

Young & Yoder Debate



Proposition:

*“All collective actions of local churches through
a sponsoring church arrangement are
unscriptural by design and denominational by
nature”*

Agreement to Debate Between Glen Young and Gil Yoder

This document expresses an agreement reached by Glen Young of Elkhorn City, KY, and Gil Yoder of Pearland, TX, to debate the following proposition:

Resolved: All collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are unscriptural by design and denominational by nature.

Glen Young agrees to write in the affirmative for the proposition, and Gil Yoder agrees to write in the negative.

The debate will consist of four (4) affirmative articles and four (4) negative articles beginning with an affirmative by Glen Young and ending with a negative by Gil Yoder, alternating between each. Each article will be no longer than four pages. Each will be submitted in Microsoft Word 7.0 format on logical pages of 8 1/2 by 11 inches with margins of one inch all around. All text will be 12 point Times New Roman. Emphasis, if used, shall be limited to Italics.

The heading for each affirmative and negative will consist of a one line title expressing the ordinal number of the article followed by either "affirmative" or "negative," and a "by" line expressing authorship of the article. A single blank line will separate the heading from the first paragraph of the article. For example: First Affirmative by Glen Young

Paragraphs will be indicated by indentation of 1/2 inch on the first line, and not double spacing. The text of the paragraphs will be single spaced.

Each debater shall be allowed to submit to his opponent before the debate five brief (single sentence) questions to be quoted and answered by the opponent in his first article. The questions should call for brief answers, for example yes or no, true or false, or a short sentence.

No new material will be introduced in the last negative rebuttal.

Publication of the debate shall be full and complete without change to its contents (except for minor typographical modifications to format the articles according to publishing guidelines). It shall be permissible, however, to publish the articles in consecutive chronological order, as long as all articles are published in a timely manner. There shall be no limitation regarding who shall be permitted to publish the debate as long as these guidelines are followed.

Each debater shall attempt to respond to his opponent's articles in a prompt and timely fashion, but no time has been set as a deadline for the responses.

The debaters anticipate a vigorous defense of the views held by each, but expect the exchange to be conducted in a manner befitting Christ and His church. May the Word of God be our only guide.

Signed:
Glen Young

Gil Yoder

First Affirmative By Glen Young

Resolved: All collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are unscriptural by design and denominational by nature.

With any discussion where there is disagreement, it is necessary to lay groundwork. Groundwork is important, as it will answer some questions and will give insight into the thinking of the disputant. It is with this in mind that I offer my first affirmative. It is my prayer that this effort will be used as a means to come to a knowledge of the truth. It is my hope that each reader will view this work in the way it is given, with love for souls and concern for truth.

The proposition before us is an effort to focus our attention on an issue that has divided brethren for the past four decades. The proposition identifies the core difference between those who promote the sponsoring church arrangement and those who do not. The core difference being the nature of the church. Until we can come to an agreement upon the nature of the church, we will never be reconciled into one cohesive body of believers.

The church is the spiritual body of Christ comprised of individual Christians (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Now this seems rudimentary on the surface, however, it is the most misunderstood of all the characteristics of the church. Preachers have been known to take first Corinthians chapter twelve as a text then present a lesson on the organization of the local church. By doing this, they blur the distinction between a local church and the distributive or universal church. Lessons of this sort have created the present division over the sponsoring church arrangement.

In presenting this treatise, I want to give credit where credit is due. The material you are about to read is in large part gleaned from the works of Robert Turner. In my humble opinion, brother Turner truly understands the nature of the church. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge his profound influence upon my studies. Though I have never met him or had the privilege to speak with him, this saint's work has led me to a better understanding of truth.

A Brief Lesson On the Nature of the Church:

The church of Christ is not an organization with some physical headquarters or positions of hierarchy or a treasury into which its members contribute. It is a spiritual relationship that its members enjoy with God. It is a relationship controlled by God based upon the faithful obedience of individuals. One does not join this spiritual state, they are added (Acts 2:47). One is not voted out by his fellow members, God removes his name should he become unfaithful (Revelation 3:5).

The faithful perform their duties in three avenues. The first is as an individual. Husbands are to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25). Christians are to provide for

widows within their families (1 Timothy 5:16a). There are other such passages but these will suffice. The second avenue is to work conjointly with other Christians (Matthew 17:16). The third is to work through the church collective or, as we are more prone to say, a local church. This work exists when Christians within a given area purposefully pool their resources thus creating an entity known as a local church of Christ 4 (Romans 16:16; Revelation 1:11). As with the other avenues for laboring in the vineyard of the Lord, this avenue has work that is distinctly defined (1 Timothy 5:16b). When men take it upon themselves to change the distinct work of a local church, they sin.

Collective Action and Cooperation of Churches:

The discussion of cooperation among local churches is not new. In October 1890, David Lipscomb was present at the first meeting of the Tennessee Christian Missionary Society in Chattanooga, Tennessee. His presence prompted a paper with comments that was published in the Gospel Advocate of October 22, 1890. It is not known if Lipscomb coined the phrase cooperation of churches or if those who promoted the missionary society used it at the Tennessee meeting. In either case, then or now, understanding what each party means by cooperation of churches is necessary to explain the opposition of the missionary societies in the last century and opposition to the sponsoring church arrangement at present.

The word, cooperate, means different things to different people and even different things to the same people under different circumstances. Historically, those who accepted missionary societies maintained that each congregation was autonomous or self-ruled. For that reason, we conclude that their argument for cooperation of churches always meant some form of collective action on the part of local churches. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity, I shall define what I mean by collective actions as stated in the proposition.

Webster's unabridged dictionary defines collective as "1. Formed by collecting; gathered into a mass, sum, or body; aggregated." It continues with respect to collective action by saying, "3. Characteristic of the experience in common or the united action of the members of an aggregation or group, -distinct from that of the individuals." The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary says that collective is "1. Formed by collection; constituting a collection; aggregate, collected. (Opposite to individual, and to distributive; so in sense 2.) Sense two has to do with collective action: Of, pertaining to, or derived from, a number of individuals taken or acting together." By definition, collective action excludes individual or distributiv^e action. Thus, as used in this proposition, collective actions of local churches shall be understood to mean the pooling of resources into or through one local church by a plurality of local churches.

For further clarification, consider the word cooperate. Although this word is not in the proposition, it will be necessary to understand something of its meaning to fully comprehend what I have said concerning collective actions of local churches.

Cooperate is defined as "1. To act or operate jointly with another or others; to concur in action, effort, or effect" (Webster's). The New English Dictionary says that cooperate means, "1. To work together, act in conjunction, with another person or thing, to an end or purpose, or in a work." It further says under the definition of cooperation, "The action of cooperating, i.e., of working together toward the same end, purpose, or effect." We have already stated that cooperation means different things. It is to the meaning of concurrence in effect that I draw our attention. When local churches do their work independently of one another, they are cooperating as per concurrence in effect. This type of cooperation does not destroy autonomy or self-rule.

When local churches act independently, they are not, in that instance, acting collectively. Likewise, when local churches pool their resources through a sponsoring church, they are acting collectively. At such times, independence is sacrificed and a body or aggregate is formed to accomplish a designated purpose. The formation of an aggregate known as a sponsoring church is unscriptural.

Unscriptural by Design: Design is partially defined as "3. To create or contrive for a particular purpose or effect:" The American Heritage Dictionary. With this definition in mind, we must ask, where is the biblical teaching that authorizes an aggregate of local churches to work through a sponsoring church? I have found passages that teach autonomy or self-rule (Acts 20:28). I have not found a passage or passages that teach a plan for the creation of the sponsoring church arrangement for the particular purpose of doing the work assigned to local churches.

Denominational by Nature: Much has been and continues to be written about denominationalism. The consensus of opinion seems to be that doctrine is the defining element that makes a denomination. I reject that conclusion, at least in part. While doctrine plays a part in developing a denomination, it is not the whole of the matter. The binding together of local churches, whether by a hierarchy or a conference or a society or a sponsoring church, has as its core nature, denominationalism.

Some have expressed surprise at A. Campbell's acceptance of the American Christian Missionary Society. How could Campbell do such a thing? Listen to his own words. "The kingdom of Jesus Christ consists of numerous communities separate and distinct from each other; and all these communities owe as much to each other as the individual members of any one of them owe to all the individual members of that single community of which they are members. Every individual disciple is a particular member of that body (or congregation) with which he is united in Christian communion; and the whole of that community to which he belongs is but a member of that great body which is figuratively called 'the body of Christ.' He is the head of the whole body, or Christian congregation; not merely or specially of one community, but of all the separate communities as constituting one kingdom" (emphasis mine). Millennial Harbinger, Vol. 6, pp. 168.

When it came to the missionary society, Campbell could accept it because he believed that the universal church was comprised of local churches. Because he held this conviction, he advocated organizing local churches together to do the work of worldwide evangelism. Earl West writes, "The establishment of this society marked the climax of years of intense effort on the part of Alexander Campbell to urge the brotherhood to found some kind of a general organization through which the entire brotherhood could cooperate to evangelize the world." *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 1, p. 166. Although this organization was considered as just a way to do evangelism, it eventually brought those churches that submitted to it into full-blown denominationalism. And I might add these churches were a denomination before they were willing to accept the reality of their action.

The Sponsoring Church: Campbell argued for an organization that would harness local churches together because there was no way to do worldwide evangelism without it. Campbell's argument is flawed because it assumes that local churches operating independently cannot do the work. His argument is based upon human reasoning rather than divine revelation. Whenever men decide that they are more intelligent than God, apostasy is around the corner. I pray that we can learn from the mistakes of the past. I fear, however, that those who have adopted the sponsoring church arrangement are traveling the same road, as did Campbell.

We must be satisfied with God's way. God's way is for each local church to do its own work. Paul admonishes the elders at Ephesus to, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28. Peter continues this thought by saying, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;" 1 Peter 5:2. From these verses, we understand that elders should take care of the work over which they are overseers. It is not allowable for them to involve themselves in the work of other local churches. There is nothing said about elders becoming overseers of more than one local church. I know of no faithful Christian who would disagree with this conclusion.

Autonomy or Self-Rule: We are speaking of autonomy or self-rule. Autonomy not only keeps out elderships that desire to broaden their oversight, it also limits the way a local church does its work. As with all commands, autonomy is exclusive, i.e., it excludes that which changes the command. Noah was told to build the ark out of gopher wood (Genesis 6). No other wood could be used. Likewise, any action taken by a local church that violates autonomy cannot be used.

A local church is to do its work as it has opportunity and ability. This is in accord with each local church being autonomous. To have a sponsoring church arrangement, a local church must create a need by taking on a work that is greater than its ability to do the work. It can then present itself as a sponsoring church in an effort to bring in the funds needed to do this work. If other local churches decide to acquiesce by adding

the cost to their budgets, they violate their autonomy by sending money to the sponsoring church. Two grave errors are now committed. The sending local churches have forfeited their autonomy by relinquishing the oversight of funds from their treasury to the oversight of another local church. And, they have become a part of an aggregate of local churches of which the Bible says nothing.

