

“WE BE BRETHREN” -- A REVIEW

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“WE BE BRETHERN” -- A REVIEW

Roy E. Cogdill, Nacogdoches, Texas

This series of articles will be concerned with a book which has recently been written by brother J. D. Thomas under the title, “We Be Brethren.” It is with a good deal of “fear and trembling” that we undertake to review what such an eminent and learned man has had to say about anything. His qualifications are imposing from the viewpoint of the wisdom of this world and he is a man of wide recognition. Certainly I do not claim to match his scholastic attainments though I have gone to school some. However, we shall not measure his writings from the philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, or theological viewpoints, so far as the science of each is concerned, but will proceed upon the basis that—

“the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; That according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (I Cor. 1:25-31.)

When men write or talk about things spiritual and eternal, what they say should never be weighed from the viewpoint of their worldly attainments. If we were to do that, then the most highly educated clergy would determine the truth and human wisdom would be the standard of truth. God says this is not so. Jesus said, “Thy word is truth.” (John 17:17.) And again Jesus said,

“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Luke 10:21)

We are not decrying education or the proper employment of learning or wisdom nor would we minimize its value, when employed properly. Rather we are emphasizing the fact that no Bible principle depends upon such for either its truth or an understanding of it. God's word is simple. Truth has for the most part been made known in very simple language. There are more words of one syllable in the New Testament than in any other literature on earth. The simplicity that is in Christ is amazing. The Word of God warns us over and over against letting it be corrupted by human wisdom.

Witness declarations like this:

“For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (I Cor. 2:2-4.)

And again this passage:

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” (Col. 2 :6-11.)

Paul warned against allowing our minds to be corrupted from the simplicity of the gospel.

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” II Cor. 11:3-4.)

If it be considered by any then that I am presumptuous in undertaking a review of what a learned man like J. D. Thomas has written, whose attainments are:

“Professor of Bible in Abilene Christian College, where he has taught for nine years and from which he received the B. A. degree in Bible and Greek in 1934. The M. A. degree with a major in Church History was conferred upon him by Southern Methodist University in 1944 and he received the Ph. D. in New Testament and Early Christian Literature from the Humanities Division of the University of Chicago in 1957,”

and in addition to all these attainments educationally, he has served as

“Director of the Annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian College since 1952. He holds membership in several learned Societies, is on the Editorial Board of the Restoration Quarterly, and is a staff member of Twentieth Century Christian. He is the 1958 speaker on the Far-East Fellowship in Tokyo, Japan.”— Jacket of Book — “We Be Brethren”;

then I ask only that the attainments of the two men be forgotten and used as no point of comparison. I do not wish to enter into any kind of a contest with brother Thomas in any sense. I do not know him personally and have no ground for any kind of personal reflection upon him or his attainments. I am concerned only with the truth of God's Word and I hope I can sincerely say with Paul,

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of any man's judgment: yea, I judge mine own self. For I know nothing by myself: yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord”. (I Cor. 4:1-4.)

Educational attainments are fine if they can be forgotten in the study of God's Word and if we can lose ourselves in the simple childlike faith that should always characterize us when we approach God to know his will. Paul counted

“All things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. and do count them hut dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him. not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”. (Phil. 3:8-10.)

These are not idle and inapplicable words from God's Book that we have cited but are pertinent to the very careful consideration of the things contained in the book under review. A good many have expressed to me in criticism of the book that it is difficult to understand and that it does not clarify any problem but further muddies the water and confuses the issues. Some have said that even in the “Glossary”, in his effort to define some of the terms used, they become more confused than ever as to what he is trying to say. Well, perhaps he was expected to make it sound scholarly but even though the book is not simple enough to be read at a glance, it is our judgment that what he is saying is evident with a careful reading at least. It is probably easier to understand the Bible, however, than it is to understand what he is saying about “How to Understand the Bible”. In fact, if we can find out what the Bible says, we won't have to worry about understanding it for it means what it says. Our problem is learning to respect what it says.

We shall have some things to say about the spirit in which the book is written, as judged from the book itself, the appeal it makes, the fairness with which it treats the subject and those who differ with the author, and his conclusions, as we go along in this review. We have called attention by the passages cited to the basic fundamental attitude with which the book, or any other book dealing with divine things, should be read and studied. When matters have been thoroughly considered, conclusions have been reached, and our course is set in the

solution of the problems under consideration, we should be sure that with Paul,

“Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.” (II Cor. 1:12.)

This is the Christian attitude and none of us can afford any other lest we place our souls in jeopardy.

Personal References and Personalities

By way of further general consideration, let us say that in personal references to brother Thomas and direct reference to his book in the quotations made from it, we are pursuing only the customary course in such a review and there should not be and cannot be righteously construed, by anything that shall be said, any spirit of enmity or personal malice. As has been stated, there is no personal acquaintance between us, there has never been any personal association, we have not exchanged communications, and there is, therefore, no possible grounds for any personal feeling of any sort. So, reserve such judgment as you might be tempted to render concerning the spirit manifested for God to make, for He alone can judge the hearts and attitudes of men. We shall write plainly and positively and without any apology for that is the only way we know how to write. But we shall be as fair and honest in dealing with the matter under review as we know how to be. Knowing our heart, if we do, there is no interest in anything but the truth of God and the welfare of the Kingdom of God among men. We ask in your consideration of this review that you give us credit for such an attitude until you are endowed with the ability to judge motives and attitudes. If we seem to manifest any spirit or attitude of severity or intolerance, please, let it be charged to a disposition to be intolerant toward what we believe to be error and not toward men.

Citations Not Given

Much of the material in “We Be Brethren” is in response to my book, “Walking By Faith” which was published in 1957, and which is now well into its second edition. Brother Thomas quotes rather copiously from it—directly—paragraph after paragraph, and refers to it many times indirectly and yet does not acknowledge even the existence of the book, either by name or by author. Neither does he acknowledge any other author or the source of any other quotation or the direct object of reference made. He customarily attributes to all of us who oppose his position everything that he has read from anyone. This, of course, is unfair. Each man, either preacher or author, is responsible for his own statements and arguments. Because men are in general agreement on some point does not necessarily mean that they shall be held responsible for what each one shall say. Brethren make arguments in debating Baptists sometimes that man: do not believe to be true though they are in complete agreement and sympathy with the thing contended for in the discussion.

It would have been good if Brother Thomas had forth rightly given the source of his quotations and the positions and statements that he seeks to refute so that brethren could know what he is quoting from, get the book or paper read it and see the context of the quotation, weigh the full comment made or argument given. He undertakes to explain in his introduction why he did not do it in this manner,

“The book was deliberately planned to omit the normal scholarly practice of making definite reference to persons quoted, because of the nature of the materials under consideration and to avoid the possibility of any personality involvements that might interfere with clear based purely upon prejudice;” (Intro. page VII.)

The quotation is not clear in its last sentence due evidently to a printer's error. But let it be understood definitely that as far as we are concerned there are and will be no “personality involvements” beyond simple personal reference and definite citation for the purpose of identification. There would have been none if he had dealt forthrightly in his quotations. He admits that his book does not follow “normal scholarly practice” and we do not believe that his reasons given are definite enough or sufficient to justify the “abnormal and unscholarly” method of quoting excerpts from a book in an effort to reply without giving even the name of the book, or the author, or the page of the reference so that it can be checked. We are not suggesting that he has intentionally misrepresented anything, but we do say that it would have been only fair to those who read his book for him to have acknowledged the source of the material to which he attempted to reply so that they might secure a copy, read and study it for themselves, in connection with Brother Thomas' book and thus carefully weigh the argument made on both sides of the issue. There is entirely too much one-sided discussion behind an “iron curtain” now and it is no advantage to truth. He may have followed such a course because of a sensitive desire to be kind to some author or to avoid unpleasantness of some sort that might arise, but it is not an example of complete fairness to his readers and the students of his book who are fair minded and want to carefully hear and weigh both sides fully and fairly, studying the issues involved, in order to determine the course they should take for themselves rather than be a “blind follower of the blind”.

Analysis of Contents and Positions

To give our readers some brief idea of the contents of the book as a whole we summarize the positions taken by Brother Thomas in this book and state in connection some things that we will set forth in review thereof.

1. Brother Thomas diagnoses our present difficulties in the church as due to a difference in our “method of interpretation”. We differ radically on this point and will undertake to show that our differences are fundamentally due to a **difference in attitude toward the Word of God and divine authority.**

2. Brother Thomas purports to deduce and discover the solution to the problem of how to determine when the scriptures authorize and do not authorize a practice by his “wavy line chart” which he calls a “Standard Diagram of Authority” and also by what he calls “The Pattern Principle” for examples. We shall show that he **has not set forth a single thing that is new** but that he rests his case actually on the same ground that has been used through the years to justify practices that cannot be found in the scriptures either in precept, example, or inference.

3. Brother Thomas defensively based his whole theory and its application on what he calls “excluded specifics” and “Optional expedients” and he applies these by his appeal to **common sense** which means his own arbitrary judgment and wisdom as we shall see. We shall show that **he needs to produce authority in some form**, generic or specific, for what he is trying to justify, either in precept, example, or inference and that in this he utterly fails.

4. Brother Thomas labors to prescribe the means by which we can determine that an example is binding and exclusive. We shall show that **no example is binding in his view except when he determines that it should be**. He is the authority and he arbitrarily determines the case and announce his decision. Too many of us are not willing for him to decide the issue for us. We do not trust in his wisdom. We believe he is under obligation to produce something in the Word of God which at least includes what he wants us to practice. We do not want to depend on him to go through the New Testament and pick out for us the examples that the Lord intended for us to follow and mark for us those He did not intend for us to follow He might have to separate the commandments of God to be obeyed and the facts of the Bible to be believed in the same way.

5. Brother Thomas professes in the book a superior understanding of the problems we face and a clear conception of the contentions made by those of us who disagree with him. We shall show that he neither understands the nature of the issues before the church nor the contentions and arguments offered by those of us who differ with him. At least if he understands, he has not correctly represented the issues or the arguments made concerning them.

6. Brother Thomas fails to see the difference between what the Bible teaches as individual Christian duties and the work of the church. We shall show that he relies on the old fallacy that whatever the Christian individual can do the church can do and that this is one of his basic MISCONCEPTIONS of Bible teaching.

7. Brother Thomas undertakes to hang the label of “legalism” on those who differ with him while he struggles to liberate himself from being classified as a “liberalist” or “modernist” in attitude. Here as in the pattern of how to establish authority and when is an example binding, he makes his own rules and formulates his own definitions and arbitrarily

applies for all these self made rules to the facts at hand. This phase of the book will be explored and it will be interesting to note “some of the terms of liberalism and modernism” as they occur.

8. Brother Thomas makes an eloquent plea for the absence of strife and undertakes a plea for unity. We propose to show that he does not live up to his plea in either direction in the book.

9. Brother Thomas professes to find the solution to all of the problems of the government and function of the congregation and it shall be our purpose to show that he either does not understand or is not willing to respect New Testament teaching concerning either.

10. Brother Thomas undertakes to apply his own pattern to justify his own conception of the problem he calls “Institutionalism” but we shall show, abundantly It think, that his “wavy line” wavers according to his own preferences and solves nothing unless he is allowed to designate where it belongs.

11. He reaches conclusions as follows:

(1) The congregations can pool their resources in an intercongregational treasury and place such a treasury or fund under the eldership of one congregation, or other organization, without perverting the function of God's organization.

(2) The money contributed into the treasury of the Lord's church can be used at the discretion of the elders for any work which they deem to be good.

(3) The churches of Christ can build human benevolent societies through which to do their work of benevolence instead of doing it through the congregational organization God has given.

(4) The only thing wrong with the Missionary Society is that it controls the churches and infringes upon their autonomy.

(5) Schools in which the Bible is taught along with secular subjects are truly the “work of the Lord” and “an expedient for spreading the cause of Christ”, and should therefore be supported by the churches of Christ.

(6) That “fellowship” as it is used in the Bible includes eating, drinking, and other social activity by the church and can therefore legitimately be provided for by the church out of its funds. That the church can become the center of social activity and can provide facilities not only for its social functions but for recreation and entertainment as well and thus by bringing worldliness into the church we can attract the world.

(7) The church can conduct any kind of a legitimate business under the supervision of its elders for profit such as a grocery store, oil business, etc., as long as the church does not do so on purpose, that is, if such a business is given to it, to begin with, and in the judgment of the elders it would be more profitable to run it than to sell it.

These are the extremes to which the author of this book goes. We shall show the fallacy of every conclusion reached and their destructiveness to the church of the Lord. It can be said for brother Thomas that he does not draw any line against anything but swallows it all. It have never seen a more consistent attitude in the acceptance of the consequences of a position than he displays. He accepts all of the consequences that all of the brethren who agree with him in the premises will eventually have to accept or give up their contention. There is no half-way stopping place or compromising position. When once the gate is down, the whole flood tide of innovations will come sweeping in again as in the days of “digression”. Bro. Thomas makes no attempt to shut the gate against just a part of these new departures that are plaguing the church but which constitute the same old problem. He accepts all that the **Gospel Advocate** and the **Firm Foundation** and the most radical among the “Institutional” brethren advocate. His position is liberal enough to suit the most liberal among them. He disagrees with many of them in arguments made and positions taken in his effort to justify his conclusions but he reaches the same conclusions they reach, one way or another.

