

Is Truth Magazine/Guardian Of Truth Foundation A Missionary Society?

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Within recent years, from various sections of the country, and from different people, I have heard that *Truth Magazine* and/or Guardian of Truth Foundation is a “missionary society.” Is this true or is it the figment of someone’s fertile imagination? The missionary society was started in 1849, which is over 150 years ago.

Brother Earl Irvin West wrote a four volume set of books on the history of the Restoration Movement, called *The Search For The Ancient Order*. The first two are much better than the last two. The first two were written at a time when brother West shared the same views that I have on sponsoring churches and church support of human institutions. I read these two books in 1957 while a student at Freed-Hardeman College in the Restoration history class of the late brother Olan Hicks, founder of the Christian Chronicle. After brother West wrote the first two volumes he made his confession of a change of views on these matters in the *Gospel Advocate* on September 19, 1957. After he made this change, he wrote the last two volumes, which in my opinion are not the quality of the first two volumes.

Now, since it has been fifty years since I read these books, I thought it would be interesting to go back and re-read them in view of refreshing what I might have forgotten about the missionary society. Some brethren evidence they have no idea what the missionary society was, how tall or short it was, how fat or how thin it was, whether it was black, white, green, or yellow, or whether it was a solid or liquid. They use the term “missionary society” much like some brethren used the expression “anti” a generation ago when they had such an intense hatred toward Roy Cogdill, Yater Tant and the *Gospel Guardian*. What was the “missionary society” they do not know, except it was something real bad. Some of those who are opposed to the Truth Magazine Lectures are not just opposed to them; they have an intense hatred toward anything connected with them. Why they have this vindictive spirit toward *Truth Magazine* I do not know. That they have a vendetta is very obvious. A vendetta is the only way to explain such intense hatred.

What Made The Missionary Society The Missionary Society?

Let us look at some of the things that made the missionary society the missionary society and without which there would have been no missionary society and which are absent in regard to the Truth Magazine Lectures.

[1] Before the missionary society was formed Alexander “Campbell felt his way along slowly enough to know that he had the bulk of the brotherhood behind him” (*The Search For The Ancient Order*, I: 167). The Board of Directors of *Truth Magazine* did not “wait until they knew they had the bulk of the brotherhood behind them” before they announced the Truth Magazine Lectureship. It is evident that a number of brethren have jumped on the opposition to Truth Lectures bandwagon.

[2] The missionary society was for the purpose of “a more efficient organization of our church” (167). But Truth Magazine Lectureship was not for the purpose of “a more efficient organization

of our churches” and no one has claimed that Truth Magazine Lectures was “a more efficient organization of our churches.” If so, who did such and where did they say so?

[3] Alexander Campbell sensed “a wide demand for a general organization” (167) but the Board of Directors of Truth Magazine did not sense “a wide demand for a general organization” among churches of Christ before they announced the first Truth Magazine Lectureship. If so, who was making such a demand?

[4] Campbell “believed there were a thousand or more local congregations vehemently crying for some means of cooperating their efforts” (168) but the Board of Directors heard no such cry before they announced the first Truth Magazine Lectureship. If so, which congregations were crying for such?

[5] Campbell “believed that some sort of organization was necessary to prevent the restoration movement from going into retrograde” (168) but the Board of Directors of Truth Magazine did not believe that the Lord’s church of this generation would retrograde if they did not announce the first Truth Magazine Lectureship.

[6] Churches of the various states would be “represented” at the convention that formed the society (170), but no churches would be represented at the Truth Magazine Lectureship. If so, which churches were represented and who represented them?

[7] Campbell thought that the missionary society was “all important to the cause of reformation” (171) but the Board of Directors did not think the Truth Magazine Lectureship was “all important to the cause of” Christ. If so, where did they ever say so?

[8] The convention, Campbell said, that would bring forth the missionary society would be a “convention of messengers of churches, selected and constituted such by the churches” (171) but those who attended the Truth Magazine Lectureship were not messengers of any church. They were not selected by any church and were not constituted such by any church. If so, which ones?

[9] At the convention “a group of permanent office had to be selected” along with a president, vice-presidents and a corresponding secretary” (173), but at the Truth Magazine Lectureships there has been no president, vice-presidents or corresponding secretary selected of the lectureship. If so, who were they?

[10] Each person present at the convention was given one vote (174), but no person attending the Truth Magazine Lectures had a vote, and, furthermore, there is nothing on which to vote. No vote of any kind was ever taken.

[11] “A committee was selected to draft a constitution” (175) but no committee was selected at the Truth Magazine Lectureships to draft a “constitution” and no “constitution” was adopted.

