personnel (150).

My first reaction upon reading this outrageous claim was, "Where are those hundreds of thousands of dollars about which brother Frost speaks?" During my tenure, I have not seen them. However, *if it were true that \$200,000 had been received during the fifty year history of this foundation*, that amount would add up to the gargantuan total of \$4,000 per year! Brother Frost laments the fact that donations were received to pay the salaries of employees of the foundation. Which foundation? The one at Florida College or the Guardian of Truth Foundation? You see, there are two sets of ethics

at work here which brother Frost applies to what he labels “dual purpose” organizations such as Florida College and the Guardian of Truth. One of them allows donations to be raised to pay personnel expenses with little or no objection and the other does not. (And, how much personnel expense would \$4,000 per year pay?) The fact is that for the last three years, during the period in which we have conducted our lectures, we have received *one small donation per year!* Do you think that this information will change anything brother Frost has to say about the Foundation? No, I am certain you do not, and neither do I! The fact is, and it is undeniable, *brother Frost has a vendetta against the foundation* and nothing that we can do or say will ever satisfy him. Brother Frost for over fifty years has ignored the lecture program at Florida College, even though he now informs us that he is opposed to it, because *he has become obsessed in his opposition to the Guardian of Truth Foundation*. But it gets even worse!

How can one explain brother Frost’s description of himself as follows: “Our hope, and one shared by others who are *ardent supporters* of Florida College, is that the lectureship, as it is presently, be discontinued” (140)? He heartily joins hands with the “ardent supporters” of Florida College who wish that they would discontinue their lecture program. Can you imagine this? Here is an organization (Florida College) that is, according to brother Frost’s own identification, an “individually supported missionary society” which is doing the work of the church, supplanting the church, making the local church an optional arrangement, and is a “worship society.” But brother Frost joins hands with its *ardent supporters!* I can assure you that brother Frost does not heartily join hands with “ardent supporters” of the Guardian of Truth Foundation who “hope” that they would discontinue their lecture program. If he is, where has he ever said so, in all of his rants against us? *Rather, he is on a personal crusade to destroy this foundation for reasons known only to him.*

But there is more. In our book, *We Have A Right*, we listed the following collective works as well:

- Two brethren pooling their resources to conduct a tent meeting such as occurs at the annual tent meeting in Burkesville, KY
- Several brethren pooling their resources to support a gospel preacher
- Several brethren getting together for prayer and singing such as occurs in home Bible studies in which a person invites several members into his home for singing, prayer, and teaching
- Brethren partaking of the Lord’s supper while on a trip to an area in which there is no congregation
- Brethren pooling their resources to take care of the benevolent needs of

- any person to whom the church also bears responsibility
- The singing, prayer, and teaching that occurs at a funeral home
 - The prayer and teaching that occurs at a wedding
 - The prayer and preaching at a Baccalaureate service
 - Prayer at a sports event
 - Prayer to open government legislative houses
 - School prayer
 - Singing schools such as is operated by R.J. Stevens
 - The chapel services at Florida College
 - The devotions held at the various dorms at Florida College
 - The lectures at Florida College
 - College scholarships which give away Bible instruction
 - The assemblies at Athens Bible School where the Bible is taught
 - *Think* magazine which is supported by individual contributions and given away
 - Biblical Insights, Inc. which receives donations
 - Gospel Truths, Inc. which receives donations (at least of articles)
 - *Preceptor Magazine* which receives donations (at least of articles)
 - Web sites such as those operated by Mars List, Bible.ca.com, Don Martin, and Jeff Belknap because they receive donations (articles) and give away their product. Obviously they are collective arrangements and not individual activity
 - Web magazines
 - Hospital chaplains
 - Police chaplains
 - Military chaplains

Brother Frost most ignored these other collective works which we brought to the readers' attention (we say mostly because we have not checked every one of them individually). Why is he so utterly unconcerned about these other collective arrangements, many of which are almost a precise parallel in their organization and work, and so completely focused on Guardian of Truth? In two books, they are never mentioned in any way—not a single word is spoken in opposition to them—instead, all of the attention is focused on the Guardian of Truth Foundation? The only thing that makes any sense at all to us is that *brother Frost has a vendetta against the Guardian of Truth Foundation*. Will anyone else dare to deny it? Brother Frost is a man who is motivated by something other than a love for the truth. How else does one explain his application of what he believes to be the principles of divine truth with such undeniable respect of persons? Paul said, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that *thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality*" (1 Tim. 5:21). Does brother Frost feel any obligation to

obey this divine charge? None whatever! And after having continued his unabated attack against this Foundation for over thirty years, he said, “The truth is, we did not even begin the confrontation!” (135). Is this man under some sort of delusion? Has he no sense of history, or recollection of his own actions? Someone writing under his name must be publishing articles he doesn’t know anything about!

I suppose that he bases this assessment on the fact that he did not condemn the Guardian of Truth Foundation *by name* until after I (mw) replied to him many years ago. The fact is that he *did* mention the Foundation by claiming that Cecil Willis had started an individually supported missionary society when he asked brethren to pay (as in purchase) for some tracts that were being sent to Filipino preachers. What other Foundation could he have been talking about? Is there anyone who takes seriously a word of this?

Brother Frost believes that it is wrong for several brethren to “form a collectivity” and then solicit contributions from saints to conduct a tent meeting (although he has never said a word about those who do such things in Burkesville, Kentucky) or pool their resources to conduct a radio program in eastern Kentucky (as brother Aaron Earhart explained to me that several did; cf. Chris Peltz, “Muhlenberg County Trip, *Truth Magazine* [May 6, 2004], 277). However, we have been waiting with baited breath to hear his protestations against their collectivities, but have waited in vain. How can this be? If you read brother Frost’s most recent literary endeavor you will find that once more he has “observed the Passover” on this and many other matters. All of his arguments and recriminations are directed at the Guardian of Truth Foundation. “There is nothing new under the sun.” All of these other similar and parallel arrangements apparently get a passing grade from Gene Frost.

“Our Collective Arrangements Are Right, But Yours Are Wrong”

Well, that is what brother Frost’s hairline distinctions make us think. Brother Frost joined hands with brother Allan Turner to co-found The Committee for Justice in Government. Brother Turner served as its president and editor of *Justice Magazine*. In regard to recent developments, brother Turner published a “Setting the Record Straight” insert that was placed in brother Frost’s book which defended his participation in The Committee for Justice in Government. Brother Turner said that he has “not agreed with all of his (Frost’s) applications, and it is correct to say that he and I do not currently see eye to eye on this subject” (1). He went on to say, “Now, unlike Gene, I have not come to the conclusion that there is anything wrong with *Truth Magazine* having a lecture series, nor Florida College, for that matter” (2). Having distanced himself sufficiently from brother Frost’s position, brother

Turner then proceeded to tell us more detail about his and brother's Frost's Committee and magazine. We have no argument with brother Turner. Nor do we oppose his founding or establishing The Committee for Justice in Government; we do not oppose his publishing *Justice Magazine*. We are not charging him with any inconsistency because he has not espoused the "church is the only collectivity" argument which brother Frost uses to condemn the Guardian of Truth Foundation and apparently he does not wish to be associated with this kind of thinking.

However, we are still left wondering about brother Frost. How does one hold the tenets that brother Frost espouses and at the same time participate in a collective arrangement such as he and brother Turner founded? Most everyone at the time, save Frost and Turner, were confused and bewildered at such a thing. Apparently they were among the handful of people who could not see the manifest inconsistency of this action. While telling us in his "Setting the Record Straight" that The Committee for Justice in Government was not a quasi-religious or parachurch organization (p. 5), Allan Turner went on to explain the nature of the Committee and the thinking of those who composed it. One cannot deny the religious nature of this group, however, given brother Turner's description of it. In his own words:

... the Committee was adamant that the Christian citizen was (is) not at liberty to ignore the religious significance of events in the real world. We believed that the God of the Last Judgment, if we properly understood the principles and precepts taught in His Word, would not be satisfied with Christian citizens who justified their inactivity by hiding behind a wall of false piety. Undoubtedly, God, we believed, would hold us personally responsible for both our actions as well as our non-actions. We believed that from such personal responsibility, there would be no escape in the encompassing light of Judgment (p. 6).

Certainly we would agree with every word brother Turner wrote in his synopsis of the beliefs and tenets of those comprising this organization. This is an organization with worthy goals and righteous principles as its guiding philosophy. Brother Turner and brother Frost were right to engage in this activity. But having said that, brother Frost was just as clearly inconsistent with his stated convictions concerning collectivities by being involved. It certainly seems to us that brother Allen is describing the thinking of a group (collectivity) of Christians. We made no claim that the Committee was a "parachurch" organization, but it was in fact a "quasi-religious" organization according to his admissions regarding its beliefs and tenets, and based upon the subjects with which it involved itself. God is a religious subject. The Last Judgment is a religious sub-

ject. The “religious significance of events in the real world” is a religious subject. Creation is also a religious subject.

To make matters even more confusing, the Committee for Justice in Government sponsored a creation/evolution debate between Buddy Payne and Frank L. Lovell in Louisville, Kentucky. Now, of course, the creation/evolution issue is not a “religious” subject, and has absolutely nothing to do with religion (tell that to the school boards who continue to rail that this is a “separation of church and state” issue), so this development did not in any wise further confuse the situation. To brother Frost and brother Turner’s mind, this did not represent any inconsistency with brother Frost’s position because “the Bible was purposely never mentioned. Not one single reference was made to Scripture during the entire debate. . . . In other words, it was not a religious event” (3). This is a truly amazing self-justification. To our minds the only reason we know that anyone ever feels obligated to defend creation is because it is God’s revelation of what happened. Were that not the case, we might believe in creation but why should we care if the whole world accepts evolution? If we accept this supposition as logical, would we not also be forced to conclude that if one verse of Scripture was cited in the course of the event or one argument from Scripture made, then that would make the event definitively a religious event (keep this in mind because we will come back to it later) and The Committee for Justice in Government in that case would have been guilty of sin for sponsoring it?

The funny thing is that this is not the end of the story. There is more to tell. In process of time, the elders of a church in Lexington, Kentucky must have liked what they saw The Committee for Justice in Government put on and decided that it was a legitimate work of the church of which they were members to conduct a lecture series on creation/evolution in Lexington. For the first time we have read from either pen, we now learn that both brother Frost (38-39) and brother Turner (3-4) condemn the Lexington church for presenting the debate on creation/evolution in which the Bible was not cited. They both believe this ought not to have been done. They have been silent about it all of this time, but now have broken their silence. But, pray tell us, what difference does it make whether the Bible is or is not cited in a lectureship or a debate? Does the fact that the Bible was cited as proof make the one right and the fact that it was not cited in the second case make the other wrong? If God is the topic of conversation, how can the discussion appropriately be described as anything else but religious? Was Paul not engaged in religious teaching on Mars Hill when he preached Christ without quoting any Old Testament Scripture, choosing instead to quote from heathen poets (Acts 17:23-31)? Was that an “irreligious,” “non-religious,” or “unreligious” event on this account alone? In our view, the

mere fact that he was making the case for the God of Scripture, even when he did not quote Scripture to prove him, qualifies as “religious discussion” by definition.

But *Justice Magazine* contained articles on such subjects as the following, according to brother Turner’s own admission: abortion, capital punishment, communism, feminism and the family, ethics in the marketplace, humanism, justice and righteousness from a biblical perspective, religion and society, theories of evolution and special creation (5-6). Did any of these articles that were published in the journal contain Scripture? We only examined two issues of *Justice* magazine. One article contained twenty-five Scripture citations; another contained thirty-five; another contained thirty-two. If citing Scripture would have made the evolution/creation debate a religious event, what does citing Scripture in an article do for this magazine that was supported by the Committee For Justice in Government? Was it then wrong for that organization to exist? Was that organization in competition with the church? Interestingly, the debate and its attendant organization were doing the very same thing that the church in Lexington did. And now, for the first time so far as I know, he condemns the Lexington church for doing a work that was not the work of the church.

One gets a distinct impression that those organizations, such as the Gospel Anchor, Inc. and The Committee for Justice in Government, of which brother Frost is a member, are scriptural simply because he says so, but should another organization do the very same thing, their organization and practices would be sinful. Why? Because he says so. The hairline distinctions which brother Frost makes to justify his own favored organizations and condemn those of others he does not favor just do not make sense to us! He may be able to convince himself by these fine lines of distinction, but the rest of us are not so inclined.

Significant Admissions

There are some very significant admissions found in brother Frost’s book that need to be noticed. Just in case you failed to notice them when you read his material, we will point out a few of them in this review. Although brother Frost charges that the Guardian of Truth is doing the work of the church. . .

He could not name the local church whose work we are doing. This is no minor or insignificant point. We challenged brother Frost’s bold and caustic assertion that the Guardian of Truth Foundation was doing the work of the church. We asked that he name the local church we had supplanted. Since that was his claim, was that not a fair question? We framed the question thus:

Which church did we supplant by having a lectureship? I am sure that he

does not mean the universal church. So he must mean the local church. That raises a question in our minds, however. Precisely *which local church did we supplant* when we held a lectureship in Bowling Green, Kentucky? Did we supplant the local church where Gene Frost preaches in Louisville? Was it the one where Don Martin preaches in Colorado? Could it have been the one where J. T. Smith preaches in Oklahoma? Which local church did we supplant? (74)

Brother Frost responded by calling brother King's argument "silly sophistry" (41). He continues,

My reference to the "church" in my statement cited above is ideological, a concept that takes form in substance with every local congregation. Since ideologically a local church may exist anywhere at any time, it has reference to no one congregation in time and place. King knows that I am not referring to a local church *in particular*, but he shifts from the obvious to *pretend* I mean a *specific* local church geographically, and at a specific time (41).

In other words, brother Frost cannot name any local church whose work the Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing! Had he been able to do so, would he not have taken this opportunity? Rather, he says that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing the work of the ideological church. We must confess that in all of our combined experience and knowledge this is the first time we have heard of this church. In what passage of Sacred Scripture may we discover the ideological church? Where on the maps of the world may we find this ideological church? And what work has God given the ideological church to do? If as he says, "it has reference to no one congregation in time and place," then is it not fair to say that according his own words, we are in competition with "no one congregation in time and place"? We take that to mean that we are not in competition with any congregation at any time or in any place. And that is precisely what we have been saying all along! Now who is guilty of "silly sophistry"?

Had someone asked of us, "What church's work is the American Christian Missionary Society doing?" or "What local church's work is Herald of Truth doing?" we could have answered both honestly and forthrightly: "Any church that is sending funds to that organization for the purpose of that organization doing its work for them." That is exactly what we would have said. But, brother Frost cannot name the local church whose work the Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing because the Guardian of Truth Foundation is not doing the work of any local church.

He could not name a missionary supported by the Guardian of Truth

Foundation. Brother Frost repeatedly has charged that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is an individually supported missionary society. So, brother King wrote,

Give Us Their Names Or Hush!

Gene commonly calls the Guardian of Truth Foundation a “missionary society.” Of course, this is a ridiculous contention. Assuming for the sake of argument that there is some substance to his allegation, a most natural question comes to the mind of the earnest inquirer. *Who are the missionaries that the Guardian of Truth Foundation has ever sent forth?* It will do him no good to send us a list of our lectureship speakers, unless he is willing also to agree that the FC lectureship speakers are “missionaries” as well. Let us have their names, brother Frost! Where were they sent from? To what places were they sent? If there are no missionaries, then his and others’ disingenuous use of this language is nothing less than a libelous and defamatory ruse, employed to excite prejudice. If brother Frost cannot name the missionaries, then he ought to give up use of this silly language articulated to justify his position. He knows the Guardian of Truth Foundation is a printing, publishing and bookselling business, that it was not set up to support or send forth missionaries, and that it has never engaged in the supporting or sending forth of missionaries—and yet he persists in the unprincipled use of this sort of language! His abhorrence for the Guardian of Truth Foundation seems to know no bounds, certainly not the bounds of fairness, honesty, or integrity, in his argumentation. *Gene, give us their names or hush!*

Brother Frost responded by saying this was just a “quibble” (149). He then continued, “Obviously, to demand a list of supported missionaries before one can identify an organization as a missionary society is a quibble, a distraction” (150). Translated, that means quite simply that brother Frost cannot name a man whom the Guardian of Truth Foundation has supported to preach the gospel. So, what he asserts as evidence of our supporting missionaries is our using money to support Guardian of Truth Foundation employees: “Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been donated (if they have been, I haven’t seen it, mw), with which the Foundation has paid full and partial salaries of those who have produced materials, as well as for the materials themselves” (150). Has brother Frost now reached the conclusion that a business which pays someone to produce a product (whether as a salary or in royalties) has thereby become a missionary society? He argues, “If the Foundation can pay the writer for the written message, can they not pay him for delivering an oral message?” Could he possibly mean, “Can Florida College use monies received from individual contributions to pay one of its Bible teachers to teach a Bible class, preach a sermon in chapel, or deliver a lecture?” Of course it

can! And it does! All the while brother Frost describes himself as joining hands with its *ardent supporters!* We are left reeling and confused. Why does he not heartily join hands with the Guardian of Truth Foundation's *ardent supporters* also?

So here is the situation: Brother Frost charges that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing the work of the church but admits there is no local church whose work we are doing. He charges that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is an individually supported missionary society but admits that he cannot name the person who is supported to do the work of an evangelist! He admits there are no missionaries being supported. Brother Frost is hunting for elusive ghosts! Even the figments of his imagination do not look convincing when they appear on the printed page. How he wishes he could find just one church whose work we are doing or just one evangelist whom we are supporting! Then he would have some logical ground upon which to oppose the Foundation. Then his allegations would not appear so empty and baseless. Alas, he is frustrated on both counts! But, he will not cease his objections because *he is on a vendetta against the Guardian of Truth Foundation* and the mere fact that he cannot name a church whose work we are doing or name an evangelist whom we are supporting will never stop him from charging the Guardian of Truth Foundation with doing the work of the church or being an individually supported missionary society!

Reviewing Other Arguments

A number of arguments deserve attention that brother Frost made in defending his position that the church is the only collective arrangement in which Christians can participate in teaching the Bible, singing, and praying. Here are a few of them:

Non-Christians are permitted to form organizations which Christians cannot form. This seems to be brother Frost's argument when he was addressing the issue of chaplains serving in hospitals, military, and police departments. He writes:

The HCA is also a collectivity of God's people, ordained and authorized of God, for worship and service in the gospel.

The U.S. Senate is also a collectivity of God's people, ordained and authorized of God, for worship and service in the gospel.

The Army is also a collectivity of God's people, ordained and authorized of God, for worship and service in the gospel.

Are these latter statements true? Is the HCA a collectivity of Christians? Did God ordain and authorize the corporation? If not, then King-Willis

have tried to pull a subtle perversion on us! And so it is with all these organizations they present (80-81).

He continues, “We question all organizations King-Willis use to justify the Foundation, which they list as collectivities: are they collectivities of God’s people, which are ‘ordained and authorized by God?’” (81). Note his distinction: Since they are not “God’s people,” then the organizations they create are acceptable. Am I to conclude that brother Frost thinks that non-Christian people can create an organization to rival the church without sinning, but that Christian people who do the same thing are guilty of sin? *Is there one law for Christians and a different law for non-Christians?* Inasmuch as the Baptist Church is not made up of Christians, we suppose, according to brother Frost’s reasoning, it does not rival the Lord’s church! Believe it who may.

Brother Frost did not deny that the various organizations mentioned above are collective actions. He did not deny that they support men to teach the Bible without charge to those who receive it. He did not say that those who participate in these activities are sinful because they are participating in an organization that rivals the church, supplants the church, does the work of the church, etc. Rather, he only argues that, since these are non-Christians, what they do is irrelevant. We ought not find surprising his avoidance of the issue by simply waving it aside as if it mattered not at all, for he does the same thing with other organizations or “collectivities” among brethren. All of those that were listed earlier are ignored by him while he sets his sights continuously on the Foundation. Those that he is personally involved in, or has had part in over the years (such as “Pickup University”) need no justification, because he personally approves of them.

Waiving of interest is not a donation. Brother Frost tried to defend his consistency of conduct in The Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc. He admits that one of the Board Members loaned The Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc. money and then waived the interest on that money (136). However, that was not a donation, according to brother Frost. Ask the man who was expecting to receive the interest on his loaned money whether or not he made a donation! If we had loaned someone \$100,000 at 5% interest and then “waived the interest,” we have donated \$5,000 to him. There is no getting around the fact. We would respect brother Frost more had he said, “We did not consistently apply our own principles,” than when we see him so fanatically and doggedly defend his inconsistent application of his own rules in the face of undeniable evidence against him.

Not against Guardian of Truth Foundation being a publishing company. Brother Frost repeatedly states that he is not against the Guardian of Truth Foundation being a publishing company. We try to accept his statement at face value, but what are we to do with this quotation which castigates the Guardian of Truth Foundation for its publishing efforts?

It is interesting to note that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is planning a song book for use among the churches. They already have prepared workbooks for use in Bible classes in the churches. They are in process of publishing a series of Bible commentaries. Many have compared their business enterprises to those of the Gospel Advocate Company, as we knew it in years past (142).

Would one who read this paragraph objectively conclude that brother Frost thinks it is wrong for the Guardian of Truth Foundation to produce a song book, prepare workbooks for use in Bible classes, and publish a series of Bible commentaries? If so, how can he, almost in the same breath, say that he does not object to our being a publishing company? As the old saying goes, "There is something rotten in Denmark." It just appears that *brother Frost is on a vendetta against the Guardian of Truth Foundation*. He is not against the Preceptor Company doing any or all of the same things. He is not against the Religious Supply Company doing the same things. He is not against Florida College doing the same things. In fact, he joins hands and heart with their ardent supporters. He is only against the Guardian of Truth Foundation doing them. To deny this is to deny the simple facts of the case. If he denies this, as he most assuredly will, his own words and actions will testify against him.

False Charges

Brother Frost made a number of false charges in his new book some of which we want to call to the reader's attention:

He asserted that Bill Cavender was a Guardian of Truth Board Member (43). Though we respect and appreciate brother Cavender's many years of gospel preaching and his numerous good works, he is not now and has never been a Board Member of the Guardian of Truth Foundation. Unfortunately, this is a clear indication of brother Frost's ignorance of the makeup of the Board of Directors of the Foundation, and shows that you cannot trust much that he has to say about the Board, the Foundation, or its work. This is an inaccuracy, and in this case, it can honestly be said that he does not know better.

Brother Frost asserted that if the same mindset as exists today were

present in the 1950s, the Guardian of Truth Foundation would not oppose church support of human institutions (v). This is not true. The fact that many of us are unwilling to mindlessly repeat his specious and unsound arguments to oppose institutionalism does not mean that we are not against the church support of human institutions. In fact, he well knows that every one of us is on record in our opposition against church support of human institutions of all stripes. Throughout the years we have worked shoulder to shoulder with him in the battle against institutionalism. For him now to charge us with these things brings us only sadness and pity for such a bitter and hostile man.

He asserts that the Foundation functions in the role of the church (2, 108). That is not true and none of our Board Members believes that we have the right to function in the role of the church. Not one of us has ever written this or claimed it to be so. On what basis does he make such a claim? This is a false accusation, pure and simple.

He charges that the Guardian of Truth Foundation manifests “a new resurgence of institutionalism, which is vying for the loyalty and financial support of brethren to the neglect of what, otherwise, would go to the church” (15). That is not true, but his statement leaves the impression that were an individual to make a contribution to any organization other than the local church (such as Florida College or Biblical Insights, Inc.), he would be vying for the loyalty and financial support of brethren to the neglect of what, otherwise, would go to the church. He has no evidence of this. This is a false and slanderous allegation. It is also a premise proclaimed by Daniel Sommer during his factional years.