Local churches can please God by doing their own work. Local churches can and do cooperate together. They do so when each works independently of all others to bring about the desired effect, namely, the spreading of the gospel. The design of the sponsoring church arrangement is foreign to the Bible. No where in its Holy content do we find such an arrangement for evangelism, edification or benevolence. When local churches operate through an aggregate (sponsoring church) for whatever reason, they take on the nature of denominationalism.

Questions:

1. The church of Antioch engaged in a "collective action" when they gathered a contribution to send relief to the brethren of Judaea (Acts 11:27-30). Young's answer. Before I can answer with a simple true or false, I need to know what you mean by "collective action." See my article above.

2. The church of Antioch sent support to the brethren of Judaea by having Barnabas and Saul deliver their support to the elders of a church other than Antioch (Acts 11:30). Young's answer. True.

3. By implication the elders to whom Baranabas and Saul delivered Antioch's support used that support to relieve needy saints of Judaea (Acts 11:30). Young's answer. True.

4. If another church chose to follow Antioch's example, that church could have sent relief to Judaea at the same time and in the same manner as Antioch with God's good favor. Young's answer. True.

5. According to the epistles, during another period of hardship, multiple churches collected funds which were later to be administered by others to the glory of God (2 Cor. 8). I am not sure what your reference is to multiple churches in view of 2 Corinthians 8. If you were speaking of the incident recorded in the passage, then I would answer, True.

First Negative By Gil Yoder

The subject of this debate, as my opponent has suggested, is one of great import to the body of Christ. As he mentioned Christ's church has been divided over the methods we employ to do her work for nearly fifty years, and despite several efforts to resolve the difficulties, little progress has been made in that arena. The division that came into existence back in the 1950's is still going strong, and there is little interaction between us. It saddens us that this is so. We hope that discussions such as this may help to shrink the gap that exists between us.

Because I am in the negative in this debate, it will be my obligation to prove that my opponent has not met his obligation, which is to prove that his resolution is true. Technically it is not the negative's obligation to prove that the resolution is false, because the burden of proof always rests with the affirmative in a debate. The negative is by design required only to show that the affirmative has not met that burden. However, I will go beyond my obligation, and will prove that the converse of brother Young's resolution is true.

What is it then that brother Young must prove? His resolution reads, "All collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are unscriptural by design and denominational by nature." This proposition is in the form of a universal affirmative. As we read through his first affirmative we noted one glaring omission from the definitions which he gave, that being the little word "all." It will not be sufficient to prove that some collective actions ... through a sponsoring church arrangement are unscriptural. To that we will stipulate. Brother Young must prove that this is the case in every instance. That will be a very tall order, and in fact cannot be done.

On the other hand in order to prove that Young's resolution is false one need only show that it is false in one or more instances. Whereas Young's resolution is a universal affirmative, the converse of that resolution, and the resolution that I will prove is a particular negative. In other words I will prove the following: Some collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are not unscriptural by design and denominational by nature. I need not, and will not, prove that every church sponsorship arrangement is sound; we simply do not believe that. But I will clearly demonstrate Young's inability to prove that every church sponsorship arrangement is unsound.

Brother Young writes, "The core difference" that divides us is the difference in how we view "the nature of the church." Then he writes, "Until we can come to an agreement upon the nature of the church, we will never be reconciled into one cohesive body of believers." We respectfully disagree with this judgment. From what we can tell our views of the nature of the church are virtually identical. Contrary to Young's assertions we do not believe that there exists, nor should there exist, any organized structure among the churches. The only earthly structure authorized within the scripture for churches is for the local body of Christ, and our view regarding the scriptural use of the

sponsoring church arrangement does not contradict this.

Much of brother Young's first affirmative was in opposition to the missionary societies which started among the churches in the last century. He spoke of Alexander Campbell's support for them, and David Lipscomb's opposition to them. He did little however to make an argument that would prove his proposition. Though we will stipulate to the unscriptural character of missionary societies, proving this does nothing toward proving that all sponsorship arrangements are unscriptural and denominational. For one thing it is at least questionable whether a missionary society is indeed a "sponsoring church arrangement," and second, even if that were proven to be true, it would only be one such arrangement.

We would argue that to compare the missionary societies with sponsoring churches is like comparing apples and rutabagas. Missionary societies were organizations made up of delegates from the churches, and were designed to supplant the churches' role in evangelism. On the other hand a sponsoring church is just a church seeking to fulfill its God given role, taking scriptural assistance from other brethren interested in its work. The two organizational models are as different as day and night.

"When local churches act independently," Young writes, "they are not, in that instance, acting collectively. Likewise, when local churches pool their resources through a sponsoring church, they are acting collectively." The word "pool" does not accurately describe what occurs through a sponsoring church arrangement. This word suggests that the resources are collected into a treasury which is common to all members. This of course is not accurate. Modify the statement to this, "When local churches send resources to a sponsoring church, they are acting collectively," and we would then agree.

Young goes on to say, "At such times, independence is sacrificed and a body or aggregate is formed to accomplish a designated purpose. The formation of an aggregate known as a sponsoring church is unscriptural." In this comment our brother demonstrates a great misunderstanding of our view. A sponsoring church is not an aggregate of churches. It is simply a single church gathering assistance from other brethren, much as occurred in biblical days. The fact that such exaggerations are necessary argues that the case against sponsoring churches is weak.

In order to prove that the sponsoring church arrangement is denominational brother Young writes, "The binding together of local churches, whether by a hierarchy or a conference or a society or a sponsoring church, has as its core nature, denominationalism." If it were true that a sponsoring church bound local churches together as asserted, we would agree. However, mere assertion is poor substitute for proof. We might point out on the other hand that there are many ways that churches can be bound into a denominational organism. Local churches can be bound into a denomination by intimidation or coercion to use certain humanly ordained methodologies not bound in scripture! Support of one church for another need not

result in the kind of ties that brother Young imagines, so no denominational component has been proved.

Young says that "God's way is for each local church to do its own work." Agreed, but it is part of the church's work to help other churches which are in need of assistance. This need not result in a loss of autonomy either for the church that sends its support to another, or for the church that receives such support. This will be demonstrated below.

In the last section of his article brother Young writes, "To have a sponsoring church arrangement, a local church must create a need by taking on a work that is greater than its ability to do the work." This statement is false. The needs for which a church can take responsibility are already great (Matt. 26:11; 28:18-20), so there is no need to "create a need." As for "taking on a work that is greater than its ability," of course this is possible, and would be foolish, but one need not assume that a church's "ability" stops where it becomes expedient for it to request assistance in its work.

Continuing Young writes, "If other local churches decide to acquiesce by adding the cost to their budgets, they violate their autonomy by sending money to the sponsoring church." No, brother Young, you are violating the autonomy of local churches by demanding that they acquiesce to your own conclusions in the matter. Autonomy is not violated when congregations make decisions and follow those decisions. It is violated when brethren from outside seek to force them to follow a course not required of them in God's Word.

In the preceding comments we have dealt with each point raised by the affirmative. In the space remaining we will make additional arguments that show that the sponsoring church arrangement can be found within the New Testament, and demonstrate conclusively that my opponent's resolution cannot be true.

According to our signed agreement the debaters were permitted to ask one another five questions to be quoted and answered in each of their first articles. We submitted five questions in the form of true or false statements, which were addressed at the end of Young's first affirmative. My opponent declined the opportunity to ask any preliminary questions.

I asked my opponent four questions dealing with a famine in Judaea as recorded in Acts 11:27-30, and how the early church handled the problem. These events apparently occurred around A.D. 44. Then I asked one additional question regarding additional hardships in Judaea and the actions taken (see Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8). Halley's Bible Handbook places these events around A.D. 57. Events connected with these periods of hardship as described in God's Word will conclusively disprove my opponent's resolution.

In my first question I asked brother Young to say whether the following statement is true or false: "The church of Antioch engaged in a 'collective action' when they

gathered a contribution to send relief to the brethren of Judaea (Acts 11:27-30)." Though by his signature to our agreement he pledged to give an answer to each of my five questions, he declined to answer this question saying, "Before I can answer with a simple true or false, I need to know what you mean by 'collective action.'" Thus we have no answer for this question.

Brother Young, the use of quotation marks in the statement obviously relates the statement to the words you have given in your proposition, so it is not possible that you do not know the definition of "collective action." According to your definition the church of Antioch obviously engaged in such an action when they took up a collection and sent the same to the elders in Jerusalem. (1) It was a local church acting. (2) They sent resources to another local church. And (3) the second church administered those resources. (We might well ask at this point, did the church of Antioch surrender its autonomy by sending funds to the Jerusalem elders? Brother Young, we ask you to respond specifically to this query.)

I can well understand why you would have some difficulty with my first question. If you say it is true, then we have an apostolically approved example of a church doing that which you have condemned. If you say it is false, then you need to redefine the terms of your proposition so as to exclude the action recorded in Acts 11. But to do that you would have to strain credulity.

My opponent was more forthcoming with the remaining questions. To each of the remaining statements he answered "true." These were questions numbers two through four: (2) "The church of Antioch sent support to the brethren of Judaea by having Barnabas and Saul deliver their support to the elders of a church other than Antioch (Acts 11:30)." (3) "By implication the elders to whom Barnabas and Saul delivered Antioch's support used that support to relieve needy saints of Judaea (Acts 11:30)." (4) "If another church chose to follow Antioch's example, that church could have sent relief to Judaea at the same time and in the same manner as Antioch with God's good favor."

Notice now the admissions my opponent makes by admitting the truth of these statements: (1) He admits that one church can send financial support to another church. (2) He admits that the elders of one church can administer support sent to it by another church. (3) He implies that this can be done without a loss of autonomy either of the sending church or of the receiving church. (4) He admits that several churches at the same time could send similar relief to Jerusalem, and have it administered by the elders of Jerusalem, and yet have God's approval. This, brethren, is a sponsoring church arrangement, and my opponent has indicated by implication that such an arrangement can have the approval of God. It is false, therefore, that all such arrangements "are unscriptural by design and denominational by nature," unless God approves of unscriptural denominational arrangements.

I finally asked my opponent to judge the verity of this statement: "According to the epistles, during another period of hardship, multiple churches collected funds which were later to be administered by others to th glory of God (2 Cor. 8)." Young answered, "I am not sure what your reference is to multiple churches in view of 2 Corinthians 8. If you were speaking of the incident recorded in the passage, then I would answer, True."

"Multiple" simply means more than one. Paul mentioned "churches of Macedonia" in 8:1, and expected the Corinthians to take part in the work under discussion. The work under discussion of course is the collection of funds to be sent to Jerusalem for the poor saints there. According to 1 Corinthians 16:1 churches (plural) of Galatia also took part in this contribution. We also read of this collection in Romans 15:25-28. All of these passages no doubt are written for our benefit as examples of our duty to do the same.

According to 2 Corinthians 8:19 several brethren were chosen by the churches to travel with Paul to Jerusalem with the collection which would be "administered" by them "to the glory of the ... Lord." The purpose for this arrangement, according to Paul, was to provide "for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21). This passage will be important in later arguments to be developed, so we encourage the reader to take note.