We have tried to ascertain whether or not the administration of Abilene Christian College and the head of the “Bible department” of the school will go all of the way with this very featured teacher of theirs. The administration of the school used to deny that they favored placing the school in the budget of the churches. Will they still deny it and yet allow this to be taught to their students? They have neither directly endorsed or denied any position he has taken though the book has been in print for some time. They cannot, however, avoid responsibility for what he teaches. He is a teacher of Bible in the school, a part of the “Bible Department”. He is employed and paid by the school administration. As long as they tolerate such teaching and support it they are necessarily responsible for it and cannot evade such responsibility.

(Installment II will follow)

“INTERPRETING” THE BIBLE

Roy E. Cogdill

(This is the **second** article written in review of the recently published book by J. D. Thomas of Abilene Christian College entitled “We Be Brethren”.)

We pointed out in the previous article in this review that Brother Thomas in his book diagnoses our present difficulties in the church as due to a difference in our “method of interpretation”. With this view we differ radically. It is our conviction that our differences are due fundamentally to a difference in attitude toward the Word of God and divine authority.

Brother Thomas devotes the first eight chapters of his book to what he believes is the major problem—that of interpretation or “methods of interpretation.” He also is conscious and, evidently very deeply so, of a difference in attitude for he devotes two chapters to “legalism”, which is an attitude he charges against those of us who differ with him in our treatment of the word of God, and he spends one whole chapter defending himself against the charge of being a “liberalist”. In fact he and Brother Roberts, also on the faculty of A. C. C. and others, have been rather busy trying to prove that they are not “liberalists.” We will deal with the “legalism” and “liberalism” discussion in other articles. Just now we are interested in studying with our readers the idea of “interpretation” and “attitude”.

It is our conception that the attitude of a man toward the truth of God will pretty definitely determine the success he has in his effort to understand and apply what God has said. Surely nothing is more important than the proper attitude toward God's Word. This is emphasized both in the Old and New Testaments. In fact, most of Old Testament history tells the story of how God sought to develop in the hearts of his people a proper attitude toward Him and His Word. This history has been retained in the Word of God that we might learn from Old Testament study the lesson that God sought to impress upon his people then. In those days God warned his people against coming to him with an “idol” in their hearts.

“Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I, Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; that It may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols”. (Ezekiel 14:4-6.)

The same warning in principle can be found in the New Testament scriptures in these words.

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they

received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they might all be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (II Thess. 2 :10-12.)

It would not matter, therefore, what rules were followed to understand the scriptures and learn the will of God, unless we have the right attitude toward it, our efforts will only result in the justification of our idols instead of learning the truth. That is the reason the wise man of the Old Testament said, “Buy the truth and sell it not”.

We have often heard people say that “you can prove anything by the Bible”. That is mighty close to blasphemy against the word of God. But it is true that any man can prove anything **to his own satisfaction** by the Bible. If he comes to justify his idols, he will be able to do so in his own mind.

If there has ever been a book written in a more labored effort to justify some practice or conclusion already reached, we have not seen it. Brother Thomas never forgot for one moment the end toward which he was driving and sought all the way through the effort to bend every rule and blend every word toward that objective. He had no plain passage of scripture that furnished authority — either generic or specific — by way of express precept, approved apostolic example, or necessary inference—hence it took a book of 260 pages to establish that he had the privilege through his own “common sense” or “good judgment” to place the “wavy line” in his chart on authority wherever it needed to be placed to serve his purpose and justify his practice. Then he gives us the benefit of his judgment and his wisdom in his own conclusions, arbitrarily reached, without one ounce of evidence from the word of God to sustain them. He could easily have solved the problem by just producing some kind of authority — any kind — by some plain passage of scripture—any passage that is plain enough that it doesn't take a PH.D. to “interpret” it for us. It is tragic that Brother Thomas could not treat his subject from an altogether objective viewpoint giving us what the scriptures say plainly in support of what he tries to justify and leave himself and his experience as a “trained thinker” out of the consideration. He started out to do so and the work had some promise, but when he tried to work out a formula by which all problems of authority could be solved and was forced to inject his own wisdom and judgment into the decision as to where the “wavy line” in his chart on authority belongs and formulate his own decision to guide us as to which examples are binding and which are not, then his attitude changed to an altogether subjective one depending on his learning and wisdom.

But let us look at some of the things in his book and see this matter for ourselves:

“In general, our BRETHREN agree upon principles of interpretation, as they cover the major doctrines of the New Testament. We have no problem whatever about what one needs to do to be saved, or the overall scheme of redemption, or the place of the church in God's plan; but the rising of these new problems about church cooperation and the

care of orphans has brought the question of details of how correct interpretation must be done into sharp focus.”

“The real differences between the BRETHREN involved in these controversies can be attributed to differences in methods of interpretation.

“In the past we have all agreed that the Bible teaches us authoritatively, and outlines actions REQUIRED of us, by: (1) direct command, (2) necessary inference, and (3) by approved apostolic examples. These basic methods have in general been accepted by all of us since the beginning of the Restoration period of church history. There has previously been no serious need to challenge any of them.” (Page 5—last line—page 6—paragraph 3.)

Unless there is some special “interpretation” of this language which we are not able to see, Brother Thomas thinks that we are faced with some problems now which have heretofore not existed. We must challenge some of the means which we have always used because of these “new problems”. The same old rules by which we have always “interpreted” the word of God on such matters as (1) what one needs to do to be saved, (2) the overall scheme of redemption, and, (3) the place of the church in God's plan; will not work anymore and will not solve the problem of “church cooperation” and the “care of orphans”. This is a tremendous admission. Who created these problems? Have they not always existed? Does the teaching of the Bible bring about these new problems ? Do we have something existing among us —newly created — that the Bible is not responsible for that has brought us face to face with the need for new rules of “interpretation” that it takes a PH.D. to ferret out for us ? Has any practice or teaching ever arisen that the plain word of God has not been able to deal with without inventing new rules and “methods of interpretation”? What a dilemma something has created!

But hear our author further:

“No one is especially to blame for our present “bottleneck” in the matter of knowing when and how examples teach required actions. We have never before faced these problems in just this same way and have simply never needed to dig into the question in such a detailed way. There has been nothing wrong with the interpretation that we have done in the past—the Bible does teach by command, by necessary inference, and by approved examples—and probably the worst thing that has happened about the whole matter up to now is that some BRETHREN have held very ugly attitudes toward others, without fathoming the problems in a clear-cut and decisive way themselves”. (Page 8—paragraph 2.)

Now I am sure that Brother Thomas does not plead guilty for himself in this charge of ugly attitudes toward one another or a failure to fathom the problem either. In the first he assumes a very pious brotherly attitude to begin with but actually betrays about as ugly an attitude as we have seen demonstrated before he finishes, as we shall show in a later article, and therein

demonstrates his inability again to treat his subject objectively. In the latter there are many evidences that he doubts not his ability to solve the difficulty with reference to these new problems—to his own satisfaction anyway—and that he actually takes credit for evolving a “Standard Diagram of Authority” that will settle all difficulties of “interpretation” for all time to come. We shall give some instances of these evidences later on also.

Remember that in the above statements Brother Thomas points out that the same rules of “interpretation” that have taught that Baptism is for the remission of sins, the scheme of redemption, and the place of the church in God's plan, are not able now to solve the problem of church cooperation and the problem of caring for orphans. We need to keep this admission in mind as we examine other statements from his book—according to Brother Thomas, **THE “BROTHERHOOD” NEEDS SOME NEW RULES OF INTERPRETATION TO LEARN HOW CHURCHES ARE TO COOPERATE AND HOW TO CARE FOR ORPHANS.**

Where are we to get these new rules of “interpretation”? He does not keep us waiting long:

“We should recognize, then, the necessity of squarely facing up to the need for a more thorough study of interpretation. Let us do it calmly and willingly and unafraid. There has as yet been no book in the field of principles of interpretation written by a denominationalist that even gets close to this problem. The best book in the general area available so far is Dungan's *Hermeneutics*, but his approach does not treat these particular problems, so he does not really help us. Our only alternative, then, is to probe the problem deeply for ourselves”. (Page 9—paragraph 3.)

From this we learn that no book solving these new problems for us has ever been written until now. Our Brother Thomas is unafraid to “pioneer” just as Alexander Campbell and other Restoration preachers have pioneered before him. He says so in the same paragraph quoted from above. Mary Baker Eddy gave to her followers a “Key to the Scriptures”. What the world did before she unlocked the Bible and told them what it meant, It don't know. But until “We Be Brethren” appeared on the scene, the truth of God's word about church cooperation and how to care for orphans has never been thoroughly explored, discovered, and made plain for all. This is a tragedy. It suppose then that the church has never in any age before known how to care for orphans and how to cooperate with other churches. Could we reach any other conclusion from these statements?

But we note the next step in the development of his “plan of interpretation” in these words:

“The Scientific Method actually includes both induction and deduction.—Simply described, the Scientific Method calls for determination of data by empirical observation (or with our five senses) and then the collection of these data, for consideration in

relation to each other. When they are thus considered (by reasoning or rationalism), a hypothesis will likely be formed that can explain their interrelation and suggest the solution of the problem". (Page 14—paragraphs 1 and 2.)

Most brethren have not formed the right “hypothesis” by using their five senses and rationalizing enough about the will of God, I guess. Either “inductively” or “deductively” this must be done or we are sunk. But listen again:

“The use of the Scientific Method requires that all essential data and concepts be distinguished from the non-essential ones and that any underlying structure or form of the phenomena under consideration be determined'. (Page 14— Paragraph 3.)

Abraham believed God, that is, he believed what God said when he was promised a son by his wife Sarah. It was against all human reason, experience, learning, and every circumstance for she was past the age of conceiving and bearing a child and had been barren through her life. Abraham considered his own body as good as dead. What sort of “empirical observation,” with his five senses, or consideration by “rationalizing” did Abraham use in order to arrive at the conclusion that God meant what he said ? ? Does a man have to understand this “Scientific Method” Brother Thomas talks about before he can understand God's Word and know God's will ? Must we rely upon rationalizing and our five senses in order to believe what God has said? What did Jesus mean when he said, thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, a hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so seemed good in thy sight” (Luke 10:21)?

But notice who Brother Thomas says are able to for these “hypotheses”.

“Hypotheses are formed by simply “occurring to the mind” during the time that experienced and trained thinkers in the field under consideration are engaged in reflecting on the various data at hand. What we mean by “experienced thinkers” may be illustrated by the fact that an automobile mechanic or a preacher would never conceive an hypothesis of how a surgeon might best perform a certain operation. They could not even reflect very well upon the data that are available in the medical field, since they could not understand or evaluate them. On the other hand each might do correct reasoning and formulate helpful hypotheses within his own field.

“This ability to understand and evaluate facts and data that bear upon a particular problem in a given field and to formulate hypotheses that may issue in a solution of a problem puts one in a position to actually make necessary “leaps of inference” from known things to unknown things and thus to draw down conclusions”. (Page 15— paragraph 2 and 3.)

We learn a little more of what he means by “trained and experienced thinkers” being able to “conceive hypotheses” in their own field by reading another short statement in the same

connection:

“Many of the early thinkers in the Restoration, however, were school men and had formal training in logic and they have no doubt had a strong influence upon the rest of us” (Page 17 —paragraph 1.)

We have been fed a strong diet of “institutional logic” from the beginning of these institutional promotions among the brethren with mighty little scripture thrown in and upon the basis of human sophistry rather than a “thus saith The Lord” we have been asked to rest our faith. Brother Thomas is no exception to this in hi book. He leaves some very lucid and definite inference in the statements quoted to this point.

I—The “Brotherhood” needs some new rules of interpretation to learn how churches are to cooperate and how to care for orphans. The same rules the have enabled us to understand the plan of salvation the scheme of redemption, and the place of the church in God's plan will not work on these new problems

II—We will have to depend upon “trained ant experienced thinkers” which means “school men trained in logic” to evolve this system of “interpretation” so that we may be able to understand that the present promotions in the church are right. We cannot come to such knowledge simply by reading and studying the scriptures for ourselves.

III—Brother Thomas qualifies in this field along with all of the rest of the PH. D. men whom we have in our professionally trained clergy in our generation. Moreover he is willing to be a “pioneer” in the field and point the way.

IV—These educated clergymen—like our brother — feel qualified and that they are in position to actually make necessary “leaps of inference” (emphasis mine) from known things to unknown things and thus to “draw down conclusions” for all of us. The difficulty is that they “leap” over too many plain passages of scripture and too many things that have been made known in the Word of the Lord in order to draw down their conclusions from “inferences” that are not justified.

Now before you feel too deep resentment toward these conclusions, if you are an admirer of our brother, it would be fitting to carefully examine the statements given above and many more of their kind in the book and ask yourself the question, If these points are not the conclusions which his language merits then what does he mean ? Let us hear him further on the last point:

“In the following pages, therefore, the attempt is made to point out an easy-to-understand principle that some have overlooked — a way that is really as simple as our ordinary thinking and understandable by anyone — for knowing when and how examples teach us—both when a matter is clearly optional for us, and also when definite, clear,

authoritative and binding “patterns” are revealed to us by God's Word. The attempt is then made to apply the principles to the various “problem areas” of tension in the brotherhood in the hope that we can all see God's will clearly and, in view of our desire for unity that we may then really “BE BRETHREN” in both our attitudes and conduct”. (Page 7— paragraph 3, page 8—paragraph 1.)

