

Truth Magazine Lectureship – Part One

“Is There An Honest Man Among Them?”

by Gene Frost

This article is Part One in response to the lecture by Tom Roberts, presented in the Truth Magazine Lectureship 2009. Part Two is entitled “Exegesis of I Timothy 3:15.” The parts can be read in any order.

On June 22-25, 2009, the Guardian of Truth Foundation held its annual “Truth Magazine Lectures.” On Thursday, Tom Roberts, a staff writer of *Truth Magazine*, spoke on “The Pillar and Ground of the Truth,” as it relates to the present Conflict over Institutionalism. The institutional conflict has resulted from the insistence of men to promote human institutions in replicating the role of the local churches of Christ. Institutionalism today is expressed in the claim of the Guardian of Truth Foundation to have the right to mirror the prerogatives and role of the local church. The church is “the pillar and ground of the truth,” and God has authorized no other organization to assume this role. The effort by Roberts, as published in the lectureship book, was to show that I Timothy 3:15—“the pillar and ground of the truth”—is predicated of the *universal* church, and not the *local* church, thus to allow other institutions than the divine, namely human organizations such as the Guardian of Truth Foundation, to function in the same capacity. We will examine this contention later in our presentation.

Sometime toward the last of May, this writer received a printed copy of Tom Roberts’ prepared speech. Upon reading the speech he planned to present, I observed that he repeated arguments which had been offered before by officers of the Foundation, arguments which we had shown to be misrepresentations and logically fallacious. It was obvious that he had not read the previous exchanges, especially since what we believe and teach he again misrepresented, even after we had corrected it before. If he was writing from a position of ignorance or misinformation, he needed to be corrected before he presented the same misrepresentations orally in his speech. On June 1st, I telephoned Tom Roberts and informed him that I was misrepresented in his speech. He assured me that he would not intentionally misrepresent anyone. I responded that if he was honest, which I accepted him to be, then I would write to him and therein correct essential misrepresentations, contrasting them with statements (quotations) I had made in the past which clearly show that I believed and taught otherwise than represented. I offered further to send him my four books, the primary references, so that he could read these statements in context. Even though the lectureship book was already printed, or was in the process of being printed and bound, and could not be corrected, he could at least make corrections in his oral presentation. On June 2, I shipped the four books (retail, plus postage, over fifty dollars), without charge to him. On June 5, I posted an electronic letter, and on the same day I also mailed a printed copy of the same. The books were delivered on June 6. Therefore, Tom had nearly three full weeks to examine the material and prepare a corrected statement for his speech on the 25th. Following is the letter he received.

Letter to Tom Roberts, Dated June 5

Dear Tom:

I am writing pursuant to our telephone conversation Monday evening past, when I expressed disappointment with your article, "The Church is the Pillar and Ground of Truth (1 Timothy 3:15)." I stated that I planned to respond to it. I concluded that you obviously had not studied the objections which many of us have levied against the Guardian of Truth Foundation in its role which mirrors churches of Christ in propagating the gospel and in conducting public worship. Out of concern for the truth and your soul I felt compelled to call first, to determine your attitude toward the truth and to find out whether or not you would have an interest in reading what has gone before. It would be better not to have to cover the same ground. With your assurance that truth is your foremost desire, and the avowal that you will not knowingly misrepresent anyone, I gladly offered you my published material in study of the issue. I have mailed to you four of my published studies so that you can compare what I actually state (and the context in which it is stated) against what is alleged. In so doing, I am trusting in your honesty and integrity not only to delete from your speech the misrepresentations but to repudiate them in the article (and book which you say is published and will be available at the lectureship). It is too late to prevent the publication of your material, but it is not too late to make correction in your presentation.

To save you time, I will reference a few of your statements with my refutation. At your leisure, you can read the studies I have made, and my responses to Dan King and Mike Willis, who are notorious in knowingly and deliberately misrepresenting what I believe and teach, which I will demonstrate in this letter. All quotes from "The Church is the Pillar and Ground of the Truth (1 Timothy 3:15)," are referenced only with the page number in parenthesis. Underlines are added for emphasis.