He charges that we are attempting to quarantine him and others who share his views (78). This is an outrageous misrepresentation. We have been saying all along that he and others who are sympathetic with him would eventually withdraw themselves from us, just as the Daniel Sommer group drew away from those who participated in colleges and other human institutions as individual activities (quite apart from the issue of church participation). Twenty plus years ago he averred that fellowship ought not to be broken “for now.” Apparently the time for patience and brotherly acceptance has passed for some of his disciples. We have shown elsewhere that the Brown Street church in Akron, Ohio has publicly withdrawn itself from those with whom it found itself in disagreement over this issue as a result of the instigation of Frost and others. Any preacher who decides to attend the Truth Magazine Lectures will be disfellowshipped, i.e. his financial support will be cut off. In fact, men already have been subjected to this public humiliation. Anyone who attends may never be considered for support. He can participate in the

Florida College Lectures, and this will present no difficulty. But the elders of that church, who agree with Gene Frost, have decided to make this a test of fellowship. To answer the question asked by Frost, “Will the sorry history of division, with the cry of ‘Quarantine them’ echoing in our ears, be repeated in our time?” Yes, brother Frost, apparently so—and you are largely responsible for it! *Under the tutelage of Gene Frost and his sympathizers, an attempt at quarantine has indeed been set into motion. But it was not at our urging. And it was not those who agree with us who initiated it. Instead, it was the disciples of Gene Frost who foisted it upon us! Once more, this is a patently absurd charge.* If brother Frost’s charges were true, his best argument would be merely “the pot calling the kettle black.” But, in point of fact, his charges are utterly baseless and false.

He charges us with being cowardly, claiming that we flee from confrontation on the collectivity issue (32). This he says in spite of the fact that we are the only ones who have risen to answer his arguments (that doesn’t sound like we have been either cowardly or have fled from confrontation with him or anyone else). This is true in spite of the fact that, as we have shown, many other comparable arrangements are condemned by his argumentation, and not one solitary voice has been raised to respond to him other than ourselves. Everyone else who disagrees with him and is involved in comparable “collectivities” has remained silent. The fact that we chose to answer him in writing rather than in oral debate does not make us cowardly, brother Frost’s comments to the contrary notwithstanding. This is also a false claim.

He charges that a contribution to the Foundation makes giving to the church an optional arrangement—one can give to either the Foundation or the church (87). Does giving to Florida College make the church optional? Does giving to Biblical Insights, Inc. make the church optional? Both of these organizations solicit contributions. Both of them accept donations. Yet, our brother does not charge them as he does us with attempting to make the church optional. Why is that, do you reckon? In fact, no one associated with this Foundation believes or teaches that giving to the church is an optional arrangement. This is a false charge as well.

He predicts that, in the future, the Guardian of Truth Foundation will be receiving church funds (110). Shades of the prophets! Our brother has become a prognosticator! The fact of the matter is, we have no way of knowing any more about the future of this organization than brother Frost has of knowing the future of any organization he is/has been a member of. One might predict that the local church of which brother Frost is a member will one day become a sponsoring church or send funds to an orphan home

or to a college. It has happened before, but we all know that it does not have to happen again. Certainly we intend to do all that is in our power to see to it that it does not happen. All of his grandiose pretensions aside, brother Frost has been no more averse to the church support of human institutions than have the members of this Foundation. Brother Frost is no prophet. His predictions are no more dependable than those of Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah (1 Kings 22:11). His charge is nothing more than a blatant effort to discredit the Guardian of Truth Foundation in the eyes of those who listen to him and over whom he has influence.

Such false charges and accusations will become brother Frost, but when a man becomes so obsessed with an issue as he has become, regrettably such outrageous and indefensible behavior is likely to occur.

We Be Brethren

When Abraham and Lot had a serious conflict because there was not enough grazing pasture in the land to sustain the herds and flocks of both of these prosperous men, their herdsmen began to have conflict with each other. Abraham approached his nephew and said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; *for we be brethren*. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen. 13:8-9). In a similar way, the strife which exists among brethren on this issue needs to end because we are brethren.

The Scriptures present a plan whereby brethren with strong conscientious scruples can act in harmony with their personal scruples without having division. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10 present the manner in which it is to be done. To those who had a serious conscientious objection to eating meats and observing days, Paul gave instruction:

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself (Rom. 14:1-7).

But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10).

To make application of this text to the present issue, brother Frost needs to quit condemning as heretics those who disagree with his opinions about collectivities. Can he conscientiously do that? Is he capable of it? In point of fact, he not only can, but he does! He has expressed his disagreement with those who sponsor the Florida College lectures but has not accused them of all of the sins he accuses those associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation with committing (making the church an optional arrangement for worship and dissemination of the gospel, asserting that Florida College has become a human arrangement that belittles the local church, charging that Florida College is a worship society designed to do what God gave the church to do, saying that Florida College supplants the church, and asserting that Florida College is falling into the very liberalism they formally opposed). He has said nothing about brethren pooling their resources to sponsor a tent meeting (such as those in Burkesville, KY) or a radio program (such as brethren Aaron Erhardt, Chris Peltz, and Ron Daly did in eastern Kentucky). He has said nothing at all about the journal *Think* which has been in publication for thirty-seven years and is the purest form of the so-called “individually supported missionary society” among us. We could continue to list examples of where brother Frost effortlessly practices the principles of Romans 14:1-7 toward other organizations and, therefore, has peace with them. The same principle will work toward the Guardian of Truth Foundation.

Furthermore, Paul said that one must hold his personal opinions to himself in order to promote peace.

Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth (Rom. 14:22).

The “faith” concerning which Paul instructed one to “have it to thyself” was not the revealed faith of the gospel, but the personal opinions of Romans 14—choosing not to eat meat sacrificed to idols and choosing not to observe days. Brethren can be at peace with one another in spite of these disagreements when brethren will obey the divine instruction to hold their opinions to themselves. Many brethren have conscientious scruples about numerous things—whether or not a woman must wear a covering in the public worship assembly, whether a man with one child is qualified to serve as an elder, whether an elder becomes disqualified when his mate dies or his children die or become unfaithful, whether a woman can hold a secular job while her children are young, whether or not funerals and weddings can be held

in a church building, whether or not to have Sunday evening communion, etc. The list could easily be extended. When a brother starts preaching his opinion and making laws where God made none, condemning as heretics every person who disagrees with him, strife and conflict are the tragic but inevitable result. Regarding this sort of thing, Paul writes,

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do (1 Tim. 1:4).

He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings (1 Tim. 6:4).

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes (2 Tim. 2:23).

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain (Tit. 3:9).

What Paul described is precisely the factional disposition that such writing has created. At least one church has dropped support of several preachers (i.e., make this a condition of salvation and fellowship) who choose to attend and participate in the Truth Magazine lectures (for example, Brown Street church in Akron, Ohio). Some have cancelled meetings of those who choose to participate in the lecture program. This will continue to create more division in the future precisely to the degree that brother Frost and those who agree with him continue to press their factional, divisive opinions upon others who do not share them.

But Paul's instructions are not one-sided. To those who believed that eating of meats and observing days were authorized liberties, Paul gave instructions that they not practice this liberty in such a way as to force another brother to violate his conscience in order to participate in those things they do together. The brother with liberty is instructed as follows:

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of

men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another (Rom. 14:13-19).

Paul was not instructing the church to agree to be bound by the conscientious scruples of every brother who had an opinion about any subject. In that case, if just one brother had an opinion that churches ought not to have Bible classes, the Bible class program in a local church would have to stop; if a single brother had an objection to multiple containers or cups in the Lord's Supper, the local church would have to serve the communion with one cup; if a brother had an objection to women teaching children's classes, women would have to be removed from the class teaching. If such were the case, the fellow with the most outlandish opinions would possess the wherewithal to control the actions of the entire local church. God did not teach us in his Word that the church should be ruled by "the lunatic fringe" but by level-headed and well qualified elders. What Paul was setting forth in his instruction was a plan which gave to each brother the room to exercise his own personal conscience, while not infringing upon the conscience of the other. We ought not to force even one person to do what he believes is sinful. And, at the same time, we should not look down upon him with judgmental disdain because of his scruple.

In many churches with which we have worked, we have met with individuals who had personal scruples different from our own about such issues as the covering, weddings and funerals in the church building, playing games using cards like those used in gambling, exchanging gifts on December 25th, and a host of other issues. We have lived at peace with one another in most cases because we received each other as faithful brethren, we gave the other individual the room he needed freely to exercise his own conscience, and we did not use our valuable time arguing incessantly with him about such issues. The same will work on this issue, if it is only tried.

On our part, we resolve to respect brother Frost and those who agree with him as faithful brethren in Christ. We resolve not to condemn them as sinners. We resolve not to put them in a position of violating their consciences. We resolve to continue our present practice of not making donating money to the Guardian of Truth Foundation, attending the *Truth Magazine* lectures, subscribing to *Truth Magazine*, or purchasing from our bookstores a test of fellowship. We resolve to follow after those things which make for peace.

What we cannot tolerate is a brother making his personal opinions a law of God and a test of fellowship for receiving others as brethren. In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, Paul faced that issue head-on and described those who made their personal opinions a law and a test of fellowship as having departed from the faith.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

The issues about which Paul wrote were matters which are properly classified as “authorized liberties.” It is not a sin either to marry or to remain celibate. It is not a sin either to eat meat or to be a vegetarian. What *is* a sin is to formulate a law requiring that all men everywhere abstain from the consumption of meat or to remain celibate. Likewise, it would be a sin to make a law requiring that all men everywhere eat meat or get married. In either case, one has made a law where God made none and, when this occurs, that person has “depart(ed) from the faith.”

Look at a few examples of this, as all of us have experienced it in our various local congregations. The no-Bible class brethren have a right as a congregation to make a choice not to have Bible classes for children. That is perfectly within the rights of a local church to decide, one way or the other. The problem between us began when they started telling us it was a divine law and condemned as unfaithful every church that elected to have Bible classes. The one-cup brethren have a right to observe the Lord’s supper using one cup if that is their preference, and we have visited some congregations of this sort and participated with them in the Lord’s supper. However, the one-cup brethren have no right to make their choice to use one cup a law binding upon brethren and to condemn as apostate every congregation that uses multiple containers when serving the one cup—the fruit of the vine. Any sister who chooses to wear a covering in the public worship assembly has a right to do so. What she and her husband have no right to do is to condemn as sinners (as one brother put it, “those who do not wear a covering are no different than harlots”) those sisters who choose not to wear a covering. When these brethren make their opinion a law binding upon all other brethren, they divide churches, creating strife and fomenting factionalism.

Diotrephes was guilty of much the same thing. John wrote of him as follows:

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved,

follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God (3 John 1:9-11).

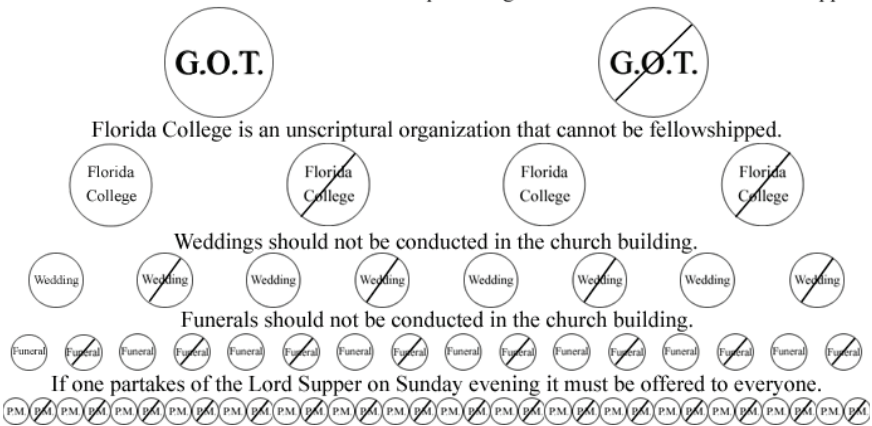
The church of which Diotrephes was a member refused to receive godly brethren, brethren whom the apostle John and the Lord himself received. Not only so, but they also refused to accept into fellowship any brother who did receive these brethren. Any brother who defied Diotrephes was “cast out” of the church.

Our perception is that brother Frost has made his opinion about collectivities into a law and is binding it upon brethren as if it were a law from God. He is preaching his personal scruples, and condemning as heretics those who disagree with him about them. Not only so, but he is doing it in a spiteful and unchristian way. Because of his violation of 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 3 John 9-11, up till now we have felt obligated to respond to his attacks. But we are confident that we can be at peace with brother Frost when and if he ceases and desists from forcing his opinions upon the rest of us as though they were divine laws and making them a test of divine fellowship. We urge him to do that.

But let us look at the inevitable result that will follow if brother Frost is allowed to bind his opinions as divine law and make them conditions of salvation and fellowship. Brother Frost has pressed his opinion that the Guardian of Truth is an unscriptural collectivity to the point that some brethren have cut off fellowship with one another over how various ones respond to this question. This issue divides the church into two groups: (1) Pro-Guardian of Truth and (2) Anti-Guardian of Truth. Another group of brethren who agree with him that the Guardian of Truth is an unscriptural organization disagree with him about whether participation in Florida College lectures, chapel services, camps, etc. should be made a test of fellowship and they press their opinions on this issue, just as brother Frost has taught them. Now we have four groups: (1) Guardian of Truth is unscriptural and Florida College is unscriptural; (2) Guardian of Truth is scriptural but Florida College is unscriptural; (3) Guardian of Truth is unscriptural but Florida College is scriptural; (4) Guardian of Truth is scriptural and Florida College is scriptural. Now we have four factions. But then, brother Frost adds another of his opinions into the mix: it has to do with weddings in the church building. As a result, each of these four groups divides over what he teaches about this; now we have eight factions. We are not through, however. Brother Frost now adds another of his opinions: namely, his belief that funerals should not be conducted in the church building and each of these eight groups divides over this opinion. Now we have sixteen groups. Finally, brother Frost adds another of his strongly held opinions to the brew. This

time it is his conviction about partaking of the Lord’s supper in a second service on Sunday evening. Division naturally follows, and each of these groups divides into two factions over this troublesome issue and now we have thirty-two factions in all! What is more, we still haven’t gotten to the unfortunate ramifications of another of his recent favorite issues—“mental divorce”—with reference to which there are several different opinions held among preaching brethren. By itself, this issue has the potential to produce many different factions among us.

The Guardian of Truth Foundation is an unscriptural organization that cannot be fellowshiped.



What is the lesson to be drawn from all of this? It lies deeper than the fact that brother Frost is a man who is wed to many different troublesome and divisive opinions. It goes far beyond brother Frost himself. It says something about where the church is headed if we take too seriously the ravings of fanatical men who take their private opinions public. Factionalism hopelessly divides the church.

We are reminded of the fact that when Thomas Campbell moved to America, he was deeply troubled over the divisions within the Presbyterian Church. That denomination divided between moderates and Evangelicals in 1732; those who left the more liberal group were called Seceders. Campbell was identified with the Seceders. In 1789 the Seceders divided into Burghers and Anti-Burghers on the issue of whether burgesses were allowed to take an oath (the burgesses of the towns required oaths binding the people to support the religion practiced in that realm). Campbell was an Anti-Burgher man. In 1799, both branches of the Seceder Church divided again into New Lights and Old Lights on the question of whether the Solemn League and Covenant should be one of the terms of communion. Campbell was

identified with the Old Light group. In other words, Thomas Campbell was a member of the Old Light Anti-Burgher group within the Seceder Presbyterian Church (Earl West, *Search For the Ancient Order*; I: 43). This group of Presbyterians was not allowed to share communion with those in any of the other factions in the Presbyterian Church. Campbell's ultimate opposition to denominational divisiveness came in reaction to his own experience among the Presbyterians. From our perspective in history it is easy for us to look back upon much of this religious confusion and label it what it was: absolute foolishness. But it is much more difficult for us to see ourselves in a comparable historical light. Let us attempt to do so, based upon what we have seen in our own experience with brother Gene Frost.

Think about the situation that would develop should brother Frost's factional issues be allowed to divide us in a similar fashion as it occurred in the Presbyterian Church. One might describe himself as being a member of the Anti-Guardian of Truth, Pro-Florida College, No Weddings in the Church Building, Pro Funerals in the Church Building, One-Takes-All-Partake-Sunday-Night-Communion Church of Christ! And of course, he could not receive into his fellowship anyone who is a member of any other of the thirty-one factions among us! This is hopeless confusion, and it is all so unnecessary. If all of these private opinions are kept private instead of being made tests of fellowship and faithfulness, then all of this foolishness goes away. It disappears in the wink of an eye. Personal scruples about such matters ought to be kept private, and the brotherhood of God's people left to do the Lord's work in peace!

Conclusion

We have spoken much of brother Daniel Sommer in all of this controversy, since in so many ways the positions and methods of brother Frost resemble those of this relentless enemy of "Bible Colleges." Now if the reader will bear with us a few lines more, let us take a quick lesson from his life. In 1901 brother Sommer took issue with a young writer, E. A. Elam, on a trivial issue pertaining to literature for use in Bible classes. Elam replied to this article by means of a gentle essay, intending by this to disarm Sommer's criticisms through kindness. But Sommer again replied, this time even more ferociously, comparing Elam to an assassin who had sneaked up behind his back to assault him. Young Elam hardly knew what to make of this whole affair, but a more experienced man, brother David Lipscomb, who knew Sommer from past unpleasant experiences with him, was thoroughly disgusted by his ungentlemanly and unchristian behavior in the matter. "Does not this," he asked, "savor more of the bravado of the slums, than of the courtesy and graces of the Christian?" As a result of this, he said that in the future it was his intention to ignore altogether what

Sommer had to say in his paper. He wrote:

I have no disposition to hinder Brother Sommer in doing all the good he can. But I am sure we cannot work together, with his present style; so in the future, as in the past, I shall let him do all the good he can, and I will go the way that seems best to me (David Lipscomb, "Our Reason for Our Course," *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 43, No. 20, p. 312; quoted in *Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 2, p. 291-292).

As to the future of the current controversy with brother Frost, we would say with Lipscomb that we have no disposition to hinder brother Frost from doing all the good he can. We are sure that with his present style, we cannot work together. As in the past, we shall go the way that seems the best to us, and let him go the way that he thinks best for himself. We hope that he does all the good that he can.

But for the sake of the peace and harmony between brethren generally, we would urge our brother to keep his opinions to himself. We beseech him not to disseminate them further either orally or through the printed page—and we promise that if he will cease this endless arguing, then we will quit also. We ask that he not endeavor to force his opinions upon the rest of us as though they were a divine law binding upon all men. We beg him not to persist in binding them on others, with or without the obvious partiality that has been so evident in his application of the principles of his convictions. And we hope that, for a change, he will esteem his brethren higher than he esteems his personal opinions. If he and others will do this, it will go a long way toward restoring peace and harmony within a fractured brotherhood.

Endnotes

1. *The Ancient Synagogue*, 22-25.
2. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, "Ancient Synagogues: A Reader's Guide," *Ancient Synagogues*, I:xxi. Typical of this approach is Schrage who writes, "Unless no answer is given (regarding the origin of the synagogue, mw), it is best to follow the majority in putting the rise of the synagogue under Ezra or during the exile. Isolation from Jerusalem and the temple undoubtedly favored the development of gatherings and buildings for worship in the exile, so that the exiles might well have brought the synagogue back with them from Babylon to Palestine" (*TDNT*, VII:811). An examination of the biblical texts, such as Ezekiel 11:15, on which the conclusion that synagogues existed in exilic times is based shows that the textual information cannot support the conclusion drawn from them (cf. Hanswulf Bloedhorn and Gill Hüttenmeister, "The Synagogue," 270).
3. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 23.

4. Urman and Flesher, xxiii.
5. "Egypt and the Rise of the Synagogue," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 38, no. 1 (1987): 1-15. Reproduced in *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery I*, edited by Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, 3-16.
6. "Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine: A Re-Assessment," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 39, no. 2 (1989), 401-410. Reproduced in *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery I*, edited by Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, 17-26.
7. *Ibid.*, 25.
8. This was originally published in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism VI*, J. Neusner and E.S. Frerichs, editors, 67-81. It is reproduced in *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery I*, edited by Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, 27-39.
9. *Ibid.*, 39.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Cf. Acts 16:13, 16 where the women assembled in Philippi at a place of prayer beside the river.
12. Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1511. The lexicon references *Publications de la Société royale égyptienne de Papyrologie, Texts and Documents* 30.5 (iii. B.C.), *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* 726 (Egypt, iii B.C.), 96.6 (iii/ii B.C.), *Tebtunis Papyri* 86.18 (ii. B.C.), etc.
13. *The Life*, 54. There can be no doubt that this *proseuchen* is referring to a building in this context.
14. *Against Apion*, II.2.
15. *Antiquities*, III.iii.1-3.
16. *TDNT*, VII:807.
17. *Flaccus*, 47.
18. *Ibid.*
19. For further evidence of Torah reading in the synagogue in Philo, see *Embassy*, 156 and *Hypothetica*, 7, 12.
20. Levine (2000), 138.
21. *Ibid.*, 139.
22. *De Vita Mosis*, II.215, 216.
23. Schrage, *TDNT*, VII:825.
24. Kasher, 215.
25. Quoted from Margaret Williams, "The Contribution of Jewish Inscriptions to the Study of Judaism," *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, III, 84-85.
26. *Antiquities* XIV.x.17 (235).
27. Note the statement that sacrifices were offered to God in the synagogue. This is probably a case where Josephus accurately quoted an error made in the decree by the people of Sardis.
28. *Antiquities* XIV.260.
29. *Antiquities*, XIV.214-216.

30. Levine (2000), 131.

31. Howard Clark Kee argues that the Theodotus inscription should be dated to the third or fourth century based on its excavation not being *in situ* (see “Defining the First-Century Synagogue,” 482-483). His opinion is not widely accepted among scholars.

32. Levine (2000), 133.

33. *Ibid.*, 133.

34. *Vita*, 54.

35. Z. Safrai, “The Communal Functions of the Synagogue in the Land of Israel in the Rabbinic Period,” *Ancient Synagogues*, I:194-195.

36. Levine (2000), 4.

37. *Ibid.*, 26. Cf. Richard A. Horsley, 54; Bloedhorn and Hüttenmeister, 271.

Supplemental Material

Response to Gene Frost: “Poor, Poor, Pitiful Me”

Daniel H. King, Sr.

(Preliminary note to the reader: This article was sent to J. T. Smith at Gospel Truths, but J. T. refused to publish it. He would only agree to print it upon the condition that Truth Magazine printed Gene Frost’s material and if the article was cut down to half its size. I proposed that if space was really the issue I would divide it into two articles and resubmit, or he could divide it. This offer was ignored. Pagination apparently only counts when the other side is being heard. Danny Brown also refused to allow a response to be printed in The Preceptor. As regards brother Smith’s demand that Truth Magazine print the diatribes of Gene Frost, I have nothing to do with the editing of that journal, as he well knows. Mike Willis is the editor of that paper, and this writer is in total agreement with his present policy on this matter. Gospel Truths and The Preceptor introduced this issue by publishing these caustic articles by Gene Frost. Furthermore, J. T. Smith has supported the cause of Frost in his editorials. Let them either publish both sides in their own venues, or else continue to print a one-sided discussion. That is entirely their decision.)

In the January, 2006 edition of *The Preceptor* (Volume 55, Number 1) published by the Preceptor Company, and the February, 2006 issue of *Gospel Truths* (Volume 17, Number 2) published by Gospel Truths, Incorporated, brother Gene Frost made an effort at literary retaliation against this writer and Mike Willis because we published our book, *We Have A Right: Studies in Religious Collectivities*. Playing upon the name of our book, he titles his article, “Since When Has Misrepresentation Been A Right?” It is interesting how the mind of this author works, for in his May, 2005 article he accused me of “a cheap shot,” said I was guilty of “gross perversions” (*Preceptor*, p. 136), “a deceitful, dishonest claim of inconsistency,” and jabbed at me with the claim that “King is able to erect and destroy the straw man of his own making” (*Ibid.*, p. 137). He further described me as one of “the elite among us,” “the elite of the society” (*Ibid.*, p. 137), etc. (Both Mike Willis and myself are members of the board of directors of the Guardian of Truth

Foundation, a non-profit organization that owns two bookstores, publishes *Truth Magazine*, sponsors a yearly lectureship, and publishes many books and tracts on religious subjects.)