Notice, however, several pertinent facts: (1) A plurality of churches determined (chose) to send financial assistance to the saints of Judaea. (2) These churches cooperated through the efforts of the apostle Paul and other brethren to see that the gift was delivered. (3) They chose brethren whom they trusted to administer the funds. (4) After the funds were transferred to those brethren, the funds were no longer directly under the control of the churches, which gave the funds.

Whether the brethren took the funds to the elders of Judean churches (a possibility), we do not know. It is possible they directly administered the aid to those who were in need. But one thing is certain: the funds were not distributed by the contributing churches themselves, but by other men. We have here an arrangement that would be an anathema today among brethren who agree with my opponent, yet brother Young admits that the arrangement was to God's glory. Can that which is "unscriptural by design and denominational by nature" glorify God? To ask the question, of course, is to answer it. Did the churches herein mentioned lose their autonomy? Of course not.

My opponent sought to prove in his first affirmative that every sponsorship arrangement is unscriptural by proving that one such arrangement was unscriptural. On the other hand I have shown that churches in the first century, with God's approval, followed practices which would be condemned by my opponent's proposition, yet these very practices brought glory to God. That pattern may be followed today with the same result. We do not say that every instance of sponsorship meets with God's approval, but we refuse to condemn that which God approves. It is wrong to condemn every sponsoring church arrangement.

Second Affirmative By Glen Young

Gil's response to my first affirmative causes me to think that I didn't succeed in my effort at being intelligible. Surely, he wouldn't misdirect our thoughts and misinterpret what I wrote just to win a debate. So, I will accept the blame and try to do a better job in this and subsequent articles.

Collective Action and Cooperation of Churches, revisited

Collective action being different from cooperation of churches is basic to this discussion. It speaks to the nature of the church of Christ. In my first affirmative, I introduced statements by A. Campbell that showed an erroneous belief about the church universal. Campbell's view that the universal church of Christ was composed of local churches of Christ, is why he could accept, and even encourage, collective action among local churches of Christ. Campbell's error is alive and well and found within the attributes of the sponsoring church arrangement whether Gil recognizes it or not.

I understand that Gil is just as opposed to the missionary society as I am. I am not accusing him, or those who agree with him, of this error. What I hope to do, is to get him and others to consider their position on collective action among local churches and its consequences. I offer the following illustration to further explain collective action and cooperation of churches.

Many small towns have what is called "clean-up week." During a specific week, residents are encouraged to give extra effort to keep their neighborhoods clean. In any given community, neighbors are to be found trimming hedges, mowing grass, pruning trees, sweeping curbs and doing general clean up of all waste. As each household does their part, they are cooperating with their neighbors to bring about a desired effect, a clean neighborhood and by expansion a clean town. This is cooperation and no reputable dictionary or philologist would deny it. By cooperating this way, each neighbor plans his own work and uses his own resources. Also, take note that each neighbor maintains complete responsibility and independence while accomplishing a concurrent effect, namely, a clean town.

Now, suppose we have the same scenario except this time instead of each neighbor working independently the following happens. The neighbors within a community meet to discuss the clean up project. During the meeting, someone suggests that they join forces and select some sort of coordinating leadership through which to do the work. Another person speaks up and says the only way it should be done is through the neighbors themselves for it is the work of the neighborhood. He then suggests that one of the neighbors be used as the agent through whom all neighbors work by contributing into a fund utilized by the agent. The neighbors then join force through the one coordinating neighbor to accomplish the clean up. They give it a name, Campaign For A Clean Town, and contact all neighborhood households to sponsor this worthy cause. This is collective action of neighbors through a sponsorship type

arrangement whereas the former was cooperation of neighbors.

The application of our illustration is this; local churches of Christ can evangelize the world, provide benevolence to needy saints and edify the body without joining forces through a sponsoring church. As each neighbor worked independently of the other to bring about the concurrent effect of a clean community, so each local church of Christ working independently of all others can bring about the desired effect of evangelism, edification and benevolence. Working in this fashion maintains the autonomy and independence of each local church of Christ.

When local churches are acting independently, they are not, in that matter, acting collectively. Conversely, when local churches are acting collectively, independence has been sacrificed in the things pertaining to, and to the extent of, that collective action.

Independent or Dependent Churches

The scriptures teach that each local church is to be independent of all other local churches. This is true autonomy. In Acts 14:23; Luke tells us that elders were ordained in every church. Peter commands shepherds to "feed the flock of God which is among you." (1 Peter 5:2) These scriptures teach that 1) each local church is complete and equal with regard to oversight, and 2) oversight is kept within the constraint of a local church. An independent local church is not dependent upon other local churches for direction, oversight or for support. There is a competency inherent with each local church. God, in His wisdom, designed the local church in a way that should it be the only one in existence, it could fulfill all its work before God.

Gil will probably say that he believes congregations are independent and autonomous. So did Alexander Campbell, who became the first president of the American Christian Missionary Society. So does the Baptist Church^hdenomination. Found under the heading of Baptist Church Government subheading I. As To Principle:, is the following, "(d) There should be no such thing as a great ecclesiastical organization standing outside of the individual church, exercising authority over it. There should be interdependence, cooperation, and fellowship among the churches. There should be exchange of counsel when needed, and wise leadership in carrying on the great denominational and missionary enterprises" (all emphasis mine, Young). A New Baptist Church Manual, The Judson Press 1966 p. 28. Having been an ordained 'pastor' in the Southern Missionary Baptist Church denomination, I can attest to the acceptance of the above statement. It was my experience that local Baptist Churches were extremely protective of their perceived independence. Each local Baptist Church did its own work. It picked its own preacher, conducted its own Sunday School and picked its own leadership without interference from any of the various Baptist Conventions. If not conformity in doctrine or ecclesiastical rule, then what makes them a denomination? To remain registered as a Baptist Church, local Baptist Churches were required to pay annual dues to the

Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, Texas. As with A. Campbell and the S. M. Baptist Church, Gil gives lip service to congregational independence but in reality, his doctrine betrays him.

Cooperation of Independent Churches

In my first affirmative, I established the definition of cooperation among local churches as concurrence in effect. This type of cooperation occurs when independent local churches go about their daily activities. The Thessalonians were involved in this type of cooperation. Paul said they were examples to all that believed (1 Thes. 1: 7-8). They were also said to be imitators of other churches in their acceptance of persecution for Christ's sake (1 Thes. 2:14). Paul further boasted of them for the purpose of increasing the zeal of other churches (2 Thes 1:4). This is cooperation without the man made trappings of organized inter-church activities or a sponsoring church type arrangement.

Cooperation among local churches can occur in a more direct way. The Roman Christians were asked to assist Phebe (Rom. 16:1-2) who is said to be a servant of the church in Cenchrea. The manner of assistance to be rendered is not revealed. Whatever it may have been, there is no hint that it was accomplished through collective action of churches. When the church in Jerusalem heard about the conversions at Antioch (Acts 11:22-24), they sent Barnabas to the work. He exhorted the brethren and converted others to the Lord. Here we have an example of one church sending a preacher to aid in another local work. If we content ourselves with what is revealed in the text, we will admit that this action was done without collective church action. In both of our examples, we have independent local churches^S cooperating together without violating their independence. Again, they did so without organized inter-church activities or a sponsoring church type arrangement.

Alms Versus Ante

Gil thinks he has found his doctrine of the sponsoring church in the benevolent acts of churches in the first century. However, upon closer investigation, we find that churches cooperated in this matter but did not engage in collective actions through a sponsoring church. What do these scriptures reveal to us?

Acts 11:27-30 gives the account of Agabus' prophec^y concerning the famine that would come upon the world in the days of Claudius Caesar. Upon hearing this, the disciples at Antioch, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did by sending their gift to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. There is no collective action of local churches through a sponsoring church here.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1 and Romans 15:25-26 is instruction concerning the need of "poor among the saints in Jerusalem." It took some time for these gifts to be collected (2 Cor.

9:2). First, each local church had to make "up beforehand their bounty" (2 Cor. 9:5) then to choose messengers to convey the gifts to Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3-4; 2 Cor. 8:19, 23). Churches were individually informed. Each church exercised its independent will in deciding to help (2 Cor. 8:10-11). Then each local church gathered a contribution (1 Cor. 16:2). And each local church controlled the sending of its own gift to the need. There was no sponsoring church between these local churches and the need. There was no one local church that took upon itself the worldwide work of providing benevolence to needy saints. There is no sponsoring church expecting other local churches of the first century to send it ^{ante} to care for the needy saints.

The example we have is that of independent local churches cooperating together by taking care of their benevolent work as they had the ability by providing alms to needy saints. We do not have an example of local churches providing ante to a sponsoring church.

Response to Gil's Rebuttal

Gil wrote in his first negative, "As we read through his first affirmative we noted one glaring omission from the definitions which he gave, that being the little word 'all.'" When I submitted the proposition, Gil was the one who suggested that I insert the word "all" rather than "the," which was my original word. Now, it is not for me to judge his motive, but this is interesting, very interesting. However, what about this quibble. In my proposition the phrase, "All collective actions of local churches" is defined by the phrase, "through a sponsoring church arrangement." By defining all collective actions this way, it defines "all" as being those actions performed through the sponsoring church arrangement. If Gil will read my affirmatives, he will see that collective action of local churches through a sponsoring church, not cooperation of local churches is our point of disagreement.

Gil wrote, "The word 'pool' does not accurately describe what occurs through a sponsoring church arrangement. This word suggests that the resources are collected into a treasury which is common to all members." To avoid getting bogged down in a semantical debate, I will condescend on this one. It does not change the fact that local churches are affiliating with and/or joining forces with other local churches when they contribute into the treasury of a sponsoring church.

Gil wrote, "The needs for which a church can take responsibility are already great (Matt. 26:11; 28:18-20), so there is no need to 'create a need.' As for 'taking on a work that is greater than its ability, 'of course this is possible, and would be foolish, but one need not assume that a church's 'ability' stops where it becomes expedient for it to request assistance in its work." To prove(?) his point, he cites the scriptures in Matthew which say to go into the entire world and preach the gospel. Gil, are you saying that each local church has that responsibility? But then you turn around and say it would be foolish for a local church to take on a work greater than its ability. Can there be any work greater than the whole world? Which is it, Gil? Is a local church responsible for

this great work or is it foolish to do so? Must each local church of Christ send someone into the entire world to preach the gospel? Would it be foolish for a local church of Christ to take on a universal work of preaching the gospel to the whole world? Will a local church of Christ have its candlestick removed if it doesn't send a preacher to the entire world to preach the gospel? Will the same local church of Christ have its candlestick removed if it doesn't send money to a sponsoring church to evangelize the entire world?

Gil wrote, "No, brother Young, you are violating the autonomy of local churches by demanding that they acquiesce to your own conclusions in the matter." Gil, do you violate the autonomy of local churches by demanding that they acquiesce to your own conclusions about the use of instrumental music when singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? Do you violate the autonomy of local churches by demanding that they acquiesce to your own conclusions about the doctrines preached by the modern day 'change agents' in the church? You see brother, the truth cuts both ways, doesn't it?

