

# **May Secular Institutions Furnish Occasion For Bible Teaching?**

**An Exchange**  
between

**John Isaac Edwards**  
and  
**Gene Frost**

Is there Scriptural authorization for the Guardian of Truth Foundation in its dual role as a publishing company and as an evangelistic society in propagating the gospel of Christ and in promoting public worship?



# May Secular Institutions Furnish Occasion For Bible Teaching?

John Isaac Edwards

The right of a secular institution to furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible was hotly disputed among brethren in the late 1800's and early 1900's. It has risen again with a new generation.

• **The Issue Is Not.** Whether the church is the pillar and ground of the truth—it is (1 Tim. 3:15); whether the church is sufficient to do the work God assigned her to do—it is (Eph. 4:11-16). The issue is: May institutions separate and apart from the church, furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, or may only the church provide such?

• **All, Some, Or None?** I know of only three answers that can be given to the question before us: Either (1) all secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible; (2) some secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible; or (3) no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible.

• **If Some.** If some secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, the question is: *why may some, but not others?* Why is it wrong for some, but right for others? What is the criteria for determining which secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible and which may not? The same principles that make it right for one would make it right for all, and what makes it wrong for one would make it wrong for all. They either stand or fall together! To be consistent, one must either say that all secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible or no secular institution may furnish such an occasion.

• **If None.** If you answer that no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then you must accept the consequences and admit all the following are wrong or give up your position.

1) *Newspapers*. In the *Salem Democrat* (Salem, IN) and the *Ellettsville Journal* (Ellettsville, IN), I have written weekly columns under the heading, *What Saith the Scripture?* These are secular institutions providing occasions for the Bible to be taught. Am I sinning by so doing?

2) *Radio*. I've preached the gospel through radio ever since I began gospel work. These radio stations are secular institutions providing occasions for Bible teaching. Is this right or wrong and what makes it so?

3) *Television*. Because of controversy over Bible teaching in the local newspaper, I was invited to appear on local television to be interviewed and occasion was given for me to point out what the Bible teaches. Was I wrong in accepting the invitation? If no secular institution may furnish occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, I was.

4) *Magazines and journals*. I have had numerous religious articles to appear in magazines and journals published by secular institutions which provided occasion for the Bible to be taught. Should this be stopped?

5) *Internet*. Some internet sites allowing space for Bible teaching, owned and maintained by secular institutions, have given occasion for me to put forth Bible teaching. Am I wrong to submit such?

6) *Prisons*. I have had opportunity to talk with inmates about the Bible and preach the gospel in prisons as correctional facilities have provided occasion for Bible teaching. Since the church is not providing the occasion, should I not go?

7) *Hospitals*. Many hospitals have a chapel and provide occasion for the Bible to be taught. Is it permissible to speak there?

8) *Nursing homes*. I have taught the Bible in numerous nursing homes as they have provided an occasion for their residents to hear Bible teaching. A nursing home is a secular institution. Should we discontinue our nursing home service?

9) *Funeral homes*. How many preachers have taught the Bible at a funeral home and even received payment from the funeral home

for such? A funeral home furnishes occasions for folks to be taught in the Bible. Is it wrong for a preacher to teach the Bible at a funeral home service, since the church is not providing the occasion? Is it wrong for a member of the church to attend such a funeral and hear the Bible taught?

10) *Schools and universities.* Many schools include the Bible in their curriculum. If no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then no Christian could attend such a school, right? Are homeschoolers in error by enrolling their students in institutions that include the Bible in their curriculum?

11) *Businesses.* If it is true that no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then you could not invite me to speak at your place of business about the Bible for a secular institution would be providing occasion for Bible teaching.

12) *The military.* The military provides occasion for the Bible to be taught. The armed forces are not the church. Would it be wrong for a Christian to teach the Bible at such services since the church is not providing the occasion?

13) *Camps.* Some camps operated by secular institutions furnish occasion for Bible teaching. If no secular institution may provide occasion for Bible teaching, then it would be wrong to accept an invitation to speak at such, or to attend or participate in such a camp, wouldn't it?

Such examples may be multiplied many times over. These are real situations and demand real answers. The fact remains: if no secular institution may furnish an occasion for Bible teaching, then all secular institutions that furnish such are in error and no Christian may have any affiliation or association with any of them.

• **If Only The Church.** If the church alone may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then no other collective, entity, institution or organization of any kind may provide occasion for Bible teaching. This would mean the home, which is a divine institution separate and apart from the church, could not rightfully furnish occasion for Bible teaching. If you believe the home can provide occasion for Bible teaching, then you

must give up the position that the church is the only institution that may provide occasion for Bible teaching. You can't have it both ways! Teaching the gospel is not the work of the church exclusively. Individuals too are charged with the responsibility of gospel teaching (Mk. 16:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:12). When individuals teach the gospel, whether singly or jointly, they are not infringing on the work of the church or minimizing the sufficiency of the church to do its work.

- **What About Singing?** God put singing in the church (Heb. 2:12). Singing is a means of teaching (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). If one opposes secular institutions furnishing an occasion for Bible teaching, he must also oppose secular institutions providing occasion for singing since singing is a means of teaching. Funeral homes furnish occasion for singing. Would it be lawful for a Christian to sing spiritual songs at a funeral home? Not if secular institutions may not furnish occasion for spiritual teaching.

- **What About Benevolence?** Wouldn't the same hold true for the work of relieving needy saints? If not, why not? The church is given the responsibility of caring for its own (Acts 2; 4; 6). Would it be permissible for a needy saint to receive support from a secular institution or would that infringe on the work of the church? If secular institutions furnishing an occasion for Bible teaching infringes on the work of the church in evangelism, then does a secular institution infringe on the work of the church in benevolence when it provides aid and assistance to a Christian? Must a Christian depend on the church alone for aid or may he receive assistance from other sources? What is true in one area must also be true in another; same principle. If not, why not? Just as evangelism is not the work of the church exclusively, neither is benevolence (1 Tim. 5:16).

- **A Plea For Unity.** We do not need three different churches: one teaching all secular institutions may furnish occasion for Bible teaching; another teaching some may furnish the occasion (and divided even further over which may and which may not provide it); and the third teaching no secular institution may furnish occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible. Brethren are maligning

each other, meetings are being cancelled, and support is being cut off by brethren over this issue. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Let us respect each others convictions in this matter. If you believe no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then do not subscribe to any religious journal, attend any school, or go to any funeral home that furnishes an occasion for Bible teaching. Yet do not bind and press your opinion to the disruption, disturbance, or division of the brethren! To do so is to be contentious or factious and is grounds for rejection (Ti. 3:10). "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19). Let us pledge that no speculative matters should ever be debated or discussed to the disturbance of the peace and harmony of the church and mutually resolve to preach the gospel rather than to propagate opinions.

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# Response to John Isaac Edward's "Secular Institutions"

Gene Frost

In responding to "May Secular Institutions Furnish Occasion For Bible Teaching," by John Isaac Edwards, I do not write in defense of the premise that he denies. First of all, the proposition is ambiguous. The terms are imprecise. The argument is flawed.

The subject of his paper is the "right" of secular institutions as versus the church. The question is the right "to furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible." The "right" under consideration, Edwards assumes for the church. We are left with the question: Do secular institutions have the same right, or is it the church's only? First, we need to understand what it means to "furnish an occasion" wherein one is taught. By definition, "furnish" means to *supply, provide, or equip with whatever is necessary or useful*. That this is John Isaac's understanding is confirmed by his speaking of "secular institutions *providing* occasions for the Bible to be taught" (emphasis added). What is supplied or provided for one to be taught is "occasion," which means an *opportunity, or a fact, event, or state of affairs that makes something else possible*. (Definitions from *Webster's New World Dictionary*.) So the question is, may a secular institution provide an opportunity that makes it possible for folks to be taught in the Bible?