Now we sincerely hope that Brother Thomas will not get his feelings hurt too badly when we tell him that we think his labored effort contributes nothing to a clearer understanding of “God's will” or to a better attitude among brethren. Rather it is our sincere judgment that he has made nothing clear but the fact that he has labored extensively to find some circuitous route of trying to justify what he and others have in their hearts as “idols” instead of making a direct and simple appeal to the word of God. Their extended efforts, all of their attempts at logic, all of their sophistry and all of their cartoons would be entirely unnecessary if they would simply produce some plain testimony from the Word of God that teaches — in any manner — what they are trying to prove is right.

This idea of “interpretation” needs to be looked into just a little. It has not been long since one of “our” preachers in California said, “It believe the Bible is inspired all right, but my 'interpretation' of the Bible is not inspired and therefore It cannot say to any man when he disagrees with what It believe that he is wrong”. He was trying to soften down the plan of salvation and the place of the church in God's plan to make himself more tolerant toward those who disagreed with him. The difficulty with such an attitude is that there is no limitation that can justly be placed upon its application. It applies just as well to the miracles of our Lord, His resurrection from the dead, His virgin birth, and his present position at God's right hand as to baptism for remission of sins or anything else.

In reality the problem of “interpretation” is simply the problem of understanding what God has said. There is no difficulty in determining what God meant, for he means what he says. One of the major differences between scholarly men of ages past is in the fact that some of them have tried to determine just **what God has said** while so many others have been concerned with **what God meant** by what he said. Judges sometimes in deciding a case and writing an opinion will spend more time talking about what the law should be and in stating their dictum than they do in announcing the law. Brother Thomas' book deals very largely in dictum and very little in pointing out to his readers just what God has said about the problems at hand. He refers to a good many passages of scripture first and last but to very few that have any direct bearing on the problems which he seeks to solve for us all. **He relies much more on what the Bible has not said or what it has said about something else than he does upon what it says in plain language about the matter of church cooperation or congregational benevolence.** If you think that isn't true, then read the book and number the passages that really have any bearing on these problems. When you have finished, ask yourself the question, “what passage has he offered in which he finds authority, generic or specific, by commandment or express precept, approved apostolic example, or by necessary

inference, **for the churches building human organizations to furnish a home for the destitute** or for such combining of the funds of many churches in one congregation, and the centralizing of the control over those funds in one eldership as is practiced in the Herald of Truth? Or, put it another way, “What passage has he produced that teaches in any manner that such practices are in harmony with the will of God?” This is what we need and not so much evasion, and “ring around the rosey” palaver.

Webster's New Unabridged Twentieth Century Dictionary gives us the following on the meaning of “interpret”:

1. To explain the meaning of; to expound; to translate, as from an unknown or foreign language into one known; to explain or unfold the intent, meaning, or reasons of; to make clear, to free from obscurity or mystery; to make intelligible; to decipher; as to interpret the French language to an American; to interpret a dream; to interpret a passage of scripture.
2. To represent artistically; to portray or make clear by representation; as, an actor interprets a character in a drama, a musician interprets a piece of music.
3. To assume the meaning of; to explain to oneself; to construe; as his statement was not correctly interpreted.

It would be interesting to see just which one of these meanings Brother Thomas attaches to the word “interpret” as he uses that word in his book. Has he assumed the role of explaining what God has said — unfolding its intent — making it intelligible? If so, God must have failed and it sounds a little like Brother Thomas thinks God did fail to make himself clear on some matters except to “trained and experienced thinkers” or “school men trained in logic”.

When interpretation means anything but simply understanding it cannot apply to the Bible. The Bible does not need a special set of rules to be interpreted. It is to be understood just like other books. There is no difference in understanding what the Bible says on baptism for remission of sins and caring for orphans and we categorically deny that the word of God is any harder to understand on the matter of which organization is to do the benevolent work of the church, or over which congregation's resources an eldership shall have control, than it is about the plan of salvation. When we treat what the Bible says on the subject of the benevolent work of the church and congregational cooperation just like the denominational world treats what the Bible says about baptism, it is for the same reason, viz., we do not have the proper attitude toward the word of God. It is a matter of attitude and not “interpretation.”

“If God has spoken to man at all, he must have spoken for the purpose and with the design of being understood. The contradictory of this proposition is a moral absurdity. But if God spoke to man with the design of being understood, he must, of course, have generally used words in their ordinary sense, or according to the *usus loquendi* of the person addressed.

For in no other way short of a miracle could he have conveyed to them his meaning”—
(Milligan's Scheme of Redemption.)

God gave us his word with the purpose that we should understand it. That is the reason for divine revelation. That revelation is in the book and not in man today. If God intended that His word should be understood then he must have used words in their general meaning or ordinary sense. Otherwise it would have been a direct work of divine grace for man to understand the will of God. It is true that words have a special sense attached to them sometimes in the Bible but that sense never is out of harmony with the fundamental meaning of the term and the special meaning is determinable from the use of the term in its connection. The same rules of interpretation of language in general that make us able to understand what we read in other books will enable us to know what God means by what he says. The Bible is its own “interpreter” and it doesn't take an M. A. in church history from SMU or a PH.D. in New Testament and Early Christian Literature from the Humanities Division of the University of Chicago to make known its meaning or to understand it in the first place We do not object to education but in the study of the Bible and in teaching the truth we do object to these “trained and experienced thinkers” trying to attach some meaning to what God has said that is not apparent in God's word. Jesus said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” He didn't mean **“PTIunnelleD”** either.

(To be continued)

“INTERPRETATION” OR ATTITUDE?”

Roy E. Cogdill

(This is the **third** in a series of articles reviewing a book recently published, “WE BE BRETHREN”, by Brother J. D. Thomas of Abilene Christian College.)

In the preceding article we have discussed the matter of whether or not we need Brother Thomas and others among “our educated” brethren to help us understand what God has said. We want to concern ourselves in this article with the fundamental attitude that has produced our difficulty. It is our earnest and considered conviction that these brethren who are trying to defend these human organizations that are doing the benevolent work of the churches of Christ, and these federations that are being formed among congregations by promoting elders and preachers in order to do a “big” work, are working on the wrong principle. They have themselves, or the problems they are trying to solve, hitched up backwards. It has always been a device of error to shift the burden of proof, if possible, and undertake to prove nothing. It is a lot easier to sit back and say, “Where does the Bible say it is wrong” than to courageously undertake to show where God has said that it is right. It is a lot easier to say, “There is no pattern” than to produce one that even includes much less specifies what men want to practice. The fact of the whole matter is that “where there is no pattern” there is no authority so far as Bible teaching goes. There must be a pattern—general or in outline (generic authority)—for whatever the Bible teaches to be God's will about anything. If there isn't a general pattern that at least includes what we want to practice, there is no authority for it at all and it is sinful and wrong. There may not be a specific pattern, in detail as to method, but if the general outline of the teaching of the Bible does not include what we do, then we act by presumption and God has always condemned such action. He still does. A thing that is completely without authority is unlawful. The brethren, who, like brother Thomas, labor to justify human institutions built by the church to do its work and other practices that have crept in to the churches, demand that those of us who oppose their inventions must produce a pattern in detail, specifying even the methods, while they are not either willing or able to produce a general pattern that remotely includes by the wildest inference what they want to practice.

They accuse those of us who stand in opposition to their promotions of **specifying as to methods** which are to be employed by a congregation under the supervision of its own elders doing its work. This is false and unjust. It know of no one who tries to specify methods. We do believe that God has **specified the organization** and that therefore it is sinful to build another. We can readily and gladly give the “pattern” of the organization that God has specified in his word to do his will in any field. They are wholly unable to point out the Bible teaching that gives even an inference concerning the human organization which they are trying to defend. Brother Thomas either is honestly confused as to the **difference between**

methods and organization—between how the work is done in specific ways and methods used and what organization does the work—or else he wilfully misrepresents our position and confuses deliberately what the issue is all the way through his book as we shall develop later on by quotations therefrom.

But the major error that we want to point out in this article is the fact that he labors extensively and meticulously in his book to prove that there is **no example that would exclude** such human organizations in the work of the church and **that there is nothing in Bible teaching that prohibits them** and with a passing wave of the hand he dismisses the obligation to **find some authority that includes them**. It is amazing to see how lightly he takes the obligation to “get such organizations in” and how much effort he puts into trying to keep others from “keeping them out”. This is pretty much in line with all of the loose talk that has been going on about those who oppose such institutions affirming a negative when they discuss these problems. Well, that is necessary if we affirm anything at all, for the scripturalness of our practice will not be denied. Would any of the institutional brethren dare deny that it is scriptural for a congregation, under the supervision of its own elders, by the ministration of its own deacons, out of the resources supplied by its own members to provide for its own destitute or needy? Will anyone deny that the congregation as an organization is sufficient to do this work? Brother Roy Deavers denied the sufficiency of the congregation to do the work which God appointed for it, in his debate with W. Curtis Porter at Dumas. But in the debate he said that was what the proposition which Porter was affirming **said but he had intended to deny what he thought Porter meant by it**. Many will affirm it and that is where we stand. We are, however, in debating this issue with our brethren, like we are in debating the instrumental music and missionary society question with the Christian church folk. If we affirm that it is scriptural to sing, will they deny it? Certainly not! If we affirm anything with them it must be a negative such as: The use of instrumental music in Christian worship is **without** scriptural authority and therefore sinful. It is what these brethren are practicing that is in question and they are therefore in the affirmative position and the burden of proof is theirs.

They do not like this affirmative obligation though and will shift it if you allow them to do so. Brother Thomas spent considerable time worrying about an example that excluded the benevolent society, the sponsoring church type of cooperation, etc., but he neglected to do what he was under obligation to do in the book. He should have spent his time finding the example or teaching otherwise that **included** these human arrangements. This he completely failed to do as we will see when we examine the scanty scriptural evidence he offers in that direction.

He tells us:

“In short, we at present face a rather complex problem of interpretation, and full thought and full reflection should be given to the hypothesis that may be discernible from all the

data that can be assembled.” page 17.

I have not been able to understand why it is any more complex than baptism for remission of sins or anything else the Bible teaches. We have never had any difficulty with using and properly applying the examples of conversion or the teaching of the Bible otherwise on conversion. To the sectarian who doesn't want to believe it these matters appear complex but he is looking at them through his sectarian glasses. Is it possible that we have ground us some sectarian lenses that will color what God says to suit what we want to practice?

We hear him further on this point:

“What we do mean when we emphasize the place of common sense, and the fact that its use is necessary for the interpreter, is that Hermeneutical Principles or rules of interpretation can never be detailed enough to cover all minor points of interpretation, and the application of common sense is thus needed for detailed matters.” page 41.

Brother Thomas dotes rather heavily on common sense in his “rules of interpretation”. In matters of application we are ready to agree that “common sense” plays a very important role. Sometimes we recognize principles laid down in divine revelation but are unable to make the proper application of them because of unsound judgment. However, common sense does not supply anything from the viewpoint of authority that the Bible leaves out. All the “common sense” on earth cannot authorize a thing that no commandment of Christ includes. Our Christian Church friends think that instrumental music is only a matter of common sense. Very few of them claim any Bible authority for it. Most of them recognize that there isn't any, but they presume that because it does so much for them, in their judgment, therefore God is willing to accept it and after all they say it is only an “aid” to singing and many of them say that it is a necessary aid for they can't sing without it. One preacher told me in a debate on instrumental music that we used the pitch pipe to get the pitch and they used the piano to keep the pitch and either was right when it was necessary to use it. Of course he was willing to admit that it was all right to sing without either for he said they were “optional aids” or matters of expediency. And, of course, he was willing to divide the church over such a matter of indifference because of what he wanted and liked. We are seeing such an attitude repeated all over again throughout the country.

Brother Thomas thinks that we cannot have “pattern authority” for anything except definite detailed requirements or specific authorizations in the Word of God. He states with great boldness:

“THERE ARE NO PATTERNS FOR OPTIONAL MATTERS OR EXPEDIENT THINGS. Unless the “sponsoring-church” type of cooperation can be proved to classify clearly on the Diagram of Authority as an excluded specific, its clear and obvious classification as an optional expedient to the generic requirement, “Go Preach,” makes

it unquestionably scriptural.” (We will examine later its possible classification as a Box “ES” type matter.) But we must never conclude that an expedient choice can be regulated by pattern authority! It is a contradiction of terms.” Page 46—para. 1.

Here we see his most fundamental error in his conception of authority. He concludes that unless a thing is an “excluded specific” it is “unquestionably scriptural”. Let us state his same proposition conversely and see where it leads us — **Unless the “sponsoring church” type of cooperation can be proved to be an “included specific” it is “unquestionably unscriptural”.**

The first proposition is the attitude of digression. They have contended all along that a thing must be specifically prohibited or it is permissible. The second attitude is that of the non-Sunday School group who have contended all along that unless a thing is specifically authorized it is prohibited. Both are fundamentally wrong conceptions of authority and Brother Thomas' is as far from the truth as either the non-Sunday School group or the instrumental music and missionary society advocates.