Now, in this new attempt at limiting the effectiveness of our business, the author of these and numerous other harsh judgments and rash criticisms (with the encouragement and support of the editors of *The Preceptor* and *Gospel Truths* magazines), along with untold pages of acidic rhetoric written down through the years against those of us who work together in the Guardian of Truth Foundation, has put forward one of the most egregious appeals for pity and sloppy sympathy that we have ever read in print journalism. He writes, “Friends, out of concern, have asked if I am upset. My reply is, No. While it is not pleasant to be vilified, it is not as though some strange thing has happened. When one stands for the truth, he can expect to be slandered . . .” (*Ibid.*, p. 6). *This writer cannot help but remember a popular song title from a couple of decades ago: “Poor, poor, pitiful me”!* Thus the title of this article.

Playing the Martyr

Further, he attempts to play the martyr with these words: “I don’t feel that any of the mudslinging sticks to me . . . but pity him whose hands are dirty. It tells us more about him than it does about me” (p. 6). In this article he bemoans the fact that we have used his name in the treatise about 2.5 times per page, and expects that the reader will feel sorry for him because of this. Yet, in his original article in *The Preceptor* he called my name 27 times in a six page article (almost 4 times per page!), and in his second five page article therein, he called my name 15 times (3 times per page!) and that of Mike Willis a comparable number. The legs of the lame are certainly not equal! We could only wish that he could see himself reflected in his own writings.

Amazing stuff! You would think that he believes that none of us has any memory at all, and cannot even read his past articles and books! This is the same fellow who made all of the uncalled-for accusations against this writer in his article that appeared mid-2005, has labeled Mike Willis a liar repeatedly in previous publications, and has persistently vilified us as money-grubbing advocates of an individually-supported missionary society in lines like the following: “The society solicits funds from members of every congregation. There is no limit to the amount of money the elite of the society can collect and control!” (*Preceptor*, May 2005, p. 137). In this most recent essay he refers to us as “the Guardian of Truth party” describes the book as an attempt to “demonize the opposition,” and a “warning to any others who would dare challenge the power, prestige, and influence of

the Foundation" (*Preceptor*, January 2006, p. 6), charges us with "flagrant dishonesty" (*Ibid.* p. 7), and says, "I charge them with malicious falsification. This is not to be ugly . . ." (*Ibid.* p. 10). *Of course not, who would ever think of Gene Frost as being ugly to others? Why, it would never enter our minds.*

Frankly, Gene Frost is one of the least sympathetic figures living and writing among us today! We would be hard put to think of a more poisonous pen than the one he has wielded down through the years. Now that he has gotten a dose of some strong medicine—at his own incitement we might add—he wants us all to know that he has swallowed it down hard, and although it has made his little tummy ache, he has survived the ordeal.

Take Courage Gene!

Further, he informs us that one dear brother called and told him, "Gene, take courage; this shows how effective you have been!" He tells us that he had been informed before he read the work that "it doesn't touch your arguments at all!" and it was described as "a slanderous and vicious attack upon my person" (p. 6). We all know that Gene Frost has sympathetic friends and followers. Of course those sympathizers are going to dole him out a healthy helping of their condolences. He should not, however, take that to be a general view that members of the Lord's church have of him or of his position about collectivities. Mike and I would never have spent the amount of time necessary to draw together all of these materials for the purpose of responding to his allegations and arguments, if we did not believe that he had been able to muster some empathetic disciples in his long career of pushing his personal conscientious objection to individual collectivities upon the consciences of others. Certainly we know he has a few determined allies.

However, brother Frost must know also that there are a host of others out there who have a completely different view of all of this than his immediate and supportive friends. He needs to hear from some of those besides his intimate associates who share his personal scruples. Instead of begging for sympathy as he does in his most recent article, he would appear more heroic if he would simply stand at attention and salute the colors while his ship goes down!

There Is Another Side

We will tell him frankly that our own friends are telling us that we have once and for all answered the faulty reasoning of Gene Frost about this matter and responded to his every foolish quibble. They are telling us that they greatly appreciate the fact that someone has finally put the literary *coup de*

grace to the Sommerite mentality among us. They appreciate the fact that someone has written a formal response to his many articles and books. They are glad that now they have something to give those who have questions on this issue to read and study in order to help them resolve the matter in their mind. Precious few have agreed with him through the years but most have been reticent to tangle with a man of such a low and hateful opinion of his Christian brethren and who employs such despicable tactics in dealing with them. They are also telling us that it was about time someone stood up to the “schoolyard bully” and fed him some strong medicine to “cure what ails him.” I cannot wait to hear what they will now say about this most recent addition to his literary endeavors! They will surely be amazed that Gene Frost now views himself as a martyred saint, maltreated and wounded, desperate for the sympathetic tears of others. Believe it who may!

Frost’s Book Review

Here are Gene’s critical comments concerning the book:

What surprises me, and a major flaw in their effort, is that it lacks the scholarship and presentation that characterizes ethical journalism. There are numerous references with no documentation, such as footnotes, which would permit the reader to examine the facts, whether they are true or not. Why do they do this? They know better. Yet what they present are mere assertions, which in fact are not so, and false statements, some knowingly made (p. 6).

The reader will note that these assertions are made without even a hint of a footnote or quotation. It is a bare allegation to the effect that we are guilty of making bare allegations! There does not appear therein even a direct reference of any sort to a single statement made in the book. He alleges that we as the authors of the book are guilty of unethical journalism and that we have provided no documentation for our case. And yet, in the body of that accusation he does not cite a single instance of the thing that he alleges to prove his point. There is not even one footnote to this allegation. If our work does not qualify as “ethical journalism,” then pray tell us, what is this article penned by our brother?

The reader may, of course, judge for himself as to whether this unsubstantiated and inaccurate claim has any merit. There are, in point of fact, dozens of quotations from Holy Scripture, from Gene’s articles and books, as well as many quotations from Daniel and D. Austen Sommer, Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, as well as a host of others. I will simply challenge the reader to do the following: Get the book and read it for your self to see whether or not this allegation has any substance at all to it. I trust that any reader who

actually opens the book will immediately see through brother Frost's verbal barrage, and see it for what it really is, pure "smoke and mirrors."

Since he is interested only in "truth and fairness" (according to his recent claim), you would expect that he would urge the reader to get the book and read it for himself. Not so. Instead, he attempts with almost every imaginable machination, to move the reader away from actually exploring the content of the work. Again, our brother gives the following critical judgment as to the value of our effort:

I find the writing of this book a waste of time: the effort in reading it a waste of time; and to respond a waste of time . . . except for the fact that a failure to respond would be misinterpreted as an inability to meet the "arguments." There is only one redeeming feature for the book: I can recommend it only as a workbook to be used in a class studying logic, to challenge the students to recognize, identify, and show the fallacy of the illogical arguments. If it is not used as a workbook in a serious study of logic, I suggest the book be catalogued under FICTION (pp. 6-7).

Awaiting Judgment of History

Brother Frost will have to excuse us while we await the judgment of history for an accurate accounting of the actual value of our work. I would guess that Hymenaeus and Alexander would have set forth a less than complimentary assessment of Paul's first letter to Timothy and Phygellus and Hermogenes regarding the second epistle. But in both instances theirs was not the final, nor the most important critical review that it received. In this case we are not at all surprised that Gene Frost is chagrined. We expected that. As one fellow said, "You can not skin a cat in any way that he will enjoy it." One could never respond to the religious errors of its principle promoter in such a fashion as to make him enjoy the process. We have attempted to make it as painless for him as possible—but one can only go so far. Others, in fact, have been quite complimentary of our work, and certainly far less critical than the "Daniel Sommer of our generation."

We can assuredly understand his desire to steer as many readers as possible away from reading the book, for it leaves the doctrines of Gene Frost in the dust bleeding and wounded—if not dead and buried! *We would only ask that the reader "ignore the plaintive cry of the vanquished" and get the book and read it. All the talk in the world will not replace a few hours of careful study.* We have no intention of restating our arguments in this venue. There are far too many of them to do that here. We believe that the book will stand the test of time, and that its broad circulation will set Som-

merism in a proper historical context, and Gene Frost in his true position in history: a promoter of the New Sommerism. Again and again the Scriptures are quoted and explained in the context of the present discussion. It is this very thing that brother Frost wants to keep the reader away from, for careful study of the Scriptures and the application of simple logic will sink his proverbial ship beneath the froth of the biblical waves!

Shifting Battle Front

As is his custom, in his most recent effort Frost attempts to shift the battle from one point over to another when we put the axe to the root of his doctrine. Pinning him down as to the precise thing that he opposes has always proven quite a challenge. It is like trying to step on Jell-o. He claims that he is forever being misrepresented and misunderstood by his adversaries. He pretends that no one understands him, and that King and Willis must resort to the tactic of misrepresenting his position in order to defeat his theory:

Here is my assessment of the book, *We Have A Right*, with particular indictments. The book is based upon false premises and seeks to answer questions that were never raised. Our opposition to the Guardian of Truth Foundation is falsely stated...(p. 7).

The Old “Duck and Weave”

Do not be deceived by his methodology. This is just more of his “duck and weave” technique. We have seen this same old worn out approach whenever anyone has responded to him throughout the years. *We are all so ignorant, unscholarly, dishonest, unethical and prejudiced that it is impossible for us to comprehend his true position!* At some juncture one would expect brother Frost to cease and desist from this effort at playing the martyr, and get down to the “brass tacks” of responding to the arguments made in the book. At some point the reader ought to ask of himself, “Has Gene Frost made any argument in any way, shape or form from Scripture? Where has he made a new argument at all to justify his position?” Apparently he is entirely incapable of this, for he rambles on for many lines (five single-spaced pages in all) with more and more of the same old tired rhetoric, persistently accusing us of misrepresentation and distortion.

In point of fact, he flatly refuses to accept responsibility for the position that he occupies or any of its logical repercussions. He is forever being misrepresented. No one understands him. Everyone lies about him. To those who read with discernment, though, this method blows up in his face. It reminds us of the story of the Iraqi terrorist, Khay Rahnajet, who did not put enough postage on a letter bomb that he had sent out. It came

back to him with "return to sender" stamped on it. Forgetting that it was the bomb he had sent out a few days before, he opened it and was blown to bits! This story is a parable of Gene Frost. To his dearest friends and closest disciples he is simply a misunderstood genius. To the rest of us, he is a man whose mind is forever closed to the necessary logical implications of his view. He refuses to own them. In the end, his arguments explode in his face, and he stands around after the detonation blaming everyone else for the catastrophe—while he has the detonation device between his own singed and smoking fingers!

Where Are The Bible Quotes And Arguments?

Only once does our brother make a slight reference to the Holy Bible (other than an early reference to his being mistreated by mean people like Dan King and Mike Willis), and that usage is a total perversion of the Word of God in a fruitless attempt to somehow correlate Scripture with his personal scruples about the Guardian of Truth Foundation. Note the following:

The church glorifies God; the Foundation honors the men who designed it, created it, and maintain it (Eph. 3:21). The one exists by the wisdom and authority of God; the Foundation reflects the wisdom of men. Jesus shed his blood to purchase the church; men claim a right to create a Foundation that has a "right" that mirrors the church in teaching and worship (p. 10).

That is the closest thing to a scriptural argument that he makes in the entire essay. When you read this, you would think that you were reading after a "purist" with regard to the church and its work. You would think that he does his work solely through the local church, and that he is opposed to all other institutions through which individuals might work together. Why, you would get the impression that he eschews all human institutions that do work comparable to that which the church does. *But you would be very, very wrong.*

Sommer's Disciple

Instead, you will discover behind these words a true disciple of Daniel Sommer, both in theory and in practice. You would find his words printed on the pages of a religious journal which is published by a human institution called The Preceptor Company and in the journal of Gospel Truths, Incorporated, a non-profit religious foundation! You would discover that both the Preceptor Company and Gospel Truths, Incorporated are groups of men working together (collectives) under common oversight (an editor) and doing the work of teaching and preaching the gospel of Christ (the work which the church also does). You would find that each of these human

institutions possesses its respective operational treasury. You would find that he has thus made a contribution of labor and time as well as a written document (all of which have monetary value and so are equivalent with money; the existence of copyright laws is proof positive that written material has financial value) to two distinctive collectivities. Neither of these journals is a local church bulletin, or a lone individual doing his own work. In other words, you would find Gene Frost attacking the hated Guardian of Truth Foundation through his own favored religious collectives, the Preceptor Company and Gospel Truths, Incorporated! He is *doubly guilty* of the very “sin” that he accuses all of us of committing! So, we shall restate our brother’s proposition thus and see if “what is sauce for the goose” is perhaps also “sauce for the gander”:

The church glorifies God; the Preceptor Company honors the men who designed it, created it, and maintain it (Eph. 3:21). The one exists by the wisdom and authority of God; the Preceptor Company reflects the wisdom of men. Jesus shed his blood to purchase the church; men claim a right to create a Preceptor Company that has a “right” that mirrors the church in teaching and worship.

Gene would, of course, repudiate the position which we have stated above. Yet, all we have done here is to replace the name of the human institution under consideration. It is one of the collectivities that he favors, not the one he hates. So he would repudiate it. But all of us know that he can not do so consistently. If he does, his cause is sunk. And with it he is sunk. “By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned” (Matt. 12:37).

Since the article was also published in another and similar religious collective that preaches and teaches the gospel of Christ, namely Gospel Truths, Incorporated, let us restate the identical proposition with that other human institution in mind:

The church glorifies God; Gospel Truths, Incorporated honors the men who designed it, created it, and maintain it (Eph. 3:21). The one exists by the wisdom and authority of God; Gospel Truths, Incorporated reflects the wisdom of men. Jesus shed his blood to purchase the church; men claim a right to create Gospel Truths, Incorporated that has a “right” that mirrors the church in teaching and worship.

Pray, tell us how the proposition is materially different in the case of the Guardian of Truth Foundation, a publishing and book selling venture, and

the Preceptor Company or Gospel Truths, Incorporated—also publishing and book selling ventures? Tell us how one is different from the other?

If brother Frost responds that the Guardian of Truth people have a lecture-ship and study the Bible together in a worship atmosphere, we will ask him, "How is that different from a group of the Preceptor writers, or the Gospel Truths writers, getting together and praying as an assembled group over a meal in a restaurant (outside the environment of the local church)?" We know that they do this sort of thing, for this writer was personally present at one of the meetings where a group of Gospel Truths writers did so.

Or again, consider these questions: "How is it that you think it is entirely proper for the writers of the Preceptor Company to send in their written manuscripts for brethren all over the country to read their material, while you condemn writers who read their written manuscripts to an assembled audience from all over the country? What makes one of those collectivities righteous and the other one sinful? What makes one arrangement good and the other wicked? How can you distinguish between reading it in print and listening to the writer read it aloud?"

An Added Footnote

A footnote to this present discussion is the fact that Danny Brown has apparently decided to commit the *Preceptor Magazine* of Beaumont, Texas to a public identification of this journal with the cause of Gene Frost, namely, promotion of the New Sommerism. He has decided to join the ranks of Daniel Sommer, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett in their furtherance of the idea that the local church is the only collectivity that has a right to teach the word of God. At the same time he functions in a leadership capacity over his own dual purpose, humanly devised collectivity that teaches the Word of God, the Preceptor Company. He has made this evident by being the first in both of these recent instances to print Gene's tirades, only later followed by *Gospel Truths*. Frost has acted the part of a proxy for him. J. T. Smith has already publicly committed to this cause with publication of his material and positive supportive comment. He has thus marginalized his journal. Will brother Brown do the same with his paper? Our brother has made no comment directly, but his actions in both instances speak much louder than words. How does he view the Florida College, Incorporated lectureships and the associated "worship services" sponsored by that "dual purpose" human institution? We wonder what he would say about the following proposition, once more, a simple logical extension of Gene Frost's remarks taken right off the pages of his own magazine:

The church glorifies God; Florida College, Incorporated honors the men who designed it, created it, and maintain it (Eph. 3:21). The one exists by the wisdom and authority of God; Florida College, Incorporated reflects the wisdom of men. Jesus shed his blood to purchase the church; men claim a right to create Florida College, Incorporated that has a “right” that mirrors the church in teaching and worship.

Gene Frost argues that a dual purpose human collectivity like Florida College, Incorporated has a right to exist. He argues that even though it “mirrors the church in teaching and worship” it is not an unscriptural collective. It has the scriptural right to exist and operate with the full financial support of Christians. It has the right to accept freewill offerings from individual saints. It has the right to be incorporated and operate under a board of directors. It has the right to sponsor daily “worship services” for the students (chapel). It has the right to teach the Bible to students in daily Bible classes. The school sends out emissaries to sponsor daily “worship services” at encampments around the nation (Florida College Camps). It has the right to do this also. Finally, he avers that it has the right to sponsor and conduct a yearly “gospel meeting” (a lectureship). Not only so, but he has been present and participated at the Florida College lectureships and their worship activities. There is no way on the top side of this planet that he can consistently entertain this view and at one and the same time maintain that the local church is the only collective that may teach and preach the Word of God! Still he does.

We wonder what brother Brown would say to that? Is he ready to sign on to this last proposition along with Gene Frost and many of his disciples? We wonder?

Conclusion

I will close this article with several brief points of emphasis. It is important that the reader keep these few basic issues in mind as all the confusion swirls about us in the present debate:

1. The Bible does not teach the theory that the local church is the only collective that may teach the Word of God. In fact, it teaches the very opposite. Brother Frost cannot produce a passage of Scripture that teaches this. If he could do so, he would have already produced it. We have proven this proposition in our book. I will not restate all of our arguments. That would take many pages. Again I will say, read the book. One basic point should be reiterated, however. The Lord Jesus stressed the importance of the individual saint living his life and conducting his

business in such a fashion as to "let your light so shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify you Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). That is an individual passage, it deals with an individual obligation, and of course requires individual fulfillment. The Christian is to glorify God in all that he does. The passage says nothing at all about the local church.

In Ephesians 3:21 Paul said, "unto him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever." This passage says that the purpose of the church is to give glory to the heavenly Father. The church, then, also gives praise and honor to God. This text does not intend to erase or eradicate the obligation of the Christian as an individual nor restrict him from his activities in the personal, family, or business arena. If so, where is the proof in the passage itself? The Bible teaches that the individual saint gives glory to God, and it teaches that the church gives glory to God. The two are complimentary, not contradictory. Neither of these Scriptures was intended to disprove the other, or nullify the teaching of the other.

What Gene Frost does with Ephesians 3:21 is precisely what Daniel Sommer, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett did before him: he wrenches the text from its biblical context in order to make it the pretext for his "local church is the only collectivity" doctrine. We believe that the local church is important as God's local assembly for converting the lost, building up the saints, and relieving the needs of destitute and suffering brethren. That is not a debatable issue among us. But we do not find any solace at all in this passage for his "local church is the only collectivity" theory. The text itself relates to the universal church rather than the local church in this context, anyway. Note v. 15 especially, where the author speaks of the "whole family in heaven and earth." The local congregation is not the subject under consideration. Read the passage for yourself. You will not find it there.

2. *There is no way that any of those who take this view that the "local church is the only collectivity" seriously will ever follow their own theory to its logical conclusion and live by its dictates.* Daniel Sommer did not do it. Neither did Carl Ketcherside or Leroy Garrett. Every one of them established or utilized a human organization to set forward their views. They were never satisfied with the local church alone. Gene Frost has been involved in a number of different human collectivities comparable to the Guardian of Truth Foundation in his lifetime. We proved this beyond all doubt in the book. J. T. Smith does not do it either. He founded Gospel Truths, Incorporated and it functions as an organization other than the local church to teach that the church is the only organization that can preach and

teach the gospel! Now the Preceptor Company is doing the same thing. Not one of these fellows has ever lived according to his own theory. Apparently not one of them ever will.

3. *Those who press this issue of personal scruple to the division of the churches and alienation of Christian fellowship are guilty of the sin of favoritism (1 Tim. 5:21).* They vigorously oppose the Guardian of Truth Foundation while they say nothing at all about others who do exactly the same things, are organized in precisely the same way, or function similarly. Very often, as we have plainly demonstrated, they are guilty of the very same things that they condemn in us! One begins to wonder at some point whether or not jealousy may be involved here. How else can one explain such gross inconsistency in the lives of those who are the harbingers of these doctrines?

We must never forget that it was envy on the part of the religious leaders in the time of Christ that led to the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10). Few would have suspected it of the priests and Sadducees at the time. They seemed to be noble men who were zealous for the Jewish nation. Jealousy is a subtle sin that is difficult to identify in those who are captivated by it (Tit. 3:3; Jas. 3:14, 16). Some even preached Christ of envy and strife (Phil. 1:15). The very success of the Foundation and of *Truth Magazine* appears to have bred jealousy in those who have not been successful in their own printing and publishing enterprises. God knows the thoughts and intents of the hearts of men (Heb. 4:12) and he will judge the same in the final day (2 Cor. 5:10). As frail human beings we may only suppose what others may be thinking. And we might be wrong. We will freely admit that. But when their actions seem to indicate that their convictions are not applied consistently and thus may not be genuine (see Phil. 1:16, 17), we cannot remain silent about the matter as we explain to an interested public what may be going on behind the scenes of this sometimes bitter debate.

4. *Gene Frost has offered us nothing new in his most recent article, just more of the "same old, same old."* Let me encourage the reader to take part in a simple exercise: peruse Gene Frost's article published in *The Preceptor* and *Gospel Truths*. Do you see a *new* biblical argument there? In fact, do you even *see* a biblical argument there? Where are all of the scripture citations? In and of itself, that should tell you something most significant about his position. He piles accusation upon accusation, insult upon insult, but he is never able to make a sensible biblical case for his view. We have dealt extensively with his "dual role organization" argument in our book. It is vacuous rhetoric, and his effort at excluding his favored human col-

lectivities (Florida College, Inc., The Preceptor Company, Gospel Truths, Inc., etc.) would be comical if it were not so sad. In the light of Sacred Writ and sound principles of logic, it falls flat upon its face. The reason is clear: there is no biblical or logical case to be made for his view.

5. *As we have predicted, pressing this theory, as he has done, is now producing severed fellowship between brethren who should be working together. Individual scruples should not divide the church and should not trouble local congregations.* Over the past several months a number of preachers who have participated in the Truth Magazine Lectures have had gospel meetings cancelled by churches in various parts of the country. In essence, these fine men have been "withdrawn from" by those congregations. In a few cases the leadership of these congregations have seemed uncomfortable with their decision, but the "sound and fury" put forth by certain journals among us has frightened them so that they are afraid to be perceived as involved in something about which they are not sure.

The most egregious and obvious proof of this type of action is what happened at the Brown Street church of Christ in Akron, Ohio on January 29, 2006. The elders of that church pressed Bob Dickey, who has not heretofore entertained this position (in fact, he has written for *Truth Magazine*, and so has had a part in the work of the Foundation), to preach against the Guardian of Truth annual lectureship (interestingly, in his lesson he observed the Passover on the Florida College annual lectureship). After the sermon, Ron Mayfield, one of the elders, announced "we have found that we should no longer have financial fellowship with men who are taking part in these matters. We simply cannot support preachers who are connected with or are participating in these endeavors."

Let us hope that this foolish and brash action will not be repeated elsewhere. Unfortunately, things do not look hopeful. The activities of private business endeavors and individual participation in them ought never to be the subject of congregational action. Down through the years Gene Frost has asked that there be no division on this issue "for now." Who can deny that such a remark, however, assumes that there will be a time when fellowship *will* be broken? It is our conviction that fellowship ought *never* to be broken over such matters of personal and individual liberty. In our time it has not been severed over participation in *college* related matters, why should it now be broken over matters related to a *foundation*?