An understanding of what it means to "furnish occasion" is made clearer by the applications John Isaac makes. What makes it possible for folks to be taught is the use of newspapers or magazines, radio broadcasts or telecasts, internet sites, businesses, etc. Of course, the providing of opportunity, i.e. the purchasing of space in a newspaper, purchasing time on radio or television, or setting up a site on the internet, does not, by the fact of making it possible, teach. It only makes possible the teaching. The institutions that make it possible are not the teachers. So understand the question: "May institutions, separate and apart from the church,—as newspaper publishers, radio/television broadcasting companies, internet providers—furnish occasion—



sell space in a newspaper, sell time on the air, sell internet sites—for folks to be taught in the Bible, or may only the church provide such? The question is *non-sequitur*. (How can *only* the church provide what it cannot provide at all?) The church cannot be the *only* provider; in fact, it may not be a provider at all, to own and operate newspapers, radio and television stations, etc. While secular institutions can be “occasion” providers, and operate as business enterprises, the church may not. The church is a spiritual body with a spiritual mission; it is not a business enterprise! Don’t confuse the providers with those who do the teaching. May churches employ the occasions provided by secular enterprises? Of course. They offer methods of teaching, which is the primary mission of the church, as the pillar and ground of the truth. (I Timothy 2:15) The church may use any lawful and honorable method by which to convey Bible teaching.

Now we find a subtle shift in the Edward’s presentation, from secular institutions *providing* the opportunity for the gospel to be taught to the institution doing the teaching. He is careful to use the same phrase, “furnish occasion,” so as to hide the shift, but he is unable to maintain the deceit throughout. Under the subtitle “If Only The Church,” he refers to the home: “If you believe the home can provide occasion for Bible teaching, then you must give up the position that the church is the only institution... You can’t have it both ways! Teaching the gospel is not the work of the church exclusively. Individuals too are charged with the responsibility of gospel teaching (Mark 16:15, II Timothy. 2:2; Hebrews 5:12).” Note that he shifts from *providing occasion* for teaching to the *teaching* itself. “When individuals teach the gospel, whether singly or jointly, they are not infringing on the work of the church or minimizing the sufficiency of the church to do its work.” These individuals *jointly* are his “secular institution.”

To cut to the chase, this is what his article is all about, to justify the secular institution that *teaches* the gospel with the same rights as the churches of Christ!

I know of no one who believes and teaches that secular institutions may not provide opportunities for teaching, that the church only can furnish newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts,

etc. That is a red herring and stinks like a dead fish! However, I do know who they are in our time that promote individuals jointly, as a secular organization, usurping the role and prerogatives that God gave to the churches of Christ. The Guardian of Truth Foundation! We note that John Isaac anticipates the conclusion one will reach when studying the arguments justifying the Foundation: “they are not infringing on the work of the church”—*actually, they are*; they are doing what the Lord commissioned the local church to do as the pillar and ground of the truth—“or minimizing the sufficiency of the church to do its work.”—if they thought the church sufficient to conduct a gospel meeting (lectureship) as the Foundation does, then there is no need for the Foundation to mirror the church.

John Isaac Edwards promotes the Foundation. For years I have challenged the assumed “right” of the Foundation. This opposition, covering articles published through the years, is published in a book, *Brotherhood Societies*. Standing before a local church assembled, where I was scheduled to conduct a gospel meeting, he displayed my book on *Brotherhood Societies* and stated that it promotes a “fruitless and faithless” doctrine. (An aside: The meeting was cancelled because, as the elders informed me, “of controversy about (me) created in the congregation as the result of John Isaac Edwards speaking to the congregation and casting doubt about (my) soundness.” He laments that “meetings are being cancelled,” though I am sure not of mine since he caused it. At the close of his article, he makes a plea for unity, but he himself is responsible for division. His public denunciation of my defense of the church, presented in *Brotherhood Societies*, not only resulted in controversy and confusion, but eventually in a division within the Salem church.) So I know where he is coming from and his agenda. Strange that I defend the blood-brought and divinely ordained church of my Lord, with abundant Scripture references, and this is referred to as faith-less (Jude 3), while the Foundation has not presented one Scripture that they say authorizes the creation, mission, and work of the foundation!

Here is my challenge, published in May, 1983, in the *Gospel Anchor*:

The Scripture(s) which authorize individuals to establish and contribute funds to a human organization (such as the *Guardian of Truth Foundation*) through which God may be worshipped and His word (the Bible) may be propagated is (are):

Perhaps now John Isaac Edwards, since he has come out so boldly and clearly in defense of the Foundation, will give us the Scripture. (That's facetious.) This is the John Isaac who refused to face me, who (when asked in writing to tell me what false doctrine I taught in *Brotherhood Societies* or elsewhere) refused even to acknowledge my letters, and who I eventually marked publicly as a "false accuser."

### **A Fatal Admission**

We have not yet finished examining his article. In his opening remarks, John I. Edwards states that the right of a secular institution was "hotly disputed among brethren in the late 1800's and early 1900's." With his endorsement of secular institutions, that is true. He occupies the same ground as those who accepted secular institutions back then. In stating that "all secular institutions"—as we now understand his thinking—"may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible," he has endorsed the United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS), as defended by J.B. Briney in the Otey-Briney Debate, held in Louisville, Kentucky, September 14-18, 1908. The promoters of the missionary society were bereft of Bible authority, and therefore their principal defense rested upon human reasoning as we see in Edward's article. Briney referred to a legitimate secular organization, engaged in publishing *magazines and journals*, and concluded that this authorized the secular missionary society. (See *Otey-Briney Debate*, page 163.) Edwards' thinking is the same, that if a secular institution has the right to furnish methods (*how* the truth might be disseminated), then it has the right to be included in *who* is to do the teaching. Briney, as does Edwards, also referred to *schools and universities* as justification for creating and maintaining missionary societies. (See *Otey-Briney Debate*,

page 162.) Briney called attention to secular *business* institutions as justification of secular societies, as does Edwards. (See *Otey-Briney Debate*, page 164).

Edwards refers to secular institutions as justification of all secular institutions to teach the Bible, which would include missionary societies.

"The same principles that make it right for one would make it right for all, and what makes it wrong for one would make it wrong for all. They stand or fall together! To be consistent, one must either say that all secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught the Bible or no secular institution may furnish such an occasion." — John Isaac Edwards.

The issue brethren debated then, John Isaac Edwards says "has risen again with a new generation." True; they endorsed missionary societies and instrumental music. He has parroted the arguments of Briney, and as far as making a defense against missionary societies, he has surrendered ground. John Isaac has compromised any discussion of societies with representatives of the Christian Churches.

By the time of the Otey-Briney Debate, and for all practical purposes, many churches had divided, or were dividing. The issue was resolved when the Progressives withdrew themselves and formed the Disciples of Christ and Christian Church of today. Even so, the same old institutionalism seems to revive in the hearts of liberal minds within the fellowship of conservative churches, nearly every two or three generations. The issue has once again been reintroduced by the Guardian of Truth Foundation and its friends.

### **The UCMS Did Not Control Churches**

When we confronted institutionalists in the 1950's and 60's, liberals in defending their secular institutions made the same arguments that the Progressives had made in the 1800's in defense of the United Christian Missionary Society. They were reluctant to accept the consequences of their arguments to embrace "missionary societies," though they freely admitted to other societies. They were accused of inconsistency. Their excuse for rejecting the missionary society was because it controlled the

churches. Lest, and in anticipation that Edwards and other institutionalists of our day make the same argument, we need to point out that this is a misrepresentation. They were indeed inconsistent. Just so, consistency will force those who support the Foundation to accept the missionary society. Briney denied that the missionary societies had control of the contributing churches:

“They are not over the churches, nor do they have churches under them, to say to one, come, and it comes, and to another go, and it goes.” (Otey-Briney Debate, page 270.)

In the Arlington Meeting, J.D. Thomas argued “that the thing wrong with the missionary society is not that it is another organization coordinate in character with the local church, but rather that it is wrong because it infringes on the autonomy of the local church—dominates churches.” To which James W. Adams properly replied:

“To oppose the missionary society on the ground of its domination of churches is not to oppose the society itself, but it is to oppose only an abuse of the society. Of course, it is wrong for missionary societies to dominate churches psychologically in the manner previously described, but *this is not the basic thing which is wrong with the missionary society*. May I repeat, *there is no organic connection* between a local Christian Church and the missionary society which, in its very nature, permits domination of that church by the society.” (*The Arlington Meeting*, pages 80, 81)

Any society that later did assume any kind of control over churches was considered to be an abuse. In principle, the UCMS and secular institutions which John Isaac defends are the same; to accept the one is to accept the other.