On this point consider the following:

“How can any man conclude that the New Testament approves anything that it does not mention? So there is no need of all this careening around all over creation on this subject — a New Testament precept or precedent would settle the argument.

IV. THE AFFIRMATIVE ARGUMENT

The demand has been made on us from time to time to affirm that instrumental music in worship is sinful. Logically, it is not required of us to do so, as it is the obligation of the one who practices a thing to affirm his practice. The man who practices sprinkling for baptism should affirm it, we deny it. The man who burns incense in worship should affirm it; we reject and deny it. So it is with this subject, the users of instrumental music are obligated to affirm that their practice is scriptural, and our task is to deny it. Nevertheless, the use of instrumental music in worship, being unscriptural, it is sinful; and as a positive negation, we have affirmed what amounts to a negative proposition in the direct and unequivocal words: Instrumental music in the worship of the church is sinful.”—Bulwarks Of The Faith—Wallace, page 269—Part Two.

These same statements apply equally to the church building human societies to do its work or to a perversion of God's organization, the congregation, into a brotherhood agency. If not, why don't they? All of this crying about us affirming our position that some of these brave institutional brethren are doing in the papers, is but subterfuge to avoid discussion. In the

Birmingham debate with Guy N. Woods, we affirmed that “It is contrary to the scriptures for the churches of Christ to build and maintain benevolent organizations such as Boles Home, Childhaven, Tipton Orphans' Home, Gunter Home for the aged and other such homes for children and the aged as are among us to do their work of benevolence”. Brother Woods reluctantly denied that proposition and complained that nothing at all was being affirmed. Of course, he would not deny that it is scripturally right for each congregation to take care of its own destitute. He should do it for that is what he preaches—that the church cannot do it—but he won't and neither will the rest.

It took four months of correspondence to get him to affirm that the Herald of Truth is scriptural. These brethren are not willing to affirm their practice without much complaining. They are always demanding that someone affirm that they are “excluded” specifically but are not willing to affirm that they are “included” even generically in what the Bible teaches. Instead of demanding that someone produce the scriptural evidence that “rules out” these human arrangements, these brethren who have introduced them and practice them to the disruption of Christian fellowship need to find the authority in the scriptures that “get them in”. Human societies to do the work of the Lord's church do not have to be “ruled out.” There is only one way to “get them in”—that is by showing that they are **included** in what God has authorized in His Word and that they therefore are doing the thing taught. It is not enough to say, as Brother Thomas has, that they are not **excluded specifically** and therefore they can be brought in by the plea of “Christian Liberty' and “sanctified common sense”. This is the gate that admitted instrumental music and all other innovations and the same arguments can be made for them that Brother Thomas has offered, if any, to justify human institutions built and supported by the church to do its work.

On this point we quote from another words that better express this principle than we can write:

“(3) What constitutes scriptural authority.

“The New Testament outlines the things required as worship. These things must be kept “as delivered” by the apostles. (It Cor. 11:2.) Paul told the Ephesians that his “knowledge” came by revelation, “whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge . . . which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” (Eph. 3:3-5.) The apostles and prophets of the New Testament completed the revelation of God's will in the New Testament, and they left it complete without the mention of instrumental music in worship. But now the digressive preachers want to divide honors with the pope of Rome and impostor Joe Smith, by supplementing the work of the New Testament apostles and prophets.”

“Paul said that we can read his knowledge— “whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge.” Now where is the passage that any innovator has shown you, that you can go home and read, for the use of instrumental music in what they call

“Christian worship ?” Where is the command that requires the use of instrumental music to obey? Where is the New Testament passage that says use it, or that mentions it as being used in the worship ?

“When the agitators for circumcision attempted to bind this Jewish practice on the church, the apostles answered: “We gave no such command.” This was the proof that the agitators were acting without apostolic authority. So it means if there is no command, there is no authority: **We gave no such command.** In order for anything to be apostolic, the apostles must command it, in order for anything to be scriptural, the scriptures must teach it, by precept or approved example. No act of duty or of worship has ever been left to a mere inference, and if it were a necessary inference, it would be a thing indispensable to the command, therefore a part of the command.” (Bulwarks of The Faith—Part Two—pages 254-255.)

From the same author we quote again:

“(3) The ground of acceptable religious action.

“There is no principle more clearly stated in the New Testament than that of **faith** as the only ground of acceptable action in the realm of religion. But faith comes by **hearing**, and hearing by the **word** of God. (Rom. 10:17) Someone is frequently heard to say: “You need not read the Bible to me, It already know what It believe.” They do not believe anything. Anybody can make a guess without any evidence; and can formulate an opinion on very meager evidence; but nobody can exercise faith except that it rests upon the solid evidence of God's word. But we walk by **faith** and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7)—not by what **seems** to be all right; and faith comes by **hearing** the word of God (Rom. 10:17); and without faith it is impossible to **please** God. (Heb. 11:6.) These verses add up to something: No word of God, no? hearing the word; no hearing the word, no faith; no faith, no walking by faith no walking by faith, no pleasing God.

“Some preachers think they have grown beyond these simple statements and plain passages, but they are scriptural principles and need to be re-emphasized with the same confidence which possessed the early preachers of the gospel, who stood on them and stemmed the tide of digression. When men think they know too much to rely on plainly stated principles of the New Testament, they have too much confidence in human wisdom, and they are not walking by faith. Faith stands on revelation; and when we enter the realm of religion, we stand in the realm of revelation.” (Bulwarks of The Faith—Part Two, Page 277.)

These words from the eloquent lips of a great gospel preacher are just as applicable now to our present problems as they ever were to the problem of instrumental music. Is it any worse to corrupt the worship of the Church than to corrupt the government, organization or function of the church ? Certainly not! If there “is no such command” given by the apostles of our Lord as grants to the church authority to build and support human institutions to do its work, then it is sinful for us to do it because it has no authority. Those who practice it are

under obligation to find the authority for it in the word of God. We shall not allow them to shift the burden of proof but shall continue to insist that they produce the passage in the New Testament that includes the thing they are preaching and practicing. No dictum from the worldly wise professors in the so-called “Bible department” of any college will settle the question with any who have any respect for the word and will of the Lord.

In order that we may clearly understand that Brother Thomas appeals to what **God has not said** rather than to what **God has said** to establish his right to engage in his humanly authorized and humanly created projects as the work of the Lord's church, let us hear from him concerning his conception of the significance of the silence of the scriptures.

“The Significance of Silence”

“Our Brethren have throughout the Restoration period of church history used a slogan, “We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent.” Slogans can be helpful sometimes, if they are not expanded into creeds and made binding upon others. But they often can help clarify matters.

“What the expression 'silent where the Bible is silent' must mean, is that when all the full machinery of Biblical interpretation is brought to bear on a given point, if something is then clearly established as an **excluded specific** (Box 'ES' type) matter, then it is clearly unauthorized and is sinful. 'Silent where the Bible is silent' cannot mean that if some optional expedient or aid is not mentioned in scripture then it would be sinful”. (Page 46—paragraph two and three.)

From this it can readily be seen that Brother Thomas considers that anything that is not **excluded specifically** is permissible. There is no one who would insist that a **matter of expediency or aid must be specifically mentioned** in the scriptures in order to be **included within the scope** of the thing authorized. Our learned professor at Abilene insists that if the Bible does not specifically exclude a matter it is authorized though there may be nothing, absolutely nothing, taught in the scriptures that even includes it.

It is clearly manifest that our brother has fallen for the fundamental error used during the last hundred years by the Christian Church to justify their human societies and instrumental music. They have always raised the question, “Where does God prohibit or exclude these matters?” Then they insist that they can be used as **aids** or **expedients** in the worship and work of the Lord and refuse to see that **they are not included** within the scope of scriptural authority and are therefore **not aids or expediencies but additions** to what God has said.

But let him say on:

“To illustrate the above points, let us note that the scripture authorized **Gopher wood** for Noah's ark, but was silent as far as Pine wood is concerned for the same purpose. This example fits the BROTHERHOOD slogan, in that we recognize that pine would

have been sinful and wrong, but only because on the Standard Diagram of Authority, Pine wood for Noah's ark could be classified in no other place than as an excluded specific (Box 'ES' type) matter. On the other hand the scripture is also silent as to riding in aeroplanes, using blackboards or visual-aid equipment, revival meetings, radio preaching, air-conditioning equipment, printed books of sermons, and a thousand other things that all of us use constantly. Yet we say that the term 'silent' in the BROTHERHOOD slogan does not apply to these; but the only way we can know that we are correct in this judgment is, again, by classifying them on the Standard Diagram of Authority; where every one of these things classify as optional expedients and therefore are not governed in any wise by pattern authority. Patterns apply only to required matters!"

Our brother recognizes "We speak where the Bible speaks and where the Bible is silent we are silent" only as a brotherhood slogan. He even capitalized "BROTHERHOOD". What he needs to recognize is that it is not a slogan at all nor does it belong to any "BROTHERHOOD.:" It is a divine principle binding on all who have any respect for God's will. Peter put it in these words, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet. 4:11.)

He tells us that the scripture was silent as far as Pine wood for Noah's Ark is concerned. Here again he demonstrates that he has the idea that God did not specifically say, "Do not use Pine wood", therefore God was silent as to Pine wood for the ark. This is false. **God did say "Do not use Pine" but he said it by specifying "Gopher"** and not by direct prohibition. Pine is not included in Gopher wood. It is excluded in it and by it. To use Pine would be an **addition not an aid**. It would have been a substitute and sinful disobedience to God's instructions. Even so, if Noah had used Gopher wood but built something that was not according to the pattern given for the Ark, he would have sinned for God commanded him to build an ARK out of Gopher wood and not only an ark but he gave the plan for the Ark. In just this same way God has given the plan for the government, organization and function of the church. The only organization God has given is the congregation — a local church— through which to accomplish the work of his church. When we build any other organization or pervert God's organization until it is not subject to the government he established for it, **we have added that which God excluded by specifying the organization and government** he wanted just like he specified the plan and material that went into the ark.

How does our brother avoid such a conclusion in his reasoning? It is obvious, he ignores the specific organization God gave his church and classifies all the human organizations which he tries to justify as "optional expedients" because God did not specifically say, "Thou shalt build no other organizations". It should be plain to any mind that is not running in the

circles of human wisdom that **when God specified the organization** of the church—a **congregation—he was not silent as to human organizations** for the church and its work **but excluded them because he did not include** them in his plan. They are not aids or optional expedients as our brother claims but are additions to God's arrangements that have come by human will and wisdom and that impeach the wisdom of God and the sufficiency of his ways.

His reference in the paragraph quoted above to “riding in aeroplanes, using blackboards or visual-aid equipment, printed books of sermons”, etc., misses the point again. The Bible is not silent as to these matters actually. **They are not specifically mentioned** and that is what our brother thinks is meant by the “silence of the scriptures”. This is his fallacy. **Riding** in anything is **authorized** by the **generic command** to “go” and since **God specified no way** in which we go—whether we ride or walk—**it is included** in what God did command. Blackboards, visual-aid equipment, printed sermons, etc., are all included in the command to “teach.” God is not silent about them. **He included them by the fact that he did not specify the particular means of teaching.** God is not silent in this same way about human organizations to do the work of the church, or as to one congregation becoming a brotherhood agency, for God did specify the organization through which Christians are to do what he assigned the church to do—the congregation with its elders. He also fixed the jurisdiction of the elders of a congregation as over the members, resources, work, worship, and fellowship of the congregation where they are elders, as we shall abundantly see in this study as we go along. If our brother classifies such matters with “Pine wood for Noah's ark” **then they are** “excluded specifics” **and therefore sinful.** If, on the other hand, he classifies these human organizations and the “brotherhood agency” plan for the congregation along with “riding in an aeroplane, blackboards, visual-aids and printed sermons” as “optional expedients”, he also must make an “optional expedient” out of the organization which God authorizes, the congregation, for they are co-ordinate elements. He is in trouble whichever route he takes with his own illustration and with his wonderful chart which he thinks solves all our problems. This we shall see in our next article.

We continue to insist that our brother and those who stand with him are under obligation to produce something that God has said that includes—even as optional expedients or aids—the authority to build and maintain human organizations through which to do the work of the Lord's Church. Until they produce the passage that does **include** these human organizations, they stand branded as bold and blatant additions to God's plan and therefore in disregard of His authority. That means that they are sinful because the Bible is **silent** concerning them and **because they are excluded by what God did authorize specifically.**

HOW TO ESTABLISH DIVINE AUTHORITY

Roy E. Cogdill

(This is the **fourth** in a series of articles reviewing a book recently published, "We Be Brethren", by Brother J. D. Thomas of Abilene Christian College.)