Finally, some have taken Frost's arguments to their logical conclusion and have formally and very publicly broken fellowship with those who are unwilling to yield to their personal scruples. We can respect their scruples

about such things, and would never insist that they participate in that to which they object, but cannot respect their unwillingness to allow others the same right of individual conscience. One is being intellectually dishonest with himself and brethren everywhere if he on the one hand says that he wishes not to get involved in this dispute, wishes not to be perceived as taking sides in a national debate, and then on the other hand he withdraws his fellowship from those on one side of the question! When you decide that men on one side of the issue will not any longer be invited into your pulpit, you withdraw financial support from certain men in the field, and in the future refuse to consider for support those men who participate individually in such things as you may have your own personal qualms about—make no mistake about it—you *have chosen sides*. *You are no longer neutral. You have chosen to break the fellowship!*

Thus, the sad result of Sommerism is being repeated before our very eyes in our own generation! Brethren who established schools did not dis-fellowship Daniel Sommer. Sommer and his crew drew away from them and would have almost nothing to do with them until near the end of his life (at which time Ketcherside and Garrett labeled the elderly gentleman an “apostate”). We are seeing the same thing from the disciples of Frost. In our book we pled for brethren to continue to work together in spite of individual scruples over these and comparable matters, even though we consider Gene Frost himself to be a “factious men” after the order of the fellow in Titus 3:10, 11. We make a clear distinction between Frost and those who share his convictions but do not share his spirit of factionalism:

Quite frankly, I do not relish the thought of conservative Christians “unsheathing the sword of the Spirit and cleaving one another in fratricidal strife” and thereafter fracturing into different warring factions. Therefore, I will not agree to be a participant in a prolonged repetition of the same arguments from both sides. These arguments have now been made off and on for over one hundred years without leading to any sort of consensus among our ranks and may now lead to further strife and perhaps ultimately to alienation of brethren over a matter of personal preference. Let it be abundantly clear to brethren who agree with and support our work and to those who do not—that our fellow Christians are accepted as faithful saints of God whether they read *Truth Magazine* or do not, and whether they choose to trade with Truth or CEI Bookstores, or attend the Truth Lectureship. We will continue to accept our faithful brethren in Christ “without doubtful disputations” whether or not they utilize the services of the Guardian of Truth Foundation. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:1, 5)” (*We Have A Right* 15).

Now brother Frost accuses us of imitating the liberals with their "yellow tag of quarantine" (*Preceptor*, Jan. 2006, p. 7), when in fact precisely the opposite is the case. The facts of recent history belie brother Frost's allegations. In no instance have any of us suggested that any man be cut off from support if he has refused to have a part with us in one of our endeavors. In fact, we have been urging continued fellowship, as the quotation above demonstrates. We have not changed our view, and this is still our appeal. At the Brown Street church in Akron and in a number of other places, who can deny that a different spirit is at work on the opposite side of these issues? Who is guilty of taking this action? Those who sympathize with us, or those who sympathize with Gene Frost?

J.T. Smith and the Re-Birth of Sommerism

Mike Willis

The February 2006 issue of *Gospel Truths*, which is published by the Gospel Truths, Inc., printed “A Reply to a Response,” written by editor J.T. Smith. This is another editorial in the campaign to revive Sommerism among non-institutional brethren. Let brother Smith state clearly what is at stake:

I am opposed to an organization separate and apart from the church receiving contributions and organizing worship services aka Guardian of Truth Lectureship. God has set up an organization for that. It is called *the Church*.

Brother Smith closes his article by stating that no other human institution has the right “to receive monetary contributions and call an assembly for worship” because “that is God’s mission for His church and It alone.”

The Rebirth of Sommerism

There you have it. Neither Daniel Sommer, Leroy Garrett nor Carl Ketcherside could have said it better themselves. In Daniel Sommer’s debate with J.N. Armstrong entitled, *A Report of Skirmishes Between a Religious Journal and a Religio-Secular College*, Sommer argued:

“Fourth. Then, in the next place we oppose this institution and pronounce it unscriptural because of what the apostle Paul says in his first letter to Timothy, third chapter, 15th verse, where he says to Timothy: ‘But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.’ So then, my hearers, he says the Church of God is the house of the living God, and adds, which is ‘the pillar and ground of the truth.’ So, if the Church of God, without any such appendage as this, is the pillar and ground of the truth, we object to this institution, established for the purpose of teaching mankind in religion (13).

D. Austen Sommer made the following argument in his debate with J.C. McQuiddy entitled *The College Question Discussed* :

Now these things are true: 1. The "Bible colleges" are organizations. 2. They are teaching the Bible. . . . 3. Teaching the Bible is 'the Lord's work.' 4. Therefore, the human organization of the "Bible college" to do "the Lord's work" is "to say the least superfluous;" and inasmuch as it is a tradition of man, we may add in the words of Christ, "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The "Bible college" is a human organization established to do "work of the church" (6).

Later Sommer wrote,

Any human organization with its president, secretary, treasurer, laws, established by Christians to teach the Bible, help the poor or sick or do any other work of the Church is unscriptural, unnecessary and dangerous. The David Lipscomb School and the other "Bible" and "Christian" colleges are human organizations established to do work of the Church for which Christ died, and thus they are unscriptural (13).

These brethren were not discussing whether or not church support of these organizations was scriptural; they were discussing whether or not these organizations could exist separate and apart from church support.

In the first G.K. Wallace-Carl Ketcherside (1952) debate in Paragould, Arkansas on the subject of whether or not Bible colleges such as Florida College could teach the Bible, Ketcherside argued as follows:

I am here defending one body for the purpose of doing the work of the Lord, while he is here defending two bodies. The Book that I read says there is one body (187).

Comparing colleges such as Florida College to a missionary society, Ketcherside said,

If it is wrong to establish a missionary society to do that first teaching (evangelism to the lost, mw), what makes it right to establish an educational institution to do that second teaching (edification, mw)? (199).

It is not a question of whether it is right for you to send your child to this school or to that school, or whether it is right to teach the Bible in school, but the question tonight is whether it is right for Christians to organize

another institution to teach the Bible. It is not right to send your child to any school that has no right to exist (200).

Carl Ketcherside affirmed the same principle in his St. Louis debate (1953) with G.K. Wallace:

The only thing I am interested in is whether it is a human organization doing the work that God intended for the church to do. I do not care where he puts it or what he calls it. It does not make any difference to me where you place a missionary society. It does not make any difference to me where you put a society like that. All I want to know is what it is doing. You may call it what you please, and put it in any category you wish, but let me tell you that when it does the work God ordained for His one body to do, brother Wallace himself says it is unscriptural and he will give it up (189).

Ketcherside claimed that the school was a “missionary society” (197). He continued,

So they have a human organization to preach the gospel. Brethren, listen, that is the kind of conglomerate mess you get into when you start establishing human organizations to do the work God gave the church to do (225).

Brother Wallace attacked the taproot of Ketcherside’s argument, the same taproot that brother Smith is teaching today, when he said,

He (Ketcherside, mw) *assumed* a *premise* that he never did try to prove. He *assumed* that teaching the Bible is the exclusive work of the church. He never did try to prove that teaching the Bible is the *exclusive* work of the church (240).

In Leroy Garrett’s debate with Bill Humble on the Bible college issue, Humble asked Garrett to prove that teaching the Bible was the exclusive work of the church (112). Garrett replied,

Is preaching the Bible the exclusive work of the church? Well, he believes it is. Surely preaching is the exclusive work of the church, so how about the missionary society? Oh, but he says, “The church *as the church*, or is it also the work of individual Christians *as individuals*? Now here is the argument: It would be wrong for the church as such to start an organization, such as a Bible college; but it is right for individuals to do so. Well, now let us see if it will work on the missionary society that way. Now, brother Humble, would it be all right for some of us to gather a group of individuals and start a missionary society? (121)

Later, he said,

Is not this the church's work? Is not the church's obligation to teach the one Lord, the one faith, and to preach Christ? And yet here you have Florida Christian College preaching Christ? Who is featuring this lecture-ship? Florida Christian College is. Who is sponsoring these twenty-seven lectures? Florida Christian College. What is it? This is a gospel meeting. Conducted by a church? No, it is conducted by a college, under the supervision of that college (127).

I reproduce these quotations for you to put brother Smith's argument in context. Brother Smith is preaching Sommerism. Anyone who reads the above quotations can see that brethren Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, Gene Frost, and now J.T. Smith are making the same argument. These brethren protest the description of their doctrine as "Sommerism." They dislike this description because they are aware of the factional division Sommer's doctrine caused among Christians several decades ago. They dislike the description because Sommer and his colleagues applied their teaching to Bible colleges whereas the new Sommerites do not want to apply their teaching to Florida College because brethren widely believe that Florida College has a right to exist, many of them have spoken on the lecture programs at Florida College, and many of them attend the lectures joining in the collective singing, praying, and Bible teaching which occurs during the lectures. They cannot afford to allow brethren to recognize that the very arguments they are using against the Guardian of Truth Foundation were used by earlier Sommerites to prove that Florida College had no right to teach the Bible. Remember the adage: If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck! These brethren are true Sommerites.

Other Collective Works Indicted

Let's be sure that we see what is at stake in this discussion about collectivities. The Guardian of Truth is not the only collectivity that has collective singing, praying, or teaching the Bible. Once the principle is established by the new Sommerites, the application will have to be consistently applied and when it is other works presently being done will be attacked as well, if these brethren abide by the Bible command to apply the faith of Jesus Christ without partiality (1 Tim. 5:20-21). Here is a partial list of examples in which I know other brethren are working collectively:

- Several brethren pooling their resources to conduct a tent meeting such as occurs at the tent meeting in Burkesville, KY each year or to conduct a radio program in Eastern Kentucky
- Several brethren pooling their resources to support a gospel preacher

- Several brethren getting together for prayer and singing such as occurs in home Bible studies in which a person invites several members into his home for singing, prayer, and teaching
- Brethren partaking of the Lord's supper while on a trip to an area in which there is no congregation
- Brethren pooling their resources to take care of the benevolent needs of any person to whom the church also bears responsibility
- The singing, praying, and teaching that occurs at a funeral home
- The praying and teaching that occurs at a wedding
- Singing schools such as is operated by R.J. Stevens
- The chapel services at Florida College
- The devotions held at the various dorms at Florida College
- The lectures at Florida College
- College scholarships which give away Bible instruction
- The assemblies at Athens Bible School where the Bible is taught
- *Think* magazine which is supported by individual contributions and given away
- Biblical Insights, Inc. which receives donations
- Gospel Truths, Inc. which receives donations (at least of articles)
- *Preceptor Magazine* which receives donations (at least of articles)
- Web sites such as those operated by Mars List, Bible.ca.com, Don Martin, and Jeff Belknap because they receive donations (articles) and give away their product. Obviously they are collective arrangements and not individual activity
- Web magazines

In addition to those collective arrangements for teaching the Bible, offering worship (singing, prayer and teaching) operated by brethren, the following are some other collective activities that also would be sinful if the church is the only organization for worship, as brother Smith contends:

- Religion classes taught at public and private universities
- Religious lectures presented at public and private universities
- Hospital chaplains
- Police chaplains
- Military chaplains
- Praying and preaching at a Baccalaureate service
- Prayer at a sports event
- Prayer to open government legislative houses
- School prayer

Let's make clear where brother Smith's doctrine logically leads (if he

believes this is not the logical conclusion to what he is teaching, let him show us why one of these is wrong and the others are right):

- Those who send contributions to Florida College are sinning
- Those who attend Florida College are sinning
- Those who speak at the Florida College lectures are sinning (is it right in Tampa but wrong in Bowling Green?)
- Those who attend the Florida College lectures and participate in worship (singing, teaching, and prayer) are sinning
- Those who attend the R.J. Stevens singing school are sinning
- Those who invite a group of teenagers into their home for teaching, singing, and prayer are sinning

Brethren, are you ready to follow these new Sommerites down this road of factionalism and division?

Review of the Article

Having made clear what the issues are, let us now examine the latest article by brother Smith to see what Bible justification he presents to sustain his argument. He used Matthew 18:15-17 to distinguish individual from collective action. With this I agree. He uses Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:18; 14 to show that there are local church assemblies for worship. No one disagrees with any of these verses.

What is missing? Brother Smith's argument is like that of the Baptist preacher who quotes a hundred passages on faith to prove that man is saved by "faith only." Brother Smith uses passages to show that the church assembled for worship and concludes that *only* the church may offer worship. But the word "only" is not in any of the passages he quotes! Furthermore, the Bible shows other groups of brethren offering worship together outside the church assembly of the local church. Acts 12:12 describes many who had gathered together for prayer (this is distinct from what the church was doing in 12:5). Jesus assembled with the Twelve in the upper room for teaching (see John 14-17), prayer (Matt. 26:28), and singing (Matt. 26:30). After the church had begun, Paul taught the Bible in the synagogue (Acts 17:1-3). If the church is the only collectivity which can have worship or teach the Bible, what was Paul doing in the synagogue? Yet, Acts 17:2 says that this was his custom or manner. The synagogue had prayer and Bible reading. This was going on after the church was established and an inspired apostle participated in it. Did he sin? Can I follow an apostle's example (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9)? These verses of Scripture suffice to demonstrate that brother Smith's premise is false: "I am opposed to an organization separate and apart from the church receiving contributions and organizing worship

services aka Guardian of Truth Lectureship. God has set up an organization for that. It is called *the Church*.” Will he give up his premise or does he hate the Guardian of Truth Foundation so much that he will cling to his premise rather than the Scriptures?

Willful Disobedience to the Command to Be Impartial

Brother Smith has another problem. He violates the Scriptures by showing partiality in the practice of what he believes. Paul wrote, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality*” (1 Tim. 5:20-21). This is not the first time brother Smith’s attention has been called to the selective application of the premise he believes. When I asked this question last time, brother Smith responded, “Brother Willis wonders why we are singling them out from all the other institutions that are doing the same thing they are doing. Let’s stick with the subject.” Apparently brother Smith believes himself to be exempt from obedience to the Lord’s charge to observe these things without “partiality” (ASV). He refused to address the issue and did not deny that he is “singling out” the Guardian of Truth Foundation. His persistence in showing partiality demonstrates that he is not interested in impartially applying the truth as the Holy Spirit commanded; rather, he is interested in attacking the Foundation. If that is not the case, let him treat all collectivities which teach the Bible, have prayer, and singing the same way. He will not do it! At least he has not done it up until now! He is only interested in attacking the Guardian of Truth Foundation. I challenge him to show me that I am wrong. Every time he says a word about the Guardian of Truth Foundation, let him say the same word about these other organizations. If he doesn’t, ask yourself, “Why?” So long as he does not, he is willfully disobeying God’s commandment to apply the faith of Jesus Christ without partiality.

The Gospel Truths, Inc. Foundation

Brother Smith says “*Gospel Truths* was founded for the purpose of giving me a medium through which evangelistic work can be done.” Gospel Truths, Inc. owns and operates the paper *Gospel Truths*. Gospel Truths, Inc. is not the local church and it is not J.T. Smith. *Gospel Truths* is not a local church bulletin and it is not a paper written by and published by one man. The latest issue had nine different men and women contribute articles for publication, it was overseen by an editor, and the cost of printing and postage was paid for by Gospel Truths, Inc. according to what is published in the masthead. Now, if brother Smith is right that the church is the *only* organization which has a right to teach the Bible, what reason can he give for Gospel Truths, Inc. teaching the Bible? Brother Smith could have pro-

duced a paper without forming a corporation to do so. He could have done his evangelistic work without creating a tax-exempt corporation to do so. So, why did he create this human organization? Why ask other brethren to pool their resources under the oversight of an editor if there can be only one collective organization for the teaching of the Bible?

Contributions to Gospel Truths, Inc.

Lastly, brother Smith chided me for saying that those who contribute an article in *Gospel Truths*, which is published by Gospel Truths, Inc., are making a donation to this human organization. In this particular issue, brother Smith published an article which I had written and without my permission for it to be published in *Gospel Truths* which he in turn sold in the public market. He didn't just give it away, like someone illegally copying a CD of a song and giving it to a friend; he sold it! Indeed, according to the premises he espouses, he would be guilty of sin had he given it away! Publishing material without the author's permission is a violation of United States copyright law. Copyright law is designed to protect the intellectual property of the author, whether that be a song, a computer program, an article, or a book. The web site <http://whatiscopyright.org/> helps define copyright law and the web saying:

The general (and incorrect) notion is that anything that is on the internet is public domain and may be taken without permission from the creator/owner. Some people actually think (incorrectly) that just because bits of web pages may be stored in one's cache, or because certain browsers allow one to do "file save as" moves or anything similar one may use such material as one wishes. **This is false.**

Brother Smith violated U.S. copyright law when he reprinted my article without my permission. I am not writing this to threaten him with a lawsuit; I have no intention to pursue my legal rights. What I am emphasizing is that even the government recognizes that intellectual property has financial value. When a person "contributes" (note the word, just like one contributes to the treasury of the local church) an article to a paper, he is making a contribution. He is releasing his legal rights to his intellectual property and giving it to the foundation, Gospel Truths, Inc. In my case, my intellectual property was taken without my permission and the civil government defines that as a criminal act. Therefore, I did not contribute anything to Gospel Truths, Inc., but the president of this corporation utilized my property without my permission, though I am willing to overlook the matter.

Brother Smith is stretching to make his point that contributing an article is not a contribution. He says that churches send reports to *Truth Magazine*

and asks if these churches have made a donation to *Truth Magazine*. If they have, they have also made donations to Gospel Truths, Inc. in the same manner. First, I don't remember getting reports from churches; most everything I get is from individuals. But, if a church wanted to make an announcement, for example that it is sponsoring a debate, it is doing the same thing in *Truth Magazine* as it is when it turns in an announcement of a gospel meeting to the local newspaper. The newspaper prints what is newsworthy. If the newspaper does not judge the announcement to be newsworthy, it charges the church for running that announcement. Second, what *Truth Magazine* gets from churches is requests to advertise that they are looking for a preacher. Brother Smith has the situation reversed. The donation is not going from the church to *Truth Magazine* but from the *Truth Magazine* to the church. *Truth Magazine* donates advertising to the church in such cases.

Furthermore, intent and purpose are involved in the nature of any action. A Christian cannot scripturally donate money to a denomination, but he may give money to such an organization in a business transaction (such as buying goods, services, or property). A faithful preacher cannot scripturally donate articles to a denominational publication in order to support and spread its errors, but he can submit an article designed to teach the truth and refute denominational error in an effort to convert denominational people to the truth. Now, the end does not justify the means, and therefore it is wrong to take even this step if it is sinful for a publishing organization other than the church to teach the truth, as J.T. claims (through his publishing organization).

Conclusion

Brother Smith seems determined to continue his pursuit of Sommerism and couples it with his persistent disobedience in applying what he understands to be the faith of Christ with impartiality. There will be some who hate the Guardian of Truth Foundation enough to appreciate what he is doing. There will be many others who shake their head in disbelief that brother Smith chooses to go down this road. He will continue to marginalize himself and destroy his influence for good during the last years of his earthly life. I regret that he has chosen this course for himself. I do not intend to engage in endless harangues with him. Should some new argument based on the Scriptures be made, I may choose to examine it but I do not intend to continue to analyze every article he writes.

Answering Brother Smith's Challenge

Mike Willis

The publication of *We Have A Right* has created quite a stir among those who make the Daniel Sommer argument that the church is the only collectivity which can teach the Bible. Brother J.T. Smith published the following as his front page article for the *Gospel Truths* December 2005 magazine which is published by Gospel Truths, Inc. He wrote,

A Challenge to Mike Willis

In their new book "*We Have A Right*" (published by The Guardian of Truth Foundation) we are told that there is no difference in *The Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc.* and *Gospel Truths, Inc.* Yes, it is true that we were forced to incorporate in order to receive a 2nd Class Non-profit mailing permit. This corporation consists of me, my wife and one of our daughters.

Because I said in an Editorial that "I am the sole proprietor and owner of *Gospel Truths*, and this is a part of my work as an evangelist" brother Mike Willis questioned the validity of this statement. He implies there is "no difference."

Brother Willis says that brethren contribute articles to *Gospel Truths* which is no different that (sic) making a monetary contribution. There are no "staff writers" for *Gospel Truths*. Those who send in articles are sending material they want published as a part of their work in evangelism.

Here is a challenge for brother Willis.

As owner and editor of *Gospel Truths*, without consulting any other person I can cease and desist the publishing of *Gospel Truths*. If there is no difference in *Gospel Truths* and *Truth Magazine* I challenge brother Willis to say "I can cease and desist the publishing of *Truth Magazine* without consulting a single person." I know, he knows and everyone else knows he cannot. They are not the same.

I want to examine what brother Smith admits in this short statement. He admits that Gospel Truths, Inc. is a corporation. He tells us who his board of directors are: J.T. Smith, Geneva Brown Smith, and his married daughter. So, Gospel Truths, Inc. is not a local church; it is not J.T. Smith; it is not J.T. Smith's family because it also involves the family of his married daughter; it is a collectivity overseen by a board of directors, just like the Guardian of Truth Foundation. All of this talk about Guardian of Truth Foundation being a human organization which is preaching the gospel in contrast to Gospel Truths, Inc. should forever end. Brother Smith has created a human organization designed to teach that human organizations which teach the Bible are wrong! Seems a bit inconsistent to me.

However, he defends his creation of this organization on the grounds that the government made him do it! If brother Smith believes that it is a sin for any other collectivity to preach the gospel, he should not organize a collectivity to preach the gospel. Period! End of discussion! The government does not force him to organize such a collectivity; certainly, he should not allow the government to force him to sin. If it tried, then he should "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). The argument appears to be that it is alright to sin if the government makes you sin.

The truth of the matter is that brother Smith formed his corporation for the same reasons we at the Guardian of Truth Foundation did—to get tax deductions for any contributions to the organization, to avoid paying taxes on any profits it makes, and to qualify for less expensive postage for his magazine. These financial considerations motivated him to commit, what he believes, is sin! Let me assure you that, if I believed that it was a sin to form another collectivity for the purpose of teaching the Bible, I would not form one regardless of what the government set forth as conditions for special tax benefits and lower postage rates.

Brother Smith thinks his board is different from the one operated by Guardian of Truth Foundation because, "As owner and editor of *Gospel Truths*, without consulting any other person, I can cease and desist publishing *Gospel Truths*." Let's examine what he has said.

1. He is not the solitary owner of *Gospel Truths*. Gospel Truths, Inc. is the owner, according to the papers he has filed with the state of Oklahoma. If he thinks he can mix and mingle personal funds with those of Gospel Truths, Inc., a non-profit religious organization, he is violating civil law and stands condemned for violating civil law as per Romans 13:1-7. He knows that he cannot, so he assuredly recognizes the distinction between a sole proprietor and a corporation. He is not a sole proprietor. He is running a corporation.

2. He affirms that he can “cease and desist publishing of *Gospel Truths* without consulting a single individual.” What difference does that make? Would Guardian of Truth Foundation be acceptable if I had the authority to “cease and desist publishing *Truth Magazine* without consulting a single individual”? If so, what Bible verse teaches that? But, granted that brother Smith can cease and desist publishing *Gospel Truths* at his whim, what does it show? It shows that his Board of Directors is made up of “yes” women. Whatever its president wants to do, its other board members acquiesce to his wishes. There is no give and take that occurs when other board members challenge and test the leadership of the organization. Frankly, the Guardian of Truth Foundation could just as easily have staffed its Board of Directors with relatives and “yes” men (or women). Had that been the case, our president could “cease and desist” publishing *Truth Magazine* without consulting a single individual, just as brother Smith can do. However, the Guardian of Truth Foundation made a conscious decision not to fill our board with “yes” men because we do not see the wisdom in that kind of organization and we see nothing in the Scriptures which requires us to put “yes” men on our board. If he thinks his board is stronger because it has “yes” people as board members and because brother Smith wants to practice nepotism in his selection of members for his board of directors, that is his prerogative. I am not charging him with sin for doing so. However, there is no biblical difference in a board with “yes” men and a board of those who are not “yes” men, so far as whether or not a human organization exists and whether or not that human organization is scriptural. If he could sustain the proposition that there is a biblical difference in the one or the other, he surely would have said so in his “challenge” to us. Give us the Scripture, brother Smith!