Gil chides me by writing, "Though by his signature to our agreement he pledged to give an answer to each of my five questions, he declined to answer this question saying, "Before I can answer with a simple true or false, I need to know what you mean by 'collective action.'" Thus we have no answer for this question." Shame on you, Gil. This whole discussion revolves around the fact that our understanding of collective action is not the same. If that has not been clear to you, then accept this as notice to that fact. The local church at Antioch engaged in collective action as does any and all local churches when they do their own work. It also cooperated with other local churches when they did their work as independent entities. The local church at Antioch didn't participate in collective action through a sponsoring church. Gil, go back and reread my affirmatives, please, then tell me what you mean by collective action. Do you mean a local church [a collective]? Or do you mean a sponsoring church arrangement? Answer me this and I will answer your question true or false. I think that is fair, don't you?

The comments you made about my answers to your questions are misleading at best. I answered them in the context of what I understand the Bible to teach about cooperation of local churches and collective actions through a sponsoring church.

Second Negative By Gil Yoder

I am thankful to my opponent for his consideration of the issues we are discussing, as I am toward all brethren reading these missives between us. The questions we are discussing have for too long been stumbling blocks to our fellowship, and any effort to resolve our differences, and to come to a better understanding of one another cannot be a bad thing. It has long been my judgment that brethren on my opponent's side have so exaggerated our differences that resolutions that might have occurred have been more difficult to achieve. It has also been the case that many on my side of the discussion have misrepresented the views of the other side with the same result.

For example brother Young and others like him have been falsely labeled as being "anti-cooperation." As he has repeatedly expressed it, our differences are not a question of whether churches can cooperate with one another to do their work. Rather our difference is a matter of how churches may cooperate. I assure my brother that I understand this distinction, and will not be guilty of arguing that he and others who espouse his views are opposed to all forms of cooperation. Though he may rightfully be sensitive to this charge, if he will examine what I have written, he will find that I have not made that charge.

Brother Young's argumentation for his views, however, is a case in point for the abuses on his side of the issue. For example instead of fulfilling his duty as the affirmative in our debate by setting forth affirmative arguments in support of his proposition, he has repeatedly raised negative arguments against erroneous views that Alexander Campbell had about the nature of the church. He has also asserted falsehoods about modern sponsorship arrangements in order to have a rather weak straw dog that can be easily kicked. Such is a waste of time, first because we do not affirm the views that Young has identified in Campbell, and second because we do not support the sponsorship arrangements that Young has identified for censure. Dear brother, though I would be honored by the comparison, Campbell is not a party in this debate, and neither are his views. As far as this discussion is concerned, your time would be better spent in dealing with the arguments that I have expressed.

My opponent gives me credit for giving "lip service to congregational independence," but seeks to categorize my beliefs with the erroneous views of Campbell and the Baptist Church. He writes that they too affirmed belief in local church autonomy, but yet supported things like the American Missionary Society, or the Southern Baptist Convention. Young then claims that my support for the sponsorship arrangement puts me in their shoes. This is, however, a great stretch. As I argued in my previous negative, not every sponsorship arrangement includes the components that make organizations like the Society, or the Baptist Convention unscriptural. My opponent's proposition is a universal affirmative, and proving that some sponsorship arrangements are in error is not the same thing as proving that all such arrangements are in error. When will brother Young understand this fact?

On that point brother Young seems tempted to judge my motives for suggesting the use of the word "all" in his proposition. When I pointed out that he failed to define the word in his proposition, he wrote, "When I submitted the proposition, Gil was the one who suggested that I insert the word 'all' rather than 'the,' which was my original word. Now, it is not for me to judge his motive, but this is interesting, very interesting." Well, there is no need to judge motives. I believed the word would help to clarify our positions. It would make plain that he was opposed to all sponsorship arrangements, as well as to allow that I could be opposed to some such arrangements, but not all. In hindsight it was wise to suggest the term, for despite the fact that Young signed the proposition in the affirmative, his arguments have served only to prove that some such arrangements are in error. Since both of us believe that, it would be foolish to enter a discussion where this distinction was not clear.

In the section entitled "Alms Verses Ante" brother Young seeks to address some of my arguments regarding first century patterns. Regarding the support that the church of Antioch sent to the church at Jerusalem Young writes that these "churches cooperated in this matter but did not engage in collective actions through a sponsoring church." No?

In his first affirmative Young defined a "collective action" as a gathering "of resources into or through one local church by a plurality of local churches." Then in answer to one of my questions Young affirmed that other churches could have followed Antioch's example by sending resources to Jerusalem, and they would have had God's approval. Whether or not that happened, we have in principle a plurality of churches (in this case Antioch and Jerusalem) gathering resources through one church. That, brethren, is the kind of sponsorship arrangement that I am supporting, whether brother Young and others like him can admit that or not.

But now we read a revision of Young's definition. In New Testament days he writes, "There is no sponsoring church expecting other local churches of the first century to send it ante to care for the needy saints" (emphasis mine). We are not certain of the meaning of "ante" in this context (unless it is supposed to be a play on words). The literal meaning of the term is "a poker stake ... put up before the deal to build the pot." I suppose in this context it is meant as a derogatory appellation for the contributions a church makes to the work of another church. (Paul would have called it a sweet smelling sacrifice!) The sense, however, seems to be some kind of required payment. If that is the meaning, it is a red herring. In our years of service in the Lord's church we have never known one instance where any such required payment was expected.

Dear readers, can you not see that if my opponent's views were true, he would not be forced to mischaracterize ours? Our belief in the sponsorship arrangement conforms to the pattern set forth in God's Word for such arrangements as given in Acts 11 and other places, but since brother Young cannot condemn the scriptural pattern, he is forced to ignore the clear teaching of the scripture, and to mischaracterize the views that we uphold.

We predicted in our last negative that brother Young would be forced to revise his definition of a collective action through a sponsoring church. This seems to be the fulfillment. A sponsoring church arrangement is not just when a church sends funds to another to be administered by it, but it is an arrangement where an "ante" is required. (One wonders if brother Young is seeking to make "Ante's" out of his opponents.) But this redefinition will not do. Even if there is no ante requirement, brother Young opposes the practice, claiming that even voluntary funding subverts the autonomy of the churches involved. He did however conveniently ignore this important question asked in our last: "[D]id the church of Antioch surrender its autonomy by sending funds to the Jerusalem elders?" We specifically asked for Young's attention regarding this question, but his response was as quiet as the surface of the Moon.

There were several questions posed in the second affirmative I should address. In his first affirmative Young claimed that churches must invent a need in order to have a sponsoring church arrangement. I replied that this charge was not true, because the need for evangelism and benevolence were already great and gave the Great Commission as one of my proofs. Brother Young replied: "Gil, are you saying that each local church has that responsibility?" There were other questions based on my supposed affirmative answer to this question, but they will be dealt with in my answer to this.

No, brother Young, I am not saying that each local church is responsible for carrying out the whole of the Great Commission. That completely misses my point, which was simply that your assertion that a need must be created in order to justify a sponsoring church arrangement is false. Now how about dealing with my answer to your false assertion instead of twisting it to mean something so clearly ridiculous?

A second question arose from my declaration that it is Young's position that violates the autonomy of local churches because it seeks to impose demands upon them that the scriptures do not make. Young asked in response, "Gil, do you violate the autonomy of local churches by demanding that they acquiesce to your own conclusions about the use of instrumental music when singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? Do you violate the autonomy of local churches by demanding that they acquiesce to your own conclusions about the doctrines preached by the modern day 'change agents' in the church? You see brother, the truth cuts both ways, doesn't it?"

Yes, truth cuts both ways, but error is as dull as a butter knife. It is not a violation of church autonomy to condemn that which the scriptures condemn, but your views, brother Young, are not scripture. I have already shown that some arrangements that you condemn are patterned in God's Word. Clearly to say churches may not follow that pattern is to impose human judgments on those churches, and violates their right to self-determination. It is ironic for you to insist that churches follow your human judgment on the basis that not doing so would cause a violation of church autonomy. If I might repeat a cliché, the shoe is on the other foot, brother Young.

My opponent's last question came in regard to my remark that though he agreed to answer five submitted questions at the beginning of our debate, he determined to answer only four. Indeed he seeks to shame me for relating this fact: "Shame on you, Gil. This whole discussion revolves around the fact that our understanding of collective action is not the same." The true-false question in question was this: "The church of Antioch engaged in a 'collective action' when they gathered a contribution to send relief to the brethren of Judaea (Acts 11:27-30)."

He asks with regard to the term "collective action," "Do you mean a local church [a collective]? Or do you mean a sponsoring church arrangement? Answer me this and I will answer your question true or false. I think that is fair, don't you?" No, brother Young, I do not believe it to be fair to impose additional stipulations on our debate after the terms of debate were agreed to. The question that I asked is not a difficult one (at least for those who teach the truth), and the only words in question are words of your own making (as used in your proposition). As I indicated in my last negative I wish for you to answer the question in view of the meaning of "collective action" in your proposition.

However, my understanding of "collective action" is action taken by a group as a whole, so that one could say the group is doing that, rather than the members of the group individually. On the other hand, unless that is your definition, it should not be the definition you use in your answer. Your answer should be based on your own understanding of the terms used.

We spent considerable space in our first negative dealing with the implications of Young's answers to the other questions given to him. Approximately one third of that article was devoted to the contradictions between his answers and his views. What did our brother have to say in response? Only this: "The comments you made about my answers to your questions are misleading at best." Brother, if my comments were "misleading," then tell us how! We deserve to know, so we may either correct our mistake or defend our words. And we deserve to know now before your last affirmative, so we can develop new material if need be to answer your charge. It is unchristian to make such charges without proof. Please go back and deal with the arguments I have made, and do not simply dismiss them and ignore them as you have done.

Previously we demonstrated a pattern in God's Word for churches sending funds to other churches for benevolence. So then at least for that purpose this pattern establishes scriptural authority for the sponsorship arrangement. In the space we have remaining we will show that the scriptures also establish a pattern for the sponsorship arrangement for the purpose of evangelism.

The reader will recall that in the book of 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul was required to defend his apostleship. Some were apparently arguing that Paul was not a real apostle, or else he would have taken wages from the Corinthian brethren as other apostles took wages from the churches where they worked. (Note: This background is

to some degree speculative, being based on Paul's defense. It is possible that other circumstances could as easily explain Paul's words.) In his defense Paul argued that he did have the right to take a wage from the Corinthians, but that he had refrained from doing so in order to benefit the new brethren there (1 Cor. 9:6ff.). He returned to that defense in his second letter to the Corinthians, saying that in fact while working with them he "robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (2 Cor. 11:8). This indicates that while Paul preached in Corinth there were at least two and probably more churches supplying him with financial assistance for the purpose of evangelism.

But wait! Concerning the same period of time Paul commended the brethren of Philippi for being the only church that "communicated with [him] as concerning giving and receiving" (Phil. 4:15). The terms translated "giving" and "receiving" are accounting terms. They have reference literally to the collection and distribution of funds. These acts of the Philippians were done "in the beginning of the gospel" (i.e., shortly after the Philippians' conversion), "when [Paul] departed from Macedonia." This identifies the acts as occurring while Paul was in Corinth.