In preceding articles of this review we have noticed the disposition to rely upon human wisdom, the trend toward an educated and professional clergy, and the claim by our brother J. D. Thomas that we need some "new rules of interpretation" to solve our problems today of **congregational cooperation and caring for orphans** and other destitute persons who are the charge of the church. We have observed our brother's effort to attribute our difficulty to "methods of interpretation" while we believe in reality it is due to the wrong attitude toward divine authority and the Word of God. We have examined our brother's claim that the "same old rules of interpretation" that have enabled us to understand what the Bible teaches concerning baptism for the remission of sins, the scheme of redemption, and the place of the church in God's plan, cannot solve the problems confronting us today in these present-day promotions but **we must have some new rules to guide us**. We have also taken notice of our brother's willingness and his confidence in his ability to evolve these "new rules" for all of us because he is one of the "trained thinkers" of our generation.

A major part of his endeavor in the book is a very labored effort to find some "new way" that would justify all of the innovations that have been introduced into the function and organization of the church in this generation. Brother Thomas is strongly in favor of all of them. He draws the line against none and is able at least to see that if one of these modern promotions can be justified in the work of the church, then all of them can. It am sure that he has satisfied himself and perhaps a good portion of the "institutional" minded brethren. We have heard of some endorsements of his book in the Gospel Advocate by Guy N. Woods, Tom Warren, and others of the extreme liberals among us. We have information also that at least one teacher in a Harding College Bible (?) class has required it to be read as a part of the course. The administration of Abilene College has not had the courage to let it be known that they endorse the positions

taken in the book, though of course they do, we are sure. They endorse the man who wrote it and his work and support him in his teaching and of course he teaches in his classes in the school what he writes and believes. The school administration, Don Morris, president, and Paul Southern, head of the Bible department, both said in a letter that they had not read the book. But that has been some time ago and surely they have been interested enough to read it by now. Until they repudiate the teaching of the book by this member of their faculty and their subordinate, they must be held responsible for it. They will probably get around to letting it be known that they are in complete agreement with the author of this book, if there

isn't too great a furore raised about it and it doesn't prove too unpopular. Whenever they do endorse it, if they do, it will mean a complete reversal upon the part of the administration of this school on the question of **church support for schools** like Abilene. A dozen years ago when this question was being discussed all over the country among churches of Christ and when there was an overwhelming sentiment among brethren against making of such schools church institutions by putting them in the budget of the churches, Don Morris hastened to deny that he was responsible for the effort headed by Robert Alexander to put the school in the church budgets. Though there had been full page ads for the campaign for "three million" urging church support and the whole thing was being promoted through the churches and he had taken part in the speech-making that had been done, Don Morris denied any responsibility for the effort and made a "goat" out of Robert Alexander, his chief promoter in the campaign. An endorsement upon his part now would therefore mean a complete reversal on the question, if he stood by his convictions then. In any event, he and the head of the Bible department, as well as the Board of directors and others responsible for the school are responsible for what is being taught and I suppose that Thomas, Roberts, and others of the faculty are teaching what they believe about these matters. Christians who are disposed to send their children to such schools should take notice that they will be taught that churches of Christ should build and maintain such institutions as Abilene College, Harding College David Lipscomb, and the others because as the author of "We Be Brethren" says, such schools are truly "the work of the Lord" and are "an expedient for spreading the cause of Christ". This is just a part of the extreme liberalism that is being poured into the minds of the young people who are being sent to such schools for a "Christian Education".

A recent article in the **Firm Foundation** criticizing the book was given hearty editorial endorsement by Ruel Lemmons, the editor of that paper. I suppose he endorsed the criticism voiced for he made no reservations in taking the writer under his wing because of what he had written. I am wondering if he actually would dare be involved in any difference with Abilene Christian College. He went to Tennessee and made the school brethren think he was in perfect agreement with them on present day issues and then came back to Austin and made faces at them as being on the extreme liberal "fringe" of these questions. He should not count too heavily on these Tennessee brethren not seeing a copy, now and then, of the **Firm Foundation** and even reading it. He has reminded us for some time of the description of a man when somebody asked where he stood on a certain issue and the reply was made, "He is strong on both sides". You can never tell by what he writes in one issue what his position is even then, much less what it will be in the next issue.

It is certain though that those struggling to keep from drowning in their own sea of sophistry and human reason will seize upon at least some things in the book, "We Be Brethren" in the hope that they will serve as a substitute for divine authority and Bible teaching for the idols they have determined to serve. This gives the time and space being used in this review reasonable justification.

An Effort to Find Authority

One thing to be marked down to the credit of our brother is the fact that he seemed to recognize that if the “sponsoring church” type of brotherhood agency or the “human organization” type of brotherhood agency are to be proven right, some sort of authority needs to be established by Bible teaching for them. Even though he went at the matter backwards, in complete reverse, as we have pointed out by trying to show that they have not been excluded without making any effort to show that they are included in God's plan, he spent more than one hundred pages of his book, Part I and Part II, trying to make us think that there is some way, even though it must be a new one, by which we can understand that these modern methods of cooperation among churches of Christ are right.

It has been our contention all along that the whole problem is one of “divine authority”. The church is a realm over which Jesus Christ exercises absolute authority. It is the only realm over which he is head.

Matt. 28:18-20. “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever It have commanded you: and 10, It am with you always, even unto the end of the world”

Paul declares that Christ is the head over all things to the church:

Eph. 1 :19-23. “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

If these problems are “in the church”, if they are of concern “to the church”, if they are related” to the church”, if they are involved in the matter of what the church can do and through what organization Gods purposes in the church can be accomplished, then the question whether Christ has authorized them is fundamental. Moreover if Christ has authorized these modern arrangements, they are taught in the scriptures in some manner for they are the only source of divine authority. It seems that every Bible student and all who have any respect for the word of God would recognize that.

In the Birmingham debate with Guy N. Woods we presented four charts illustrating the fact that the fundamental question of the whole problem is one of divine authority. Has Christ authorized what is being done ? How may we establish that we have divine authority from

the scriptures for what we do in the church ? Brother Woods made no attempt to answer the argument that God has specifically authorized an organization for executing that which he has commanded the church to do, and has therefore **excluded** every other organization for the accomplishment of this work of the church. That is, He has excluded the church building and maintaining **any other organization** than that which he has specified. Woods said that he agreed with the principles laid down concerning authority but that these were not in issue in the discussion because we were not discussing a proposition concerned with the question of authority. He doesn't agree with Brother Thomas, even if he did endorse his book with some reservation. Brother Woods does not think that we need divine authority for the benevolent organizations which the church can build and maintain. Brother Thomas thinks that we must at least develop us some “new rules” of interpretation that will help us to see that divine authority in the scriptures has not “excluded” such institutions whether it has “included” them or not. He thinks that if they are not specifically excluded then they must be included and that is what the silence of the scriptures mean.

Brother Thomas recognizes and states several times that the Bible teaches in three ways; 1) command, 2) approved examples, 3) necessary inference. (page 8, paragraph 2). He says:

“To return to the principles of interpretation of the restoration movement we remember that we have always believed that pattern authority was established by commands (or express statements); by necessary inference; and by approved precedents or approved apostolic examples” (page 53—para. 4)

Some brethren among the promoters do not believe this. There is much talk about our doing many things for which we have no authority at all. Evidently we have quite a number of those who are trying to preach the Gospel who do not believe that we need Bible authority of any kind for what we think we need or should do. Cleon Lyles said in a recorded speech at Tulsa, Oklahoma, that he did not believe, and did not think he had ever believed, that we must have command, approved example, or necessary inference, in order to have Bible Authority. He was advocating church hospitals (Church of Christ Hospitals with Church of Christ doctors and nurses, as Keeble advocates now—and Church of Christ needles to stick us with) as far back as 1943, so It guess he never has believed that it was necessary to have Bible authority at all.

E. R. Harper tried to get the Herald of Truth in at the door labeled “principle eternal” in the debate with Tant. Tom Warren and Roy Deaver and others of the “liberal fringe” have tried to squeeze human benevolent organizations in at the door of the “law of love”, whatever that is, if it is.

Even our Brother Thomas after avowing that he recognizes that these three methods of establishing Bible teaching or authority have always been sufficient, throws them out of the window and alleges that we have always believed in these and in the past they have been adequate, but we need some **new rules** to solve these new problems of institutionalism or

cooperation. (See page 5, last line, page 6, pare. 3, page 8, pare. 2)

Most of the institutional crowd have been saying that these are not new problems but these “methods” have always been used. Some have probably already sensed the feet that if these are new problems, then there can not be any authority in the Bible for such “methods”, as they describe them. Either these human arrangements have not always existed or there has not always been opposition to them or they are not new in any sense You can take your choice. Brother Thomas chooses to say they are “new” and we must have some “new rules of interpretation” to solve them. If such arrangements existed in the beginning (and of course they are not even hinted at in the Bible) by divine authority, has Satan been loafing on the job in failing to oppose such good works as these? What other Bible doctrine, or work of righteousness, or divine ordinance has he been silent about through the centuries? We still affirm that Brother Thomas, in his admission that these problems are new, has made a fatal admission for his cause; and his claim that we need some “new rules” to understand what the Bible teaches concerning them is a fatal admission of the wrong attitude toward the Word of God.

We want to examine the “Standard Diagram of Authority” invented by Brother Thomas for he proposes this as the solution to all of our problems. He makes interesting claims for it. What made it the “Standard” except that it is his idea, It do not learn from his book. Maybe that is just the name of it. One thing you cannot accuse our brother of is the lack on complete confidence in his own wisdom and ability. He not only has the pharisaic disposition concerning his own attitude being pious and right, “counting himself only to be righteous and setting all others at nought”, but he has discovered “an easy-to-understand principle that some have overlooked—a way that is really as simple as our **ordinary thinking** (emphasis mine—R. E. C.) and understandable by anyone — for knowing when and how examples teach us—both when a matter is clearly optional for us; and also when definite, clear, authoritative and “binding patterns” are revealed to us by God's Word. The attempt is then made to apply the principles to the various “problem areas” of tension in the brotherhood in the hope that we can all see God's will clearly.” (Pages 7,8)

“In addition to the above major premise containing the statement of the “pattern principle” of our study, Part II of this book, the Solution section, has set forth one other **major contribution** (emphasis mine—R. E. C.) toward New Testament interpretation, that of the Standard Diagram of Authority.” (Page 92.)

“To illustrate the above points, let us note that the scripture authorized **Gopher** wood for Noah's ark, but was silent as far as **Pine** wood is concerned for the same purpose. This example fits the brotherhood slogan, in that we recognize that pine would have been sinful and wrong, **but only because on the Standard Diagram of Authority** (emphasis mine, R. E. C.) Pine wood for Noah's ark could be classified in no other place than as an **excluded specific** (Box “ES” type) matter. On the other hand, the scripture, is also silent as to riding in aeroplanes, using black boards or visual aid equipment, printed books of

sermons, and a thousand other things that all of us use constantly. Yet we say that the term “silent” in the brotherhood slogan does not apply to these; but **the only way we can know** that we are correct in this judgment is again, by classifying them on the “Standard Diagram of Authority.” (page 47)

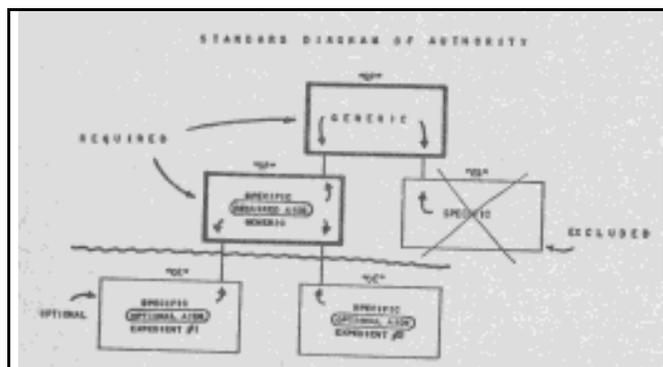
“**Only by this method** (emphasis mine— R. E. C.) can we clearly see how some things about which the scripture is “silent” are sinful and wrong and based on human authority rather than God's; while other things about which the scripture is “silent” are perfectly scriptural and should be used”. (page 47—pare. 2)

Now It confess that It cannot make such distinctions in the silence of the scriptures — not even with my brothers help. If the Bible says nothing that can be construed by the ordinary meaning of the language to include a practice, the silence of the Word of God forbids our practicing that thing, no matter where Brother Thomas classifies it on the “Standard Diagram of Authority”. His dictum will not solve the problem for us. Those aids included within the scope of the command—either necessarily essential or optional—cannot be classified as something about which the scripture is silent as we have shown in a previous article. When the scriptures command “teach” without prescribing the specific method of teaching—the command includes everything necessary or even that could aid in performing the command without specifying it—but when something is done in an effort to carry out that command—such as “another gospel” or another “organization”—then these matters—not being included in the command or unauthorized and are therefore sinful and wrong because they are **additions** rather than **aids!** It looks like even a PH.D. could see that.

But from the above quotation it is easy to see that Brother Thomas is certainly enamored with his “new”— “Standard Diagram of Authority”. He certainly does not weaken his case any by a lack of confidence. It is not often that you find a PH D. who is known for his humility anyway. Indeed—”Knowledge puffeth up”. (It Cor. 8:1.)