[12] \$100 was given to make Alexander Campbell “a life member of the Society” (176) but no money was given to make anyone a “life member” of the Truth Magazine Lectures.

[13] “The convention was asked to recommend to the churches that they not countenance as a preacher any man who was not approved and acknowledged by two or more churches” (176) but

the Truth Magazine Lectures has made no such recommendation!

[14] The convention had 156 “delegates” who met (176), but there were no delegates from any churches present at the Truth Magazine Lectures. If there was, who were they?

[15] The constitution which was adopted in article three said the society would be composed of “annual delegates, Life Members and Life Directors.” “Any church may appoint a delegate for an annual contribution of ten dollars.” “Twenty dollars” paid at one time would make one “a member for life.” A “director for life” could be obtained by paying \$100 at one time (177). None of this kind of thing happened at the Truth Magazine Lectures, nor was such considered.

[16] The Missionary Society, article 7 of the constitution says, “shall establish such agencies as the interest of the Society may require, appoint agents and missionaries, fix their compensation, direct and instruct them concerning their particular fields and labors, make all appropriations to be paid out of the Treasury, and present to the Society at each annual meeting a full report of their proceedings during the past year” (177). Truth Magazine Lectures did no such things, neither has the Board of Directors ever considered such.

[17] The society arranged for both “managers” and “foreign managers” (178), but the Truth Magazine Lectures arranged for none of these.

[18] Fifty two people paid \$20 to become “Life Members”; eleven paid \$100 to become “Life Directors” with \$2,140 subscribed and enough promises made to add up to over \$5,000. Nothing like this was done at the Truth Magazine Lectures.

[19] There were about 200 “representatives of the church from abroad” (179) but at the Truth Magazine Lectures there were no representatives from any church. If so, who were they and from what churches did they come?

The Board of Directors of Truth Magazine has not solicited funds from either congregations or individuals to put on Truth Magazine Lectures. If so, which church or individual has contributed one dime for this purpose? However, that does not keep those who are in opposition to the Truth Magazine Lectures from trying to make them a “missionary society.”

Old Trick Revived

Most of those seeking to make Truth Magazine Lectures a “missionary society” are old enough to remember the “trick” played over fifty years ago on Yater Tant and the *Gospel Guardian*. The *Gospel Guardian* was published from 1949 through 1980. During those early years this was the leading journal among Churches of Christ in opposition to church support of human institutions. As editor, Yater Tant had an “open door policy” which meant he would print both sides of a question for the consideration of his readers. If someone disagreed with what was published therein, he could write an article in reply and Yater would publish it, often in the same issue in which the article to which he was replying appeared.

During these years, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, there was intense and bitter hatred from many toward Yater, *The Gospel Guardian* and its publisher, Roy E. Cogdill. Every vicious, ungodly thing that could be said was said about them and it. Some called Yater “Gator Tant” and

“Tater Yant.” The paper was called “The Gospel Garbage.” One wrote in my college year book that “the *Gospel (?) Guardian*... makes some of the most reliable brooder paper I’ve ever seen.”

As Yater wrote in *The Gospel Guardian* in opposition to church support of human institutions and the sponsoring church type of congregational cooperation, efforts were made to make it appear that he was doing the very thing he was opposing. One such effort was to make *The Gospel Guardian* a “missionary society.” In order to do this they had to have it receiving money and then sending it out to some preacher. Thus, a person sent a \$5 dollar check drawn on the Citizens State Bank in Earth, Texas on April 13, 1953 made out to the “Gospel Guardian” with the note “for Dick Smith in Germany.” If Yater would endorse the check, whoever sent the check would have “proof” that the *Gospel Guardian* was “a missionary society” receiving money and sending it to the preacher. Probably not thinking that there was a “trap” being set for him, Yater did what I would think most men would have done. He turned the check over and wrote on the back “pay to the order of R. E. Smith Gospel Guardian by Yater Taut.” When Charles Holt debated W. L. Totty and Sterl Watson at Garfield Heights Church in Indianapolis October 18-22, 1954, Sterl Watson introduced the check and tried to make it appear that *The Gospel Guardian* was receiving contributions and forwarding them on to preachers, thus the “Gospel Guardian Missionary Society” (*The Indianapolis Debate*, 194-195, 230-231, 256-257, 279, 30).

Now, when some brethren oppose Truth Magazine Lectures saying it is a “missionary society” they are just “stealing the thunder” of institutional brethren over 50 years ago. You see, the younger generation of brethren was not around when the battle was raging over church support of human institutions and the sponsoring church and many of them probably never saw a copy of *The Indianapolis Debate*. The charge that *Truth Magazine* is a missionary society is not new. It was made years ago.