[Note: I had listed a number of misrepresentations, but after compiling the following response, I realized that I have presented as much as you will have the time to consider and correct in your lecture. I perceive the following to be your basic opposition, which I clearly show to be gross misrepresentation. When this is corrected, there is but little left in the form of quibbles.]

Tom Roberts' Personal Misrepresentations of Gene Frost (and Others)

***"They continue to assert that teaching the Bible is the exclusive work of the church. They deny the right of group activity to anything save the local church."* (22)**

Likewise, "it is *sinful* for brethren to arrange a situation in which prayer, singing, and Bible teaching takes place outside of the local church." (22)

"Are individuals authorized to teach, sing, pray, or practice benevolence outside the local church? As ludicrous as it sounds, some are denying individuals these rights." (27)

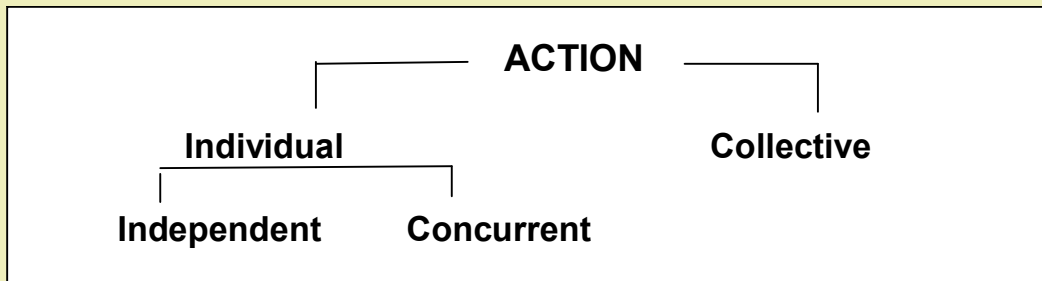
Response

Since I am referenced in the same paragraph, I presume that "they" includes me. I am a principal identified by name. Now compare how I am *represented* with what I *actually state*.

Brotherhood Societies, pages 4-5, October 1977:

"A failure to properly distinguish between individual action and joint action has been a constant source of confusion in the churches of Christ and detrimental to its peace and harmony. For the sake of clarity, we define *individual action* as conduct involving solely the volition of the individual or individuals involved. When several individuals are involved, the action is *concurrent* as distinguished from *independent* action when the individual acts alone. *By joint action* we mean action in which individuals cooperate, each acquiescing his own volition in favor of the collective will. It also may

be called *collective action*, a term we prefer and will use henceforth in this study. (When we speak of volition of the individual, we understand that it is the exercise of will only in harmony with the will of God, and not a will independent of divine authority.)



“Individual Action

“Serving and worshipping God alone, by oneself, is obviously authorized, as we pointed out in the opening thoughts of this article. One is to pray to God, study His word, teach his neighbor, et al. No one else is involved in his personal action. It is *independent*. (Matt. 6:6, 1Tim. 4:15-16, 2 Tim. 2:2)

“Individual action also may be *concurrent*. That is, two or more pray together, study together, and teach together without losing any individuality in the association. There is no organic tie (in a judicial sense). Each remains independent in control of his personal participation, though in a dependent action. The volition of none is surrendered to the others, even though they share in the action undertaken. An excellent example of concurrent action is found in the teaching endeavor of Paul and Barnabas with others, including John Mark. There was no organization involved, no head or authority to whom the others submitted, and no treasury belonging to the association. There was only an expression of willingness to labor together in a relationship where each was independent in control of his own funds. This is borne out by the fact that enroute, John Mark decided to leave the effort and return to Jerusalem. His leaving did not constitute a violation of authority, was never labeled a sin, did not disrupt fellowship. Later, Barnabas was willing to work with John Mark in a similar effort. Personal preference and judgment were the only factors in Paul’s refusal to take him with them: ‘Paul *thought not good* to take him with them.’ And although Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways, the incident of John Mark was not a matter affecting their fellowship in Christ. Paul, in fact, later commends John Mark. (Acts 12:25, 13:2-5, 11, 15:37-38, Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11, Phile. 23-24)

“Collective Action

“In collective action, the individual acquiesces his personal will in favor of the collective will. Involved is a commitment or agreement to work together or to accomplish a particular goal, an accepted submission to authority that governs or directs the collectivity, and the formation of a treasury that finances the functioning of the collectivity. The collective action may be brief or extended in time.”