My brother might want to make the "receiving" a figurative term to refer to the benefit the Philippians received because of their generosity to Paul, but that would imply that the other churches that supported Paul in Corinth received no such benefit for their contributions. Besides that, there is no compelling reason to interpret Paul's commendation figuratively except to force it to fit a preconceived interpretation. The only reasonable conclusion to draw from the fact that Paul received support from several churches, but that only the Philippians engaged in "giving and receiving," is that the other churches supported Paul through the efforts of the Philippian brethren to collect that support and pass it along to Paul.

Is there any reason for Paul choosing this method over more direct lines of support? Yes, there is. Paul desired to provide "for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 9:21). This was especially true in matters of money. Paul knew that the Lord knew his heart, but he wanted men to know that his dealings were always above board. With regard to the contribution the churches sent to Jerusalem Paul refused to take the money himself and required that the churches choose others for that task. It makes sense that Paul would have chosen some mechanism of support so that all could see that Paul's dealings were honest in the sight of God and men. There is much potential for abuse in direct support, and Paul would have desired to avoid even the appearance of that evil. Having a supporting church to account for the funds collected would avoid that potential problem.

We have demonstrated now apostolically approved examples of collective action through a sponsoring church for both benevolence and evangelism. When will brother Young make the argument that all such arrangements are unscriptural and denominational? We await his reply.

Third Affirmative By Glen Young

In his second negative, Gil attempts to make the reader believe I have not identified that which I oppose. Either Gil is honestly unable to understand my words or he has decided to debate without considering my arguments. I pray that it is the former and not the latter.

A discussion, such as we are having, is a marvelous way of coming to the knowledge of truth. This can only be accomplished if the disputants are searching for truth rather than trying to win a debate. I believe that those interested enough to read this exchange are intelligent enough to comprehend whether or not I make my case. I am willing to leave the discernment of the validity of my argumentation to the intelligence and honesty of those who read this material. I am equally willing to leave the debater's rhetoric to Gil. With this in mind, I now continue with my affirmation.

A Brief Lesson on the Nature of the Church Revisited:

In my first affirmative under the above heading, I gave the nature of the universal church of Christ as being a spiritual relationship that Christians enjoy with God. Within the context of that relationship, I pointed out three avenues through which Christians perform their duties. They are 1) as an individual, 2) working conjointly with other Christians and 3) working through a collectivity known as a local church of Christ. I introduced this into our discussion because I believe this understanding of the nature of the church is foundational to our disagreement. Gil's response was to say in essence, no disagreement. However, as time has progressed, he has revealed that we are not in agreement on this.

Gil writes, "However, my understanding of 'collective action' is action taken by a group as a whole, so that one could say the group is doing that, rather than the members of the group individually." By virtue of his definition of collective action, he believes you can group local churches of Christ together to do a work. Now, dear reader, you can understand why I have introduced A. Campbell's belief that the universal church of Christ is composed of local churches of Christ. You can understand why I introduced A. Campbell's and the Baptist Church denomination's concept of congregational autonomy into this debate. It is this grouping together of local churches of Christ that is unscriptural by design and denominational by nature. Gil says that "collective action is action taken by a group as a whole" and again, he says, "the group is doing that." Having his own words before us, how can we take him seriously when he says that I have mischaracterized his views? Or, how can he take himself seriously when he writes, "He has asserted falsehoods about modern sponsorship arrangements in order to have a rather weak straw dog that can be easily kicked." Gil, have you honestly not seen what I have argued about the nature of the church and collective action? Or, is this just more of the debater's rhetoric?

In my second affirmative under the heading, Collective Action and Cooperation of Churches, revisited: I wrote, "When local churches are acting independently, they are not, in that matter, acting collectively. Conversely, when local churches are acting collectively, independence has been sacrificed in the things pertaining to, and to the extent of, that collective action." I shall now restate the last part of my quote using Gil's definition of collective action. Conversely, when local churches are acting by a group as a whole, independence has been sacrificed in the things pertaining to, and to the extent of, that which the group is doing. Gil should have no problem understanding that when I say 'collective action of local churches' that I am opposing the grouping together of local churches to do a work. He should have no problem understanding that when I speak of cooperation among local churches, I am speaking of local churches acting independently of one another doing their own work. He wrote, "We predicted in our last negative that brother Young would be forced to revise his definition of a collective action through a sponsoring church. This seems to be the fulfillment." Gil, being that you wrote this, would you kindly point out where I revised my definition?

Alms Verses Ante Revisited:

Gil, I wouldn't for a moment think of making you an "Ante," or an "Anti" either. I prefer to think of you as a brother who is salvageable. It is my prayer that our study will help the both of us have a proper respect for and better understanding of God's word.

Gil writes, "No, brother Young, I am not saying that each local church is responsible for carrying out the whole of the Great Commission. That completely misses my point, which was simply that your assertion that a need must be created in order to justify a sponsoring church arrangement is false." He admits that no one local church is responsible for evangelizing the whole world. If no one local church is responsible for the whole of the Great Commission, then each local church is only responsible for a portion of the Great Commission. Being therefore responsible for only a portion of the Great Commission, means that the responsibility of a local church is limited. The limitation that is placed upon a local church is its ability to finance the work. Therefore, would not a local church determine its responsibility to a work based upon its individual ability to do that work? When a particular local church decides to take on a certain work greater than its ability to finance that work, it will then be compelled to seek out financial help from other local churches. It has in that instance created a need by taking on a work larger than its ability. It is a created need because each local church is not responsible for carrying out the whole of the Great Commission as Gil says. When a local church over extends itself unnecessarily, it is creating a need!

Was Jerusalem a Sponsoring Church?

Gil writes, "Whether or not that happened, we have in principle a plurality of churches (in this case Antioch and Jerusalem) gathering resources through one church." Dear reader, go to Acts 11:27-30 and read it. Now, the brethren at Antioch determined to

send relief to the needy saints in Judea. They did so by Barnabas and Saul who delivered it to elders. He gets a plurality of churches by having Antioch and Jerusalem involved in this relief. In the first place, the church in Jerusalem is not mentioned. Elders are mentioned but whose elders? Gil, give us a verse of scripture that tells us which local church these elders served. To give a particular local church is pure speculation because the relief was for the saints in Judea. The elders could have been from any of the churches in Judea or they could have been from all the churches in Judea. I don't know where these elders served and neither does Gil. For him to make an argument that these were Jerusalem elders and thus the money was sent to the Jerusalem church is pure speculation on his part. Jerusalem was just one city in Judea. Secondly, the relief sent from Antioch was for Judea and as already mentioned, Jerusalem was in Judea, therefore, saints in Jerusalem would be receiving rather than giving alms. Gil says a plurality of churches (Antioch and Jerusalem) gathered resources. Not so, Jerusalem was one of the areas of need. The only gathering of resources was done at Antioch and that from brethren, not local churches. We must be content with what the verses say, not what Gil wants them to say. This kind of speculation is what we must contend with from the false religions of the world and the change agents in the church. It should not be characteristic of those who seek truth.

Gil writes, "He did however conveniently ignore this important question asked in our last: "[D]id the church of Antioch surrender its autonomy by sending funds to the Jerusalem elders?" We specifically asked for Young's attention regarding this question, but his response was as quiet as the surface of the Moon." What can I say that I have not already said? The church at Antioch did not surrender its autonomy because it did not contribute into a sponsoring church type arrangement to render aid to the saints in Judea.

Was Philippi a Sponsoring Church?

Gil writes, "But wait! Concerning the same period of time Paul commended the brethren of Philippi for being the only church that "communicated with [him] as concerning giving and receiving" (Phil. 4:15)." He is using Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 11:8 where he states, "I robbed other churches, taking wages (of them) that I might minister unto you;" There is no doubt that Paul was supported by more than one church while preaching in Corinth. The problem Gil has is to prove that what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:8 is the same incident that he speaks of in Philippians 4:15-16. Prove it Gil! Don't speculate, don't hedge. Just produce the scripture that proves these were one and the same event.

The surest way to know if a man has faithfully represented the scripture is to read the scripture. I encourage our readers to take the time to read Philippians 4:15-16. I shall not reproduce it here because of space. I also encourage the readers to investigate the references I give, as I will be brief and to the point. Adam Clarke in his commentary on Philippians 4:15 says, "[In the beginning of the Gospel] When, having

preached to you, I went forth into Macedonia, I received help from none of the churches which I had founded, but from you alone. I received nothing from any others, and nothing was offered me." Macknight, in his work, Macknight on the Epistles, one volume edition, renders Philippians 4:15-16 as follows. "Now, to shew you how seasonable your present was, and that I honoured you by accepting it, know ye also, O Philippians, that after I first preached the gospel to you, when I went forth in Macedonia to preach, no church communicated with me in the matter of giving me money, and of my receiving money from them, but ye only; I received money from no church but yours. For such was your love, that even when I was in Thessalonica ye sent twice to supply my necessity; and I accepted your present, that I might make the gospel free of expense to the Thessalonians" (page 372). From these and other biblical scholars, it is evident that they do not associate these verses with Paul's preaching in Corinth. Where did Gil get his doctrine on these verses? I don't know. Maybe he will tell.

It should be noted that Corinth of that time was in Achaia not Macedonia. Thessalonica was in Macedonia. Also, the idea of accounting is easily seen if we open our eyes. The church in Philippi sent and Paul received. It is no more complicated than that. Gil's definition of collective action has local churches forming a group. Where is the group? Paul says, "no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only." Does Gil want us to believe that the local church at Philippi was a group of local churches? If language means anything, and I believe it does, one needs help to misunderstand what Paul says. Paul was referring to one local church and only one local church, the local church

Gil's Five Questions:

Gil writes, "Brother, if my comments were "misleading," then tell us how! We deserve to know, so we may either correct our mistake or defend our words. And we deserve to know now before your last affirmative, so we can develop new material if need be to answer your charge. It is unchristian to make such charges without proof." In trying to answer his questions honestly, I gave him what he asked for i.e. a true, false answer to questions two through four. Because I did this, he concludes that I admit to three things and imply a fourth. His four conclusions are misleading because he drew these conclusions based upon his acceptance of collective action of local churches through a sponsoring church type arrangement. If you have read any of what I have written, it should be abundantly clear that I do not agree with Gil on this matter.

It would have been correct if Gil would have concluded 1) Glen admits that brethren in one location can send financial relief to needy saints in another area. 2) Glen admits that elders would be a natural choice to distribute relief to needy saints. 3) Glen implies that there is no loss of autonomy when each local church does its' own work. 4) Glen admits that the brethren at Antioch determined to send relief to needy saints in Judea, which they did by the hands of Barnabas and Saul who delivered it to the elders for distribution.

When we were putting together this debate, Gil wanted to submit questions. I told him I would answer any questions he asked but would not submit any to him. I did so for a reason. That reason is illustrated by his response. I have found that questions that are asked in a debate format are slanted to benefit the one asking. The questions he asked are ample proof. To answer these questions true or false leaves the one doing the answering open to the kind of misrepresentation that occurred. I am not accusing his motives for I am sure I would have been just as guilty had I submitted questions for him to answer. We like to think of it as drawing a conclusion off of an opponent's erroneous position. For the above reason, I refused to formulate questions of like nature for him.