3. He states that he has no staff writers. That’s interesting inasmuch as he was a staff writer for another paper, that is, he wrote a regular column entitled “Using Great Plainness of Speech” in *Searching the Scriptures* for years. Was brother Smith guilty of sin when he served as a “staff writer” for *Searching the Scriptures*? And what Bible verse says that it is right for a corporation such as Gospel Truths, Inc. to publish a paper so long as it does not have staff writers and wrong if a corporation such as Guardian of Truth Foundation publishes a paper because it has staff writers. Is having a staff of writers what makes *Truth Magazine* wrong but *Gospel Truths*, which is published by Gospel Truths, Inc., right? If so, what verse in the Bible teaches that? Frankly, I haven’t read that verse in my Bible. Have you? Give us that Scripture too, brother Smith!

Arguments such as those brother Smith made are the kind which men are forced to concoct when they create their own collectivities to teach that

collectivities which teach the Bible are wrong. Either they are admitting that their collectivity does not teach the Bible or they are woefully inconsistent. The kind of hair splitting which brother Smith makes in this short article demonstrates his problem in trying to defend one collectivity while condemning those operated by others. This is the same problem Daniel Sommer, W. Carl Ketcherside, and Leroy Garrett had when they taught that the church is the only collectivity which can teach the Bible, all the while operating their respective collective teaching arrangements in *Octographic Review*, *Mission Messenger*, and *Restoration Review*. The Daniel Sommer position that the church is the only collectivity which can teach the Bible or offer worship leads logically and inevitably to the position that Bible colleges are wrong and all gospel papers operated by more than one individual are wrong. Make no mistake about it; those who want to draw a line of fellowship against those of us associated with *Truth Magazine* will also draw a line of fellowship against those associated with Florida College, *Biblical Insights, Inc.*, *Think*, R.J. Stevens singing schools, those who participate in summer camps in which the Bible is taught and have singing and prayer. Make no mistake about it: There is no rational reason to apply this test of fellowship to the Guardian of Truth Foundation but not to other collective works operated by brethren. Teaching one's opinions as divine revelation inevitably leads to factionalism and unnecessary division.

But there is another alternative brother Smith and those associated with him can choose to follow. The other alternative is that these brethren can practice what they teach with partiality. Paul wrote, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:21). These brethren can make a conscious decision to ignore those other collectivities which are doing the same thing that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing and are organized and supported the same way that the Guardian of Truth is. Should they so choose, this will be obvious to brethren as well. Thinking brethren will ask, "Why are only those associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation and *Truth Magazine* singled out for condemnation?" They will think that those who selectively apply their teaching must have a vendetta against someone for whatever reason. What else can explain their using partiality in the application of what they believe?

Brother Smith tries to defend the contributions he receives from the writers to his paper as being different from monetary contributions. Nevertheless he writes, "Those who send in articles are sending material they want published as part of their work in evangelism." Therefore, these articles are "evangelistic," as in "missionary." Each issue contains a number of writers

working together under a common head—a collectivity—to produce their product. This is the very reason that I described *Gospel Truths*, which is published by Gospel Truths, Inc., as a missionary collectivity! “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned” (Matt. 12:37).

Brother Smith attempts to justify his practice of running what I could describe as a “privately supported missionary society” with the argument that he could send in an article to a Baptist publication to expose the errors of the Baptist church without that action being comparable to a contribution of money to said magazine. He tells us that this is the same thing that he and his stable of regular contributors are doing. Sounds pretty good on the surface.

However, our brother seems a bit confused in this situation. These two things are not at all equal. Certainly one could make a “contribution” of a negative article, condemning any false doctrine, to a journal that was the purveyor of that error or sinful practice. For example, any one among us would be delighted to have the opportunity to contribute an article exposing the evils of homosexual behavior to a magazine that is circulated among those who believe in and practice the homosexual lifestyle. Likewise, we would be happy to respond in kind to the errors of those who are the advocates of any false doctrine, so long as our hands are not tied as to what we might be able to say. This would apply, of course, to the situation with the Baptist journal that our brother discusses.

On the other hand, most brethren would see a clear-cut difference between that and what Brother Smith is actually practicing. Those who participate with him are not writing in to expose the sin of what brother Smith is doing. Rather, they are making a contribution to his paper that is beneficial and supportive, rather than condemnatory and confrontational. One might imagine, as a more appropriate comparison, that one of our brethren decided to make a monthly contribution as a regular writer in the same homosexual magazine that we mentioned above. Each month he composed a positive and encouraging piece of literature, let us say, on travel options: modes of transport, destinations, hotels, restaurants, etc. If brother Smith picks up this magazine at the doctor’s office, and reads one or two of his articles and discovers that this brother in Christ is “making a literary contribution” to said journal—will he be willing to swallow his own contention that this fellow is not actually making any sort of “contribution” to the ongoing success and welfare of the journal to which his literary donation is being sent monthly? I think we all know the answer to this question! He understands the difference between an article that is critical of sin and error, and the

practice of making a donation of literature that is supportive of the wrong that is being taught or practiced. The former is detrimental to the magazine, attempting to tear it down and destroy it. The latter is a literary subsidy of sorts, reinforcing the positions taken by the journal. That is precisely what his stable of writers do every single month. But, let's go a little further. Let's suppose that a brother in another state volunteered to typeset the same homosexual magazine without charge, another group of people volunteered to address and mail the same homosexual magazine without charge. Would these people be making donations to that homosexual magazine? Our brother is transparently "grasping at straws" in his effort to justify that which is as clearly a parallel to the organization and operation of the Guardian of Truth Foundation as anything ever could be. Brother Smith, your desperation is showing!

An Open Letter to Brown Street in Akron, Ohio

Mike Willis

Dear Brethren,

I extend my warmest greetings to each member of the Brown Street church. Ever since I began preaching, I have known of the Brown Street congregation. My brother Cecil was preaching there in a two preacher arrangement, first with Connie W. Adams and later with Ferrell Jenkins. He was preaching and editing *Truth Magazine* at the same time. When he moved away from Brown Street to preach in Marion, IN, I still received *The Enlightener* and enjoyed keeping up with the activities at Brown Street. Little did I know that some years later my brother Lewis would spend over twenty years in your pulpit. You were kind enough to invite my brother Don for a meeting and, on two separate occasions, to have me with you for a meeting.

My acquaintance with Bob Dickey goes back nearly thirty years. I have known his family in the Indianapolis area ever since I moved to preach at Mooresville in 1969. He and I have not had opportunity to spend a lot of time together but all that we have spent together has been warm and cordial. He followed me in the work at Trader's Point in Indianapolis. He has held meetings where I preached at Danville and, I believe, I was in a meeting at Trader's Point while he was there, but I could be mistaken about that. He was a staff writer for *Truth Magazine* for several years.

I mention these warm relationships in order that you might know how painful it is for me to write this letter. I regret having come to such a disagreement that I feel the need to send a letter to the membership of the Brown Street congregation to respond to a sermon preached in January 29, 2006 by brother Dickey. I contacted brother Dickey to receive a copy of his sermon. Before he responded, brother Dan King wrote an article

which was posted on the internet in which he mentioned Bob's sermon and the elders' decision to discontinue financial fellowship with those who were participating in the Truth Magazine lectureship (see [truthmagazine.com/articles/collectivities/Response to Gene Frost by Dan King](http://truthmagazine.com/articles/collectivities/Response%20to%20Gene%20Frost%20by%20Dan%20King)). Bob wrote me a three page letter about brother King's reference to him and Brown St. I replied to Bob in a phone call asking to meet with him. I believed he sinned against God and me in his sermon. But Bob has refused to meet with me in spite of two separate appeals (although the second appeal conflicted with a meeting he was holding, he left no uncertain impression that he was unwilling to meet with me), leaving me no alternative to address this situation except directly to you in this letter. One cannot respond to a full sermon in two or three pages, so I ask your forbearance in reading through this lengthy reply. Inasmuch as brother Dickey reacted with a three-page letter to his name and the Brown St. congregation being mentioned in one paragraph in an article by brother King, I believe he should understand why it is natural that I would respond to his January 29, 2006 sermon that was preached at Brown Street.

Those of you who have attended Brown Street through the years and have known the Willis family, know that there are few more committed to opposing church support of human institutions than we are. I invite you to look at my writings in particular. You can visit our web site (truthmag.com) and research "institutionalism," the "all-sufficiency of the church," etc. to see what I have written through the years. I invite you to read my workbook *Passing the Torch* for lessons on church support of human institutions. Anyone who would represent me as defending missionary societies or participating in one misrepresents me, either intentionally or unintentionally. You can imagine my disappointment in brother Dickey representing me as among those brethren who believe in missionary societies or by my actions endorsing them!

I can agree with much that brother Dickey said in his sermon. I believe in the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ as man's Savior (Heb. 10:9-10); I believe in the all-sufficiency of Scripture (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17); and I believe in the all-sufficiency of the church (Eph. 3:8; 4:7-16).

But brother Dickey's sermon goes well beyond opposition to church supported missionary societies. He uses the word "missionary society" in a new way and then charges that the brethren associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation endorse missionary societies according to his new definition. The term "missionary society" has historically been used to describe those church supported institutions that in turn provided support for preachers in the field. Brother Dickey knows that

he cannot prove that the Guardian of Truth Foundation ever received a donation from any church and knows that he cannot name a single preacher for whom the Foundation provided financial support in its fifty years of existence. So, he changes the meaning of “missionary society” to describe what it was never before used to describe—individuals working together, totally separated from involvement with any local church. Even with this, he cannot provide the name of a single person supported by the foundation to do the work of a gospel preacher. Nevertheless, having changed the definition of “missionary society” and without telling his audience that he is using the term in a peculiar and different sense, he publicly accused the Guardian of Truth Foundation with being a missionary society. Bob said,

But in the last two years, it has become evidence that they (the Guardian of Truth Foundation, mw) desire to function as a privately support missionary society, involved in doing what we believe God gave the church to do. . . .

Quoting anonymously Don Martin, Bob said,

with the lectureship it clearly progressed from being an alleged secular foundation run by and comprised of brethren for the purpose of making money. It officially and overtly placed itself into a privately funded entity status that affords and encourages Christians to pool their resources in working through a human organization to teach and preach the gospel, an organization in addition to and separate from the local church, which God has appointed to afford such pooling and organization for Christians to collectively preach the gospel.

In doing this, he takes the position that teaching the Bible is the *exclusive* work of the local church—that no other organization can teach the Bible. In taking this position, brother Dickey has identified himself with the Daniel Sommer position and the statement by the elders has identified the Brown Street church with the position of Daniel Sommer. Here is brother Dickey’s argument:

But, I cannot find authority for men who are Christians banding together, pooling their funds, placing themselves under a board of directors, and asking for individual Christians to contribute to something that God gave the church to do.

When God is specific that is our pattern. And my friends, God has been very specific about who is to do this work. Now there is not a statement in the Bible that says that individuals can’t form a corporation or an institution or a foundation or a benevolent society to do work that God gave the

church to do. But, the fact that the statement is not there means that it is not authorized. God has been specific. He gave this work to the church.¹

1. Brother Dickey protests being represented as believing that God gave the church exclusive responsibility to teach the Bible. I draw this conclusion based on the following: (1) His argument that God specifically authorized the organization to teach the Bible and help the Christian just like he specified singing. The nature of specific authority is that it excludes everything else in the same class. (2) His direct statements:

And, individuals also have a responsibility, but let me tell you brethren, there is no authority for Christians forming a benevolent society with a board of directors, a treasury, structure and so on to relieve needy saints. If this is scriptural, I cannot find it anywhere in my Bible. I realize as I say these words tonight that I am saying things that will probably hurt and wound some of my friends who are involved in this endeavor. I will be misunderstood. I will be falsely charged perhaps as being unkind and inconsiderate and not a benevolent person. But, I cannot find authority for men who are Christians banding together, pooling their funds, placing themselves under a board of directors, and asking for individual Christians to contribute to something that God gave the church to do (Sermon p. 5).

I believe it is wrong for brethren to pool their resources together and form human and privately funded missionary societies, edification organizations, and benevolent organizations. God has already assigned the collective or corporate work of teaching the lost and edifying the saints, and, when circumstances demand it, relieving the physical needs of the saints in His organization, the local church.

Bob thinks he has avoided the Sommerism doctrine by admitting that individuals can work together. He said,

No one is opposed to working together. It is not a question of whether Christians can be involved in what they have said is distributive action in an aggregate setting like eating the Lord's Supper. I believe I can do that with you. I believe I am supposed to do that with you. And so, you can talk about distributive action in an aggregate setting and I am not opposed to that, but that is not what this is.

However, I ask what does he mean by "distributive action in an aggregate setting"? Where would one read about "distribute action in an aggregate setting" in his Bible? The language "distributive action in an aggregate setting" comes from

Daniel Sommer opposed Bible colleges on the grounds that the church is the exclusive organization which can teach the Bible. To show that this is the teaching of Daniel Sommer, please read the following quotations:

The Rebirth of Sommerism

In Daniel Sommer's debate with J.N. Armstrong entitled, *A Report of Skirmishes Between a Religious Journal and a Religio-Secular College*,

Don Martin, not the Bible. These are the hairline distinctions brother Dickey's position forces him to hold. If all brethren under God's blue heaven have to make the same hairline distinctions brother Dickey and brother Martin make in order to go to heaven when they die, we are all in trouble! The word "distributive" is defined as "referring to each member of a group regarded individually." "Aggregate" means "formed into a whole, mass, or sum, united; combined; total." "Distributive action in an aggregate setting" is nothing more than collective action. Brother Dickey gave an example of "distributive action in an aggregate setting" which he approves—the Lord's supper. Here is an action taken together under common oversight presented by an institutional body (whether viewed by the civil authorities as incorporated or unincorporated). To demonstrate that distributive action is not collective action, try to imagine "distributive action in an aggregate setting" for churches. Distributive action is one church doing its work and another church doing its work; but collective action involves oversight and all acting together. I ask you brethren, "Is taking the Lord's supper each Christian acting individually or is it collective action?" Common oversight determines when and where it will be taken, who will preside (note that "preside" implies someone is over others) at the Table, and common funds are used to provide the elements, trays and plate and table, place for partaking, etc. If this is what brother Dickey means by "distributive action in an aggregate setting" then about any collective arrangement can be approved. Guardian of Truth Foundation can call its action "distribute action in an aggregate setting" but brother Dickey can see clearly enough that this is a collective action. I challenge brother Dickey to define "distributive action in an aggregate setting," something which he approves, in such a way as to exclude the Guardian of Truth Foundation.

I challenge brother Dickey to define "collective," "institutional," and "organization" in such a way as to include the Guardian of Truth Foundation but to exclude Florida College and the Florida College camps, both of which he participates in, defends, and has never renounced.

Brother Dickey writes, "I think the school has a right to teach the Bible. . . ." What Bible verses authorizes Florida College to teach the Bible and prohibits the Guardian of Truth Foundation from doing the same? Brother Dickey has not and cannot answer this question!

Sommer argued:

“Fourth. Then, in the next place we oppose this institution and pronounce it unscriptural because of what the apostle Paul says in his first letter to Timothy, third chapter, 15th verse, where he says to Timothy: ‘But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.’ So then, my hearers, he says the Church of God is the house of the living God, and adds, which is ‘the pillar and ground of the truth.’ So, if the Church of God, without any such appendage as this, is the pillar and ground of the truth, we object to this institution, established for the purpose of teaching mankind in religion (13).

D. Austen Sommer, son of Daniel, wrote (and please note the similarity to what brother Dickey preached),

Any human organization with its president, secretary, treasurer, laws, established by Christians to teach the Bible, help the poor or sick or do any other work of the Church is unscriptural, unnecessary and dangerous. The David Lipscomb School and the other “Bible” and “Christian” colleges are human organizations established to do work of the Church for which Christ died, and thus they are unscriptural (13).

These brethren were not discussing whether or not church support of these organizations was scriptural; they were discussing whether or not these human organizations sinned when they taught the Bible. The Sommers believed the work of teaching the Bible was given *exclusively* to the church.

Carl Ketcherside affirmed the same principle in his St. Louis debate (1953) with G.K. Wallace:

The only thing I am interested in is whether it is a human organization doing the work that God intended for the church to do. I do not care where he puts it or what he calls it. It does not make any difference to me where you place a missionary society. It does not make any difference to me where you put a society like that. All I want to know is what it is doing. You may call it what you please, and put it in any category you wish, but let me tell you that when it does the work God ordained for His one body to do, brother Wallace himself says it is unscriptural and he will give it up (189).

Ketcherside claimed that the school was a “missionary society” (197). Brother G.K. Wallace attacked the taproot of Ketcherside’s argument, the same taproot that brother Dickey is teaching today, when he said,

He (Ketcherside, mw) *assumed* a *premise* that he never did try to prove. He *assumed* that teaching the Bible is the exclusive work of the church.

He never did try to prove that teaching the Bible is the *exclusive* work of the church (240).

In Leroy Garrett's debate with Bill Humble on the Bible college issue, Humble asked Garrett to prove that teaching the Bible is the exclusive work of the church (112). Leroy Garrett replied,

Is preaching the Bible the exclusive work of the church? Well, he believes it is. Surely preaching is the exclusive work of the church, so how about the missionary society? Oh, but he says, "The church *as the church*, or is it also the work of individual Christians *as individuals*? Now here is the argument: It would be wrong for the church as such to start an organization, such as a Bible college; but it is right for individuals to do so. Well, now let us see if it will work on the missionary society that way. Now, brother Humble, would it be all right for some of us to gather a group of individuals and start a missionary society? (121)

Later, brother Garrett said,

Is not this the church's work? Is not the church's obligation to teach the one Lord, the one faith, and to preach Christ? And yet here you have Florida Christian College preaching Christ? Who is featuring this lecture-ship? Florida Christian College is. Who is sponsoring these twenty-seven lectures? Florida Christian College. What is it? This is a gospel meeting. Conducted by a church? No, it is conducted by a college, under the supervision of that college (127).

I reproduce these quotations for you to put brother Dickey's argument in its proper context. Brother Dickey is preaching Sommerism. Anyone who reads the above quotations can see that brethren Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, Gene Frost, and now Bob Dickey are making the same argument. These brethren protest the description of their doctrine as "Sommerism." They dislike this description because they are aware of the factional division Sommer's doctrine caused among Christians several decades ago. They dislike the description because Sommer and his colleagues applied their teaching to Bible colleges whereas the new Sommerites do not want to apply their teaching to Florida College because brethren widely believe that Florida College has a right to exist, many of them have spoken on the lecture programs at Florida College, and many of them attend the lectures participating in the collective singing, praying, and Bible teaching which occur during the lectures. They do not want brethren to know that the very arguments they are using against the Guardian of Truth Foundation were used by earlier Sommerites to prove that Florida College had no right to teach the Bible. Remember

the adage: If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck! These brethren are true Sommerites.

What is especially interesting is that brother Dickey uses the identical argument that the Sommerites use to oppose Bible colleges but does not so much as mention Florida College in his sermon. He is opposed to a human institution sponsoring a lectureship in Bowling Green, KY but he says nothing about a human institution sponsoring a lectureship in Tampa, FL. He condemns the Guardian of Truth Foundation as an individually supported missionary society but has participated in the human institution (Florida College) sponsoring a lectureship at Tampa. Is it right to do in Tampa what it is wrong to do in Bowling Green? If brother Dickey were only interested in pursuing the truth, does it make any sense that he would attack the human institution sponsoring a lectureship that is less than one-fourth the size of the one in Tampa? Why condemn the little lectureship in Bowling Green and say nothing about the big lectureship in Tampa?

Further Extremism

A further example of brother Dickey's extreme position is his conclusion that brethren can only work collectively in benevolence for saints through the local church. Brother Dickey said:

And, individuals also have a responsibility, but let me tell you brethren, there is no authority for Christians forming a benevolent society with a board of directors, a treasury, structure and so on to relieve needy saints. If this is scriptural, I cannot find it anywhere in my Bible.

Brother Dickey has now taken another step that only a few of the Sommerites take. He believes that Christians cannot make contributions to any organization which provides benevolent help to Christians except through the local church. This means, whether or not brother Dickey accepts the logical conclusion to his argument, that one cannot make a contribution to the Heart Fund, American Cancer Society, Diabetes Foundation, etc. if it helps so much as one Christian because that would put it in competition with the local church, even though no church funds are involved.

And interestingly enough, brother Yater Tant suggested that we should put a "box in the vestibule" so that individuals could contribute to orphan homes, old folks homes, unwed mothers homes, and other benevolent works so that these institutions could be supported by individual contributions rather than church contributions and thus avoid brethren dividing over institutionalism. Though I think brother Tant's suggestion was naive, this manifests Tant's and the majority of his brethren's understanding that

churches did not have *exclusive* responsibility in benevolence. As a matter of fact, I can't name a single gospel preacher who would agree with brother Dickey on this point, except D. Austen Sommer.

Brother Dickey's Proof

Brother Dickey tried to sustain his position on the basis of the following Scriptures: Ephesians 3:8; 4:7-16; 1 Timothy 3:15. There is not one word in any of these verses that says the church has *exclusive* responsibility in the teaching of the Bible.

Brother Dickey and I agree that the Bible does not contradict itself. The Bible shows other groups of brethren singing, offering prayer, and teaching the Bible outside the congregational assemblies of the local church. Acts 12:12 describes many who had gathered together for prayer (this is distinct from what the church was doing in 12:5). Jesus assembled with the Twelve in the upper room for teaching (see John 14-17), prayer (Matt. 26:28), and singing (Matt. 26:30).

Both Jesus before the establishment of the church and Paul (and others) after the establishment of the church taught the Bible in the synagogue (Acts 17:1-3). The synagogue was a human institution, not mentioned in the Old Testament that was begun in the intertestamental period. The earliest evidence of a synagogue is from the third century B.C. in Egypt. The synagogue was supported by individual contributions, used some of its resources for benevolence, and had prayer and taught the Bible. It had organization, being overseen by rulers of the synagogue (*archon* and *archisunagogos*). Jesus participated in the synagogues while on earth (Luke 4:16—"as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day") and Paul participated in them after the church was established. If the church is the only collectivity which can have singing, prayer, and teach the Bible, what was Paul doing praying and teaching the Bible in the synagogue? Yet, Acts 17:2 says that his custom or manner was to teach the Bible in the synagogue. This teaching of the Bible by this human institution occurred after the church was established and an inspired apostle participated in it. Did he sin? Can I follow an apostle's example (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9)?

In Luke 8:1-3, women made contributions to Jesus and the Twelve, which contributions were put into a "bag" (treasury) that Judas kept for them (John 12:6), from which were supplied benevolence and the needs of Jesus and the Twelve while they were teaching (Luke 8:1-3; John 13:29). Can we follow the example of Jesus and the Twelve?

By denying that Christians can do what Jesus and the Apostles did, brother Dickey unwittingly undermines the authority of apostolic examples!

This biblical evidence effectively destroys the thesis that the church is the only organization which has Bible authority to teach the Bible, the underlying premise on which brother Dickey builds his case to oppose the Guardian of Truth Foundation for sponsoring its lectureships. Any conclusion based on that thesis is wrong.