Brotherhood Societies, pages 90-91, June 1981:

“He [Mike Willis] teaches that we believe that “to discharge ... *individual responsibilities* with reference to ... teaching the word of God” it has to be done in the church, and concludes:

“I know of no passage which says that the work of teaching the word of God has been given *exclusively* to the church.’

“Contrast the charge with what I wrote in October 1977 (*Gospel Anchor*):

“Responsibility before God is individual. Each soul shall give account for himself. I will not answer for you, nor you for me. We individually are called, individually respond, individually worship, individually serve, and individually will be judged. Whatever concurrent and collective action may involve the individual, it does not negate nor diminish the individual’s responsibility.”

“Serving and worshiping God alone, by oneself, is obviously authorized, as we pointed out in the

opening thoughts of this article. One is to pray, study His word, teach his neighbor, et al.”

“We even charted the distinction between “individual” and “collective” action, showing that to teach, support preaching, worship, and to edify are all authorized. ...

“Since he has ‘studied’ this material, he must know that his charge that we do not believe in individual action in teaching is a false charge. It is inexcusable to say that we believe that ‘teaching the word of God has been given *exclusively* to the church.’”

We Have A Right Answered, page 42, © 2006:

“Willis charges that Gene Frost believes that the local church is the only collective arrangement in which men can worship and work, and he defines a collectivity as anytime or anyplace two or more pray, or sing together, or teach another person. *This is a misstatement of what I believe.* I believe that the *collectivity of God’s people, authorized or ordained by God, for their collective action in worship or teaching, is the local church!* “Collectivity” refers to the body of Christians, the organization or functioning unit. If Willis knows of another such body of Christians, which God has ordained, which may engage in collective worship which He has ordained, then let him tell us what it is! I deny that he can find another “collectivity of God’s people,” other than the church, “ordained by God to teach the gospel” as His pillar and ground of truth. I know that he cannot find in the Bible the collective body, identified as the GOT Foundation. If he could, he would, and he would not have to pervert what we say, or put words in our mouth, or close his hand upon our mouth to silence what we do say.

“Of course two Christians or more can go together to teach (not as a collectivity or organization or body), or sing together, or pray together. We have before established the point that God’s organization, or collectivity of His people as a functioning unit, is the church. At the same time, we pointed out that individuals can concurrently journey together, as did Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-5), or pray and sing together, as did Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25). They did not form another organization, or body, or collectivity to operate alongside the church as a parachurch organization. When King writes —

“We are informed by Gene Frost and others that we cannot sing together, pray together, study the Bible together outside the local church” (WHAR 70).

— understand that *I said no such thing! I have corrected both King and Willis for attributing these false statements to me. Others have corrected Willis in open forum of misrepresenting (as I relate elsewhere in this book).*”

They Have No Right, pages 135-137, © 2008:

“Not only do they refuse to correct misrepresentations, even after having them called to their attention, they continue to repeat them. They compound egregious misrepresentations by making statements which are represented as being what we *say*, when, in fact, we say no such thing. Here is the partial record.

“Gene Frost and J. T. Smith will now take their places as two of the new names forever associated with intemperate attacks upon the right of individuals to work together in legitimate business organizations.” (WHAR 12)

“Not so. We have never denied individuals the right to work together in legitimate business organizations. They cite no reference because there is none.” (Cf. WHARA 5-8.)

“He (GF) is in fact right when he says that brethren tend to ignore him and generally avoid his company when this subject is discussed.” (WHAR 13-14)

“I said no such thing! I have not experienced any such hostility, but generally have been cordially accepted. (Cf. WHARA 23-28.)

“We are informed by Gene Frost and others that we cannot sing together, pray together, study the Bible together outside the local church.” (WHAR 70)

“Never happened! This is a prevarication. I do not even believe what they state that I said.

“He (GF) says it is a sin for these people to worship together outside the confines of the local church...” (WHAR 71)

“Untrue! When and where did I say this? They do not cite any source reference because they know it is not the truth.