I close this third affirmative by expressing my appreciation to those of you who are reading this exchange. I encourage you to continue your search for truth, for it is a life long endeavor. Truth shines its brightest when rubbed against the doctrines of men. Carefully examine what is written both in the affirmative and negative, then compare it to the everlasting words of God. What you find within these treatises that is in harmony with His divine words, keep. The rest should be discarded.

Third Negative By Gil Yoder

Before I begin my response to brother Young's third affirmative article I want to express my apologies for being so long in sending this reply. In the agreement we made in order to conduct this debate both of us agreed to reply in a timely manner. Though no definitive time frame was expressed, this response should have come sooner than it did. Several circumstances taking much of my time, including a mild heart attack about three weeks ago, hindered me in the preparation of this article, but it could have been produced earlier. I hope my opponent will forgive this lapse.

It has been a pleasure defending the principles we believe are taught within God's Word, and combating those not contained therein, but we must admit to some level of disappointment. We had hoped to hear some affirmative arguments that went to prove the proposition that brother Young here affirms. However, after three-quarters of our opponent's allotted space not a single argument has been presented with the conclusion, "All collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are unscriptural by design and denominational by nature." My opponent will have only one additional opportunity to correct this mistake. Our readers are encouraged to read his last affirmative to see if he makes the attempt.

Brother Young's methodology from the beginning has not been to set forth affirmative arguments. Rather he has sought to position himself in the negative. He has repeatedly cited unscriptural practices of some organizations and argued against them in order to proclaim these practices as proof of his assertion. He could have saved himself much wasted space and time. We agreed that such practices are unscriptural. Nevertheless, since the cited practices cannot be found in every sponsorship arrangement, the fact that these practices exist does not prove that all such arrangements are unscriptural. He has argued that it is contrary to the nature of the church to form a conglomeration of churches under a single eldership. To this we again have agreed, but not every sponsorship arrangement results in a conglomeration of churches, so this does not prove that every sponsorship arrangement is unscriptural.

In the first negative article in this debate I carefully explained that my brother's obligation was to prove a universal affirmative, that is, an affirmative proposition that asserts that all members of a certain set have a certain characteristic. The set of interest in our discussion is that set described by the words "collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement." In other words we could say the set of all sponsoring church arrangements. The characteristic that my opponent claims to adhere to every member of this set is the characteristic of being "unscriptural by design and denominational by nature." However, brother Young has not set out any argument that applies to every member of this set. He can prove that some sponsorship arrangements are unscriptural (to which we stipulated from the beginning), but he cannot prove that all are unscriptural.

Within my opponent's last affirmative article we could not discover a single affirmative argument, though we searched through it repeatedly for that purpose. Instead it was more negative material regurgitating my opponent's opposition to Campbell's beliefs in the matter, attacking the straw man he set up in his first article, and a little ad hominem attack thrown in for good measure.

This time on the other hand there was a difference. This time brother Young decided to dress me up as his straw man. He struggled to get that scrawny-framed individual's tattered clothing around my extra-large frame, but that effort will prove to be futile. (It's hard enough fitting in my own clothes.)

The reader will recall that my opponent excused himself from answering one of the five questions submitted to him before the debate as we arranged in our agreement. He did this by conditioning the answer to one question upon my answer to a new question of his. Although the agreement both of us signed made no allowance for such stipulations, we have considered it our duty in this debate to answer every question put to us, and to the best of our ability we have done so. We therefore answered Young's question by defining a "collective action" as an "action taken by a group as a whole ... rather than [by] the members of a group individually."

Without warrant brother Young falsely averred from this definition that I believe that churches may be brought together into a conglomerate organization for benevolence and evangelism. He wrote, "By virtue of his definition of collective action, he believes you can group local churches of Christ together to do a work.... You can [now] understand why I introduced A. Campbell's and the Baptist Church denomination's concept of congregational autonomy into this debate. It is this grouping together of local churches of Christ that is unscriptural by design and denominational by nature."

I do not know how to say this kindly, but that is an irrational leap of logic, not worthy of thinking adults. Nothing in the definition that I gave for "collective action" implies anything about my beliefs regarding church autonomy. I do not believe that local churches may be grouped together as Campbell attempted or as the Baptists do, and to assert that this is my belief is at best a feeble attempt to deceive the readers of our debate.

In the definition I gave there was no mention of churches being grouped together. The collective I had in mind through which individuals might engage in collective action was the local church. There are certain acts in which individual Christians act individually. There are other acts in which Christians act collectively. Prayer for example might be engaged in individually, and it might be engaged in collectively. In this sense acts performed by a church are collective actions, but acts committed by individual members alone are individual actions. When a church sends support to be used by another church (such as we find in Acts 11), the kind of action that takes place is collective, not because two or more churches are involved in the action, but because it is the church that sends the support and not just the individuals in that church.

In connection with definitions I pointed out in my last negative that brother Young modified one of the definitions he had previously given for "a collective action through a sponsoring church," just as predicted in my first negative. My opponent asked, "Gil, ... would you kindly point out where I revised my definition?"

Yes, gladly. In your first affirmative you wrote that "collective actions of local churches shall be understood to mean the pooling of resources into or through one local church by a plurality of local churches." I knew that definition would not stand, because, if it were valid, it would condemn actions described in Acts 11:27-30 that had apostolic approval. I knew that pressure on this point would bear heavily on brother Young and force him to revise his definition so he could keep his hobby without seeming to condemn apostolic precedent.

We did not have to wait long to see the fulfillment of that prediction. In your second affirmative you modified the definition to include the idea of an "ante" or an expected or required payment. This was in direct response to my argument regarding Acts 11:30. In it you wrote, "There is no sponsoring church expecting other local churches of the first century to send it ante to care for the needy saints.... We do not have an example of local churches providing ante to a sponsoring church." The addition of that little word "ante" was all it took to change the definition you previously had given. No, brother Young, there was no "ante" in the cooperative efforts engaged in by New Testament churches, but there were cooperative efforts such as would be condemned by your proposition. Churches can engage in the same kind of cooperative efforts today without having any "ante" requirement, just as the churches did in the first century. As I have stated before it is just that apostolic example I am defending in this debate, and not the abuses you have attempted to identify with my view.

In Young's first affirmative he wrote that he could not answer my question unless he knew what I meant by "collective action." I replied that I wished him to answer using his definition. Young insisted that I give him a definition declaring that this was only "fair." Though I did not think it "fair" to add stipulations to our agreement after the fact, I nevertheless gave him the definition he requested. We have now come to the closing articles in our discussion, however, and brother Young has yet to answer the question we posed in the beginning. Brother Young agreed in writing to answer five questions submitted before the debate. He answered only four. He promised to answer, if I gave answer to one of his own. I did, and we are still waiting for the answer he should have given in his first article.

That is unfortunate because even if we finally receive the answer that is now greatly overdue, our agreement precludes me from introducing new material in the final negative. I will therefore be handicapped in my response no matter what brother Young may now say.

Brother Young congratulates himself for not asking questions in this debate. Writes he "that questions that are asked in a debate format are slanted to benefit the one asking.

The questions he asked are ample proof." Going on he says that he does not wish to accuse me of false motives, but then he writes, "I am sure that I would have been just as guilty had I submitted questions for him to answer." Brother Young, what do you mean by "just as guilty"? Is this not already an accusation of false motives?

The astute reader, however, is aware that brother Young has asked many questions in this debate. Were those questions "slanted to benefit the one asking"? Brother Young, we have made a concerted effort to answer all of your questions without impugning your motives for asking them, because we believe that sound preachers of the gospel have nothing to fear from examination. It has been our experience on the other hand that false teachers pick and choose the questions they will answer, if they answer any at all, and that they are the first to discount the value they bring to a discussion of controversial issues.

In the section where brother Young revisits his assertions regarding ante-ism he writes, "The limitation that is placed upon a local church is its ability to finance the work." Dear brother, who has placed that "limitation" on the local church, God or men? I believe it to be the latter. Just as the Pharisees wrote laws to hedge their brethren into their false interpretations of the Law, you brethren are legislating where God has not bound. Where is the scripture that states that churches of Christ are so limited? I know it cannot be found, or else we could affirm that the Bible is hopelessly in a state of contradiction.

The church to whom the brethren of Antioch sent support were not able to fully finance the work in which it was engaged. That is why Antioch sent their support. If the limitation you place on churches today were a part of God's law, then the elders who received that support in Acts 11:30 sinned in so doing. So, brother, I insist that you give us some Bible to buttress the law you have given, or repent of legislating where God has not bound.

Regarding the quibble whether the elders mentioned in Acts 11:30 were the elders of the church in Jerusalem, this question has little bearing on the subject at hand. It might be an interesting issue to discuss under different circumstances, but for this question it is only a side issue. Whether those elders were the elders of the Jerusalem church or some other, one thing is certain: they were the elders of some church, and the scripture gives their deeds its approval.

Concerning Philippi's "giving and receiving" in behalf of the apostle Paul (Phil. 4:15) brother Young presented quotations from Adam Clark and Macknight in his attempt[†] at an answer. Both Clark and Macknight affirm that the Philippians' support came only while Paul was in Macedonia. While I respect the scholarship of these two men, they were not always right in their commentary, and they are not correct in this instance. The text clearly indicates that the "giving and receiving" occurred not while Paul was in Macedonia, but when he departed from the province. To be sure Paul did receive some support from Philippi twice during his short visit to Thessalonica (v. 16), but the

commendation of verse 15 was for actions in addition to that as is clear from a reading of the text. As the old timers used to say, "The Bible sheds a lot of light on them commentaries!"

The book of Acts tells us that the first city visited by Paul upon leaving Macedonia was the city of Athens, where he waited a short time for Timothy and Silas (Acts 17:15f.). But before their coming he departed to Corinth where he stayed for one and a half years (18:11). It must have been for support received in Corinth that Paul commended the Philippians.

Couple this with Paul's words of 2 Corinthians 11:8-9, and the picture becomes even more clear. While Paul was at Corinth he received no wages from them, but he "robbed other churches" that he might not be a burden on the Corinthians. This support came to him from "brethren which came from Macedonia." Putting the passages together it becomes clear to any with an open mind that the brethren from Macedonia brought the support that the brethren at Philippi gathered together with the help of other churches, and gave that support to Paul. There were churches (plural) who supported Paul in Corinth, but only Philippi communicated in the form of "giving and receiving."

Brethren, rid yourselves of your preconceptions and realize that this is but one way that churches can support the preaching of the gospel. Some preachers spend an inordinate amount of time raising support for their work, when their time would be better spent in the field where their work is most needed. Philippi relieved Paul of that necessity by raising support in his behalf. Sponsoring churches do that and other important tasks in behalf of gospel preachers today. When they do so the autonomy of the churches involved is not threatened because each church decides for itself whether they will cooperate and the amount they will send if they choose to help.