Inconsistency

Brother Dickey is very inconsistent with the teaching that he delivered in this sermon. Brother Dickey explains that he believes the church is the exclusive institution that can teach the Bible but, in the past Bob Dickey has participated in several human institutions that having singing, prayer, and teach the Bible. In 1996, brother Dickey preached a sermon at the Florida College lectures and in his biographical sketch he indicated that he was a student at Florida College (1962-63, 1965, 1970-72), Butler University (1976), and Luther Rice Seminary (1979-80)—all of these are human institutions that teach the Bible. Wouldn't it be just as wrong to be a student in one of these institutions that teaches the Bible as it is to teach in one of them? (Is it acceptable to attend the Truth Magazine lectures so long as one does not speak?) He said that he was “the first president of the North Central Alabama chapter of the Florida College Booster Club” and “he and Charlotte. . . were the first directors of the Florida College camp in Indiana (1982-83).” I participated in the Indiana chapter of the Florida College camp. When I was there, we studied the Bible, had prayer, and singing, just like we do at the Florida College lectures and at the Truth Magazine lectures. Perhaps brother Dickey can tell us why it is right for him to do what he prohibits others to do. We ask him to tell us plainly: Are the lectures, chapel services, and other worship services conducted at Florida College and Booster Camps sinful organizations—individually supported missionary societies? Did he sin when he spoke at and attended the Florida College lectures?

Let's see if brother Dickey will apply his own reasoning to his participation in Florida College. He writes,

If you don't think that the Foundation is doing a better job than the church in teaching the Bible, why not discontinue your lectureship? You know that several voices of concern have been raised in objection to what you are now doing. Why not allow a local congregation in Bowling Green to have the annual lectureship, if they desire? Why must the Foundation feel that they have to control what is being preached among brethren?

To this I reply, “If you don't think Florida College is doing a better job than the church in teaching the Bible, why don't you tell Florida College to discontinue their chapels, camps, and lectureships? You know that several

voices of concern have been raised in objection to what they are doing. Why not allow a local congregation in Akron or Tampa to have the annual lecture-ship, if they desire? Why must the college feel that they have to control what is preached among brethren?” If the argument has any validity, it applies with equal force to Florida College which brother Dickey defends.

Brother Don Martin whom brother Dickey quotes to show the Guardian of Truth Foundation has no right to sponsor a lecture program at Bowling Green uses the very same arguments brother Dickey uses to conclude that Florida College does not have a right to conduct a “gospel meeting” (lecture program) in Tampa. In this he is more consistent than brother Dickey.

Consider the following parallels between what brother Dickey opposes and what he has participated in and, defends as righteous:

Guardian of Truth Foundation	Florida College	North Alabama Florida College Booster Club	Indiana Florida College Booster Club
Is incorporated	Is incorporated	Is incorporated	Is incorporated
President–Head	President–Head	President–Head	President–Head
Editor selects writers and board selects speakers	President selects faculty; faculty selects lecture speakers	Director selects counselors	Director selects counselors
Regulates content of magazine/ lectures	Regulates content of Bible classes, lectures	Regulates teaching done at camp	Regulates teaching done at camp
Has singing, prayer, and teaches Bible	Has singing, prayer, and teaches Bible	Has singing, prayer, and teaches Bible	Has singing, prayer, and teaches Bible
Depends on individuals for support	Depends on individuals for support	Depends on individuals for support	Depends on individuals for support
Not under elders of any church	Not under elders of any church	Not under elders of any church	Not under elders of any church
Does not do work of church	Does not do work of church	Does not do work of church	Does not do work of church

I ask brother Dickey to define “organization” in such a way as to exclude Florida College, the North Alabama Florida College Booster Club, and the Indiana Florida College Booster Club but to include the Guardian of Truth Foundation. If there is no difference, how can brother Dickey defend his involvement in these other organizations while teach-

ing his position that God specified the organization which is to teach the Bible.

If all of these organizations are the same, why didn't brother Dickey plainly tell the brethren at Brown Street that he is just as opposed to Florida College teaching the Bible, having daily chapel services, and conducting a lectureship as he is with Truth Magazine conducting one? If all of these organizations are the same, why didn't he tell the church at Brown Street that those who participate in the Florida College camps are equally as guilty of participating in an "individually supported missionary society" as those who participate in the Truth Magazine lectures? And why don't the elders make an announcement stating that they are going to quit providing financial fellowship or inviting for meetings those who speak at the Florida College lectures or participate in the Florida College Booster Club camps?

But brother Dickey sees nothing wrong with Florida College teaching the Bible and conducting a "gospel meeting."

We are interested in having brother Dickey and the Brown Street elders tell those members at Brown Street who participate in the West Virginia and Northern Ohio Booster Clubs and camps, where the Bible is taught, individuals conduct singing, and have prayer (both institutions do the same thing that are done at the Guardian of Truth Lectures) that they are also guilty of promoting an individually supported missionary society by their participation in these institutions? What will the elders do with these following members at Brown Street who are participating in these camps? *(In the letter addressed to the Brown Street church, I inserted the names of twelve members who were active participants in the Florida College Camp. Those names are intentionally omitted in this publication.)*

Why is it right for these members to do the same thing that brother Dickey and the elders condemn those associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation for doing? Brother Dickey and the elders may engage in hair splitting to justify the one and condemn the other, but most brethren can see rather plainly the inherent inconsistency.

Brother Dickey struggles with this Brown Street problem charging that my mention of the brethren listed above is designed to smear their names. That is not the case. I believe they are to be commended for what they are doing and have done the same myself. What I am calling attention to is brother Dickey and the elders' inconsistency. Brother Dickey said, "they are not involved in preaching the gospel like the Foundation is now doing"—when they are doing the same thing we are doing in a different

human institution—teaching the Bible, having prayer, and singing. There is not a man living who can demonstrate that what Florida College and its camps are doing is right but what the Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing is wrong. And that was the reason I made specific mention of brother Dickey and the elders' at Brown Street's inconsistent application of their new found doctrine.

Paul said, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. 2:1). Brother Dickey and the elders at Brown Street need to carefully study what Romans 2:1 says.

Hijacking Scholars

Brother Dickey quoted a number of well-known gospel preachers as if they were teaching the same thing as he is now teaching. He quoted David Lipscomb as if he agreed with him that the work of teaching the Bible was the exclusive prerogative of the church. If that were so, why would David Lipscomb have edited *Gospel Advocate* and started David Lipscomb College? He quoted Benjamin Franklin, but if Franklin agreed with him that the right of teaching the Bible was the *exclusive* prerogative of the church why did he start the *American Christian Review*? He quoted Roy E. Cogdill, as if brother Cogdill agreed with him that the church has the *exclusive* right to teach the Bible, yet brother Cogdill started the *Gospel Guardian* which was owned and distributed by the Foundation presently known as Guardian of Truth Foundation, taught at Florida College, spoke at Florida College lectureships, and otherwise promoted donations to both organizations. It simply is not true that these scholars agreed with brother Dickey. Brother Dickey has misrepresented these men when he leaves the impression that they supported Sommerite teaching.

Misrepresenting Brethren

Sometimes in the midst of preaching a lesson, a brother overstates his case. Perhaps that is what happened when brother Dickey misrepresented me and others associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation. Regardless of why a person misrepresents his brother, he has an obligation to correct it when it happens.

Here are some things brother Dickey charged:

It is not uncommon for these parties to decide what should and should not become an issue among brethren, what men to support or not to support, and what meetings to announce locally. I believe that sometimes these men that are a part of these institutions, these foundations began to think

they know better than anyone else in the brotherhood about who should be helped, about what should be done, what the real issues are today, and whether or not we should announce brother So-n-So's gospel meeting because he's either with us or he is against us.

If brother Dickey is going to make that charge, perhaps he can provide the documentation to prove it. Otherwise, it is only his evil surmising. Who has done this? And isn't this exactly what Bob Dickey and the Brown Street elders are doing when they decide to make their Sommerite position a condition of salvation and a test of fellowship?

Brother Dickey also said,

They give a greater allegiance to them. They are more involved with them.

There are people that give more to the institutions than they give to the Lord on the first day of the week, when God has commanded that they give as they have been prospered.

I mentioned these charges to brother Dickey on the phone and he wrote me back in an e-mail, "I looked at my lesson again, particularly the part in the lesson where I say: 'Some give greater allegiance to them and work harder to support and fund them than they do the local church'. In the context of my lesson, I was not specifically talking about the Truth Foundation, but was speaking of 'institutions' in general. I know my thought at the time was particularly mindful of the missionary society, the Herald of Truth, and such like. I did not have you personally in mind." I appreciate brother Dickey clarifying this, for he would have to know the hearts of each member of the Foundation to be able to prove the former and to know how much each of these men gave to both the local church and to the Foundation to be able to prove the latter. Regardless, brother Dickey needs to make this clarification that he did not mean this to include those associated with the Truth Magazine lectures just as publicly as he made his charges before the Brown Street church and circulated among brethren.

Brother Dickey clarifies in a private letter to me that he did not mean the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He said, "You know that my statements toward the end of my lesson, as I informed you earlier, are said about an 'institutional mentality,' and that I was not saying that these were *your* particular attitudes or actions (My notes and lesson CD clearly mention the ACMS and Herald of Truth)." The truth is that brother Dickey could no more prove these things about those associated with the ACMS and the Herald of Truth than he could about those associated with the Guardian of

Truth Foundation. He made charges that he cannot and could not prove. He has simply falsely accused someone other than those associated with the Truth Magazine lectures.

But brother Dickey made many other charges. He charged that we thought the Foundation can do a better job than the church in teaching the Bible. That is not true. Not one of us believes this. Brother Dickey needs to make correction just as publicly as he made his charges.

He charged, "And many times, they defend these institutions more than they defend the Scriptures and the will of God, I am afraid." This allegation is false also. Brother Dickey needs to make correction just as publicly as he made his charges.

He charged, "And I think, many men are glad to find a position and power and the ability to do something in a realm where in the church perhaps they are not able to function." How could brother Dickey know the heart of any of us? Only God himself has the ability to know such things. Brother Dickey needs to make correction just as publicly as he made his charges.

Brother Dickey charged that "they have a way of involving local churches in their campaigns, in their sphere of influence to the detriment of these local churches." What is he talking about? Who is guilty? Let him provide his documentation or withdraw his charge. I deny that I am guilty.

Brother Dickey's description of the Akin Foundation is not accurate either. Ask any of its Board Members. The Akin Foundation is a trust set up by a brother in Texas who was fortunate enough to own several oil wells. He left a portion of his estate to churches. The Akin Foundation never has asked individuals or churches to make contributions to their Foundation in order to support gospel preachers. Brother Dickey made another false charge, this time against the Akin Foundation. Rather, the money was going the other way. This brother left money to give to churches. When an institutional church made an effort to take control of this money, brother Cogdill asked churches and individuals to help cover the legal expenses to keep that from happening. I am rather confident that these monies were not donated to the Akin Foundation because the Akin Foundation was at that time under control of the courts. Whether or not one agrees with individuals and churches helping to pay for these legal bills (*Truth Magazine* carried an article challenging that as well as did one or two other journals), it is inaccurate to describe the Akin Foundation as a missionary society, even if one uses brother Dickey's special and unique definition. And the fact of the matter is that not one church gave a dime to this effort, according to

what brother Cogdill said. (I have never received a dime from the Akin Foundation and have never been associated with it in any capacity, lest someone is wondering.)

But, I predict that brother Dickey will not be able go into the pulpit and make these corrections for the same reason that Paul Blake has not been allowed to correct the mistakes he made in his sermon during a gospel meeting in the October 2004. After brother Blake preached his lesson, he discussed with the brethren whom he had indicted (Ron Halbrook, Weldon Warnock, Harry Osborne, and Tim Haile) what he accused them of and found that he was mistaken. He wanted to return to Brown Street and correct his misrepresentations and the elders have to this day refused to allow him to make correction. Finally eighteen months after the event, the Brown Street elders made a statement for brother Blake, which corrected part of what he preached. They continue to this day to forbid brother Blake access to their pulpit to make full correction. In order to present a complete, unedited version of his correction along with enough documentation to demonstrate that he was eager to make the correction early on in these events, brother Blake posted his statement and his entire correspondence on a web site (<http://www.paulrblake.blogspot.com>). He related to me that he could not in good conscience allow their much edited version of his correction to be represented by implication as his total correction. Based on how the Brown Street elders have handled this brother, I predict that the Brown Street elders will not allow brother Dickey to correct his mistakes either! We will wait and see. What a change in Brown Street which used to advertise that it had an open pulpit and would welcome those who disagreed with their public teaching to come into their pulpit and show them where they were teaching error. Now it is different!

Guilty of What He Charged Others With Doing

Brother Dickey charged that those associated with Guardian of Truth were guilty of causing disruption and a party spirit.

And these collectives and societies have and always will cause disruption and party spirit and eventually, I believe, they will cause division in the body of Christ just as we see its happened before with the Christian Church and our own brethren because of the institutions and societies which they continue to adamantly set before us.

Brother Dickey cannot find the man who can show that he has been treated as if he were unworthy of church support and/or of fellowship should he decide not to subscribe to *Truth Magazine* and/or attend the Truth Magazine lectures. Those of us associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation do

not believe that one has to be associated in any way with the Foundation to go to heaven when he dies, any more than one has to attend Florida College or its lectures to go to heaven when he dies.

But, interestingly, the ones who are guilty of factional and party spirit turn out to be those who are making it a test of fellowship, just as Daniel Sommer, Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, and others did in the past. Ron Mayfield, speaking for the elders, made a statement for the Brown Street elders which accused men of “robbing God of His glory” by participating in the Truth Magazine lectures. Then he said,

This teaching was requested by the elders as a preemptive measure to specific action that we as elders must exercise. The elders will be contacting some of the men we currently [supporting?] from this congregation in whom we no longer have confidence. And additionally, some who have caused a great disturbance, and needless to say disruption, among fellow Christians. We have not reached hastily the conclusion in this matter, but after careful and prayerful consideration, much meeting and deliberation, we have found that we should no longer have financial fellowship with men who are taking part in these matters. We simply cannot support preachers who are connected with or are participating in these endeavors.

My dear brethren, the elders at Brown Street decided to drop their support of Daniel Ruegg, Tom Roberts, and Don Willis because they are speaking at the 2006 Truth Magazine lectures. Brother Mayfield said that Brown Street “no longer have confidence” in these men and charged that they “have caused a great disturbance, and needless to say disruption, among fellow Christians.” We have not made participation in the lecture program a test of fellowship, caused disturbance and needless disruption over this issue, but the elders of the Brown Street church and Bob Dickey have made it a test of salvation and fellowship, all the while charging that we are creating the problem. They are walking in the footsteps of the Sommerites.

Brethren at Brown Street, your elders and preacher have led you into a position that would not allow most of the men who have worked with you in the past and held your gospel meetings to return for a meeting at Brown Street, men such as Lewis Willis, Connie W. Adams, Weldon E. Warnock, Tom Roberts, Andy Alexander, Dan King, Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, Jason Hardin, Brian Sullivan, and many others like them. Are you aware that your eldership and local preacher have taken this church in a different direction than the Brown Street church has stood for the past forty to fifty years?

A Matter of Indifference or A Matter of The Faith?

When brother Dickey reacted to his and Brown Street’s name being

mentioned in the article by brother King, he responded by stating that the Brown Street church was making a judgment decision regarding whom they chose to support. Here is what he wrote me:

The decision to discontinue the support of these men is not a congregational action to mark or withdraw fellowship; neither is it an attempt to dictate to others in the body of Christ what they are to believe. We believe, like you, that local congregations have a right to make sound judgments about who they can conscientiously support.

No doubt, the congregation where you are (and the congregations of other writers for Truth Magazine) have made decisions in the past about who they will and will not send monthly support to, or who they will or will not invite to hold gospel meetings. All of us may differ on those judgments, but we seek to maintain congregational autonomy and do not press our judgments on other brethren or churches. Dan has written that you “have been urging continued fellowship” with brethren who disagree, even though individual preachers, elders, and congregations make these local decisions about who to support and who to invite for meetings. I do not believe you are guilty of dividing the body of Christ just because you make such local choices. Is this not the same for those of us at Brown Street? *No one has marked or withdrawn from any preacher* (my emphasis, mw); the elders just felt they had to be consistent with their personal views on this issue. If you and Dan have helped draw conclusions that have affected who you support and who you have for meetings, why are we guilty of dividing the body of Christ when we have made like decisions?

We have not said that anyone cannot attend your annual Lectureship. We have not told anyone they should not buy from your bookstore or that they should not take and read *Truth Magazine*. These are personal matters. They should not affect the local congregation. We have members here who may or may not agree with my personal convictions on these questions; I will not press my own beliefs on others. I certainly have no desire to enter into some brotherhood debate about personal scruples.

In this letter, he implores, “Can we agree to disagree?” on these issues. In his March 13, 2006 e-mail he said, “I am not interested in pressing my own views about this matter on others.” But, he did press his views on this matter to the congregation at Brown Street when he preached on January 29th that the Guardian of Truth Foundation was just like the American Christian Missionary Society. And the elders did press their view on this matter on others when they broke financial fellowship with those preachers who disagreed with them, which action brother Dickey defended in public. And Brown Street did make the following charges against these brethren whom they announced their discontinuance of support: They are men in

whom Brown Street “no longer have confidence” and “have caused a great disturbance, and needless to say disruption, among fellow Christians.”

In his letter, brother Dickey places his sermon and the elders’ decision to cut the support of Tom Roberts, Daniel Ruegg, and Don Willis in the realm of human judgment. If this is a matter of human judgment, brother Dickey sinned by preaching his human opinions. Romans 14:22 instructs one, not to preach his personal judgments but to hold them to oneself, just as we expect those who believe in the covering, not wearing makeup, not cutting one’s hair, etc. to do. Furthermore, Romans 14 instructs brethren to receive one another in spite of our differences in human judgment (14:1; 15:7), but the elders at Brown Street cut off the support of those who believed differently from them on the matter of the Truth Magazine lecture series.

I cannot believe that anyone who heard or read brother Dickey’s sermon can reach the conclusion that he thought he was preaching about a matter of indifference, a matter of human judgment. I don’t believe the elders at Brown Street thought brother Dickey was preaching his human judgments about matters indifferent. I believe they thought he was charging that those who participated in the Truth Magazine lecture series were guilty of “robbing the church of its glory” by creating an individually supported missionary society to do the work God gave the church to do. To the elders this was not a matter of human judgment; it was a matter of sin and those who were guilty of participating were not worthy of their financial support. That is the conclusion I reached when I heard the sermon. I find it hard to reconcile brother Dickey’s sermon with his letter. He compared the Guardian of Truth Foundation to the American Christian Missionary Society, said that we violated the Scriptures in having the Truth Magazine lecture program in the same way as do those who use instrumental music, and denied the all-sufficiency of the church by our actions in having the lecture program. And, he preached a sermon to convince the members at Brown Street to believe the same as he does about the Guardian of Truth Foundation sponsoring a lecture program. The stated purpose of this sermon was to generate support for the elders’ decision to cease financial fellowship with any associated with the lectureship. Brother Dickey then writes in his letter, “. . . nor have any of us tried to influence any of the congregation about what to personally believe about this issue.” How does one justify such obvious inconsistencies? I ask brother Dickey to tell us plainly: Brother Dickey, do you believe that those who participate in the Truth Magazine lecture series are guilty of sin and unworthy of fellowship? We ask the elders to give us their answer to the same question.

I believe that brother Dickey would never have preached what he labels as his personal judgments in his private letters to me about the Truth

Magazine lecture series had he not been prompted to do so by the elders' decision to cut off the support of those who participate in those lectures. I believe brother Dickey saw that those same elders who cut off the support of Tom Roberts, Daniel Ruegg, and Don Willis for participating in the Truth Magazine lecture series would not continue to support him to preach at Brown Street if he reached a different conclusion than they reached. Even though he had participated in the past in human institutions that were doing the same thing as is being done in the Truth Magazine lecture series, he preached his sermon without specifically condemning those same activities in which he had participated in the past that are identical in form and principle to what he condemned. He did not mention the Florida College lecture program, he did not mention their chapel assembly, he did not mention their Booster Camp programs—all of which he participated in the past. He did not confess sin for having done so in the past. He did not say he used bad judgment for doing these things in the past. He made no effort to address his inconsistency.

A man may change his mind about a subject. All of us have. If brother Dickey has changed his mind, we ask him to publicly renounce his participation in the Florida College lectures, the Florida College Boosters Clubs, and other human institutions which teach the Bible. If he thinks that he can make a Bible argument defending the Florida College lectureship in Tampa but condemning the Truth Magazine lectureship in Bowling Green, let us see his argument. The truth is that it cannot be done either logically or scripturally!

The Bob Dickey who preached the sermon on “individually supported missionary societies” is not the Bob Dickey I have known and loved for thirty years. The Bob Dickey who refuses to meet and talk with me about his sermon is not the Bob Dickey I have known and loved for thirty years. What is there about moving to Brown Street that has changed Bob Dickey?

Conclusion

Inasmuch as public charges were made against the Guardian of Truth Foundation and I am involved in its work, I felt that a response was appropriate. Since I have no other means of addressing the Brown Street church than through this letter, I have resorted to this. My intention is not to do the church at Brown Street harm. I have known and loved brethren there too many years to feel ill will toward any of its members. However, I tire of having my good name destroyed by false charges on the basis of mistaken concepts about what the Bible teaches, misrepresentations, and unfair judging of motives. Consequently, I felt the need to send this letter to you good brethren. Should you want to contact me about anything

I have written feel free to do so. I have sought to press brother Dickey's teaching to its logical conclusion, but I mean him no personal harm. He is my brother, my friend, and I still consider him to be a good man. But in this matter he is wrong and he and the elders are leading the Brown Street church into taking a factional stance against brethren who disagree with their personal convictions and peculiar scruples. It breaks my heart to see this drastic change in Brown Street.

Brotherly,
Mike Willis
April 2006

Defending Non-Church Collectivities

Al Diestelkamp

There are some brethren who call in question the authority for individual Christians to form a collectivity other than a local congregation to accomplish work that the Lord has authorized to be done by churches. While I hope the preceding sentence fairly represents the views of such brethren, I recognize that there are some variations in belief among those who are in general agreement in opposing what some have called “religious collectivities” or “para-church organizations.”

Since *Think* is a work of a collectivity of Christians involved in an activity that is authorized to be done by local churches, I feel it is my obligation to defend our right to exist. This task is made a bit more difficult due to the fact that, as already noted, those who oppose such “collectivities” are not in full agreement as to what is allowed, and what is not allowed. As a result, I feel like one wrestling with an octopus—not knowing which tentacle is attacking.

For the sake of those who have never heard of this controversy, let me try to sum up the different views that have been put forth by those in opposition to such collectives:

- Some oppose all collectivities of Christians in *any* work that churches are charged to do. They note that it is the church which is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), and conclude that any other collectivity usurps the church’s mission. Specifically, they would deny the right of Christians to band together to teach or preach the gospel. This would include opposition to schools, camps, and publications which teach from the Bible.

- Most of these brethren would claim that the family is the one exception to this rule.

- One variation of this view is to limit opposition only to collectivities that form legal organizations, such as corporations.

- Still another variation allows that Christians may form collectivities and propagate the gospel as long as they charge for such products and/or services. Thus they give an exception if it is a business. So, they do not object to a “gospel paper” published by an organization if they charge a subscription price, but if it is free, or accepts donations, they claim it is unauthorized.

From the foregoing you can easily see that some of these brethren would include *Think* in the unauthorized category, and others would not. Some have specifically given an exception to *Think* because it is a family publication. I appreciate the gracious offer, but in reality this publication would have gone “belly up” long ago had it not been for our long list of “Voluntary Partners” who have financed a work that is beyond our family’s ability.

I have sometimes wondered if the criteria used to determine which organizations fit into their category of “unauthorized collectivities” and which do not, is based on their attitude toward the people who run the organizations. I’ve wondered that when reading what they write in one gospel paper, against another gospel paper.