It is unfair to condemn all societies on the basis of an abuse. It is tantamount to someone condemning all churches of Christ on the basis of an abuse by one church. For example, I know of a church which withdrew its fellowship from a member in violation of Scriptural procedure. A faithful member was a victim of a kangaroo court, accused without formal charges, and forbidden to answer the charges or make a defense. He was summarily withdrawn from by the church. Would it be proper and fair to reject all churches of Christ because of the abuse of one? I could not in good conscience be identified with this church, but their

shameful action does not defile all other churches. (The faithful member referenced above is now identified with another congregation, and is generally accepted in other places.)

We do not have to misrepresent the missionary society in order to reject it. It is unlawful because it is a *secular institution* coordinate in character with the local church, usurping the role that God assigned to the church. That is our objection to the Foundation.

### **The Issue Today**

I am glad that the editor of this journal has seen fit to publish the article by John Isaac and has given me the opportunity to respond. I want brethren to see the subtlety and shallowness of the promotion of “secular societies” in usurpation of the role that the Lord gave to His churches.

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# The Legs of Brother Frost Are Unequal

John Isaac Edwards

*Gospel Truths* published my article entitled “May Secular Institutions Furnish Occasion for Bible Teaching?” (December 2007) and a “Response” by brother Gene Frost. His article denying the right of secular institutions to furnish occasions for Bible teaching was published by a secular institution furnishing occasions for Bible teaching: *Gospel Truths, Inc.* Truly, “the legs of the lame are not equal” (Proverbs 26:7).

From reading the first paragraph of brother Frost’s response, I take it he did not think much of my article. He says, “the proposition is ambiguous. The terms are imprecise. The argument is flawed.” I reckon anyone could say that about anything, but just saying it doesn’t make it so. In beginning his response, Frost says he does not write in defense of the premise that I deny. I’m not sure what that means exactly—the premise that I deny. What premise do I deny? If my proposition is ambiguous (doubtful or uncertain; capable of being understood in two or more possible senses or ways) and my terms imprecise (inexact and vague), as he says, how can he be certain what I deny? He had to say these things in order to have me saying things I did not say. Frost says, “this is what his article is all about, to justify the secular institution that teaches the gospel with the same rights as the churches of Christ!” He says it’s ambiguous and imprecise, but he claims to know what it is all about!

## A Non-Issue

Brother Frost missed the point and raised a non-issue when he equated purchasing space in a newspaper and purchasing time on radio or television with furnishing occasion. My article did not discuss whether the space was purchased or made available free of charge. Preachers have written columns in newspapers and spoken on radio and television programs without paying 1 penny to do so. The newspaper and the radio/television station furnished the occasion. What preacher would not take advantage of such an opportunity? I ask, is this unscriptural? If no secular institution may furnish occasion for Bible teaching, it is. Some brethren will

say it is acceptable with God to purchase space in a newspaper or on a radio; it would be wrong, however, for the radio station or newspaper to donate space to you. Which do you say, brother Frost? Tell us in unambiguous, precise terms. Did you pay Gospel Truths, Inc. for the space of your response published in *Gospel Truths* or was it provided at the expense of *Gospel Truths*, Inc.? Either way, a secular institution (Gospel Truths, Inc.) furnished the occasion. Have you ever spoken at a funeral home? Is this not a secular institution furnishing occasion for Bible teaching? How much did you pay the funeral home to speak there, or did they pay you? I said nothing about the church furnishing “newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, etc.” This is a non-issue. The question is, May secular institutions such as newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, etc. furnish occasion for Bible teaching? There is a difference.

### **The Guardian of Truth Foundation**

Brother Frost says, “I do know who they are in our time that promote individuals jointly, as a secular organization, usurping the role and prerogatives that God gave to the churches of Christ. The Guardian of Truth Foundation!” If he has an axe to grind with the Guardian of Truth Foundation, he will have to take it up with the members of the Foundation. He says that I have “come out so boldly and clearly in defense of the Foundation...” My article did not even mention the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He says the Foundation is infringing on the work of the church, doing what the Lord commissioned the local church to do as the pillar and ground of the truth, and minimizing the sufficiency of the church to do its work by conducting a lectureship. Would the same be true of Florida College and their lectureship? Or is there a double standard? If the Guardian of Truth Foundation minimizes the sufficiency of the church by having a lectureship, does Florida College minimize the sufficiency of the church by having a lectureship? Would it be out of place for me to say brother Frost promotes Florida College? He’s attended and participated in their lectures. A copy of his lecture on “The Nature of Miracles” is in the 1975 Florida College lecture book. He and his family established “a memorial fund with Florida College to provide loans



to young men desiring a college education in their preparation to preach the gospel” (*The Gospel Guardian, September 21, 1972*). Where has his confession been made for the wrong he did, if he believes such is wrong?

### **The Salem Church**

Brother Frost brings up the Salem church, which is totally unrelated to the article. About a week before my leaving to work with the church at Ellettsville, I was informed by one of the elders that Frost’s book, *Brotherhood Societies*, had been circulated among the brethren at Westside. In closing announcements, I held up a copy of the book and said that it had been brought to my attention that this book had been circulated among the brethren and that I had read the material and felt that it promoted an unnecessary controversy that the church did not need to be disturbed or divided over. The church was at peace and I was “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3)—that was my agenda. Sadly, the brother that introduced the book was eventually withdrawn from by the church because of falsification and sowing seeds of discord among the brethren. I recommend that anyone wanting to know about the Salem church, contact the elders of the church.

To this day, brother Frost has never contacted me personally. He sent me a letter 9 months after the fact, addressed to me and “To whom it may concern,” in which he charged me with accusing him of being unsound, accusing me of “criminal and sinful” actions, of “making a false accusation, of slandering a brother.” Other brethren received the letter before I did. I felt that he was doing to me the very thing that he accused me of, and I did not respond, following the example of my Lord, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again...but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (I Peter 2:21-23).

If the situation was reversed, and someone introduced my written materials among members of the Birchwood church in Louisville, Kentucky and brother Frost made a comment about it that he felt it promoted a fruitless controversy, and it was reported to me, I would pick up the phone and call him and ask him about it. It might be that I had written something that I needed to study

again and reconsider. Or, it might be that I would tell him that I disagree, that I believe it is not fruitless, but something the church needs to be warned about. I would not go on a campaign to publicly accuse him of slander and being a false accuser. I wonder, if someone passed out my article on “May Secular Institutions Furnish Occasion for Bible Teaching?” and brother Frost said something about it, would that be “criminal and sinful”—would he be slandering a brother?

Evidently, brother Frost believes it was wrong for me to say that I felt his booklet, *Brotherhood Societies*, contains needless controversy (what I did was criminal and sinful, slandering a brother, according to him), but it is right for him to speak out against my article, “May Secular Institutions Furnish Occasion for Bible Teaching?”, and charge me with dishonesty (“so as to hide the shift”...“deceit”, Gene’s Response, page 8, left column, lower half), causing confusion and division, and misrepresent me as endorsing the United Christian Missionary Society. It appears that brother Frost has assumed for himself a right that he does not give others. How is this equal?

### **The United Christian Missionary Society**

Brother Frost charges that I occupy “the same ground” as J.B. Briney and that I have “endorsed the United Christian Missionary Society” and “compromised any discussion of societies with representatives of the Christian Churches.” Anyone with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education can see the difference between a secular institution such as a funeral home furnishing occasion for Bible teaching and the church making contributions to The United Christian Missionary Society! Brother Frost compares me to Briney and the Guardian of Truth Foundation to the United Christian Missionary Society. Either brother Frost does not know anything about the Guardian of Truth Foundation or what a missionary society is, or both! Either he doesn’t know what Briney believed or what I believe, or both! It is unethical, unfair and unbrotherly to take what a man writes and apply it to something he doesn’t even mention and charge him with endorsing it when he knows that is not the case! Brother Frost says I have “parroted the arguments of Briney.” Gene misrepresents me in that Briney wrote in defense of

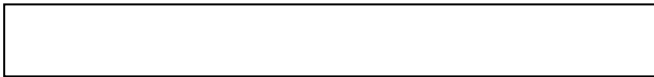
human organizations supported by churches, whereas I was discussing how individuals, not churches, may function. Frost mentioned the Guardian of Truth Foundation as having a “gospel meeting.” Leroy Garrett charged that Florida College, in having a lectureship, was having “a gospel meeting” (*Humble-Garrett Debate*, page 127). Would brother Frost like it if I accused him of parroting the arguments of Leroy Garrett, W. Carl Ketcherside, or Daniel Sommer? No, old institutionalism has not revived in the hearts of liberal minds; old factionalism has resurrected in the hearts of contentious minds.