The holy scriptures authorize churches to support preachers in the field, but the scriptures do not proscribe specifically how this is to be done (brother Young's legislation notwithstanding). In the first century we find direct support for the preachers, and in the case of the situation in Corinth indirect support, where one church not only gave their support, but also received support from others to send on to Paul. How can that practice be wrong when the apostles themselves engaged in it?

We now have completed six of the eight articles of this discussion. So far brother Young has failed prove the proposition he agreed to affirm. It is not so much that my opponent is unable to reason correctly, or unskilled in the art of debate. I am sure that when defending the truth he can do as well as anyone. This time on the other hand brother Young is on the other side of the truth, and the errors of his views have been his greatest impediments in this debate.

We also will have one additional opportunity to bolster our opposition to the proposition under discussion.

Because of the rules of the debate, this will be mostly by way of summary, because new material is not allowed in the final negative. We have confidence however that we will be able to answer any additional arguments presented by brother Young even with this handicap, so we look forward to seeing his best effort in his final composition.

Fourth Affirmative By Glen Young

It is good to see that Gil is able to resume his activities after his illness. I pray that he will continue to improve daily.

I have pondered long and hard how might be the best way to close out my part in this debate. I considered that I might respond in kind to Gil's remarks. Then, I remembered I had promised not to use debater's rhetoric. I further thought I would say over and over again how Gil has not proved his points but declined because I trust in the intelligence and fairness of those who will read this effort. So, with all of my human frailties and lack of skills in debating, I offer to you my final thoughts in this debate. Glean from it that which is biblically sound and kindly overlook its lack of sophistication and eloquence of presentation.

The "Old" Gil vs. the "New" Gil

As I read the third negative, I could not help but notice a somewhat more belligerent tone. I also noticed that Gil began to use the word "cooperate" instead of "collective" when speaking of the sponsoring church type arrangement. All of which, causes me to think that Gil has become a "new" man. But, it makes no difference, false doctrine is false doctrine whether it is the "old" Gil or the "new" Gil who proclaims it.

The "old" Gil wrote in his first negative, "In other words I will prove the following: Some collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are not unscriptural by design and denominational by nature." Here we have him accepting the premise that it is scriptural for local churches to act collectively through a sponsoring church. Then in his second negative he defined collective as "action taken by a group as a whole, so that one could say the group is doing that, rather than the members of the group individually." The only logical conclusion of these statements is that, collective action of local churches is equivalent to a group as a whole doing the action. To emphasize, he says that it is the group rather than the individual who gets the credit. He has two or more individual local churches acting collectively as a group through a sponsoring church.

Now, the "new" Gil writes in his third negative, "In the definition I gave there was no mention of churches being grouped together. The collective I had in mind through which individuals might engage in collective action was the local church." Again he writes, "When a church sends support to be used by another church (such as we find in Acts 11), the kind of action that takes place is collective, not because two or more churches are involved in the action, but because it is the church that sends the support and not just the individuals in that church." Could it be that we are making headway in this discussion? Does the "new" Gil now accept that collective action among local churches is unscriptural? This is my position. Does Gil now believe that each local church must send aid directly to the need and not go through some interim local church (sponsoring church)? Does he now reject the interactive workings of local

churches through a sponsoring church for the purpose of benevolence or evangelism? Does he now condemn as unscriptural the use of a sponsoring church for the purpose of providing a worldwide radio or TV program and for the collecting and sending of benevolent help to brethren in foreign lands where famine exists? If so, I applaud his leaving error and standing for the true pattern found in God's word.

Being that I will not have another opportunity to address his response to this one, please consider. The only collective actions that Christians can biblically engage in are those actions performed through the local church of which they are members. If you have any doubt, go back and re-read my affirmatives as they pertain to collective actions of local churches versus cooperation among local churches. When two or more individuals participate in an action, that is collective action. By the same token, when two or more individual local churches participate in an action, that is collective action. Hence, when two or more local churches participate in sending funds to a sponsoring church, that is collective action. And, according to the "old" Gil, it is a collective action, which equals a group doing it. Remember, I have stated repeatedly, "When local churches are acting independently, they are not, in that matter, acting collectively. Conversely, when local churches are acting collectively, independence has been sacrificed in the things pertaining to, and to the extent of, that collective action."

The "old" Gil wrote in his first negative, "As for 'taking on a work that is greater than its ability,' of course this is possible, and would be foolish, but one need not assume that a church's 'ability' stops where it becomes expedient for it to request assistance in its work." I took this statement to mean that it is foolish for local churches to take on a work greater than their ability. Especially since he wrote in his second negative, "No, brother Young, I am not saying that each local church is responsible for carrying out the whole of the Great Commission." By virtue of his statements I came to the conclusion that Gil believes the work of a local church is limited, at least at some level.

But wait, the "new" Gil writes in his third negative, "In the section where brother Young revisits his assertions regarding ante-ism he writes, 'The limitation that is placed upon a local church is its ability to finance the work.' Dear brother, who has placed that 'limitation' on the local church, God or men? I believe it to be the latter." On the one hand, Gil says a local church is limited, at some level, in its work. However, on the other hand, he says to limit the work of a local church is a doctrine of men. I think you can easily see that we now have two distinct and different Gil's.

Again, being that I will not have another opportunity to address his response, please note. It does him no good to quibble over my use of "its ability to finance the work." It is the passing of money from local churches to a sponsoring church that I have objected to in this debate. It is this interactivity between local churches that is both unscriptural and denominational.

What This Debate Has Been About

Gil would like for you to think this debate is just about how a local church does its work. He wants us to believe that a sponsoring church type arrangement is simply a way for a local church to do its work. However, that is not what this debate is about. It is about whether or not the sponsoring church type arrangement is unscriptural by design and denominational by nature. Unscriptural by design meaning that you cannot find the sponsoring church type arrangement in God's Word. Denominational by nature means that the bringing together of local churches into a group, a collective of churches, is denominational.

God's pattern is that with which we must be satisfied. God's pattern is for each local church to do its own work. Paul admonishes the elders at Ephesus to, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Peter continues this thought by saying, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof" (1 Peter 5:2). These verses teach us that elders should take care of the local work over which they are overseers. These instructions to elders accentuate that each local work is autonomous. It is not allowable for elders to involve themselves in the work of other local churches. There is absolutely nothing said about elders becoming overseers of more than one local church. There is no scripture where an eldership at one local church ever became the overseers of a work involving two or more local churches. Hence, the sponsoring church type arrangement is an unscriptural alliance of local churches which allows an eldership from one local church, a sponsoring church, to oversee a work for other local churches.

In Gil's efforts to counter my position, he has introduced 1) the benevolent acts of brethren in the first century and 2) the supporting of Paul by the local church at Philippi as he preached the gospel. In using the benevolent actions recorded in Acts 11:27-30, he tried to make the Jerusalem church into a sponsoring church. When I asked him to prove that the elders to whom Paul and Barnabas gave the benevolent aid were elders for the Jerusalem church, he responded by saying, "Regarding the quibble whether the elders mentioned in Acts 11:30 were the elders of the church in Jerusalem, this question has little bearing on the subject at hand." On the contrary, it has very much to do with our subject. My point goes to prove that the Jerusalem church was not a sponsoring church. Is it any wonder that Gil says it has little bearing on the subject at hand? The verses, which Gil introduced, spoke to brethren engaging in benevolent acts toward other brethren. They said nothing that even hinted of local churches sending benevolent aid to a sponsoring church that would in turn forward the aid to the need. Consult my previous writings concerning this point then you judge dear reader.

Gil further tried to argue for the sponsoring church type arrangement by claiming that the church at Philippi was such a church. He reasoned that Paul used the church at

Philippi as a sponsoring church through which his support was funneled while he preached at Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:8-9). When I introduced the scholarship of Clarke and Macknight, he made light of it by saying, "The Bible sheds a lot of light on them commentaries!" It would have been of greater benefit to this debate if he had challenged their scholarship on this issue. He writes, "The text clearly indicates that the 'giving and receiving' occurred not while Paul was in Macedonia, but when he departed from the province." Gil makes an assertion without proof. Why didn't he give us his scholarly exegesis that causes him to believe the Philippian church extended its support of Paul beyond his leaving of Macedonia and Thessalonica? Why didn't he just show us where these Bible scholars were wrong? This is unfortunate because now he cannot introduce new material in his last treatise. I would have liked to examine Gil's scholarship on this issue. The truth is that Clarke and Macknight are only two of many Bible scholars who do not accept Gil's faulty exegesis of Philippians 4:15. Scholarship aside, all one has to do is read the passages in question to see that Paul was commending Philippi for sending him support which he received (sending and receiving). Notice, it is a preacher of the gospel thanking a local church (one local church, not two or more, not a group of local churches, just one) for their generous financial support. He happens to identify when he received it but that is incidental to what he says. The language is clear and no more complicated than that. It is when brethren go to the scripture to try to prove something they already practice that they get into trouble. Read, dear reader, read and then you judge.

I introduced A. Campbell's statements into this debate to show that one may be opposed to division (denominating) within religion and yet hold a view that is core to denominationalism. The bringing together of local churches into a group for the purpose of performing an action, regardless of the action, is denominational. I introduced the teachings of the Southern Missionary Baptist Church denomination to show that even those who accept the designation of being a denomination maintain a fierce loyalty to congregational independence. The independence in such cases is false for no local church can be autonomous (self-governing) when it aligns itself with other local churches for whatever reason, even a godly one. All of which points to the fact that the sponsoring church type arrangement is denominational by nature. Again, dear reader, I encourage you to read my writings and judge for yourself.

God's Pattern for the Christian's Work

The church of Christ is not an organization with some physical headquarters or positions of hierarchy or a treasury into which its members contribute. It is a spiritual relationship that its members enjoy with God. It is a relationship controlled by God based upon the faithful obedience of individuals. One does not join this spiritual state, they are added (Acts 2:47). One is not voted out by his fellow members, God removes his name should he become unfaithful (Revelation 3:5).

The faithful perform their duties in three avenues. The first is as an individual. Husbands are to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25). Christians are to provide for

widows within their families (1 Timothy 5:16a). The second avenue is to work conjointly with other Christians (Matthew 17:16). The third is to work through the church collective or, as we are more prone to say, a local church. This work exists when Christians within a given area purposefully pool their resources thus creating an entity known as a local church of Christ (Romans 16:16; Revelation 1:11). As with the other avenues for laboring in the vineyard of the Lord, this avenue has work that is distinctly defined (1 Timothy 5:16b). When men take it upon themselves to change the distinct work of a local church, they sin. We must be satisfied with the pattern, which God has given us in His word. It is our plea that brethren everywhere put off the shackles of human opinion and return to the simple pattern of the New Testament.

In this debate, Gil has charged me with not answering his infamous five questions. I did answer his questions. I just didn't answer them the way he wanted. If you remember, he asked they be answered with a true or false. That is comparable to me asking him to answer yes or no to the question, do you continue to beat your wife?

In this debate, Gil has charged me with ad hominem debating. I shall leave the reader to determine if I have assigned motives to him that are not logical conclusions to his arguments. I am sorry he thinks I have.

I dedicate my efforts, as meager as they are, to the God and Father of all creation. May He receive glory and honor from whatever good was accomplished by this effort.