The fact is, what he calls his “Standard Diagram of Authority” is but his way of illustrating the difference between matters **essential and incidental**—Those things either required or permissible — and those which are **excluded—for the reason that what God has said does not include them.** The illustration is all right if properly applied. In fact, by the brother's own illustration you can completely eliminate everything for which he contends

if you make proper application for it. Let us see. Here is his diagram or illustration:

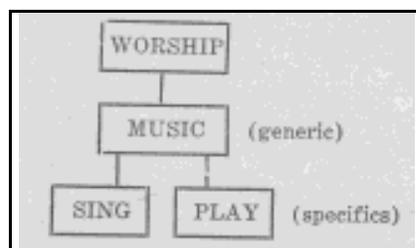


We hear from him this comment concerning the illustration and its use:

“But at the point in such a scale of relationship where God stops specifying what man must do, there we draw our “wavy line” and we understand that all relationships below this point are optional matters for the Christian.

“We should note here that expedients will always occur below the wavy line on our diagrams, and that whatever may rightly be called an expedient will always be an optional human choice, and should never in any wise be considered as “binding”; or as “establishing a pattern” of required conduct”. (page 22)

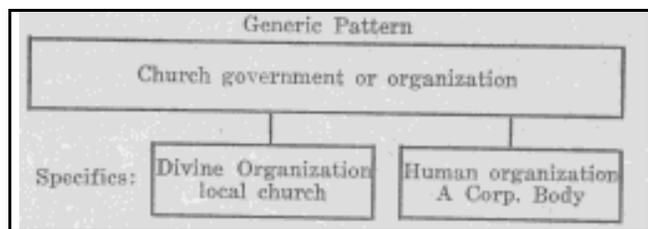
Now it should be apparent to any one that there is nothing magical about the “wavy line” on the diagram. Neither does the fact that Brother Thomas places a thing below the “wavy line” make an expedient out of it. By a wrong application of this illustration you might classify a practice as belonging below the wavy line when it clearly by the scriptures could not be classified as a matter about which we have any choice whatever. We illustrate this by singing and instrumental music.



Where does the wavy line belong on this illustration —above or below the specifics — **sing and play**? If above, according to our brother's rule then the specifics, sing and play are “optional expedients”—meaning that we have a choice of either one or both. But if the wavy line is placed below the specifics—sing and play—then sing becomes a **required specific** and play an **excluded specific** according to his use of the diagram. Our organ brethren would place it above these specifics for they say they are optional expedients. It is obvious that placing the “wavy line” does not change the nature of the practices designated. **Bible teaching determines the classification of these practices** and it cannot be changed by an arbitrary location of any “wavy line” even by the use of “common sense” upon the part of an “experienced thinker”. So it is with the problems created in the church today by institutional promotions. Just as “sing” is a specific kind of music that God has authorized and the very selection of it by divine authority eliminates play — so a specific organization authorized by Christ (the congregation or local church) eliminates every other organization because it is the

one the Lord has selected and he has not given us any choice about it. Any other organization beside the local church to do the work of the Lord's church is not authorized. It is not included in the congregation which God has authorized and is therefore an addition—a coordinate—which is eliminated by the Lord's specific arrangement. Its nature determines what it is—not a **wavy line**.

His contention is that the “wavy line” on the chart draws the distinction between the “Required and Excluded” matters and the “optional aids or expedients”. All specifics above the “wavy line” are either “specifically required” or “specifically excluded” and all specifics below the wavy line are “optional expedients.” Using this very means of determining the matter—really it is only a designation of the classification and not a determination of their classification at all—let us apply this method to our present day problems.

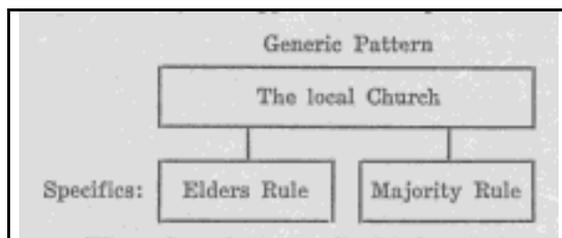


Here we have a “generic pattern” called “church organization or government”. The specifics of this generic are: the divine organization—if God has given one, or the human organization, whatever legal form it may assume or be given. Now with reference to these specifics, where must the “wavy line” be located to designate what is required or excluded and what is optional in the divine arrangement ? Remember that **every specific above the wavy line** is either a “required specific” or an “excluded specific” according to the rule laid down by our brother in his book. **All below the wavy line are** “optional expedients”. If then, in the above illustration, we place the “wavy line” above the specifics — Divine Organization and Human Organization, we make them **optional expedients** and we can either let the local church, the divine organization do the work of the church or we can build a human organization to do it. This is exactly where the institutional brethren stand, Brother Thomas with them. Very few of them are boldly blatant enough to dispute with God's Word like Guy N. Woods and deny that a congregation can — under the supervision of its own elders, through the ministration of its own deacons, and out- of the resources supplied by its own members — do its work of relieving the destitute for whom it is responsible.

Brother Thomas in his book would be forced to place his “wavy line” **either above or below our specifics**—(1) divine organization, the local church; (2) and the human organization, a corp. body. If he places his “wavy line” **above** these specifics, he takes the position that both the divine organization, the local church, and the human organization are “optional expedients” and we have a choice between God's plan, the local church, and man's way—the human organization—in doing the work of the church, any work. This means that

we do not have to respect the God given organization any more than the one man has fashioned and we have an option between using God's or forming our own. This is true because his **newly discovered rule** with reference to this chart is that all specifics below the wavy line are “optional expedients”. But if he places the wavy line **below** the two specifics: (1) the local church, a divine organization, (2) and the human organization, then the divine organization, the local church, is a “required specific” and the human organization is an “excluded specific” in any work of the church and it would not matter what work it might be. One or the other positions is a **necessary** conclusion from the application of his own rule and the use of his own diagram! The first dilemma disrespects and rejects God's wisdom and way by making it an optional expedient with man's way. The **last excludes such human organizations as Boles Home, Inc., Abilene Christian College, and every other human organization, from any connection with the church and from doing any work of the church. They cannot be “expedients” provided and sustained by the church of the Lord for God's specific—the local church—eliminates and excludes them.** They have no authority to exist in the capacity Brother Thomas assigns them—”expedients”, built and maintained by the church to do its work.

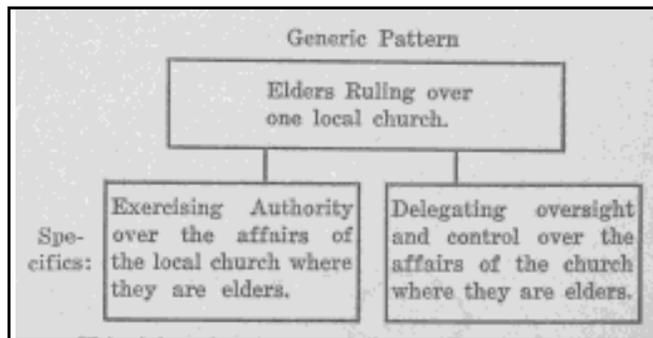
But carry the application a step further:



Where does the “wavy line” belong? above the specifics in the above diagram or below? If you place it above, you make out of God's government—eldership rule over the local church—an “optional expedient” and give man a choice between eldership and majority rule. This nullifies God's arrangement for the congregation; Acts 14:23— elders in every church; It Tim. 5:17—eldership rule; Heb. 13:17—obedience to elders and their responsibility for the members of the congregation; Acts 20:28—elders taking heed to the flock over which they are elders; It Pet. 5:2— elders tending the flock among them. Is God's revealed plan for the government of his organization, the local church, an optional matter? Will Brother Thomas or any other man among us affirm that it is?

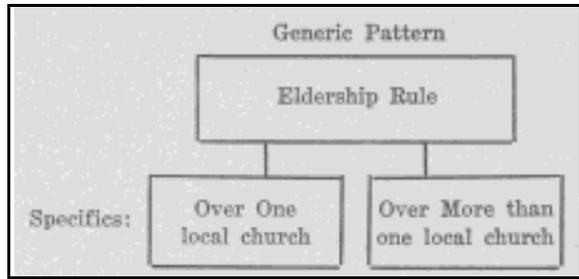
But if you place the “wavy line” **below** these specifics —then the rule of the eldership is a required specific and the rule of the majority is **excluded** in the local church. This is the correct classification— **not because of the line but because of Bible teaching.** This would condemn every instance where institutional brethren have rebelled against the elders for not adopting these human organizations for doing the work of the church.

But follow the new rule another step in application:



Where does the wavy line belong here? **Above** the specifics of (1) elders ruling over one local church and (2) elders ruling over more than one local church? If so, then they are “optional expedients” according to our brother and it can be done either way. But if you place the wavy line **below** the two specifics on the chart above, then elders ruling one church becomes a **required specific** and elders ruling over more than one church becomes an **excluded specific** and according to our brother Thomas it is therefore sinful and wrong.

But our liberal brethren say they do not believe that one eldership should rule over the affairs of another church. They affirm stoutly that they do not advocate one church controlling another church and that such arrangements as “our” benevolent societies and the Herald of Truth do not involve the control either of another organization over the churches or one church over another church. Of course, their denial of this does not necessarily mean that it isn't so. We have letters from the president of the United Christian Missionary Society denying that **they** believe in such or do it. The fact of the matter is that all such arrangements either exercise **direct** or **indirect** control over those churches who work through them. There is no other way that they could be a medium of church cooperation. They may not exercise direct control over every activity of the contributing churches but they have control over that part of their activity that is accomplished through such a cooperational agency. It is a fundamental principle of New Testament church government that there should be elders in “every church” (Acts 14:23.) It is also fundamental New Testament truth that those elders should be the superintendents **of all the work of the church where they are made bishops.** I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2. We would diagram this teaching on the matter like this:



This delegation of supervision and oversight of some of the affairs of the church of which they are overseers could be to a human organization differing in form from a local church or it could be made to the eldership of another local church. It would be a perversion of the function of the eldership and of the local church but it could be perverted and made to serve a purpose and use that God never assigned. So where does the **wavy line** belong in the diagram above? Is it **optional** for the elders to either **exercise** the government God has placed into their hands or **delegate** it? If it is optional whether they exercise or delegate their oversight of the affairs of the church, then the **wavy line** would belong above these specifics for everything below the wavy line classifies according to our brother as **optional expedients**. But if God has given the elders no choice but to exercise their supervision and oversight in the affairs of the local church where they are elders, then the **wavy line** would belong **below** these specifics and that would recognize that God has **specifically required** an eldership in his church to **exercise** their oversight and control over the affairs of the church where they are elders and has **specifically excluded**, therefore, the **delegation** of their supervision and control over the affairs of the church where they are elders to any other organization, whether it be congregational in its form or fashioned after some human plan.

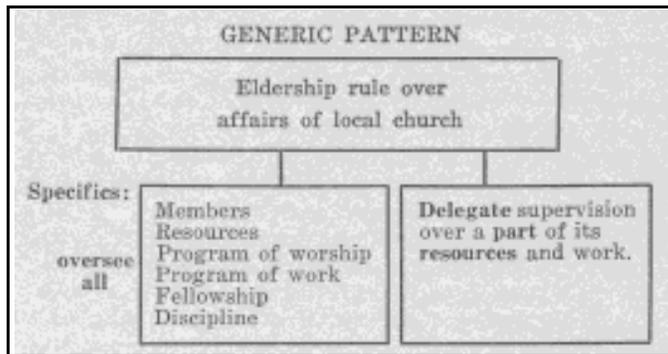
While it is not brother Thomas' contention that the elders of one church can surrender complete control over the affairs of the church where they are elders to another organization or to another church and its elders, yet he positively advocates the surrendering of a part of their oversight of some of the activities and resources of the church where they are elders to either kind of organization. Without this these human arrangements which he seeks to justify could not exist. If many churches did not contribute to the Highland Church at Abilene, they could not carry on the Herald of Truth. **If it is their work**, then they are using and therefore controlling and expending the resources of many other churches to do their work. If it is the work of many churches, as Guy N. Woods and the elders of Highland claimed in the Birmingham debate, then they are directing and controlling the work of many churches. They have to take one or the other position and they have taken both. Either way it is the delegation of some of the supervision and control God ordained to be exercised by the elders of a local church over its own affairs. These facts are so plain and undeniable it would be dishonesty to dispute them.

It should be plain to every, responsible individual, whether a trained thinker or not, that if an eldership can delegate **any part** of their oversight, they can delegate it **all** on the same

principle and by the same authority. In the oversight of a congregation an eldership becomes responsible for the (1) members, (2) resources, (3) program of worship, (4) program of work, (5) fellowship,

(6) discipline, of that congregation. Which part of that oversight can they delegate? If they can delegate it in part, then they can by the same token of authority delegate it wholly. If not, let brother Thomas tell us why not? Is there any more scriptural authority for delegating the oversight of “foreign” work than their “local work”? Where does God make such a division?

In order to illustrate this to be the truth, let us use our brother's **wavy line** again.



If congregations can pool their resources either in the treasury of one local church or in the treasury of an organization that is not congregational in form, their elders can delegate the oversight of their resources, in part at least, and not exercise the oversight thereof themselves. If they can do a part of their work under the exclusive control and oversight of another eldership, then they can delegate the oversight of that part of their work to that eldership or to another organization. If they can delegate their oversight in part, why can't they delegate it wholly?