### **Misrepresentation, False Accusations, Falsification and Slander**

Brother Frost has publicly accused me of being a false accuser. When he publicly accuses me of causing division and endorsing the United Christian Missionary Society, where does that put him? Brother Frost in his article, “Since When Has Misrepresentation Been A Right?”, says, “Whenever desperate men are determined to win an argument or justify a position, they will resort to whatever strategies they think will accomplish it. When unable to answer the opponent’s arguments with truth, they ‘go after the man,’ hoping that the reader will be carried along with the emotions of their presentation and not notice that they have presented no proof of their charges. As the Indian chief responded to such carnal attacks, ‘Much thunder, no rain!’” And again, “Falsification defined is any effort to change a fact which results in a distorted representation of information. Speakers or writers are expected to present facts that are true, accurately presented and provable. When they misrepresent and distort the truth, the reader is deceived. This is the tactic of one whose only desire is to win an argument in the eyes of the reader.” “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Romans 2:21).

It is interesting that brother Frost served as editor of *Gospel Anchor*, published by the Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc., with regional editors and staff, a secular institution which furnished occasion for Bible teaching, and now uses *Gospel Truths* as a medium in responding to my article on secular institutions furnishing occasion for Bible teaching. *Gospel Truths* is published

by Gospel Truths, Inc., a secular institution furnishing occasion for Bible teaching. A corporation is defined as “1. A body that is granted a charter legally recognizing it as a separate legal entity having its own rights, privileges, and liabilities distinct from those of its members. 2. Such a body created for purposes of government. 3. A group of people combined into one body” (*The American Heritage College Dictionary*). Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc. and Gospel Truths, Inc. are separate entities, distinct from the one body, the church (Colossians 1:24), created for the purpose of propagating the Bible. Brother Frost has asked for the Scripture(s) which would authorize individuals to establish a human organization through which God’s word (the Bible) may be propagated. It is the same Scripture(s) that would authorize Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc. and Gospel Truths, Inc. to propagate the Bible. Can he provide the Scripture(s) for such?



Brother Frost seems to be upset about having a meeting cancelled and seems to have a personal vendetta against the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He has simply used my article which was totally unrelated to the cancellation of his meeting and didn’t say a word about the Foundation as an opportunity to vent his frustrations and feelings. I have better things to do than to engage in endless discussions and debates over a matter of opinion. If you don’t think you can subscribe to *Gospel Truths* because it is published by a secular institution furnishing occasion for Bible teaching, don’t subscribe. But don’t disturb and divide the church over your opinion. The church has enough problems to deal with. There are lost souls that need to be saved, erring Christians who need to be restored, and weak brethren who need to be strengthened. Let us not be distracted from this great work by senseless controversies.

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# John Isaac Edwards' Lame Defense

Gene Frost

Titles to an article serve a purpose. A title states the subject matter of the text to follow, or it sets the tone of its contents. Upon reading the title of John Isaac Edwards' article—"The Legs of Brother Frost Are Unequal"—I immediately ruled out my physical legs as being the *subject* of his article; therefore, the title must set forth the *tone*, the general character or attitude of his following comments. My impression is that he was attempting to be clever, somehow hinting at the well-known proverb which begins with *the legs of the lame are not equal*. Indeed he references Proverbs 26:7 in his opening paragraph. The first line of this proverb gives the simile, that which is *like* something else. But where is John Isaac's comparison? His reference is nonsense—he says that I am crippled in my legs, which thankfully is not so. Obviously, he does not understand the proverb ... yet he demonstrates it himself!

In Proverbs 26:7, the legs of a cripple which hang useless *is like* (is compared to) a fool using a proverb (words of wisdom, 1:5-6). The word (Hebrew, *dalyu*), translated "are not equal" in the King James version, means *slacken, feeble*, as the 11 translations I consulted convey: "*hang limp,*" "*hang loose,*" "*are useless,*" "*hang down,*" "*crippled,*" "*hang useless,*" "*hang crippled.*" The uselessness of the lame man's legs *is like unto* the uselessness of a proverb, or word of wisdom, in the mouth of a fool. The fool misses the point and therefore is incapable of using it effectively. "The fool does not understand the 'proverb' (*masal*), has not implemented it, and cannot use it or teach it correctly and profitably." (Allen P. Ross, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Frank E. Gaebelien, gen. ed.), volume 5, page 1088.)

Edwards makes no comparison. He simply states improperly that the legs of Gene Frost are unequal, that is, they are crippled and hang useless. What is his point?

He states no proverb. He makes no use of a proverb. He does not compare crippled legs to anything. He simply makes an untrue statement that the legs of Gene Frost are unequal, or hang useless. However, his statement well illustrates the proverb itself. If he

meant his statement to be a proverb, he failed. If he thought it a wise saying, he failed. His statement is useless ... in fact, as useless as are feeble, crippled legs to a lame man. Proverbs 26:7 declares that a “A fool can use a proverb about as well as a crippled man can use his legs.” (*Today’s English Version.*)

If John Isaac wants the proverb actualized, here it is ... based on the translation above:

**John Isaac Edwards can use a proverb about as well as a crippled man can use his legs.**

John Isaac’s statement about my legs is nonsense, and so it *sets the tone* for his article. This is what we may expect.

### **Introductory Remarks**

In his first article, John I. Edwards endeavored to prove that *all* secular institutions have a right (1) to teach the gospel to the conversion of the lost, as do the churches of Christ, *and* (2) to provide the means or avenues through which it is disseminated. His stated agenda is to justify all secular institutions which assume the prerogatives of the churches of Christ. His unstated agenda is to justify the role of the Guardian of Truth Foundation, and other endeavors like it. He assumes that those of us, who oppose the ambitions of the Foundation, do not believe that any organization can provide means through which one’s teaching may be distributed. He confused *providing* the means or avenues of teaching with the *teaching* itself, so as to conclude that if an organization provides a means, then it is authorized to assume (actually to usurp) the role of the church in teaching. The church is not the only “pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15), and glory may be given to God in the Foundation as well as in church. (Ephesians 3:21)

We have shown the error of his thinking, and apparently did so effectively in that the substance of what we presented is untouched. I knew from the second sentence of his response, when he used the equivocal phrase “furnish occasion,” that John Isaac has a problem. He either has a serious deficiency in ability to comprehend or he is deceitful. I do not think his problem is in intellect, but in character. He says,

“His article denying the right of secular institutions to furnish

occasions for Bible teaching was published by a secular institution furnishing occasions for Bible teaching: Gospel Truths, Inc.”

By “furnish occasions” he means either (1) provides means by which teaching is conveyed, as publishing (printed text) or broadcasting (radio), or (2) the teaching itself, as in writing or speaking. In the case of *Gospel Truths*, it provides the means, as may a newspaper (or newspapers, which was the case when I had a syndicated column published in a number of papers). Using the term unequivocally, as providing the means, we can use this definition in the place of the ambiguous term:

“His article denying the right of secular institutions to (provide means, i.e. newspaper, journal, tract, etc.) for Bible teaching was published by a secular institution (providing means, in this case a journal) for Bible teaching: Gospel Truths, Inc.”

Who denies a publisher the right to publish a newspaper or journal? I don’t. When Edwards says that my article does, he fabricates, or maybe one would rather I say, he misrepresents, or even stronger.

After making his false statement, Edwards comments: “Truly, ‘the legs of the lame are not equal’ (Prov. 26:7).” This makes no sense. It is nonsense!

### **Re.: The Substance of My Response**

In the second paragraph, Edwards takes note of my estimation of his effort:

“First of all, the proposition is ambiguous. The terms are imprecise. The argument is flawed.”