To respond to the argument against such “collectivities” based on 1 Timothy 3:15, please note that the apostle did not refer to the the local church as the “pillar and ground of the truth.” The “house of God” is the universal church. Yes, a local church is to support the truth because it is part of the “house of God,” as are individual Christians. Thus, Christians *must* band together in local congregations, and may band together in other ways to support the truth.

The claim is sometimes made that we have no first century examples of Christians forming collectivities other than local churches to spread the gospel. That simply is not so.

We have an example of the church in Jerusalem sending a letter to the Christians in Antioch in which they convey teaching (Acts 15:20). This clearly shows that conveying truth in written form is an authorized work of a local church. If we were to embrace the “no-collectivities” doctrine that would mean that it would be unauthorized for individual Christians to band together to write letters to other brethren. However, many of the New Testament epistles were the result of individual Christians pooling their talents and resources.

I would hope that no one would claim that the New Testament epistles were the work of any local congregation, but of individual Christians. Nine of the twenty-one epistles, while inspired by the Holy Spirit, were the work of more than one individual Christian.

Paul joined forces with Tertius to write to the Romans (Rom. 16:22). Paul authored, and Sosthenes penned, the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:1). Paul and Timothy did the same for the second letter to that church (2 Cor. 1:1), as well as to churches in Philippi (Phil. 1:1) and Colosse (Col. 1:1). The same two worked together to produce the letter to Philemon (Phile. 1:1). Three Christians, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, all participated in the two letters to the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), and Silvanus helped Peter pen the first letter to the “dispersion” (1 Pet. 5:12).

I suspect it will be argued that the foregoing examples “don’t count” because inspired men were involved in the teaching, but to me the very fact that they were inspired just strengthens the right of individual Christians to join forces in proclaiming the truth in other collectivities, as well as in local churches.

The fact that some of these non-church collectivities have lectureships that are similar to gospel meetings is a particular sore spot with some brethren. Even though care is taken not to schedule lectures at times which would “compete” with nearby local churches, some question the right of any collectivity other than a local congregation to provide opportunity for worship.

Worship, including collective worship, is not restricted to within the auspices of local churches. Preaching, prayer, and singing are forms of worship in which individual Christians, and groups of individual Christians, can engage (Acts 16:25).

If I Were Going to Oppose the *Truth Magazine* Lectureship

Tom O'Neal

When I received word that *Truth Magazine* was going to have a lectureship, I knew immediately that brother Gene Frost would be opposed to it. Time has proven this correct. I did not expect brother J. T. Smith to oppose the *Truth Magazine* lectureship as he has in *Gospel Truths* and then repudiate the Florida College lectureship, which he has attended so many times and upon which he has spoken.

Among the things that were on the program at the first *Truth Magazine* lectureship was an open forum. Now I realize that some open forums are just that in name, they are not really open. *Truth's* open forum was exactly what it was advertised to be—it was an open forum. The first afternoon moderator Steve Wolfgang did not wait until someone might bring up the question. He raised the question himself about the scripturalness of the lecture program and gave anyone who wanted to have their say an opportunity to speak. No one responded. He further pressed for someone to have his say, but no one had anything to say. I sat there and thought, “Where are all those that have objected to *Truth Magazine* lectures? Here is their opportunity to set forth why they think that the lectureship is unscriptural and no one is present who wants to avail himself of the golden opportunity to expose what he perceives to be unscriptural about the lectureship.” It is pretty obvious that those objecting to the lecture program will write on a web site or in a magazine where they are secure, but will not come out in the open where their arguments can be examined for all to hear. What the opposition needs to affirm is:

The Scriptures teach the only collection of individuals working together to preach and/or teach the word of God is a local church of Christ.

If that is so, then all they need is just one verse of Scripture that so teaches. Brethren do not need realms of their convoluted reasoning as to why they

think this is so. Just give one verse of Scripture. It is just that simple. Why will they not do so? Both Gene Frost and J. T. Smith have something that is neither a church nor an individual through which they oppose *Truth Magazine* lectures. More will be said about this later.

Among those brethren who have either reservations about *Truth Magazine* lectures or outright opposition to it, there are two groups:

[1] One group of brethren is not leading a charge to openly oppose the lectureship, make it a test of fellowship, withdraw from those who favor it, and divide the church over it. They have reservations or concerns over whether this is the best thing to do. Some of them have expressed their feelings openly in private to me. I have been comfortable working with them in gospel meetings. They are not out to destroy the magazine and its influence among brethren. From the history of brethren, they have concerns as to what this lectureship could lead to down the road—that, in time, *Truth Magazine* Lectures could lead to something that would be detrimental to the cause of Christ none would deny. There is always that possibility. But that is true of other things. About 50% of marriages end in divorce, but people still get married and preachers read the vows for couples. Preachers do not stop performing wedding ceremonies just because many who get married also get divorced. Children often grow up and leave the faith, but couples still have children. No couple says we will not have any children because they might in time turn away from the Lord. Churches go astray, but we still start new churches. No group of brethren say churches in the past that have stood for the truth are now compromising the truth, so we will not start any new church. This group of brethren personally have a conscience problem with the lectureship. Some will and have attended the lectures and others have not. Some who have attended would not speak if asked. These brethren in discussion with me have been reasonable, fair, and understanding of me in attending the lectureship and speaking when asked. I respect these men and would not want them to violate their conscience in doing that with which they are not comfortable. Neither would those connected with *Truth Magazine* want these brethren to violate their conscience in this matter. These brethren have not withdrawn fellowship from those of us who feel otherwise and I have absolutely no intention of withdrawing fellowship from any of them.

[2] There is another group of brethren that is actively opposing the *Truth Magazine* lectures. This group's most well known member is brother Gene Frost. He has written a book to try and answer *We Have A Right*, a book written by brethren Mike Willis and Dan King in which they defend the right to have a *Truth Magazine* lectureship. Gene's book is called *We Have A Right*

Answered. Gene has written much over the last several years in opposition to the *Truth Magazine*/Cogdill Foundation. Gene has not only already written a book in opposition to the Foundation before there was a lectureship but has written much in his now defunct paper, *Gospel Anchor*. One of the reasons it is no longer in publication could well be that people like myself ceased taking it because they saw it as almost a one issue paper.

I have been very disappointed in the writings on this subject by brother Gene Frost. I did not know that he had such a vindictive side to him that he has revealed in his writings. For example, in the February, 2006, issue of *Gospel Truths*, Gene wrote that his “name appears 350 times in the text written by Daniel King and Mike Willis, an average of 2.5 times per page, and this does not include the pronouns!” (1). Yet, Gene in his book calls the names of Mike Willis and Dan King too many times for me to count. If the reader wants to know the exact number of times he calls their names, I will leave it to the reader to count them in Gene’s book. If Gene, because it is wrong, is going to complain about his name being called numerous times, why does he do the very same thing? Gene, in his book, is having a pity party and has a persecution complex. He thinks it is a “vicious attack upon my person” (1). Why is answering what one has written a “vicious attack” upon his person? Does that mean that Gene is making a “vicious attack” upon the person of Mike Willis and Dan King in reviewing what they have written? In this article Gene charges them with slandering and vilifying him (1), of vile descriptions, mudslinging, sophistry, carnal weapons, personal attacks, being vicious, mere assertions, false statements, demonizing him, hostile (5) flagrant dishonesty, and character assassination (6). Again I say I have never seen this side of Gene and am greatly disappointed in him. Yet, Gene says he wants to have a Bible study with Mike. Does that kind of language seem like it is conducive to having a Bible study? I would be hesitant to enter into a study with someone who had said such hard and mean things about me. Gene should be ashamed.

One of the things about Gene’s book, *We Have A Right Answered*, is it is not only a hard read, but some of his information is in error. He lists brethren James R. Cope, Roy E. Cogdill, Connie W. Adams, Larry Ray Hafley, Donald P. Ames, and Bill Cavender saying, “some of the men are presently on the board of the GOT foundation” (40). Of all the men named only Roy Cogdill and Connie Adams have ever been on the board of the Guardian of Truth Foundation. The other men Gene names have never been and are not now on the Guardian of Truth Foundation board. Roy Cogdill died in May of 1985. Only Connie Adams is presently, of all the men named, on the board of the Guardian of Truth Foundation. I was surprised to see this poor research upon the part of Gene. Or did he rely upon someone else to

do his research and took their word without checking behind them? When I realized how off base he is in this, something that is easy for me to check out, it makes me wonder how off base he is in others things he tells the reader of in his book.

I was disappointed in Gene's book as I expected a much more scholarly book from him than what he delivered. There was not much "answer" to it. It was more of a harangue. If I believed Gene's position, I believe I could have written from his view point a better work and done it in a lot less words and without such malice toward my brethren. Knowing that The Preceptor Company published it, I doubt that it has a large circulation.

No one that I know of believes that one must support *Truth Magazine* or the lecture program in order to be faithful to the Lord, to receive the blessings He affords or to go to heaven. None that I know of consider the *Truth Magazine* Lectureship the vestibule of heaven.

If I were going to oppose the *Truth Magazine* Lectureship, there are some questions that I would have to ask myself. I would have to have a good talk with myself. What I would do is go into the closet, pull up a chair, turn off the light, sit down, and in the seclusion of the closet ask myself the following questions:

[1] Tom, are you opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures because it was not your idea to have them?

[2] Tom, are you opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures because you were not invited to appear on them?

[3] Tom, are you opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures because you were not invited to write for the paper as a staff writer several years ago?

[4] Tom, are you opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures because you submitted an article in the past and for whatever reason it was not published?

[5] Tom, are you opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures because you have some personal problem with the editor of the magazine and you are going to let your personal feelings toward the editor cause you to oppose the lectures?

[6] Tom, are you opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures because you differ on some doctrinal point with the editor? If so, what is the specific doctrinal point on which you differ with the editor? Will you write out the

doctrinal disagreement? Once written, could it be seen by others as just your opinion about the matter?

[7] Tom, would you be opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures if a relative or good friend of yours were not opposed to them?

[8] Tom, would you be opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures if a fellow preacher who is your friend were not opposed to them?

[9] Tom, would you be opposed to the *Truth Magazine* lectures if you did not have a vendetta of some kind to get back at one or more of those associated with *Truth Magazine*?

[10] Tom, what is the verse in the New Testament that *Truth Magazine* lectures violate? Whatever that verse is, write it on this line _____ when you turn the light back on in the closet. Tom, don't give yourself some of your convoluted reasoning, just write the verse in the blank. If you do not have a verse, you have no argument.

[11] Tom, is the reason you oppose the *Truth Magazine* lectures because you have a different judgment about some matter from those responsible for them? Are you going to oppose them, withdraw from those that favor them, and divide brethren over that which you admit is just a matter of judgment?

[12] Tom, are you going to oppose the *Truth Magazine* lectures because one of your supposed friends stole thousands of dollars from the Truth Bookstore and went to jail for his theft?

Before I would oppose the *Truth Magazine* lectures, I would have to take a long, hard look at each of these questions and answer each of them honestly. When I did so, I think I would find the real reason for my opposition to the lectures.

I find it amazing that both brethren Gene Frost and J. T. Smith are in opposition to the *Truth Magazine* lectures when they both have appeared on the Florida College Lectures in the past and supported the school. J. T. has said the Florida College Lectureship is "wrong" (*Gospel Truths* [July, 2006], 8). However, when he preached against the *Truth Magazine* lectures in a sermon here in Tampa on January 18, 2007, he did not include the Florida College Lectureship. Yet, Florida College, Inc. is neither an individual nor a church which is why J. T. says he opposes the Guardian of Truth Foundation. Is he afraid to oppose the Florida College lectures in

their back door? People in his audience could see he is inconsistent when he publicly opposes the Guardian of Truth Foundation but does not oppose Florida College. Gene Frost along with the Frost family decided “to establish a memorial fund at Florida College in memory of his late father, the beloved brother Jack Frost, Sr., to provide loans to young men desiring a college education in their effort to preach the gospel” (*Gospel Guardian* [Sept. 21, 1972]; *Preceptor* [Dec., 1972], 7). Did they sin in so doing? If so, to whom have they confessed their sin, where did they confess their sin, and when did they confess their sin?

What Bible passage has Gene or J. T. discovered that caused them to change their mind about supporting a human institution that they now say is doing the work of the church? They should share that passage, just one verse will do, with the rest of us. We can read it for ourselves. We do not need the benefit of convoluted reasoning. Just give us the verse. Roy Cogdill would say, “Give me the passage that I can read for myself in plain, simple language or do not expect me to believe it.” I heard him say that many times in preaching. It is appropriate here and now.

What is it that makes brethren Gene Frost and J. T. Smith scriptural in providing written teaching through their human institutions, Gospel Truths, Inc. and Gospel Anchor, Inc., but wrong, sinful, and leading the church into digression for *Truth Magazine* to provide oral teaching? Let J. T. and Gene go through all of their convoluted reasoning but ordinary people can understand there is no difference in principle in providing oral and written teaching.

Those brethren that oppose what they called “uninspired literature” would permit a preacher to make all kinds of comments on a passage orally in a Bible class, but would oppose him writing those same comments on paper and passing them out. Again, I heard brother Cogdill tell about preaching at a place out from Abilene, Texas, when he was in school there. There was a brother who opposed “uninspired literature.” Brother Cogdill asked him if he could not come out to preach some Sunday what would be his attitude if he just wrote out his sermon and sent it so it could be read to the congregation? He said that would be wonderful. What would be the difference in principle of giving teaching orally or written? What makes it sinful for *Truth Magazine* to provide teaching orally, but scriptural for Gene and J. T. to provide written teaching? Or would Gene and J. T. agree *Truth Magazine* lectures would be scriptural if they charged people to attend the lectures just like they charge for their papers? What makes one right and the other sinful?

The charge is made that *Truth Magazine* is conducting gospel meetings and worship. This is the old charge that W. Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Gar-

rett and others have made in their opposition to colleges operated by the brethren over the years, resurrecting the old position.

Both J. T. and Gene, especially Gene, do not like their teaching being compared to Daniel Sommer's teaching, along with W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. However, if they do not like such a comparison, they should not make the arguments those men have made.

In *The Humble-Garrett Debate*, Leroy Garrett charged that Florida College [Florida Christian College at that time] in having a "lectureship" was in reality having "a gospel meeting." . . . "They conduct lectureships, or gospel meetings" (127). "It is holding gospel meetings" (129). "Florida Christian College does conduct gospel meetings" (153).

In J. T. Smith's paper, *Gospel Truths*, brother Aaron Erhardt has a front page article in the August, 2006, issue in which he asks, "Does The Guardian Of Truth Foundation Have A Right To Conduct Gospel Meetings?" Observe that he thinks that *Truth Magazine* Lectureship is a "gospel meeting." That is exactly how Leroy Garrett viewed the matter.

Brother J. T. Smith calls the *Truth Magazine* Lectureship a "gospel meeting" (*Gospel Truths* [July, 2006], 8). Hear him: "I am opposed to them using Guardian of Truth Lectureships to promote their human institution with work God gave the church to do—namely a lectureship or gospel meeting."

Brother Don Martin calls the lectures of the Guardian of Truth Foundation "gospel meetings" (*Gospel Truths* [July, 2006], 13). In a sermon preached by brother Bob Dickey at the Brown Street Church of Christ in Akron, Ohio, on January 29, 2006, he said the "annual lectureships or gospel meetings in Bowling Green, Kentucky" (page 6 of the manuscript; I have an audio CD also of the sermon). I do not know brother Dickey very well except by his good reputation. But he says in his sermon (page 10), "I have not always felt the convictions of which I speak tonight." What changed his mind? Did he read some verse in the Bible that convinced him that he was wrong in the position that he held? If so, would he be kind enough to share that verse with the rest of the brethren who do not currently hold his present position? Or could it be that the elders at Brown Street gave him the choice of lining up with them in opposition to the *Truth Magazine* Lectures or be let go?

Roy E. Cogdill Is Used; Not Misused

Because of the tremendous influence that the beloved, late Roy Cogdill had in opposing church contributions to human institutions back over the years and the respect that brethren in general had for him, he has been quoted

by a number of brethren as though he opposed human institutions having a lectureship. First, let us look at a quotation that some have used.

Human societies to take over and do the work of the church which the Lord built His church to do are spiritual forgeries for they are unauthorized in the Scriptures. The only thing that God ever built in the way of religious organizations is the church. He gave it order and arrangement that it might accomplish His will. In the New Testament days the local “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16) did the greatest job of propagating the truth and furthering the borders of the kingdom of Christ that has ever been done. The maze of Missionary Societies, Education Societies, etc., did not exist and the man does not live that can find authority for their existence today in the Scriptures. They are human and not divine. They are spiritual forgeries and those who promote them will stand condemned.

The first time I saw this was in an article by brother Donald Townsley written in *Truth Magazine* [September, 16, 2004], 561-562). He quoted this from the *Gospel Guardian* [June, 16, 1966], 98. The next time I saw this quotation was in an article from the pen of brother Aaron Erhardt in *Gospel Truths* [August, 2006], 4. The original place where the article appeared was in the church bulletin, April 24, 1966, of the Winnetka Avenue Church of Christ, in Canoga Park, California, where Roy was preacher at the time. I have bound copies of the bulletin edited by Roy. I have not seen them in any other preacher’s library.

Another wrote of Roy Cogdill, “Looking back, I believe I was taught well by brother Roy Cogdill when he reached forth one of those long swooping arms, placed a large hand on my shoulder and proceeded to instruct me with regard to the self-sufficiency and the all-sufficiency of the New Testament church. Now, after all of these years, my own brethren have resurrected some of the very arguments that he and others so decisively cast down” (tract *Business Bible Lectureships*, pages 15-16).

I do not charge these brethren with deliberately misrepresenting brother Cogdill. They either do not know their history or they have forgotten it. Let us take a look at the record.

(1) Roy was president of the Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Company which published *Ancient Landmarks* and was editor of said publication (*Ancient Landmarks*, July, 1947, 8). The Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Company also produced *The Gospel Guardian*. In time, the Gospel Guardian Company/Cogdill Publishing Company was turned into the Cogdill Foundation, which in time was turned into the Guardian of Truth Foundation. Roy was not opposed to the Guardian of Truth Foundation because he was responsible

for it and its predecessors. From a now deceased member of the board of directors I have some of the legal papers concerning the transition.

(2) Roy often spoke on the Florida College lecture program. He also was asked by brother James R. Cope, President of Florida College at the time, to do some legal work for the college in regard to property the college owned in California. In addition to this, while Roy preached for the Par Avenue Church in Orlando, Florida, he was hired to teach Bible at Florida College and drove back and forth between Orlando and Tampa in order to do this. When Cogdill was hired to teach Bible at Florida College he said, "I have a great deal of confidence in its President [James R. Cope, tgo] and the men he has gathered about him in the school and am glad to help in its work in whatever way I can" (*Florida College News Bulletin*, Vol. 17, No. 4 [Mid-April, 1969], 1). Does this sound like Roy Cogdill was opposed to some organization besides the church teaching the Bible? He did legal work for the school, was on its faculty, was paid for teaching Bible by the school, and spoke on its lectureships. That is some way to oppose the school, which is a human institution, teaching the Bible.

(3) In April, 1969, Truth Magazine, Inc. merged into the Cogdill Foundation with Roy E. Cogdill as President, Harry Pickup, Jr., Vice President, Troy C. Irvin, Secretary-Treasurer, with Olie Williamson, Cecil Willis, James P. Needham, James W. Adams and Peter J. Wilson as members of the Board of Directors (legal papers in my files, tgo). Again, does this sound like Roy Cogdill was opposed to an organization teaching the Bible besides the church?

(4) In a sermon which brother Bob Dickey preached at the Brown Street Church in Akron, Ohio, on January 29, 2006 [I have both a CD and manuscript of the sermon] he proposes to give out information about the Akin Foundation and the Guardian of Truth Foundation. His research for the sermon leaves a lot to be desired and evidences he knows little of what he is talking about. Both of these foundations involved brother Roy Cogdill. Again, I have no objection to someone quoting or representing brother Cogdill, but they should be fair and represent brother Cogdill accurately and not make him say something or support something by their inaccurate representations, which he did not.

The Akin Foundation was simply the funds of brother John W. Akin. Neither individuals nor churches were asked to contribute funds to it, nor did they do so. The funds from the foundation were sent to a church to make it possible for that church to support their own preacher. It was not for them to support other preachers somewhere, with just the funds from

the Akin Foundation passing through the treasury of a local church to some preacher in another place.

Brother Bob Dickey in order to try and establish a basis to oppose the Guardian of Truth Foundation having a lectureship introduced the Akin Foundation and misrepresented it. I do not charge that he knowingly misrepresented it; my guess is he does not know any better, but I will leave that between him and God. Nevertheless, he misrepresented both Roy Cogdill and the Akin Foundation.

[A] He quoted an article by brother Cogdill saying it is in the *Gospel Guardian* of April, 1977. In 1977 the paper was published bi-monthly, not monthly, thus there is an April 1st issue and April 15th issue. What is quoted is from the April 1st issue, page 157. This article also appeared in *Truth Magazine* [July 28, 1977], 8. Here is what brother Bob said:

The Akin Foundation acted as a private supported missionary society for years supporting preachers in their work. I heard about it when I began preaching the gospel. And as a young preacher needing support from outside sources, I thought maybe the Akin Foundation could help me. But, the more I learned about it, the more fearful I became of it. There's no doubt in my mind that foundation did much good, that it helped support many preachers in difficult places, that many interested and concerned brethren gave their money to what they thought was a good thing. Of course at first, they were only individually supported, refusing church supported contributions, but when they faced financial difficulties later on brother Roy Cogdill began to appeal for churches to help the Akin Foundation. Here is what he said. 'Most of the readers of this paper know already that the Akin Foundation is in trouble. It is not to advertise this fact, but to call attention to the opportunity of all of you to render a service to the foundation which has done so much for the spreading of the gospel. . . . He (Cogdill, TGO) continued, 'The Sixty -eight (sic) District Court . . . has granted an injunction against the trustees from further distributing any of the funds of the foundation. . . . This effort will cost money as any case in court does. . . . What do you think and what will you do about it? . . . Both churches and individuals are urged to respond (Bob Dickey's manuscript, page 4).

I have never seen a more garbled quotation. Bob Dickey has quoted from Cogdill's article stopping in the middle of a sentence and putting a period as though that was the end of Cogdill's sentence. He has quoted a sentence and then jumped to the next paragraph in the article. He has quoted a sentence, skipped a sentence and quoted another sentence making the Cogdill article say something that Cogdill did not say. I have indicated in the above quoted paragraph from Dickey where he has skipped and left

out what Roy Cogdill said by It is one thing to quote from another and it is something entirely different to “cut and paste” an article to make it say what you want it to say when the original author did not say what he is made to say. Such is dishonest and deceitful regardless of who does it, why he does it or how he does it.

[B] Notice that Bob says, “The Akin Foundation acted as a private supported missionary society for years supporting preachers in this work.” Who supported the Akin Foundation with funds? Since Bob is giving out information about how the Akin Foundation functions “for years” let him tell us who were the people that contributed to this “private supported missionary society.” The truth is this is a figment of his imagination and is not based in fact. What Bob says just did not happen; he is mistaken about it.

[C] Bob also says, “many interested and concerned brethren gave their money” to the Akin Foundation which was “what they thought was a good thing.” Again, I call upon Bob to document what he has just asserted. There is not one word of truth in what Bob said.

[D] Then Bob says in his sermon that the Akin Foundation “at first” was “only individually supported, refusing church supported contributions, but when they faced financial difficulties later on brother Roy Cogdill began to appeal for churches to help the Akin Foundation.” First, the Akin Foundation never “faced financial difficulties.” The Akin Foundation had plenty of money. Where did Bob get his information? Did he just wish this was what happened and he just made it up out of thin air? You can see how far one can go when he wants something to be so, which is not.