Why Not Be Consistent?

THINK On These Things, July-August-September, 2007, page 4 has an announcement of the “fourth annual” “Men’s Overnight Bible Study” which is “organized by Christians in northern and central Illinois.” It “is not the work of any congregation.” Eight individuals have topics and are speakers at this Bible Study. Its purpose is to “encourage and edify men in their particular roles in the Kingdom—helping them be better Christians” and “to strengthen every man in Christ Jesus.” *Think* is published by the Diestelkamp family who has served the Lord in a difficult section of the nation with great personal sacrifice. I have no problem with this “Men’s Overnight Bible Study.”

Now what is amazing to me is that the men who have so strongly opposed the four year old Truth Magazine Lectures have had not one word in opposition to this four year old “Men’s Overnight Bible Study.” I wonder why? Are these brethren opposed to all organized entities separate from the local church that are teaching the Bible, or have they a vendetta just against *Truth Magazine*? The “Men’s Overnight Bible Study” is “not the work of any congregation” but is the “organized” effort of “Christians in northern and central Illinois.” It appears those opposed to the Truth Magazine Lectures just pick and choose who they are going to oppose. It appears they just pick and choose which perceived sins they are going to oppose. One group of brethren can get away with that which they perceive as sin because it is an entity separate and apart from any congregation but they turn their heavy artillery against *Truth Magazine*. Why will they not

be consistent? To me, their inconsistency shows they oppose some they think are in sin and say nothing about others who are doing exactly the same thing.

Has Truth Magazine Been Misrepresented?

Some brethren have been so opposed to the Truth Magazine Lectures that they have written things that I think are out right misrepresentations. However, I will withdraw my charge if they will document what they have said from some responsible brother. However, even if these statements can be specifically documented, they do not represent the views or words of those connect with Truth Magazine. Consider some of these:

(1) Brother Don Martin wrote and brother J. T. Smith published in *Gospel Truths*, November, 2006, page 19 the following:

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...

Who said this? When did they say it? Where did they say this? Who else heard this besides brother Martin? Will brother Martin give the name, address, and telephone number of the party that is supposed to have said this so it can be verified by others? If he will not, why not? Until he documents this quotation completely, I am going to say it is a figment of his fertile imagination. And if someone said this, does this represent the Board or staff of *Truth Magazine*?

(2) Again, brother Don Martin wrote and brother J. T. Smith published in *Gospel Truths*, November, 2006 the following,

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!”

Again, I call upon brother Martin to tell us who said this? There must be a plurality of people who have said this because brother Martin says “those” and one individual is not a “those.” When was this said? Where was it said? Who else besides brother Martin heard this said? Will brother Martin give the name, address, and telephone of just some of those who said this so it can be verified by others? Until he documents this quotation completely, I am going to say it is just a figment of his fertile imagination.

(3) Brother Mike Hughes wrote 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.”

Brother Hughes would do us a great favor if he would tell us who made this argument? Where was it made? When was it made? To whom was it made? Who besides him heard it made? Will

brother Hughes provide this information? If he will, it can be verified. If he will not, then I charge this is just his fertile imagination at work.

(4) Someone designed an advertisement for brother Gene Frost's book in which he claims to have answered the book *We Have A Right* written by brethren Dan King and Mike Willis. Brother Frost's book is called *We Have A Right Answered*. This advertisement appeared in *Gospel Truth*, November, 2006, page 12, in *The Preceptor Magazine*, December, 2006, page 28 and on the back page of *The Preceptor Magazine*, January, 2007. Here is what the advertisement 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.

Since the wording is the same for the advertisements in both papers, I would guess brother Gene Frost wrote them. If he did not, he can tell us who did. Who wrote them is not really important to my point.

Where did the Guardian of Truth Foundation make this claim? Let brother Frost tell us where this claim was made. Who was the person who made this claim for the Guardian of Truth Foundation? Let brother Frost document this claim and then it can be verified as being legitimate. Until brother Frost documents this claim, I am going to charge that this is what he says the Guardian of Truth is claiming and not what it actually said.

Those connected with *Truth Magazine* have not made the above four claims. But if they did they would have been wrong. We would need to teach them better. If we can find out who made the above statements, if they were really made, we need to teach them better. No knowledgeable brother of New Testament teaching would make such claims.

One of the things I have found out about brethren who are trying to defend the indefensible is that they are not as careful in handling the truth and representing things as they should be. Truth Magazine Lectures are not a missionary society. However, there are some brethren that are so determined to make a missionary society out of it that misrepresent matters and do not realize that they lose credibility with thinking brethren.