His reaction is: “I reckon anyone could say that about anything, but just saying it doesn’t make it so.” No, John Isaac, an honest man could not say that about a clear and distinct proposition, of terms accurately stated, or of argumentation which is valid. When you refer universally to “anyone,” including yourself, do not include me. The flip side to your statement, “just saying it doesn’t make it so,” is that your denial doesn’t make it “not so.”

In the first place, I did not *just say* that his proposition is ambiguous, his terms are imprecise, and his argument is flawed. I

*showed* them to be so. I referred to them in the beginning so that the reader might be alerted to observe the truth of the matter. In contrast John Isaac sniffs at my statements and the proof by which I showed them to be so, and then ignores them. In my “Response,” I refuted the substance of his article. He makes no attempt to sustain his proposition, and instead treats us with quibbles.

Since John Isaac Edwards has chosen not to deal with the substance of my response to his article, and engages in deceit, I find that I must re-examine the proposition and argumentation of the first article, lest one be deceived into thinking that his “Unequal Legs” article has any merit. Because of the restraint of space, I will defer a discussion of the Foundation, alias the Missionary Society, and the relevancy of the Salem episode, to another article.

Now I will once again expose the fallacy of his proposition, and then address the quibbles and effort to divert attention from the issue.

### **The Issue**

John I. Edwards states the issue:

“May institutions, separate and apart from the church, furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, or may only the church provide such?”

In stating the issue, he sets forth two premises as to who may “furnish an occasion” for the Bible to be taught: (1) secular institutions, or (2) only the church.

*He denies* that “only the church” may fulfill this role. I do not believe that only the church can teach the gospel, and I know of no one who does, and I seriously doubt that Edwards can name anyone who does. And so I stated in my response, “I do not write in defense of the premise that *he denies*.” It’s a pity that he does not know what this means, and wonders aloud, “What premise do I deny?” He ought to know what he denies ... it is one of the two.

He accepts the premise that “some secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible.” He reasons further to conclude that “*all secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible.*” This is the proposition he defends.



However, the proposition is ambiguous, as we shall show *again*, because its terms are imprecise.

### **Imprecise Terms**

When Edwards says that secular institutions may “furnish an occasion” for Bible teaching, he does not define the terms, but, as we noted in our response, we determine what he means by the way in which he uses the phrase.

One time he uses “furnish occasion” to mean (1) providing the opportunity, the means or media, through which one does the teaching, such as newspapers, radio, television, magazines and journals, etc. Then he uses “furnish occasion” to mean (2) the action of teaching itself. Vehicles of communication by which teaching is disseminated are not themselves teachers, but simply avenues through which teachers may instruct. It is a fallacy of reasoning to shift back and forth between the definitions. Because a radio station, for example, makes available time on the air that may be used to teach the gospel, it does not mean that God authorizes radio stations to propagate the gospel, as would the churches of Christ. They may not function as a pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Tim. 3:15) And conversely, because the church may use time in broadcasting the truth, it does not mean that God authorizes the church to go into the broadcasting business, to operate a radio station.

At this point John Isaac quibbles that I “missed the point” and “equated purchasing space in a newspaper and purchasing time on radio or television with furnishing occasion.” To *equate* is to make equal in meaning, and thus he pretends that I believe that when occasion is furnished it must be purchased! How utterly absurd. He knows that I said no such thing, and since I defined the terms, he knows I conclude no such thing. We know he is imprecise in using his own terms, but when he represents others I guess there is no limit to his nonsense. (I suppose we should have expected it; he warned us.)

Purchasing space or time is not an issue. It is, of course, the norm. Newspapers and radio stations are created, not as charitable institutions to give away their services. I do not know of a newspaper or radio station that does not generate revenue from the

sale of its services. If a newspaper offers some free space (as in “letters to the editor,” or a “church page,” or as a syndicated column, which I wrote for years), it is promotional to generate interest in order to increase circulation and eventually greater revenue. Whether the space is offered with or without charge is immaterial to the fact that it only affords the opportunity to teach—the newspaper is not the teacher. Who finances the publishing doesn’t change the point. This is a quibble, a diversion to shift the issue. Whether purchased, or donated, is not the issue. Whichever, I repeat, those who *provide* the media are not the teachers.

Notice, however, in making this quibble, Edwards does make *purchasing* services an issue. He makes a public charge that ...

“Some brethren will say it is acceptable with God to purchase space in a newspaper or on a radio; it would be wrong, however, for the radio station or newspaper to donate space to you.”

I don’t believe there are such brethren! Who are these people who teach that God approves of purchasing space in a newspaper, but declares it a sin to accept space which the newspaper offers without charge? I doubt not that he can put a spin on it to make it appear so, in which case, if he does, I would expect them to call him a false accuser. I call upon John Isaac Edwards to name anyone (and he made it plural) who teaches that it is wrong for one to accept space offered by a newspaper without charge.

Even so, it doesn’t change a thing we have taught. He is now reduced to quibbling, and it isn’t pretty. I urge the reader not to be distracted. Go back and re-read my response to his article.

### **Edwards’ Proposition Is Ambiguous**

The proposition—”all secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible”— is ambiguous because he uses “furnish an occasion” in two senses. John Isaac knows what “ambiguous” means; he states that an ambiguous proposition is (and I quote) “capable of being understood in two or more possible senses or ways.”

What I stated in the opening paragraph of my response, I have proven: “*First of all, the proposition is ambiguous. The terms are imprecise. The argument is flawed.*”

At this point, Edwards has another quibble. He writes, “if my proposition is ambiguous” and “my terms imprecise,” “how can he be certain what I deny?” I beg the reader’s indulgence while I explain this to John Isaac. It is simple. You use faulty arguments to draw a fallacious conclusion. Your conclusion is what you believe. I grant that what you *state* you believe, even though you arrive at it by faulty reasoning. But, you may have a point: “how can anyone be *certain*, regardless of what you say?”

### **Edwards Fails to Make His Case**

He fails to prove his case—“a set of facts or arguments supporting one side of a debate or controversy”—because his argument (“reasons given in support” of his conclusions) is flawed (weak and invalid). All of this we set forth in our response, which was met with nothing more than John Isaac’s caviling. He makes no attempt to answer the proof of our charge of ambiguity, imprecision, and flawed argumentation.

He writes, “He had to say these things in order to have me saying things I did not say.” I want the reader to understand the way John Isaac engages controversies, for which he is known. When he says that he is made to say “things I did not say,” he will point to a statement and comment, “I did not say that ... I did not use those exact words.” He is known to make statements, from which even his friends draw the same conclusion, which may not be, as they later find out, what he “meant.” When he finds himself in an uncomfortable situation because of what he said, he counters that everyone misunderstood, that he did not use the very words they use to express what he said. I can expect the same; therefore I challenge him now to tell what “things” we “have him saying,” which “he did not say” ... and does not believe.

### **Where Is The Scripture?**

John Isaac closes his article, assuming that we are opposed to secular organizations providing means or avenues through which the gospel may be propagated. He completely ignores my last article. How many times do we have to correct him before it finally sinks in? This lack of comprehension seems to be a common failure of the Guardian of Truth Foundation and its advocates. Please understand: The church may use the services of a secular

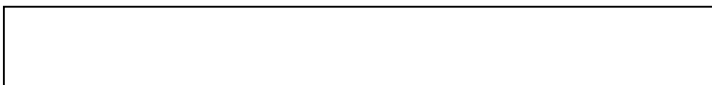
institution (such as a publishing company or broadcasting company) by which to publish printed teaching material or broadcast oral teaching. It is then the teaching of the church, and not the teaching of the secular institution. This is not the issue. The issue is: may the people of God ignore the religious body (church) God ordained to propagate the gospel, and instead form a secular body to usurp the church's role, using the same services of the publishing company and broadcasting company as would the church. The question is: which body did God ordain as the pillar and ground of the truth: the church or the Foundation? Did He ordain both, so that we have the option? We need not just a "yes" or "no"; we need a Scripture.

Note his answer to our question. "Brother Frost has asked for the Scripture(s) which would authorize individuals to establish a human organization through which God's word (the Bible) may be propagated." Edwards' answer is:

"It is the same Scripture(s) that would authorize Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc. and Gospel Truths, Inc. to propagate the Bible."