[E] Then Bob tells his Brown Street audience “later on brother Roy Cogdill began to appeal for churches to help the Akin Foundation.” Again, Bob is not as careful with the facts as he should have been. Brother Roy Cogdill never appealed to Churches of Christ in general to contribute to the Akin Foundation. Again, out of thin air Bob makes this assertion. He has no proof for none exists. The reader who goes back to the *Gospel Guardian* or *Truth Magazine* to read Cogdill’s original article will see this.

[F] What brother Cogdill said was, “After many hours of discussion with various brethren, I determined to make an effort to salvage this fund that it may continue to teach truth and righteousness through supporting faithful brethren thus accomplish the purpose that prompted the faithful servant of God who gave to this Foundation all of his part of the blessings God had given into his hands.” Two things are revealed by this quotation. (1) I (Roy Cogdill) determined to make an effort to save the Akin money.

(2) “The faithful servant of God” is singular in number, which was brother John Akin, who was the one who contributed his own money to this fund. Bob says “brethren gave their money.” “Servant” is singular, “brethren” is plural. Again, Bob is wrong in what he said.

[G] After telling what he had done by engaging a “competent trial lawyer in Dallas” and what his fee per hour was, Roy wrote, “What do you think and what will you do about it? Those of you who through the years have been supported by and have participated in its help, what will you do to help preserve it—both churches and individuals are urged to respond.” One should observe that Roy did not ask individuals or churches in general to respond. He asked those individuals and churches that “through the years have been supported by and have participated in its help” to respond. The money was to go to Roy Cogdill to pay the attorney for his work in saving the Akin fund from institutional hands. There is a great deal of difference in an individual or a church providing funds for an attorney to make sure they continued to receive what was theirs from the Akin fund and in making a contribution to the Akin fund itself. Brother Cogdill later said no church contributed to him for the defense of the Akin fund. If one does not know the difference, he ought not to be representing matters in regard to this to his Brown Street audience. And now that he and the Brown Street elders who endorsed his sermon have been corrected, they need to correct the matter with the Brown Street Church and they all need to repent.

What is interesting to me is, brother Cogdill told me that the preacher who was the first to write him challenging what he was doing in this matter was also the first preacher to write him asking support out of the Akin funds after brother Cogdill with the help of others had saved the funds. How opposed was he to what brother Cogdill was doing? To me, his argument seemed to be out of convenience and not out of conviction. I thought that was very presumptuous on his part.

Guardian of Truth Foundation and the Church

The charge is made that the Guardian of Truth Foundation takes over the work that God gave the church to do and preaches the gospel by having gospel meetings and conducting worship services. Is this true?

Brother Bob Dickey said, “I cannot find authority for men who are Christians banding together, pooling their funds, placing themselves under a board of directors, and asking for individual Christians to contribute to something that God gave the church to do” (Dickey’s sermon manuscript, page 5).

Just who is it that has banded together, pooled their money and put themselves under a board? Brother Dickey does not tell us. He just implies such and expects those who heard his sermon or read his manuscript to assume that someone has done this. He should have been specific as to who has done what he says they have done. The reason he did not specify just exactly who did this is because it is a whole lot easier to make a broad general assertion than it is to prove what he has said by giving specifics! However, his assertions are not proof.

The term “church” is used in at least two ways in the New Testament. “Church” is used in a generic or general sense and in a specific or local sense. When Jesus promised to build his church in Matthew 16:18, he used the expression in a general sense. He referred to no specific local congregation. In this general or generic sense, the church has no officers on earth, no office or headquarters on earth, no mission on earth, and no arrangement ordained by God to carry out any work for the church in general. One of the many things that was wrong with the missionary society started in 1849 was it was an effort to activate the church in its general or universal sense.

The second way the term “church” is used in the New Testament is in a specific or local sense, like the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1), Ephesus (Rev. 2:1), Smyrna (Rev. 2:8), Pergamos (Rev. 2:12), Thyatira (Rev. 2:18), Sardis (Rev.3:1), Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7) and Laodicea (Rev. 3:14). God named the officers on earth for each of these churches, namely elders (Phil. 1:1) with their qualifications (1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1) and deacons (Phil. 1:1) and their qualifications (1 Tim. 3). These were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) and their function, oversight and authority were limited to the local congregation where they were (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

It is the local church that has the responsibility to preach the gospel (1 Thess. 1:7-8), edify itself, (1 Cor. 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26) and care for her needy members (Acts 6:1-6). God made no plans for one church to send money to another church for it to preach the gospel or edify its members. If so, where? God did make provision, if and when a local church could not care for her needy members, for other churches to send to that church when in need to assist it in caring for the less fortunate among them (Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 16:25-31; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8 & 9).

Now, what church has Guardian of Truth Foundation taken over its work? It is a lot easier to make a charge than it is to prove the charge. Has the Guardian of Truth Foundation taken over the work of the Brown Street Church in Akron where brother Bob Dickey preaches? If so, just when did they take

it over? Did Guardian of Truth Foundation announce to the Brown Street Church or to anyone else that they were taking over their work of preaching and worship? If they did not, just how did the Brown Street Church find out that the Guardian of Truth Foundation took over her work of preaching and worship? Did the Guardian of Truth Foundation take over the work of preaching and worship from the Birchwood Avenue Church in Louisville where brother Gene Frost preaches? If so, just when did this happen? Did the Guardian of Truth Foundation inform the Birchwood Church that they were or had taken over their work of preaching and worship? If they did not, just how did the Birchwood Church determine that their work has been taken over by the Guardian of Truth Foundation? Or is this also just an assertion without any proof? Did the Guardian of Truth Foundation take over the work of preaching and worship of the East Central Church in Tulsa where J. T. Smith preached for several years? When J. T. moved to preach for the Nebraska Avenue Church in Tampa did he find out that they had no work of preaching and worship because the Guardian of Truth Foundation had taken it over? Surely the Guardian of Truth Foundation would not do such a thing and let J. T. find out there was nothing for him to do when he arrived in Tampa because it had taken the work of preaching and worship away from Nebraska Avenue. That would be a poor joke to play on J. T.

Has Guardian of Truth Foundation taken over the work of preaching and worship from any congregation? The answer is NO. Even brother Gene Frost admits that is so! With such an admission from brother Frost, why would he stir up such a storm among brethren for a good many years about something that is not so? I don't know; I leave it to the reader to figure out.

In his book in which Gene tries to answer Mike Willis and Dan King, Gene quotes himself saying, "What we oppose are collectivities—companies or societies, incorporated or unincorporated—which solicit the pooling of resources of individuals or churches for the teaching of the gospel . . . under the oversight of a human board. This supplants the church. . ." (*Individually Supported Missionary Societies*, 37)" (*We Have A Right Answered*, 39).

Then on page 41 of his book, Gene has this to say:

My reference to the 'church' in my statement cited above is ideological, a concept that takes form in substance with every local congregation. Since ideologically a local church may exist anywhere at any time, it has reference to no one congregation in time and place. King knows that I am not referring to a local church in particular, but he shifts from the obvious, to pretend I mean a specific local church geographically, and at a specific time. This is pure sophistry, designed to mislead the readers. The reason that King does not reason conceptually perhaps is due to a common un-

derstanding with Willis' diocesan concept, which we addressed in *Gospel Anchor*, July, 1979. The article is reproduced in *Brotherhood Societies*, page 38. The diocesan concept images the work of a local church to be that geographical area in which it is located, or which it has assumed as an area of evangelistic endeavor. It is this false concept that stifles the intellect's ability to think conceptually."

Observe that brother Frost says Dan King "knows that I am not referring to a local church in particular" and "it has reference to no one congregation in time and place." Thus, by his own admission brother Frost admits that Guardian of Truth Foundation has not taken over the worship and work of preaching of a single congregation of God's people anywhere in the world! It is all just an "ideological" "concept." Gene should be ashamed of disturbing good brethren over the years with what he now admits is not a reality, but just an ideological concept. He should repent for such divisiveness among brethren. Others should cease to follow his lead and repent for their part in the division they have contributed to among brethren.

Good brethren have been cut off from support, preachers denied support, preachers have had to leave congregations and disrupted their families, heartache has been experienced among good brethren, fellowship hindered, and lines drawn over what is admitted to be just an ideological concept. For shame brethren. And shame on those brethren who have contributed to it.

Brother Don Martin wrote there is a "new church, the Guardian of Truth Foundation" (*Gospel Truths* [July, 2004], 13). Brother Martin continues by saying Ron Halbrook "is busy with the gospel meeting or if you prefer, lectures of the foundation" (13). Again, brother Martin says, referring to the Guardian of Truth Foundation, "This new institutionalism when carried out to its full application . . . competes with and will replace the local church" (13). In *Gospel Truths*, October, 2006, page 8, brother Martin says that institutions like the Guardian of Truth Foundation "are doing the work God has assigned to the local church (1 Timothy 3:15)." Brother Martin again wrote, "One family that attended the 'Third Annual Guardian of Truth Foundation Lectures' told me: 'Brother Martin, the Foundation is doing a wonderful job in preaching the gospel. In fact, they are able to do what local churches cannot do. . . .'" (*Gospel Truths* [November, 2006], 19). Brother Martin concludes this last article by saying, "In closing, I view those more honest who say, 'We are not satisfied with just being members of a local church and therein collectively preaching the gospel, we demand the right to have our own societies, foundations, and orders in which to preach the gospel. After all, we think that we with our president, board members and own treasury can do a better job than the local church with its oversight and treasury!'"

Brother Don Martin is very bold saying there is “a new church, Guardian of Truth Foundation.” Now where did he get his information? He just made it up out of thin air. He just asserted it and was in hopes his reader would agree with him. His assertion is not proof. He did not quote from anyone associated with *Truth Magazine* that claimed Guardian of Truth Foundation is “a new church.” IF such were so, it does not meet on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-4). It does not take up a collection upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-4). It does not eat the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It has no elders or deacons (Acts 14:23; 20:28-32; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). How can it be a church when it does not do what a church is supposed to do?

Keep in mind Don Martin says the Guardian of Truth Foundation “competes with and will replace the local church.” Now where is his proof? He has none except his own statement. We have already shown from what brother Gene Frost has said that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is not in competition with any church. If as brother Martin says Guardian of Truth Foundation does replace the local church, will there be Guardian of Truth Foundations every place there was a local church or will everybody have to journey to Bowling Green, Kentucky each week to worship at the headquarters of the Guardian of Truth Foundation? Or has brother Martin got all of this worked out in his mind yet as to how all of this will function?

Brother Martin tells of a family that attended the *Truth Magazine* Lectures only to return with a glowing report of it, saying that they could do that which “local churches could not do.” Keep in mind brother Martin gives this as a direct quotation, placing it in quotation marks, from his source. But notice that brother Martin did not document his source. That makes it impossible for anyone to check out his source. Is that exactly what brother Martin was told or is that the construction that brother Martin put on what he was told? No brother associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation would say it can do in its work and worship what “local churches could not do.”

Brother Martin puts in quotation marks that some are saying to the effect that the Guardian of Truth Foundation in regard to work and worship “can do a better job than the local church with its oversight and treasury.” Now who said that? Brother Martin again does not document his source. No one associated with the Guardian of Truth Foundation says that it can or does a better job in regard to worship and preaching than the local church. If so, brother Martin, who is it? We want to know who made this statement. You should either document it so others can check it out or withdraw it. Which will he do? It is my opinion that he cannot document his statement. He should withdraw it.

On this point of the Foundation doing a better job than the church in preaching the gospel, brother Mike Hughes said in *Gospel Truths* [December, 2006], page 11, “Then the argument that really floored me was, ‘The foundation could preach the gospel better than the church could’.” Now who said that? Where did brother Hughes get that? He did not tell us so it could be checked out. It was just asserted by him without any proof whatsoever. He put it in quotation marks which would indicate he was quoting it from some source, but he does not document his source where others could check it out. No one associated with Guardian of Truth Foundation said it could do a better job preaching the gospel than the church. This is just another one of those matters pulled out of thin air. When a man will not document his evidence it is obvious that he is on thin ice.

Brother Brian Yeager says, “The Guardian of Truth Foundations (sic) seeks to diminish the role of the local church in spreading the Gospel to all nations” (*Gospel Truths* [June, 2006], 12). On the same page he says, “The Guardians of Truth Foundation, while it may try to insert itself, is not therefore part of the body of Christ. It is another body of those who have decided to do some of the same works that have been directed solely for the local church to perform (i.e. evangelism and edification).”

Brother Yeager thinks the Guardian of Truth Foundation seeks “to diminish the role of the local church in spreading the Gospel.” What is his proof? He has none. It is a figment of his youthful imagination. One can see how these brethren that are so opposed to the Guardian of Truth Foundation can just make up all kinds of things without any proof whatsoever and spread it around among brethren. Whether there is any evidence that someone believes or teaches what they say is beside the point. Brother Yeager says that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is not a “part of the body of Christ.” Who ever in his right mind thought that it was. It is a human organization and has always so regarded itself, whereas the church is a divine organization. Brother Yeager needs to be more careful with his facts or stop sowing doubt and division among the people of God.

Observe brother Yeager says that evangelism and edification are “works that have been directed solely for the local church to perform.” Does this mean that he does not think an individual Christian can evangelize and edify? If what he says is so, it does. But I have an idea that he believes the Christian can evangelize and edify in addition to the local church. If so, he needs to be more accurate in what he writes so as not to stir up the brethren.

In *Gospel Truths*, September, 2006, page 4, brother J. T. Smith is discussing “organizations such as Guardian of Truth Organization of today”

and says “There is no authority for any other organization doing the work of the church.”

I do not know of anyone who would disagree with J. T.’s statement that “there is no authority for any other organization doing the work of the church.” With that statement what J. T. is doing is assuming that the Guardian of Truth Foundation is “doing the work of the church.” Where is J. T.’s proof other than his assertion? If he had some proof the reader can be sure he would have given it. J. T. has a human organization that teaches the word of God called *Gospel Truths, Inc.* Why is J. T. using his human organization to oppose another human organization? The fact that J. T. denies it, does not make it so. What makes J. T.’s human organization scriptural, but the same kind of an organization of others unscriptural? (We will deal with this point in more detail later in this article.)

Someone wrote an advertisement for brother Gene Frost’s book in the November, 2006, issue of *Gospel Truths*, page 12, and on the back page of *The Preceptor Magazine*, January, 2007, in which they said, “The Guardian of Truth Foundation claims ‘We Have A Right’ . . . to create and maintain a human organization, which usurps the role of churches of Christ, in disseminating the Gospel of Christ and conducting public worship.” This same advertisement with the same wording had also appeared in *The Preceptor Magazine*, December, 2006, page 28. I do not know who actually wrote this announcement since it does not say, but since it is an announcement for brother Gene Frost’s book, I would think he wrote it. The reader will also notice that Gene or whoever wrote the above did not document where the Guardian of Truth Foundation made such a claim. Wonder why? Could it be they have no statement from the Foundation that can be quoted that says this? The truth of the matter is that the Guardian of Truth Foundation has never made such a claim. Gene ought to be more careful in making such wild charges, and especially when he can not prove them. Again, I say I am disappointed in what Gene has written. I expected better of him.

The Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc.
Gospel Truths, Inc.
Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc.
Florida College, Inc.

Companies or corporations have some things in common, yet there may be some things that make them different from others, and yet they are all human institutions. For example, one corporation may have a board of directors of three people and another corporation has a board made up of twenty people; one corporation may provide a service and another sells a product. One corporation may have an advisory board to its board of directors and it

is called “an advisory board” while another corporation has about the same thing and it is called a “national council.” One corporation might operate in an area that is moral and decent and another might operate in an area that would be opposed to the morals of a Christian. One corporation might have all family on its board of directors and another might have board members that are not related to each other. Aside from whether a corporation operates a moral or immoral business, these other things are not what makes one corporation right and another one wrong. For example, calling advisors to the board of directors an “advisory board” or “national council” is not what makes one right and the other one wrong.

Brother Gene Frost has long opposed the Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc. but when they announced their first lecture program in 2004 it seemed to rejuvenate his opposition to a level that we had not seen before. Evidently what he had written before he did not consider strong enough in opposition to the Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc. So, he wrote another book, *We Have A Right Answered*, in which he continued to oppose the Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc. However, what is amazing is that Gene while opposing a human institution has his own human institution, The *Gospel Anchor* Publishing Company, Inc. by which he opposes the Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc. If *Gospel Anchor* Publishing Company, Inc. is scriptural and therefore alright for Gene to have, why is not Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc. also scriptural and alright to exist? If Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc., is unscriptural, why is not *Gospel Anchor* Publishing Company, Inc. also unscriptural? Gene will give you his cocktail of confusion as to why his human institution is scriptural and Guardian of Truth Foundation is not but when all is said and done it just boils down to his say so.

Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc. is not a church; neither is it Gene Frost. It is an incorporated entity which is defined by Webster as “a body of associated persons.” *Gospel Anchor* Publishing Company, Inc. is a human institution or organization which produced a paper called *Gospel Anchor*. Gene says *Gospel Anchor* Publishing Company, Inc. is not like Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc., but just his saying so does not make it so. Gene has/had a human institution through which he fights a human institution. Is not Gene guilty of “neo-institutionalism”? Both J. T. and Gene are practicing the very thing they are condemning in others. “Physician, heal thyself.”

Not only has Gene had his own human institution to fight human institutions, since his has been out of commission, he has used brother J. T. Smith’s human institution, *Gospel Truths*, Inc., through which to attack the Guardian of Truth Foundation, Inc. *Gospel Truths*, Inc. is not the local church in

Oklahoma where J. T. used to preached nor is it the church in Florida where J. T. is currently preaching. Neither is *Gospel Truths*, Inc. J. T. Smith. It is neither a church nor an individual; it is a human institution.

Like brother Frost, brother J. T. Smith opposes the Guardian of Truth Foundation having its lectureship. He, too, says that Guardian of Truth Foundation is a human institution designed to do the work of the church. So, J. T. uses his human institution, *Gospel Truths*, Inc. to oppose a human institution, Guardian of Truth Foundation. Why is *Gospel Truths*, Inc. scriptural and alright in the eyes of J.T. but Guardian of Truth Foundation is wrong and unscriptural? The reason is J. T. said so.

What amazes me is that both Gene and J. T. declare something without any proof except just their say so and that is supposed to prove the matter. They give no proof, just assert whatever they want to, and that is the end of the matter so far as they are concerned.

Speaking of both Florida College and Guardian of Truth Foundation, brother J. T. Smith said in *Gospel Truths*, July, 2006, page 8, “They are both wrong!” J. T. goes on to say, “Let this fact be understood. I am not opposed to Florida College as a Liberal Arts College. I am not opposed to Guardian of Truth Foundation and their publishing books, their book stores or their publishing of *Truth Magazine*. I am opposed to them using Guardian of Truth Lectureships to promote their human institution with work God gave the church to do—namely a lectureship or gospel meeting.”

If “They are both wrong” I wonder why J. T. did not also say, “I am opposed to them using Florida College Lectureships to promote their human institution with work God gave the church to do—namely a lectureship or gospel meeting”? Both Florida College and Guardian of Truth Foundation have a lectureship; they both do gospel teaching through the printed page, with Guardian of Truth Foundation publishing *Truth Magazine*, and Florida College publishing *Florida College Magazine*. In the 2003 summer issue (Vol. 5, number 1) on pages 24-29, brother Larry Dickens has his outstanding article, “Then God Said,” in which he sets forth what the Bible teaches about creation and in opposition to some of the modernism that has circulated around Florida College on that question. This material he put in tract form and circulated by the thousands. I helped him by mailing many boxes of them to people and churches I knew. This material was presented by him during chapel at Florida College in 2002. In this regard, Florida College is doing exactly what the Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing, that is, providing oral teaching (a lectureship) and written teaching (*Florida College Magazine*) yet J. T. has for months written against the Guardian

of Truth Foundation in his *Gospel Truths* as well as print articles by Gene Frost and others in opposition to the Foundation. Why such an unbalanced opposition? Could it just be that he has a vendetta against the Guardian of Truth Foundation? When J. T. spoke in a gospel meeting where he preaches here in Tampa some time ago, he “blasted” the Guardian of Truth Foundation as being unscriptural, but said not a word about Florida College being unscriptural. Do you wonder why? I am not opposed to Florida College existing, of having a lectureship or teaching through its magazine. If I were, I would not hesitate to say so on their door step. I would not be silent about the matter here in Tampa and blast them somewhere else. The only opposition that I have to the school is the modernism, in regard to the length of the days of creation as taught by Shane Scott, the serpent in Genesis 3 not being a literal one as taught by Marty Pickup and the “Big Bang” theory as Hill Roberts passed out his CD, that is circulating out from there and have not hesitated to say so here in Tampa.

I am amazed that brother Frost claims he is an “ardent supporter” of Florida College even though he thinks its current operation of a lectureship is “wrong,” yet he thinks Guardian of Truth Foundation is wrong but is not an “ardent supporter” of it. Why is he an “ardent supporter” of one institution that he thinks is wrong, but not an “ardent supporter” of another institution he thinks is wrong? Gene says the Guardian of Truth “Foundation is wrong to sponsor public collective worship and to usurp the role of the church in disseminating the gospel. To the extent that this is what Florida College does, it is wrong. As this is descriptive of their lectureships, then it is wrong for the College to sponsor them” (*We Have A Right Answered*, 140). On the same page he says, “Our hope, and one shared by others who are ardent supporters of Florida College, is that the lectureship, as it is presently, be discontinued.” As I have said before so say I again that it is amazing brother Frost can have two institutions that he thinks are wrong and be such an “ardent supporter” of one and for years write in opposition to the other. Make sense out of that.

When I started to write this essay it was not my intention to review Gene Frost’s book, *We Have A Right Answered*. A person could write a large book answering all of the error contained in it. I will leave it to the reader to do further study of this question if they have a real interest in it. My perception is that only a limited number of brethren will take the time to wade through the material on this question. I would wish that every Christian would take the time to order the material that is available on the subject and study it thoroughly. However, having been over some of the material on this subject, I can understand why someone else would not be interested to the point of spending a lot of time reading some of it. All the material on

the subject can be ordered from Truth Bookstore at www.truthmagazine.com or 1-800-428-0121.

An Appeal

In closing I would like to make a strong and sincere appeal to brethren Gene Frost, J. T. Smith, Don Martin, Bob Dickey, the elders of the Brown Street Church in Akron, Ohio, and others who have taken such an adamant stand against the *Truth Magazine* Lectureship to stop their senseless and unnecessary divisiveness over something that is a matter of human judgment. Our Lord's church has enough problems and issues without you inventing another one and then blowing it out of proportion. When the history of the Lord's church is written of our generation, you will not be treated well. Contrary to what you might think, you are not standing for the everlasting gospel, only your own opinion. Churches have been divided over your human opinion, preachers have had to leave where they have been preaching because of your human opinions. One preacher in the Blue Grass State had to leave a congregation that he had helped build up and with whom he had a good relationship for nearly a quarter of a century because some in the eldership wanted him to disassociate himself with the *Truth Magazine* Lectures and the Guardian of Truth Foundation. Some would rather have their way over their personal opinion than have the benefit of this preacher's talents in their pulpit and classrooms. I agree completely and think brother Al Diestlekamp hit the nail on the head when he wrote, "I have sometimes wondered if the criteria used to determine which organizations fit into their category of 'unauthorized collectivities' and which do not, is based on their attitude toward the people who run the organizations. I've wondered that when reading what they write in one gospel paper, against another gospel paper" (*Think* [Jan., Feb., Mar., 2007], 3).

The only verse that the brethren mentioned in the above paragraph have produced that even has the appearance of being theirs is 1 Timothy 3:15: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Paul was writing to Timothy who was at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). Is the "church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" the universal church or the local church? If "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" was the church at Ephesus where Timothy was at the time, then the church in Jerusalem, Corinth or any other local congregation was not "the pillar and ground of the truth." If the "church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" is the universal church, then the universal church has a work to perform but has no earthly officers to oversee it supporting the truth, or a treasury to fund supporting the truth. Which do the above mentioned brethren believe?