“These brethren are falling prey to the old errors of the anti-Bible class brethren. Years ago they sought to limit the study of Scripture to the formal worship services, i.e. ‘the assembly.’ It was their contention that all Christians had to come together formally into a single assembly in order to study the Bible, and that ‘the assembly must not be broken up into little pieces.’ ... Gene Frost, Don Martin and others are guilty of the same sort of thinking.” (WHAR 73)

“Do the Foundation defenders possess the power of God to know what others think? Was I guilty of this sort of thinking and not even aware of what I was thinking? Was this what I was thinking when I debated the ‘anti-Bible class’ brethren, thinking they were right at the very time I was opposing their arguments? Can King tell me when and where I was guilty of this thinking? Is my “thinking” a matter of record?

“Brother Frost’s capacity for logical thought leaves us in utter amazement! Furthermore, he takes on the aura of the Pope of Rome in his capacity to speak ex cathedra about such things.” (WHAR 76)

“With his incapacity to think outside of his institutional box, I can understand King’s amazement. However, to state that I assume papal authority is not hyperbole; it is slander. What “edicts” (the word he used in the next paragraph) have I issued? By what authority does *he* make his charge? It is not papal, and it is not divine. The authority is his own. He cites no reference because none exists.

“For these men to allege that Christians cannot worship, sing and pray together, in circumstances outside the assembly of the church—without somehow robbing the church of its glory in the plan of God—is ludicrous in the extreme.” (WHAR 83)

“What is ludicrous is the foolish allegation that we supposedly alleged that Christians cannot worship outside of an assembly of the church. This is so absurd that it is difficult to imagine that anyone could actually make the charge ... and yet they do, and even after denial, they persist. How does one answer dishonest men?

“The reader cannot know what the issue—the Scriptures authorize individuals to establish and maintain human organizations (such as the Guardian of Truth Foundation) through which God may be worshipped and His word propagated, which prerogatives are given to churches of Christ —is all about by reading the flawed material of *We Have A Right*. For an honest and serious study, it is incumbent upon the reader to read *Old Issues Do Not Fade Away*, *Brotherhood Societies*, and *We Have A Right Answered*, along with articles written by many other writers who have seen the unlawful role of the Guardian of Truth, the fallacies argued by its supporters, and potential dangers it poses to the churches of Christ. *We commend to you the reading of this material*. This, we understand, requires considerable reading, an expenditure of time and effort, but the truth deserves the effort.

“Our fellowship with the Lord and with one another is dependent upon our walking in the light of truth. Where there is fellowship with others, let us keep this unity of the Spirit in a bond of peace ... to be broken only by a spirit of rebellion, when a brother cares only for his own way in rejection of the Lord’s authority.”

For quick references to the various points you raise, here is a list of pages where I have previously dealt with them. In *Old Issues Do Not Fade Away*: pages 19-23, 82-93; *Brotherhood Societies*: pages 4-19, 55-63, 70-73, 88-93, 109-113, 121; *We Have A Right Answered*: pages 3, 5-14, 42, 45-47, 53-56, 64, 74-78, 84-85, 95, 117-119, 133-134, 140, 142-148, 152, 161; *They Have No Right*, pages 35-36, 134-137.

I hope that you will carefully examine this material, where you can read everything in context. I pray for your honest appraisal.

I call to your attention the fact that when I am accused of saying things which I did not say, King and Willis give no reference; they cite no source. You have done the same. To try to amend your article with references will demonstrate to you the fact such references (to what I supposedly believe and teach) are manufactured. This needs to be acknowledged and corrected.

Tom, I will have more to say when I make a response to your article (and the chapter in the GOT publication of the lectureship).

Sincerely,
(signed)
Gene Frost
CC: To Whom It May Concern.

Tom Roberts’ Lecture on June 25th

I have heard Tom’s oral presentation in Bowling Green. He did not justify his charge that we believe that teaching the Bible is the exclusive work of the church, and therefore it is *sinful* for brethren to arrange a situation in which prayer, singing, and Bible teaching takes place outside of the local church.

“Are individuals authorized to teach, sing, pray, or practice benevolence outside the local church? As ludicrous as it sounds, some are denying individuals these rights.” (Lectureship book, page 290.)

That there is no misunderstanding of what Tom is saying, note that by “outside of the local church” he means *outside of the assembly*:

“*Is it right* for brethren to pray individually and collectively outside the local

assembly? Is prayer exclusively the work of the local church?