Inadvertently he has rejected the Guardian of Truth Foundation. You see, the Gospel Anchor Publishing Company is *not* authorized to propagate God's word, to evangelize the world to convert souls to Christ, nor is Gospel Truths, Inc. The publisher of *Gospel Truths* magazine can provide the avenue or means (the printed page) which individuals and/or God's authorized teaching body (the church) may utilize. They may purchase it as a teaching medium (as they would purchase a tract) that teaches the truth on a subject. However, they may not usurp the church's role as an alternative body through which the gospel is freely disseminated to instruct the world. That is what Guardian of Truth Foundation is doing, among things, in their Lectures. That is why it is wrong.

"Can he provide the Scripture(s) for such?" "Scripture(s) that would authorize Gospel Anchor Publishing Company, Inc. and Gospel Truths, Inc. to propagate the Bible."



There is no such Scripture! And since he says he has the same authority (Scripture), he has none! This will be interesting. Now that he has *stated the truth*, will he reject it? There is no authority for any man-made body, even when composed of only Christians, to function in the same role and capacity as the churches of Christ.

Isn't this simple enough? It is not the difficulty of the subject with which we have a problem, but with the ambitions and will of men who simply will not have it so. As some brethren long ago told me, when I asked for this authority, "You may as well know, we are going to do it anyway!" In those days, liberal institutionalists made the same appeal that Edwards makes now. "Desist from opposing what we do! There are lost souls that need to be saved, erring Christians who need to be restored, and weak brethren who need to be strengthened. Let's not be distracted from the great work we are doing through our institutions!" They forget that there are also false teachers who needed to be exposed in their error, and innocent, but misguided, people delivered from the wiles of the devil! (I John 4:1, II Peter. 2:1, Galatians 2:4-5, II Corinthians 10:3-6, Jude 3, Philippians 1:17.)

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# John Isaac Edwards and Missionary Societies

Gene Frost

Early in the history of churches of Christ on the American continent, a program was introduced that has been a bane and thorn in the fellowship and work of churches of Christ. Promoted by zeal rather than divine direction, missionary societies were introduced, formed, and promoted even to the alienation of brethren, and eventually to division and creation of a separate and distinct religious movement. The mid-eighteenth century witnessed troublesome times, as the right of institutions to usurp the role and prerogatives of the churches of Christ was debated.

A definitive debate of the time, which has been published and is presently a historical resource, is the Otey-Briney Debate, between W.W. Otey and J.B. Briney in 1908.

The issues of the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, were revived and debated in the mid-1900s to the close of the century, and have now flared up again in this present time. We have observed that old issues do not go away; they fade until a favorable time. Now once again, we are hearing the arguments made in former times.

## A Fatal Admission

In reviewing the defense of secular institutions by John Isaac Edwards, published in *Gospel Truths*, December 2007, we noted that he “occupies the same ground as those who accepted secular institutions back then. In stating that ‘all secular institutions’—as we now understand his thinking—‘may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible,’ he has endorsed the United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS), as defended by J.B. Briney in the Otey-Briney Debate, held in Louisville, Kentucky, September 14-18, 1908.” (Actually, it is more appropriate to reference the American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS), which preceded the United Christian Missionary Society.) He stated in the introduction of this first article:

“The right of a secular institution to furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible was hotly disputed among brethren in the late 1800's and early 1900's. It has risen again with a new generation.”

John Isaac takes great offense at our identifying him with the very issues brethren in that time faced as missionary societies were introduced, and finally resulted in division and creation of the Disciples of Christ, or the Christian Church. If he did not refer to the missionary societies that fomented division, then let him tell us what was this secular institution then, which has now been resurrected in our day, and who is it that is opposing secular institutionalism? Give us names and documentation that supports the claim.

In his effort to escape the charge of endorsing the very issue that brethren in the 1800s and we today are debating, John Isaac says that we have misrepresented him and J.B. Briney, who in 1908 defended the societies:

"Brother Frost compares me to Briney and the Guardian of Truth Foundation to the United Christian Missionary Society. Either brother Frost does not know anything about the Guardian of Truth Foundation or what a missionary society is, or both! ... Brother Frost says I have 'parroted the arguments of Briney.' Gene misrepresents me in that Briney wrote in defense of human organizations supported by churches, whereas I was discussing how individuals, not churches, may function."

To compare the arguments Edwards makes in defense of societies to that of J.B. Briney, and the GOT Foundation to the UCMS (more appropriately, the American Christian Missionary Society), Edwards concludes that I know nothing about the Foundation or the Society. This quip is taken from the playbook of the Foundation, as are practically every argument he makes ... and it has all been answered. It was expressed by Dan King, in a joint effort with Mike Willis:

*"But there is a difference between us on this point: We actually know what a missionary society is. Gene does not seem to know."* (WHAR 79)

If Edwards had read the book (*Brotherhood Societies*), which he declared is "fruitless and faithless" (obviously without having read it), and if he had read the reply to *We Have A Right* in our book, *We Have A Right Answered*, he could have avoided this blunder that they also made. It is tiresome to have to answer the same old false arguments over, and over again! But we will try one

more time to penetrate the cranium of those who prostrate themselves before the idol of their heart, whose adoration is the creation of man's wisdom, and that in a form where only the Lord's church ought to be.

John Isaac is half-right: Briney wrote in defense of the missionary society supported by *churches*. But as he means "by churches," and *not by individuals*, he is absolutely wrong! Briney also wrote in defense of societies supported by *individuals*!

### **Individually-Supported Missionary Societies**

Read carefully through the following quotations. This is information that you will not read from the *historians* of the GOT Foundation.

"It was not very long after the dissolution of Mahoning Association that 'Co-operation Meetings' began to be held. These meetings were held on different plans. Sometimes individuals of different churches united, organized with president, secretary and treasurer, raised means by contributions, and employed preachers to go into destitute places. This was called 'Individual Cooperation.' Sometimes the meeting was composed of messengers or delegates from several churches who met with one of the churches, in which case it was called, 'Co-operation of Churches.'" (Joseph Franklin and J.A. Headington, *The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, page 239.)

The Mahoning Association dissolved in August, 1830, nineteen years before the American Christian Missionary Society was created in 1849.

In 1844—five years before the ACMS was created—interested individuals were invited to meet in Danville, Kentucky on January 11, 1845 to discuss a plan of co-operation. If adopted, the arrangement would be left to the brethren in attendance. The announcement read:

"This co-operation is designed to be permanent, not yearly: — an individual, not a congregational association. It seems that almost all the efforts to co-operate by churches, have failed." (H. Goodloe, Jos. Smith, J.L. Rice, *Christian Journal*, vol. III, no. 40, page 626.)



The proposed meeting was conducted and the society was formed, as announced in the February 1, 1845 issue of the *Christian Journal*.

In a historical review of the ACMS, F.M. Green relates the financial struggle that the society had from its beginning:

“The financial question has always been a question of more or less difficulty to the General Society. The sources from which it has derived its revenue for the prosecution of its work have been various and uncertain.” (F.M. Green, *Christian Missions*, page 160.)

Support came from individuals and churches, but mostly from individuals:

“For the first twenty years or until 1869, and including that year, the revenue of the society was largely derived form Life Directors, Life Members, Annual Members; increased, however, by voluntary contributions from churches and individuals.” (F.M. Green, *Christian Missions*, page 166.)

In 1868 Thomas Munnell, Isaac Errett, W. K. Pendleton, G. W. Elley, and A. R. Benton, in a resolution which they hoped to increase revenue, acknowledged that the “life-membership and life-directorships” had “been the main and permanent sources of income to the Society” (Earl West, *Search For The Ancient Order*, vol. 2, page 94.)

In an effort to vitalize the ever-failing attempts to activate a brotherhood missionary society supported by churches, in October, 1869 a new plan was adopted, called the Louisville Plan, which effectively killed the struggling ACMS. However, it too was a failure:

“The ‘Louisville Plan’ was mainly an attempt to reach general ‘church co-operation,’ and an honest effort was made for ten successive years to realize something from it. It was a failure; and whoever reads and carefully studies the history of the Church of Christ from the beginning, may well doubt whether ‘church co-operation’ was ever realized except in very limited circles.” (F.M. Green, *Christian Missions*, page 148.)