In the above illustration, if brother Thomas places his **wavy line** above these specifics, he makes it optional as to whether or not the elders of a church exercise their own oversight over the congregation where they are elders or delegate it to others. If this is his position, then there can be a merging of the work of elders, congregational lines need not be noted or considered in matters of worship, work, discipline, fellowship or otherwise. This would have but one result and that would be to allow the destruction of the form and framework of the local church and permit the forming of a federation of churches under one eldership. This is the episcopacy in reality and either Methodism or Romanism could not any longer be condemned as to organization.

Our readers can see, we feel sure, that the **great discovery of new rules of interpretation** which brother Thomas claims to have made is but another method of

illustrating the same old principle of discernment between matters authorized by the teaching of the scriptures and matters that are excluded because unauthorized by the scriptures—concerning which the word of God is silent--because they are not included in anything which God has said or the Bible has taught. The method of distinguishing is immaterial. It is the distinction that must be recognized and the teaching of the scriptures makes it.

BIBLE AUTHORITY AND "COMMON SENSE"

Roy E. Cogdill, Nacogdoches, Texas

(This is the **fifth** in a series of articles in review of the book "We Be Brethren," by J. D. Thomas.)

We have seen in previous articles that the book "We Be Brethren" by J. D. Thomas has approached the problems of the benevolent work of the church and congregational cooperation by a circuitous route rather than facing up to them forthrightly. Brother Thomas and other brethren bent upon justifying the churches in building and maintaining human organizations to do their work, and the pooling of resources and centralization of power and control under one eldership, should honestly and sincerely lay aside all of their subterfuge, duplicity, ambiguity, sophistry, and their high and mighty air of superiority, and recognize that they are in an affirmative relation to such practices and it is their obligation to produce clear and understandable Bible teaching that authorizes what they want to practice. It is not enough for them to put on airs to make us think they are so superior in intellect, training, or spiritual discernment and insight, that we should accept their judgment about such matters.

We are all entitled to the scriptural proof, clear and plain, that such practices are in harmony with the will of Christ before they are crammed down our throats and we are forced to participate in something in the church of God in which our faith must stand in the wisdom of man rather than in the word of God. We have not been able to find such scriptural proof. We have begged for it. So far all that has been offered is sophistry, human wisdom, the plea that they are not "specifically excluded" by the scriptures, and the contention that there is no "pattern," so we can do what we please about these matters.

Brother Thomas relies mainly on the fact that these corruptions and departures from God's order are not "specifically excluded" by "pattern authority" and upon his superior learning and his own judgment. We are not willing for this to settle the question. We want and must have a "Thus saith the Lord" that includes these institutional arrangements which churches think they have the right to affect. We have the right and obligation for our faith to stand upon the word of God and not in the wisdom of men. (It Cor. 2:1-5.) Brother Thomas' own words accuse him in these matters of a denominational attitude:

"As far as our diagram is concerned the Denominationalist accepts some matters of the box"ES" type as being scriptural and proper— for instance, instrumental music in worship. He would say that the command to sing does not exclude the use of the instrument. In other words, he feels perfectly free to add to or take from the required matters, in line with his own traditions; yet all the while he feels that he is definitely showing allegiance to the Bible. He is not strictly conscious of the need to

interpret carefully and exactly; so in general, our evaluation of this man is that he is somewhat loose and careless about God's exact requirements and accepts many items of human authority, (Box "ES" type), without really being aware that he is not being fair to the Bible, to himself, and to God" Page 29 —Paragraph 1.

We are compelled to say in response to the above statement quoted from our brother, "Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things". (Rom. 2:1.) Brother Thomas you are guilty of exactly what you charge the "Denominationalist" with doing.

It is not difficult to see that the organization which God gave the local church, the only organization of the church, is just as specific in the field of **organization** as singing is in the field of **music**. "Sing," and "play" are coordinate acts in the field of music. Singing and instrumental, or vocal and instrumental, music are coordinate kinds of music. So are the organization which God designed for his church, local church or congregation, and human organizations coordinates. One is divinely designed and the other is of human design. One is authorized in the scriptures and the other is not. They are both organizations. They differ in form, authority, and origin, but they occupy the same field—that of organizations. Since God specifically requires the congregational form set forth in N. T. scriptures (Phil. 1:1), he has therefore specifically excluded the other form, the corporate body or whatever form the human organization may take. In sharp contrast they stand:

The congregation Boles Home, Inc

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Divine in origin. | 1. Human in origin |
| 2. Authorized by Christ | 2. Chartered by the State |
| 3. Regulated by the Script-
ures | of Texas. |
| 4. Ruled by Elders | 3. Regulated by State laws |
| | 4. Ruled by a Board of
Directors. |

The church in its universal nature has no head on earth, no headquarters on earth, no central authority or governing body on earth, no universal or joint mission, and therefore no universal organization on earth. **Churches of Christ (Romans 16:16)** have a common head, Christ in heaven. They have a common authority, the Gospel of Christ. (II John 9-11.) They have a common purpose or mission, "to seek and save the lost". They have a common form of organization—Phil 1:1.

This local organization of the church is the only one that the scriptures set forth. There is no other either within or without this specific one. There is none larger or smaller. This local organization or body is identified specifically by divine authority in the Gospel both as to form and function.

Ephesians 4:11-12	
Apostles and Prophets	{ The work of divine revelation. (We have the full benefit of this work preserved by God's providence in our Bible?)
Evangelists	{ The work of propagating the Gospel of Christ.
Pastors and Teachers	{ The local church and its func- tion.

The function of the local church is not in the field of economic enterprise or money making. It is not in the field of social reform. It is not in the field of domestic relations. It is not in the field of secular education. It is not in the field of government or political science. Its function is spiritual and is divinely designated as spiritual only.

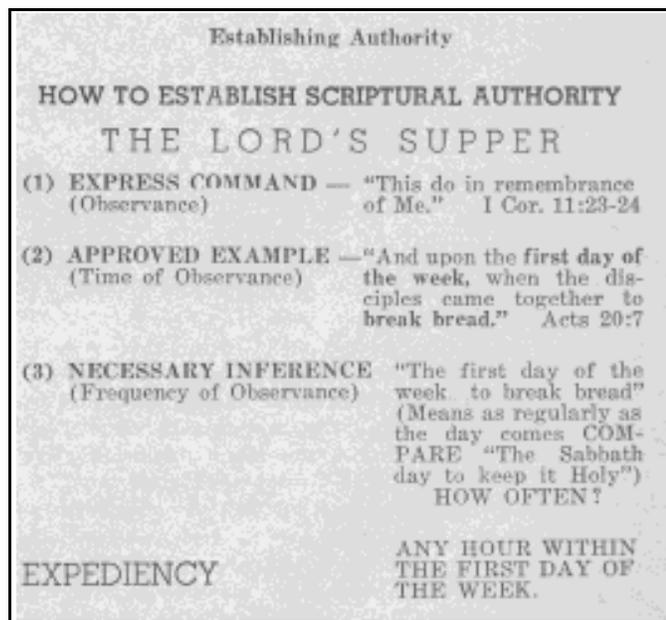
The Local Church.	{ Evangelism
Phil. 1:1	{ Edification
Eph. 4:11-12.	{ Ministering

This is not “a pattern” but “the pattern” for the organization of the local church and its function. There is no other. It is as specific as to form and function as singing is to music. Why should Brother Thomas think to “add to or take from the required matters, in line with his own traditions; yet all the while he feels that he is definitely showing allegiance to the Bible”. He condemns the “denominationalist” for so doing and then is just as guilty himself. In the above quotation he has this further to say.

“He is not strictly conscious of the need to interpret carefully and exactly; so, in general, our evaluation of this man is that he is somewhat loose and careless about God's exact requirements and accepts many items of human authority, (Box “ES” type), without really being aware that he is not being fair to the Bible, to himself or to God” Page 29—Paragraph 1.

Yet when we plead with him and other brethren not to take exactly the same attitude about the organization of the Lord's Church, he accuses us of being “legalists.” It appears to depend with him on whether he is for or against as to whether he is a “legalist” or a “liberalist”. He works on one side when he opposes something which has only “human authority” and then switches to the other side when he is for something which has only “human authority”. His preferences and judgment do not affect the will of God, however, and he should know that. If accepting “items of human authority” is being unfair with the Bible, with himself, and with God, when the denominationalist does it, and if that is what makes one a “Denominationalist”, then Brother Thomas is one when it comes to churches building and maintaining human organizations to do their work. It is our contention that corrupting God's

order in organization or function is as much denominationalism and makes one a “denominationalist” just as much as corrupting God's order in worship. If not, why not?



In the above chart we illustrate the three ways of establishing divine authority by the scriptures. We need to understand of course, that the Bible does not authorize what it does not teach. If the scriptures, the gospel of Christ, do not teach it, whatever it is, then the Lord does not authorize it. But how does the Bible teach or authorize a thing? The Bible teaches by 1) express command or precept, as illustrated in the command to keep the Lord's Supper—”This do in remembrance of me”, It Cor. 11:2324; 2) by approved example (apostolic approval) as illustrated by Paul meeting with the saints in Troas on “the first day of the week” for the purpose of “breaking bread”, Acts 20:7; and 3) by necessary inference—that is, it is necessarily inferred from the clear and unmistakable import or meaning of the language used. These are

the only three ways in which we can learn from the scriptures what the church can or cannot do. If the passage cannot be found that falls into one of these three categories authorizing the church of the Lord, either generically or specifically, to build human organizations to do the work of the church in any field, evangelism, benevolence, or edification, they are not authorized by the scriptures.

“Common Sense” with all of the human wisdom and education that a man can acquire will not augment or substitute for divine authority. Brother Thomas, as do other institutional brethren, pays lip service to divine authority and even to these three means of establishing divine authority, and then without even an apology for his inconsistency and the glaring contradiction it evidences, makes his appeal to “common sense”. How in the name of “common sense” can Bible authority be necessary if common sense justifies anything without

it ? Such tripping back and forth is not “common sense”. It is nonsense of the first order!

None of us would deny that it takes good common sense to make the right application of Bible Teaching to our every day living and our service and worship to the Lord. But that is in the field of **applying Bible teaching** and not in the field of **what the Bible teaches or authorizes**. Brother Harper invented the idea of “principle eternal” to try to get around Bible authority. He didn't make it. Brother Thomas, while claiming originality, falls back on the old “digressive” plea of “Sanctified Common Sense”. It will do no better.

In fact, this appeal to common sense while paying lip service to Bible authority is just one of the several contradictory positions our brother takes in his book. If there must be Bible authority for what the church does, then where is the realm in which “common sense” permits and justifies anything that is not authorized? If, on the other hand, common sense will serve as a substitute for authority from the scriptures, then what is the realm in which we must have Bible authority?

The appeal to **common sense** is but an appeal to presumption—the presumption of human wisdom upon the will of God, and this has always been condemned. God condemned Israel for doing “every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes”. This destroys all standards of authority and leaves everyone to worship his own intellect. It would destroy the Bible as a standard of authority and open the gate for every egotistical presumption of every “intellectual” in the church to trust in his own wisdom and walk in his own ways. We could practice whatever seems good to us whether God has said anything that includes it or not.

In his book, “The Christian Union Overture”, Frederick D. Kershner, Professor of Christian Doctrine of Drake University, makes an eloquent plea for **common sense** and pinpoints the substance of such a plea for anything in these words:

“Not only does the Declaration assert the essentially Protestant principle of the right of private judgment. but it also emphasizes what has been called the formal principle of the Reformation, that is. the supreme authority of the Scriptures. Campbell was a disciple of Chillingworth in that he asserted that the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestantism. **The Bible, interpreted freely in accordance with the individual or rational conscience and judgment, furnishes the religious standard of the Declaration.** (emphasis mine—R. E. C.) The Bible is authoritative for Thomas Campbell in the fullest sense of the word, but he will not be bound by “any human interpretation” of the text. Critics of Mr. Campbell, at this point, have urged that his one principle contradicts the other, that is to say that both the Scripture text and the personal judgment of the individual cannot be authoritative. If we make the latter supreme, it reduces the other to unimportance and visa versa. This is the favorite argument of what are sometimes called the “inner consciousness advocates”. Their position is that there can be no authority beyond individual conscience and

judgment inasmuch as these must determine the meaning of Scripture and therefore possess the ultimate and final word. It is quite trivial, they say, to speak of the Bible as the only authority when by that expression you mean always the Bible as interpreted by this or the other person. Where there is no common standard of interpretation there is no common standard of authority. To talk, therefore, of the scriptures as supreme and private judgment as also supreme is to talk nonsense. The scriptures are authoritative only as you and It interpret them for ourselves, and since It am not bound by your interpretation nor are you bound by mine nor either of us by any other man's, there is no such thing as any common Scripture. It have a Bible and you have a Bible and the other man has a Bible and our Bibles are all different because they are the result of several intellectual processes upon the text. This being true, we must either give up one thing or the other. We must affirm the authority of the text as interpreted by some definite common principle (the method of Roman Catholicism) or we must assert the right of private judgment as absolute and independent of any other consideration”—Pages 41-42.

After thus pointing out the argument made against Mr. Campbell's appeal to both the authority of the scriptures and the right of private judgment, Mr. Kershner points out in his book that the solution of the problem was found in denominationalism in the writing of human creeds. This was the effort to establish the standard of “interpretation” needed in appealing to the authority of the scriptures. Of course, it was found that human creeds had to be “interpreted” by the individual to suit himself, in the right of private judgment, just like the Scriptures. So they had solved nothing.