“*Is it right* for brethren to sing individually and collectively outside the local assembly? Is singing exclusively the work of the local church?”

“*Is it right* for brethren to preach and teach individually and collectively outside the local assembly? Is preaching and teaching exclusively the work of the local church?” (Lectureship book, 289)

Tom blatantly accuses “some”—he has made clear they are those who oppose the dual role of the Foundation—of denying individuals the right to pray, sing, and teach outside of the assembly of the church! He repeats the charge over and over. In other words, all praying, singing, and teaching must be in an assembly of the church, and outside an assembly it is sinful!

This is the most absurd charge, so ridiculous it ought to be immediately rejected with scorn. I certainly do not believe, much less teach, what he alleges. That he knows better is noted by the fact that he quotes me as teaching otherwise. He quotes the *Gospel Anchor* of October, 1977 (published in *Brotherhood Societies*, page 4), where I explained the concurrent action of individuals:

That is, two or more may pray together, study together, and teach together without losing any individuality in the association. . . . An excellent example of concurrent action is found in the teaching endeavor of Paul and Barnabas with others, including John Mark.”

I even drew a “picture” showing the difference between individual and collective action. The article in the *Gospel Anchor* is extensively quoted in my letter of June 5, 2009 above. I ask the reader to please read this letter again, particularly the response under the heading of “Tom Roberts’ Personal Misrepresentations of Gene Frost (and Others).”

When Tom Roberts stood before an audience in Bowling Green, Kentucky, he knew that I do not believe and that I had not taught that individuals have no right to pray, sing, or teach outside of a church assembly. I know of no one who believes and teaches such nonsense. Yet he refused to correct the false charges he made, which are now being circulated in the Foundation’s lectureship book. Just three weeks before his speech in Bowling Green, he protested his honesty, that he would not knowingly misrepresent anyone. He can no longer say that. Let me rephrase it: He can longer *truthfully* say that.

Tom Roberts now joins the ranks of Dan King and Mike Willis, whose lead he follows by repeating their fallacious argumentation, and now, in demonstration of his own character failure! What is it with these supporters of the Foundation? How can they knowingly misrepresent their opponents? When Dan King was rebuked for making a false charge, he acknowledged that we denied it. His defense was:

“In some of their writings they say that it is not the reason for their opposition, but the reality is that they are being more than somewhat disingenuous.” (WHAR 27)

Dan King *knew* that he misrepresented us, but rejected our protest as being dishonest and insincere (disingenuous). All that we had taught before was discounted; his solipsistic thinking was all that mattered. This attitude rules out any hope for a fair and honest exchange of thought. Defense of the Foundation is paramount, rising even above truth itself. Do Dan King and Mike Willis, and now Tom Roberts, call themselves Christians as they make these false charges? If so, they shame the name of Christ, and give occasion to the enemies of the cross to blaspheme!

I shall repeat the question I asked in our exchange with Dan King and Mike Willis: How does one answer dishonest men? I wonder, *Is there anyone connected with*

the Guardian of Truth Foundation who will demand of their number that misrepresentations cease and be corrected? I know that there are others, loyal to the Guardian of Truth Foundation, who surreptitiously have repeated the misrepresentations. They share the guilt, as well as do members of the board of the Foundation, who are responsible for the publication and dissemination of their lectureship book. (Rom. 1:32) Is there even one honest soul, who will try to document what Dan King, Mike Willis, Tom O'Neal, or Tom Roberts say I believe and teach, and who, failing to do so, will make public correction for repeating and spreading the misrepresentations? For 30 years I have called for honest men to step forward to engage in a fair and open study of the issue. Is there an honest man among supporters of the Foundation?

There is a word for what they say. The dictionary defines it as "a false statement deliberately presented as being true; a falsehood. Something meant to deceive or give a wrong impression." The Bible says that those guilty of it "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." For this reason, I telephoned Tom, and wrote to him with specific misrepresentations needing corrections wherein he had misrepresented me; and sent to him records of previous corrections of men, including primary sources. He had the material to know that he was making false charges. He has to know that what he charged is not so. This is sad, sad, sad.

We have put forth great effort to save these people from themselves. I have prayed for them that they might respond to the truth. What more can I do? ☞

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