John Isaac Edwards presents a distorted picture of history, denying what even a casual historian should know. The missionary society is a body or organization created to propagate the gospel.

Its support may be from individuals and churches, or from individuals alone, or from churches alone. Whatever the source of its support, the missionary society is unlawful and usurps the role God gave to the local churches.

### **Briney's Argumentation**

Edwards makes a distinction where there is none. Not only is he ignorant of the history of the missionary societies that fomented division between the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) and churches of Christ, but also in particular J.B. Briney in his debate with W.W. Otey.

"Gene misrepresents me in that Briney wrote in defense of human organizations supported by churches, whereas I was discussing how individuals, not churches, may function."

John Isaac identifies the society as only church supported. I don't know how he overlooked the numerous references I made in opposing *both* church-supported *and* *individually-supported* missionary societies. I referenced the societies promoted in the 1800-1900s, identified the organizations, and made the distinctions in *Brotherhood Societies*, the book (I repeat) he identified publicly and warned brethren as being "fruitless and faithless." Did he condemn and label a book he never read? Obviously so. That was also a directive in the playbook of the Foundation: (you can guess who Dan King had in mind) "his efforts ought to be rejected outright and he should be ostracized." (WHAR 12)

I doubt if Edwards has read the *Otey-Briney Debate*. He speaks with authority about books he has not read. If he has read the *Otey-Briney Debate* and *Brotherhood Societies*, tell us so, and I will acknowledge the fact ... and will attribute his ignorance of the facts to a lack of comprehension rather than to pretentiousness.

He says that "anyone with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education can see the difference between a secular institution such as a funeral home furnishing occasion for Bible teaching and the church making contributions to The United Christian Missionary Society!" I wonder if his 8<sup>th</sup> grader can see a difference between the funeral home and the Guardian of Truth Foundation in furnishing "an occasion for folks to be taught"?

Did I misrepresent the missionary societies and J.B. Briney? No, it is John Isaac Edwards who misrepresents the Debate.

In the debate, Briney first describes the missionary society as composed of individuals, not churches:

"They are voluntary organizations composed of Christian people who are banded together for the promotion of the cause of Christ. These organizations are made up of men and women with the love of God in their hearts, and with a desire, under Christ, to advance the interests of His kingdom." (O-B 160)

He first describes the individually-supported society and then the congregationally-supported society.

"There are no ways or means indicated by which such a work as this may be carried on, and, hence, Christian men are thrown upon their own judgment, upon their own resources as to that, and it is their privilege to devise, as best they may be able to do, the means to be employed through this organization for the furtherance of the work that it has in hand." (*Otey-Briney Debate*, page 163, underline added.)

"I may take it upon myself to go here, or there, or elsewhere, at home or abroad, and tell the story of Jesus and His love. Well, any two may combine and send a third, and say to that third, you go and stand before the people and preach to them the story of the Cross, while we stand behind you. We will support you in this work. As you do it, you may look to us and call upon us and draw upon us for whatever funds may be necessary in the carrying out of this mission. Well, if two may do this, then any number may do it. These two individuals can very readily confer with one another and without difficulty lay their plans and make their arrangements, and meet all the demands that the cause makes upon them. But here are a hundred men or five hundred men. (*Otey-Briney Debate*, pages 166)

In his first speech, he gives several illustrations of individuals forming and supporting a missionary society. Later, in the same paragraph as the above quotation, he introduces congregational support.

"Now, my dear friends, it is sometimes the case that one local church can take up a man and send him out to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I shall have more to say about that a little further along, if my time will allow. ... And they select the man, or this individual congregation may do the same; select their man, and

the field, and provide for his needs in that field ..." (*Otey-Briney Debate*, page 167.)

Briney then describes many congregations which can not by themselves support a man, in which case 2, or 100, or 500 can support the preacher. To do so each congregation may select two representatives, who then organize, select the man and the field, and agree to support him. Now he has the congregationally-supported missionary society. And this is about the way it happened: with interested individuals, and then congregations became involved so that the concept of a brotherhood missionary society evolved.

A century later, in my lifetime, liberals of the day formed a missionary society, called the Gospel Press, which was

"supported entirely by individuals." (T.E. Milholland, *Firm Foundation*, March 26, 1957, page 207.)

Remember that John Isaac emphasized that he "was discussing how individuals, not churches, may function." It matters not. When a secular institution usurps the role of the local church in propagating the gospel, it matters not whether it is financed by churches or individuals; it an unlawful body.

Now that John Isaac has clearly made it known that he defends secular institutions who are supported by individuals (not churches), is this not true of the Guardian of Truth Foundation? What must a missionary society do, other than change its name and drop the phrase "missionary society," to be accepted and defended? Now John Isaac may say, "There's a difference. The Foundation operates a business enterprise and sells books." He obviously does not know that the missionary society also published and obtained revenue through the sale of their books, to wit:

"In the report of the Board to the General Convention in 1864, B.W. Johnson, then Corresponding Secretary, used the following language: 'It gives us pleasure in this discussion of ways and means, to acknowledge the devotion of our venerable President Campbell, of the copyright of the Christian Hymn Book, to be held in trust for the society. The proceeds from the sales of the revised book, will add very materially to the resources of the society.'" (F.M. Green, *Christian Missions*, page 100.)

The GOT Foundation publishes, including *song books*.

It may be that John Isaac will say, “But the GOT Foundation doesn’t send funds to preachers in their effort to further the gospel.” Why not? Does it not send printed material to preachers to use in their teaching of the gospel, and give them books for their personal study? The Foundation spokesmen reason that a contribution of material, as a manuscript, or of time and effort, is equivalent to a contribution of money.

“When he writes for these papers, which are human institutions, or ‘brotherhood societies,’ he is making a contribution to them, despite his objections to the contrary.” (WHAR 47)

“And these human institutions solicit contributions of articles for their publication. Who said that money is the only contribution that can be made to the human institution?” (WHAR 48)

The Foundation does not send financial support to preachers now, but in their rubric what would prohibit it?

Therefore, we repeat: will John Isaac accept a present-day missionary society, which accepts financial support from individuals, and not from churches? On what basis can he object?

### **The Salem Affair**

In my response to John I. Edwards’ first article, I made reference to events that occurred before the church in Salem, Indiana, prior to his moving, not to open discussion of the particulars, but to show the agenda of his promotion and the hypocrisy in his exhortation. He writes in a nebulous style, seeking to persuade the readers to accept his proposition before declaring what secular institution in particular he seeks to promote. Therefore I cut through the confusion of his premise, exposed the fallacy of the proposition, and then showed where he stands—“stands” is perhaps a little too strong; instead “where his allegiance is”—in the present controversy before brethren. In Salem, in overseeing who is invited, during his “watch,” to preach, he revealed his allegiance to the Guardian of Truth Foundation. As one reads their confusing defenses, it is beneficial to know the real purpose and conclusion of the argumentation. It is here that we make the connection.

He lamented that “meetings are being cancelled,” when he in fact precipitated it himself. I didn’t bring up the subject of meeting cancellations. While he sheds crocodile tears, the reader should know that the elders of the Westside church in Salem apologized to me for canceling a meeting, as they wrote: “because of controversy about you created in the congregation as the result of brother John Isaac Edwards speaking to the congregation and casting doubt about your soundness.”

I am sure that John Isaac would like to shift full attention to the Salem affair, and away from the debacle of his defense of all secular institutions in propagating the gospel. However, this is not the venue for it. The editor has been gracious and liberal in offering the pages of this journal for the present discussion. Perhaps we can find a different venue, in which to discuss the events of that situation from a Scriptural perspective. He has no cause to exult in his dishonorable conduct.

Gospel Truths  
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# The Salem Church

Gene Frost

Because of events before the church in Salem, Indiana, I know where John Isaac Edwards stands on the issue of individually-supported missionary societies, and specifically concerning the Guardian of Truth Foundation in assuming a role that God assigned to the churches of Christ. The church, not the Foundation, is God's pillar and ground of the truth. Each and every loyal local church of Christ reflects the wisdom and glory of God. (Eph. 3:8-10, 21.) The Salem affair reveals much about those who rally to the human society. This is why I mentioned the Salem church—not because of the cancellation of a meeting, which is of no consequence; it matters not; it was simply the occasion that precipitated Edwards' militant reaction.