Fourth Negative By Gil Yoder

So now we come to the conclusion of our discussion. Brother Glen Young has completed his fourth and last affirmative article, and this will be the last of four negatives discussing the proposition, "All collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are unscriptural by design and denominational by nature."

According to the rules of our debate, "No new material will be introduced in the last negative rebuttal." Because honorable men attempt to keep their agreements, this final article will serve to summarize the arguments that have already been given, and evaluate the efforts both of us have made in this discussion, rather than to introduce new arguments or evidence. The careful reader will glean little information from this article that has not already been said. Nevertheless we believe our last words will help to tie everything together to the benefit of those who take time to read.

Let me first say my thanks to brother Young for engaging me in this debate. While we differ on this subject, and perhaps others, and while I believe that the sin of binding where God has not bound is serious enough to justify the rupture of fellowship that exists between us, I can and do commend him for having enough conviction to defend his beliefs in this forum. We have known one another now only a short while, but I consider him to be a friend for the effort he has made to correct me in what he believes to be a fault, and I hope that he considers me a friend in the same vein.

There is a little in the last affirmative article to which I should respond. Brother Young began with an effort to pit my words against me. Such is an effective tactic in debate when one's opponent contradicts himself, but if one resorts to wresting with words to show an apparent contradiction, the tactic will normally fail. In this case brother Young strains to find contradictions in our words, but only by missing their evident meaning. In effect he is practicing eisegesis (reading into my words) rather than exegesis (reading out of my words). Biblical skeptics do the same thing when they seek contradictions in God's Word.

My opponent's first example of a shift in my writing had to do with my use of the word "cooperate" instead of "collective" when speaking of the sponsoring church type arrangement." But this shift is only in brother Young's head. A simple search of the articles presented in this debate reveals that every article has spoken of the "cooperation" of churches, including those of my opponent. In fact brother Young has employed the term by far with the greatest frequency.

What I have said is that our difference is not a matter of being for or against cooperation. "Rather our difference is a matter of how churches may cooperate" (second negative). That has been the import of our discussion from the beginning, and did not suddenly rear its head in the last negative.

Next my opponent once again misrepresents the meaning of my words making it appear that sometimes I have affirmed agreement with grouping churches together into a conglomerate of churches under a single head. I don't believe that our readers will be fooled by that stratagem, however, so it deserves little response. Suffice it to say that to affirm "Some collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are not unscriptural by design and denominational by nature," does not imply a belief that churches may come together into a single group.

Brother Young himself wrote, "The only collective actions that Christians can biblically engage in are those actions ^{ex}performed through the local church of which they are members" (fourth affirmative). In this sentence my opponent uses the term "collective action" in the same sense I have defined it, so he ought to have the faculties to understand the sense in which I have employed it. When a local church sends funds to another local church to support that church in a work in which it is engaged, both churches are engaged in collective actions. The sending church is acting collectively, because its members can be seen as a group sending the funds, and the receiving church is acting collectively, because its members can be seen as a group receiving the funds. That this practice finds authority in the scripture is abundantly clear in Acts 11:27-30, as we have seen before. But it is precisely this practice that my brother condemns in his proposition.

So, once again brother Young's attempt to pit my words against me fails.

Finally, the last affirmative erroneously averred that there was some contradiction between my words that it would be foolish for a church "to take on a work greater than it's ability," and my objection to my opponent's efforts to legislate a human limit for a local church. This is how my words were strained to bolster brother Young's weakened position: "On the one hand, Gil says a local church is limited, at some level, in its work. However, on the other hand, he says to limit the work of a local church is a doctrine of men."

Those, brother Young, are not my words, and there is no justifiable reason for reading that into my words. This is what I said specifically: "In the section where brother Young revisits his assertions regarding ante-ism he writes, 'The limitation that is placed upon a local church is its ability to finance the work.' Dear brother, who has placed that 'limitation' on the local church, God or men? ... Where is the scripture that states that churches of Christ are so limited?"

I did not say that placing limits on the work of the church is a doctrine of men. The Bible itself places limits on churches! Placing man-made limits on a church, however, is a doctrine of men. Precisely for that reason I challenged you to produce the scripture to support the law that you affirmed. In response you produced none. If you could, I am sure the passage would have been produced. Therefore your silence in that matter speaks volumes.

Now, finally, before I wrap up my side of this discussion I need to respond to one other point in the fourth affirmative. With regard to the commendation that Paul gave to the Philippian church for their "giving and receiving" in his behalf (Phil. 4:15), brother Young wrote that I made "an assertion without proof" when I said, "The text clearly indicates that the 'giving and receiving' occurred not while Paul was in Macedonia, but when he departed from the province," placing him squarely in Corinth where, Paul later wrote, he received support from multiple churches.

It is not the case that I gave no proof for that statement. My proof is the text itself, which reads, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only." I need not go into a detailed commentary of the passage to note that "when I departed from Macedonia" points to a period following Paul's visit in that province, and not to a period while in the province. Brother Young's vaulted commentaries notwithstanding, I am satisfied with the evident meaning of the English translation of the venerable KJV, and I trust our readers to judge correctly between the merits of the two.

In his own summary of the debate my opponent claims that our discussion has been over whether one church can scripturally oversee the work of another church. We freely admit that brother Young has sought diligently to make our discussion over that point, but that has never been our point of disagreement. Over and over again we have voiced our agreement with brother Young regarding the autonomy of the local church, and pointed out that that is not the issue that creates the division that exists between us. The truth is brother Young has raised this straw man argument because he cannot prove the point that really needed proof in this debate.

The real issue has nothing at all to do with autonomy (except that my opponent takes the liberty to tell churches what they must do in matters of judgment). Rather the real issue of this debate is this: Is it scriptural for one church acting autonomously to send financial support to another church for use in a work in which it is engaged? Furthermore is it scriptural for a church to collect financial support from several other churches in order to sponsor the work of a preacher of the gospel? My opponent answers no to both questions, but we have seen in Acts 11 that the answer to the first question is yes, and in Philippians 4:15 coupled with 1 Corinthians 11:8 that the answer to the second question is yes.

We have shown in these passages that the practices mentioned were practiced in faith in the first century. Since apostolically approved practices of churches in the first century set a pattern for us today, modern churches have authority to follow those practices today.

In my first negative I pointed out that my duty in this debate would be to prove that my opponent has not met his obligation. What was his obligation? It was to prove a proposition expressed as a universal affirmative, which is that "All," not some,

"collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are unscriptural by design and denominational by nature." My opponent proved the "some" part of his affirmative (we readily stipulated to that), but he never went beyond that point. Therefore, I have met that part of my obligation in this debate.

However, I said that I would go beyond that obligation and prove that the converse of brother Young's proposition is true, specifically, "Some collective actions of local churches through a sponsoring church arrangement are not unscriptural by design and denominational by nature." This also I did by showing the examples I gave with regard to the Judean famine, and the Philippians support of Paul. I did not and would not argue that every sponsorship arrangement is scriptural, for clearly that is incorrect. But that I have proven that some sponsoring church arrangements are scriptural and, therefore, undenominational should be evident to all.

In contrast it should be equally evident that the other writer in this debate failed to meet his burden of proof. Several facts should bear this out:

1. My opponent agreed in writing to affirm a universal affirmative proposition, but he presented arguments only to prove a particular affirmative proposition. In other words he asserted that all sponsoring church arrangements are wrong, but his arguments only went to prove that some of those arrangements are wrong.

2. My opponent agreed in writing to answer five questions, which were by agreement to call for a simple yes or no, true or false, or a short answer, but he answered only four, and excused himself from the fifth. In his last article he claims to have answered all of the questions, but the reader would be hard pressed to find where he answered this simple true or false question: "The church of Antioch engaged in a 'collective action' when they gathered a contribution to send relief to the brethren of Judaea (Acts 11:27-30)." I have searched carefully for an answer to this question, but cannot find it.

Originally brother Young's excuse for not answering the question was a supposed ambiguity of the term "collective action" (brother Young's own terminology as employed in his proposition). In his last affirmative a new excuse surfaced for his omission, which was that to ask the question would be comparable to his asking me "to answer yes or no to the question, do you continue to beat your wife?" I will show that the two questions are not comparable.

First, if brother Young were to ask me "do you continue to beat your wife," he would be implying that at least once in the past I did beat my wife. That would be deceptive and tantamount to a lie. The question that I asked of my opponent implies that the church of Antioch took up a collection for needy ones of Judea, but the scriptures teach that truth, so there is no deception involved in its asking. On this count therefore, the questions are not parallel.

Second, although the question was in the form of a true or false statement, nothing prevented a longer answer. Nevertheless even that format was avoided.

Third, even the question "do you continue to beat your wife" has an answer. Were I asked the question, I would simply say, "No, because I never began to beat her." Only one who had once beaten his wife, or who continued to beat his wife, should have difficulty answering this question, because to answer it truthfully would tend to reveal an ugly fact. I maintain that a truthful answer to my unanswered question reveals a great weakness in my opponent's proposition. This fact is most likely the explanation why it was never addressed.

3. My opponent argued against practices that both of us condemn, when he should have argued against practices that I support with which he disagrees. Two practices he mentioned were the American Christian Missionary Society, and the organization of the Baptist Church. Our rejection of both of those organizations is as strongly held as brother Young's, so his remonstrance against them served only to give him a target easily hit.

4. Brother Young argued that when one church sends money to another church, either the sending church exercises authority over the receiving church, or else the receiving church exercises authority over the sending church. He never explained, however, how this could be in the light of Acts 11 wherein the church of Antioch sent money to the elders of another church. My opponent argued that such practices violate congregational autonomy, but in fact brother Young's efforts to prevent the kind of action found in Acts 11 is itself such a violation. If the church where my opponent attends determines not to follow that practice, that is a decision they have a right to make, but they do not have a right to decide for other congregations in matters such as this.

5. Finally my brother asserted as a law of God, "The limitation that is placed upon a local church is its ability to finance the work," but would not or could not produce the scripture to justify that law, though we pressed upon him so to do. The scriptures, however, contradict that law. Had the elders mentioned in Acts 11:30 agreed with Glen Young, they could not in all good conscience have received the funds sent to them by the brethren in Antioch, because it was sent to help them in a work for which they were financially unable to do alone.

In his last affirmative brother Young stated a belief that I in my third negative became "somewhat more belligerent [in] tone." I am sorry he felt that way, because every word that we have written in this debate has been written in love for my opponent, and for others who might read these pages. However, we expected "a vigorous defense of [our] views" ("Agreement to Debate"). Sometimes fervor is mistaken for enmity, but it has been our goal to avoid that snare. There is no doubt that we can stand some improvement in our attitudes and in our ability to reflect the proper attitudes in the things that we do. However, we were generally pleased with brother Young's demeanor in this debate, and hoped he would feel the same toward us.

It is still our hope that many will read the words of this debate with an open mind and an open Book, with the intent to understand each writer, and especially God's Word. There has been too much polemic exaggeration of the differences between us, so we are convinced that better understanding, both of God's Word and of our views, would help to heal some of the division our brethren have seen because of the subject of this debate.

May God speed these words to open and honest hearts!