Having reached this point in his discussion, however, Mr. Kershner tells us what he believes is the solution of the problem and what he conceives to be Campbell's solution to the problem. It is solved by him in these words:

“What solution of the Protestant enigma are we to gather from the platform put forth by Thomas Campbell? It is quite obvious that he rejects in toto the creedal method which he saw clearly enough had been definitely discredited by past experience and history. On the other hand he is a thorough-going Protestant and certainly manifests no sympathy with the Roman Catholic idea of centering authority in the church. Still further, he indicates no disposition to surrender either private judgment or the authority of the Scriptures. How then does he reconcile the two ? The answer to this question lies at the very heart of the religious movement which arose, in large measure, as a result of his teachings.

“The first consideration which it is necessary to keep in mind in order to understand the doctrine of authority embodied in the Declaration and Address is the belief of its author in the substantial infallibility of what may be called “the common mind.” Both Thomas and Alexander Campbell believed in a universal reason which makes possible unity of thought on the part of individuals. This common

reason or common mind, when applied to the scriptures, would necessarily yield the same interpretation and in this way guarantee unity of thought and action. Both of the Campbells rejected the idea that any individual judgment with regard to the Scriptures should be considered authoritative, but they were assured that the judgment of the common mind or the universal reason could not be mistaken. Hence the scriptures, interpreted as above indicated, constituted for them an infallible and universal authority.

“Doubtless some one is asking at this point how the common mind is to be detected, and what guarantee we can have in any given case that our individual private judgment coincides with the universal reason. Mr. Campbell would unquestionably have answered the question by an appeal to the intellectual majority. Whatever the great bulk of thoughtful men agree upon as touching the interpretation of Scripture is doubtless an expression of the common mind upon the subject” (Emphasis mine—R. E. C.) (The Christian Union Overture—Frederick D. Kershner— pages 43-44.)

Now, is this what Brother Thomas means by common sense as a means of “interpreting” what the scriptures authorize ? There is no other course. Either we are limited by our common sense to an application of truth or we must reach some standard in the realm of common sense —somebody's common sense—as to what the Word of God teaches. Are we to take the route of popery and allow some of our “intellectuals” to determine the matter for us? Or are we to get all of the leading “intellectuals” (or as our Brother Thomas would say—the “trained thinkers” or “school men trained in logic”) among us together and let them determine the question by an “appeal to the intellectual majority” as the Drake Professor, Frederick Kershner, would advocate. Whose “common sense,” Brother Thomas, can furnish the basis of unity ? Of course, it is not difficult to see that our learned brother thinks that those of us who do not belong to the “intellectual majority” have very little common sense or we would not oppose all of these modern innovations. But It learned when a child from an old man who used to visit my grandfather that “mother wit”, as he expressed it and “book learning” are not necessarily twins. Many of the great Gospel preachers who fought the battle against denominationalism all over this country had enough confidence in the Word of God—per se—without any “interpretation” of a private nature, to stand upon it and put to flight the “armies of aliens” with it. Let the Bible interpret the Bible. This is what Peter meant anyway when he said, “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation”. We must speak as the “oracles of God” and everything God has said must be understood and applied in the light of all God has said—on that same theme or question. This is the safe way to determine truth and its application. Take all truth into consideration.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the “head over all things to the church, which is his body”. (Eph. 1:23.) The church then is the realm over which the Lord exercises absolute authority. It is the only realm over which he reigns as head and in which his authority is absolute in the lives of men. In every other realm his teaching binds those who are his

subjects to submit to other divinely established authority. In the family the woman is subject to the man, the children to the parents. In the government we are subject to the “powers that be” as long as they are not contrary to the will of the Lord. In every realm his authority is supreme but in the church of the Lord his authority is absolute and there is no other but his. The church can do only what he gives his consent for it to do or what he authorizes. There must be found within his word either specific authority or a commandment that includes, within its scope, these benevolent institutions and other human organizations which churches are building or every contention that can be made for them falls flat and is unavailing. We must have the passage, the authority from the word of God, established by one of these avenues through which the Bible teaches us what the will of the Lord is, that gives the churches the right to build human organizations and maintain them through which to do their work in caring for the destitute or in anything else.

Let us note that Bible Authority is either **Generic** or **Specific**.

SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY		
Commanded	Generic	Specific
Ark (Gen. 6:14)	Wood	Gopher
Water of Cleansing (Numbers 19:2)	Animal	Red Heifer Without Spot
Praise (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16)	Music	Sing
Evangelize (I Tim. 3:15; I Thess. 1:7-8)	Church (I Thess. 1:1)	Organization (Congregation) (Phil. 1:1)
Edify (Eph. 4:16)	Church	Organization (Congregation)
Relieve (I Tim. 5:16)	Church	Organization (Congregation)

God commanded Noah to build the ark; in Gen. 6:14 we find the record. If he had commanded him to make it out of “wood,” then there would have been no kind of wood that he could not have used by the authority given. But God specified “gopher” and by doing so eliminated every other kind. Specifying **excludes** everything of the same order, kind, or class. It does not exclude anything that is not in the same order or class but it eliminates everything of the same kind or species. We can see this even from a straight line, if we are not blinded by our prejudices.

In like manner, God commanded the water of cleansing in Numbers 19:2. It was to be made of the ashes of a red heifer without spot or blemish mixed with cedar wood and hyssop, and scarlet. God prescribed the manner in which it was to be made and used. Again God

specified. It must be a heifer. Any other animal would not do. Every other animal was eliminated—became an excluded **specific** for the reason that God made the choice and did not leave it to Israel. In his choice he **excluded** every other kind of animal by **including** and **specifying** that it must be a heifer. You don't need our brother's "wavy line chart" to see that, now do you? We need only to let God mean what he says.

In the same way, God specified in the church the kind of "music" by which he is to be praised, (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16.) If he had simply said for us to praise him, we could use any method of praise, shouting, dancing, etc. But he specified that we are to praise him by music— making melody. The New Testament **specifies** the kind of music that is to be made in praise to God—singing. It also specifies the instrument upon which the melody is to be made unto God—the heart. Every other instrument is eliminated by the specific choice that God made in the matter and every other kind of music is eliminated by the fact that God specified the kind he wants and will accept. We should have all learned this well by this time for it has been argued through one hundred years in our efforts to teach our brethren who wanted to corrupt the worship of the Lord by the addition of another kind of music. God did not **specifically prohibit** in express terms. He eliminated every other kind **by selecting** the kind he wanted. We are limited, without choice except to rebel against God, to that selection. There is no authority for the use of mechanical instruments of music. God did not **include** them in his command but specified the kind that **excludes** them, and therefore they are without authority and wrong.

Today God commands the church to evangelize the world with the Gospel of Christ. In this work the church is the "pillar and ground of the truth", (1 Tim. 3:15.) In 1 Thess. 1:7-8 we have the example of the Thessalonian Church being commended by Paul for doing this work. If God had given the church no organization through which to work, but had simply commanded the church to do it, the churches could have built any kind of an organization they chose. But God did not leave the matter general and command the church to accomplish this mission without giving to the church an organization. God specified the organization of the church through which his will is to be done. It is as definitely specified as the kind of music we are to offer in worship to him. The one and only organization specified by God is the local church—the congregation. He did not specify the particular means and methods to be employed by the congregation in evangelism—but **he specified the organization that is to do it**. This organization, specified by God, eliminates every other organization in the church just as surely as singing eliminates playing upon instruments.

On this point we quote from another of recognized influence and ability:

"Accordingly, if the command authorizing music in the worship of God had been given in the general terms just supposed, the conclusion would be inevitable that whether it were on one kind of instrument or another, would be wholly immaterial, since each and all alike are embraced in the generic term "music;" and if we

were making either vocal or instrumental music, or making the latter on any one or more of the numerous kinds of instruments, we would, in each and every case, be obeying the divine command. Reverting, for the moment, to our principle as formerly illustrated, we are commanded to “go” to men with the gospel; and whether we walk or ride, or whether we ride in one or another of the numerous ways of riding, we are, in each and every case, obeying the divine command to “go”. But if we are commanded to “walk” to men with the gospel, all methods of going otherwise would be excluded, and we would be compelled to walk if we obeyed the command.

“The same principle applies in precisely the same way to the religious organization under which, and through which, God’s children are to work. If he had merely commanded them to work without giving them an organization through which, and under which, to work, with its divinely appointed board of supervisors and managers to look after the work, then they could obey the command by forming for themselves an organization for that purpose and appointing a board of supervisors to look after the work. But the Lord has given them an organization, and has specifically named its board of overseers and managers.

“Now turning to the word of God with renewed attention to our main theme, we find that Christians are nowhere commanded to make music in the praise of the Lord. This shows that it is not merely music that God wants in the worship, and that, if he wants music at all, it must be music of a special kind. Having seen that no generic term authorizing both vocal and instrumental music is used in the New Testament, we proceed now to the first division on the descending scale of classification and inquire, is there any term used which is more specific and which limits the music to one of these kinds, and if so, to which kind? It must be evident to every thoughtful person that, in a case of two or more coordinate species, if God limits his command to one of the species, we do not obey that command when we use another; and if God has limited his directions for music in the worship to one of different coordinate kinds, we cannot be loyal to his directions without we limit our practice in the same way”.

“Instrumental Music in the Worship”

—M. C. Kurfees—Pages 77-79.

The principle discussed so clearly and pointedly by Brother Kurfees many years ago is just as applicable today. He saw then that the same principle applied to the organization of the church as to the **kind of music** we use in worship to God. The fact that God has specified the **organization** of the church excludes every other organization for the reason that God has limited his arrangement and command to just one of the species and has appointed its form and we do not obey his command when we use another.

This is not only, in the work of evangelism, the principle by which the missionary society is ruled out but in every other work of the church is just as effective in excluding human

organizations built by the church to do its work. God has commanded the church to edify itself. He did not give the church the choice of what kind of an organization it would build to do this work of edification. If he had, the church might correctly have built and maintained such a school as Abilene College. But God selected the organization and designed it himself. It is a local church. (Phil. 1:1. Eph. 4:16) By his selection of this specific organization, he eliminated such an organization as Abilene College in the edification of the church. It is not and cannot be scriptural as a church institution or when supported by the church to do any work. This is just as surely true as that a “red heifer” eliminated and excluded every other kind of an animal in the water of cleansing.

God also has commanded his church to relieve certain destitute people. (I Tim. 5:16.) That work might have been done through a multiplicity of organizations both already in existence and yet to be fashioned. But God did not leave the church to choose the kind of an organization it would use in doing its work of relieving the destitute. He specified the organization to do this work of relieving. It is the local church, the congregation. This is the only organization God has given the church. This specific arrangement—God's own choice—eliminates any choice upon the part of the church. The matter is settled—the choice is made and God made it. That should settle the question with every God-fearing Christian on earth for all time to come. God eliminated every other organization in the benevolent work of the church by choosing the specific organization through which we are to accomplish this and every work of the church.

We especially want to call the attention of Brother Thomas and other brethren to the fact that no one — absolutely no one — that we know anything about, is insisting that God has specified the methods and means which this local church can use in accomplishing this mission or any other which God has given his church to do. Neither are we undertaking to “legislate” for him in specifying the methods and means to be employed by a congregation. **This charge in Brother Thomas' book is absolutely false and is a complete misrepresentation of all of us.** There is no excuse for Brother Thomas not knowing that we have not done so. He should apologize and correct it for it is calculated to arouse prejudice, is an appeal to such, and is unfair and unjust. Yet it is repeatedly made in his book. We will see what he will do about it and how interested he is in acting like “we be brethren”.

Methods and means are employed by organizations. They are not coordinate with organizations. Brother Woods objected to the missionary society in one of the debates with Brother Porter on the ground that it is an organization that employs means and methods. This is also true of the congregation. The organization of the missionary society is coordinate with the congregation in the field of missionary or evangelistic endeavor. Both organizations must use means to do the work. In like manner, such organizations as Boles Home, Inc. is not a method or means but an organization. It uses methods and means—provides property for shelter, necessities of life, and supervision and care for the children for which this organization is responsible. So does the congregation use methods and means in providing

for its destitute. It must provide shelter for those for whom it cares if they do not have it. It must also provide the necessities of life and supervision and care for those who must have it who are subjects of its “relief”. These organizations—that of the benevolent society chartered by the state under the name of “Boles Home, Inc.” and the local church in any community — are therefore coordinates when it comes to “relieving” the destitute. One is a divine arrangement and the other is human. One is ordained of God and commanded to “relieve” the other is built and supported by churches that profess to be serving the Lord to do exactly the same thing. It is not obedience to God's command to the church. **It is a human organization which is unauthorized so far as the church is concerned and is excluded and eliminated by the divine arrangement of the organization for the church specified in New Testament scriptures.** This is what makes instrumental music unscriptural and wrong. It makes such human organizations as Boles Home and all others like it unscriptural and wrong when built and maintained by the churches to do their work. There is no authority for such. Brother Thomas has not produced it and cannot do so from the word of God and as smart and well educated as he is, we are not willing to accept his word for it.

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