He complained to one of the elders that my coming would damage the church's reputation. This was discussed by the elders. Doubt about my soundness was planted among them. I was notified of John Isaac's comments. To alleviate any doubt, I suggested that the elders read my book, and the offer was accepted. At my expense I sent four copies, one to each elder.

Shortly thereafter Edwards wrote to one of the elders:

"I see where your friend Gene Frost is still riding his hobby horse. He has devoted a whole website to this fruitless issue. ... You really need to get a copy of *We Have A Right* from Truth Bookstore and read both sides of this issue. It might just defrost you."

Two weeks later, John Isaac stood before the church, read Acts 20:29-30 —"*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*"— held my book, *Brotherhood Societies*, and stated that the book was creating a "faithless and fruitless controversy."

That same evening, the elders met with John Isaac, and it was recommended that I come and discuss my position. John Isaac

responded, “Not on my watch!” He refused to have a face-to-face meeting with me. The elders could not prevail.

On December 14, 2005, the four elders wrote me to cancel the meeting for the date scheduled. They wrote,

“This is not done because we feel you are a false teacher. Rather it is because of controversy created in the congregation as the result of brother John Isaac Edwards speaking to the congregation and casting doubt about your soundness.

“Brotherly, and wishing you the best,” Elders.

Because of the confusion created in the minds of the members, I offered every family, at my expense, a copy of *Brotherhood Societies*.

That John Isaac Edwards has championed the cause of the Foundation cannot be disputed. I mentioned the events in the Salem church in response to his attempt to justify the Foundation and counter any opposition; if not to justify the Foundation, then for what purpose?

### **False Accuser**

John I. Edwards acknowledges that I accused him of being a false accuser. It was no idle word. He put me in the context of Acts 20:28 with “grievous wolves.” He discounted my defense of the Lord’s church in *Brotherhood Societies*, describing it fruitless (unproductive, useless) and faithless (dishonest, unreliable). If this were true, I would be a false teacher, which some understood him to implicitly express, including the four elders who assured me that they did not view me as such.

I wrote Edwards personally, asking that he “cite specifically wherein I am guilty of teaching error.” I wrote, “Without a proof of the charge, you are guilty of making a false accusation, of slandering a brother. (James 4:11)” After numerous efforts by myself and others to get him to apologize for his public accusation, and his adamant refusal, I finally charged him with slander, of being a false accuser. I have the proof of my charge in the form of signed statements of witnesses.

For over two years, I heard nothing from my accuser ... no apology, no word of repentance for his sin.



Yet he made a feeble, “You, too!” When I publicly accused him, he asks, where does that put me (GF)? It does nothing to me; I remain the one falsely charged and that without proof or even an attempt to defend the charge! When I accuse him of slander, it is accompanied with proof. His charges are hollow. When challenged for proof, he retreats behind a veil of silence.

As outlandish a paragraph as I have ever read is his appeal for sympathy and approval by assuming a self-righteous posture of imitating Jesus. Here again is his second paragraph under the subtitle, “The Salem Church.”

*“To this day, brother Frost has never contacted me personally. He sent me a letter 9 months after the fact, addressed to me and “To whom it may concern,” in which he charged me with accusing him of being unsound, accusing me of “criminal and sinful” actions, of “making a false accusation, of slandering a brother.” Other brethren received the letter before I did. I felt that he was doing to me the very thing that he accused me of, and I did not respond, following the example of my Lord, ‘Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again...but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously’ (1 Pet. 2:21-23).”*

*This is absolutely false!* I wrote John Isaac on August 22, 2006, *addressed him personally*, both in the letter and on the envelope. It was not *addressed* to “whom it may concern.” Since others were actively concerned, in particular the elders, I sent a copy to the elders of the church (“to whom it may concern”), as I notified John Isaac at the close of my letter. Apparently, John Isaac does not know that the abbreviation CC literally represents “carbon copy” and indicates “that a duplicate has been or should be sent to another person” as it concerns them. The CC is not to whom a letter is addressed. The letters to Edwards and the elders were posted the same day. If some letters were delivered later than others, that is not of my doing, but is due to the forwarding and deliveries of the mail by the U.S. Postal System. This is so elementary, it is embarrassing to have to explain it.

I had waited nine months after the public slander before the church before writing. I knew some were talking to John Isaac, trying to persuade him to make correction. I waited in hope that he

would come to his senses and recognize the gravity of his act. Finally, I addressed what he had done and stated what was needed to correct the matter. Up to that time, I had made no charges against him. Now John Isaac says that in writing to him I was doing (present tense) the very thing I accused (past tense) him of doing. I had made no accusation before this! Yet he says that had I accused him of slandering me, and now I was doing the same thing to him. The truth is I had not accused him, in deference to the elders who I thought were dealing with the problem. When I did finally confront him, nine months after the fact, I had cause, with witnesses and a signed statement. He confuses the time-table. John Isaac's comment is a perfect example of weaseling (in its informal sense: "to back out of a situation or commitment in a sneaky or cowardly manner"). Using my Lord as his excuse is disgusting. Jesus was "reviled"—as described by Albert Barnes: "He *was* reviled. He was accused of being a seditious man; spoken of as a deceiver; charged with being in league with Beelzebub, the 'prince of the devils' and condemned as a blasphemer against God. ... He did not revile those who had reproached him. He asked that justice be done. He demanded that if he had spoken evil, they should bear witness of the evil; but beyond that he did not go." (Barnes' Notes, *First Epistle General of Peter*, 2:23.)

Jesus was not reviled for wrong-doing. He did not sin. (1 Pet. 2:22) Nor was He above the law—He lived by it and honored it. He told His distracters: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil" (John 18:13). He was willing to face his accusers.

Unlike Jesus, John Isaac did wrong. In charging him with it, we have witnesses. He refuses to face the recipient of his slander. He refuses to make any correction. He refuses to answer charges against him because he is unwilling to take responsibility for his conduct. He is guilty of sin against a brother and will not repent! Rather, he allows others to "fall on the sword" for him. In this, he does not follow the example of the Lord.

John Isaac has a penchant for making others appear guilty in situations where he is guilty. It is amazing how he can reverse the guilt: "To this day, brother Frost has never contacted me personally." So the one who slanders another has no responsibility,

but the one who is slandered must first contact the slanderer personally! It matters not that *to this day, John Isaac has not contacted me personally*, I was supposed to contact him. Really! Can someone explain how it was my responsibility to write to him. I had said nothing derogatory about him. I was not at fault. He was the slanderer. He made the personal unprovoked attack. When I did write him, I did not address him without a cause. He gave me cause, and even then I did not slander (make a false statement and damage his reputation). I stated what he had said publicly and how it was understood by those who heard him, and unless he could prove his charges before the church he would be guilty of making “false charges.”

I wrote a second letter, registered, addressed to him on September 9, 2006, which he refused to accept. The elders also received a copy, which I have no doubt he has read.

After calling upon him to either make correction or prove his charges, *without any response from him*, finally on November 1, 2006, I issued a statement marking John Isaac:

*“Therefore, I hereby publicly charge John Isaac Edwards with publicly making a false accusation against a brother, that he refuses to justify or defend his actions, and sets aside divine directions in dealing with such matters.”*

Friends of many years are estranged as a result. And he equates the two?! To cap it all, he assumes a righteous stance by refusing to admit any wrong. Strange how one who commits a grievous sin against another can claim to be a victim and he whom he slandered now is the “bad guy”! Edwards is indeed devious. I say this not to be ugly, but to describe what he has done.

The entire episode related above is based upon his determination to defend the Guardian of Truth Foundation, which he feared would be publicly addressed and exposed before the church. His articles in *Gospel Truths* were designed to support his actions, and to join the advocacy that secular institutions have the right to propagate the gospel and to conduct public worship, which we see as a usurpation of the role God gave the churches of Christ.

While time is still available to him, we pray that our erring brother will repent and correct the wrong he has done. And this

desire is also for all who have been caught up in this human adventure, have compromised the truth in support of error, and have become enablers of those who actively engage in unlawful activities, i.e. activities unauthorized by God.