

BROTHER THOMAS AND THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Roy E. Cogdill, Nacogdoches, Texas

(This is the tenth article in review of "We Be Brethren" written by J. D. Thomas, Professor, Bible Department, Abilene Christian College)

Before this review was announced or begun, Brother Cecil Willis of Brown Street Church in Akron, Ohio, an excellent student, thinker, and writer, as well as preacher, wrote an article on Brother Thomas' attitude toward the **missionary society** that we want to give our readers at this juncture in our review. We could not improve on it and it has some information in it that is very enlightening concerning the charges Brother Thomas makes against the missionary society and the reasons he gives for thinking it wrong. We are grateful to Brother Willis for this help in our review of this book.

Brother Thomas and The Missionary Society

Cecil Willis

For some time it has been obvious that some brethren objected to the missionary society of the Christian Church more from prejudicial reasons than from scriptural and logical reasons. We have been alarmed to find so many of the brethren (usually those not very well informed) who have no objection at all to the missionary society. For many years, our main objection to a missionary society has been that it is a human organization undertaking to do the work which God gave to His divine organization, the Church. The missionary society presupposes that God's arrangement has failed. It presupposes that God either could not, or did not, or would not supply such an organization adequate to accomplish His purposes. It insults either the wisdom of God, or the ability of God, or the goodness of God. It says that God either did not know what was needed to propagate the gospel throughout the world, or that He knew what was needed but could not provide it, or that He knew what was needed and could provide it but would not do so. Any way you look at it the missionary society insults God. It also assumes that man can build an organization that can accomplish what the organization God built could not accomplish.

In Brother Thomas' book he quotes a brother who rightly says: "In this paper, only one proposition is discussed and defended: The church, being divine in its origin, needs no human organizations through which to do its work, and that the innovation of such organizations violates the divine will, and thereby becomes sinful".

Brother Thomas then adds his comments to the quotation in these words: "We accept this BROTHER'S definition of organization, but we question the necessity of his later conclusion." He questions that the addition of such organizations is sinful!

Hear him further: "He must prove to us just exactly how and at what point 'such organizations violate the divine will!' A mere claim that they do so will not suffice." (We Be Brethren, page 133.)

In all of the debates the brethren have denied that the church could work through a human organization. Brother Woods at first (see Indianapolis Debate) denied that the orphan homes are separate organizations. At that time they were likened to Bible classes. Since then orphan homes have become separate organizations, like privet homes, but enjoy divine status as homes. Brother Thomas admits a church can do its work through a human organization, so long as certain conditions are met. He says:

"Our point just here, however, is that a human institution or organization can be used in doing the work of the Lord . . ." (Page 154.) "The only qualification, legalistically speaking, of any organization's doing a work for the church is that in doing so they be able to classify as an expedient method, and (in the context of our present problem) that they do not usurp the local church autonomy. But the local church and the individual Christians **must use agencies** (his emphasis), or 'organizations,' for getting the Lord's work done." (Page 168.)

Without hesitation, Brother Thomas tells us that the Lord's church "must use agencies or 'organizations' for getting the Lord's work done," These agencies are not options; they are "musts".

According to Brother Thomas, the only requisite necessary to legalize an institution or an organization is that it must "classify as an expedient method." I never knew that an organization was a method. I thought **institutions used methods to get works done**. Brother Woods in the Indianapolis debate objected to the missionary society because it was an "organization or institution" that used methods and means. Brother Briney thought he made a pretty good case to show that the Missionary Society was an expedient method. He showed that it was getting the work done. And after all, Brother Thomas says:

"Ways of sending money to a preacher are purely optional and we must not make binding what God hasn't! The fact of getting money to a preacher is important, but how many hands it goes through in getting to him or **whose hands they are**, are purely incidental and in no sense binding". (Page 74.)

Well, the missionary society is a "way" of getting money to a preacher, Brother Briney said. They also have "hands" and a good many of them, but these make no difference Brother Thomas says. Thus far in the controversy, Brother Briney would have by far the better of the argument with Brother Thomas. In fact, there would be no argument, because Brother Thomas has already made Brother Briney's arguments.

But we notice that Brother Thomas says an organization is legitimate if it can "classify as an expedient method." An organization is a "method". Of course this is not so, for an organization is a unit or entity that **employs** methods. Once more Brother Thomas tells us,

"There is no such thing as a binding method of how cooperation must be done, and we are therefore free to choose any method of cooperation." (page 81.)

Brother Briney could not have done better. His parallel argument on this point reads:

"I allege that where the Scriptures require this to be done (i.e. preach the gospel — CW), and are silent in regard to the method by which it is to be done, this silence authorizes these men whether they be many or few, whether it be one congregation or a hundred congregations, to meet in the name of the Master, and under the commandment to go, inaugurate such a work and carry it on; and whenever you have that, you have a missionary society!"

(Otey-Briney Debate, p. 169.)

Brother Briney said we are free to use any method; so does Brother Thomas. Brother Briney says a human organization is a method; so does Brother Thomas. Brother Briney says he gets his authority for his human organization in the command "to go" (see above quotation) which is generic authority; Brother Thomas says he gets his authority for his human organizations in "the generic authority to 'visit the fatherless in their affliction'." (page 114.) Both of these brethren can see a human institution in such generic authority. Brother Briney claimed God was "silent as to how to go" and Brother Thomas claims God is silent about "how to cooperate" or "how to visit". Boles Orphan Home is just a "method" to Brother Thomas, though it admits it is an institution. Abilene Christian College is also just a "method," to Brother Thomas. He says, "So, today, we may take advantage of a Christian college as an expedient method of teaching God's will . . ." He means CHURCHES may use a "Christian college as an expedient method of teaching God's will", as he devotes an entire chapter of his book trying to prove. Of course, he doesn't prove it but assumes it. No brother can defend the right of a college to exist who undertakes to defend it on the basis of it being a **"method" through which churches of the Lord propagate God's will.** The church is the one and only organization through which church duty is discharged. The only defense of the school, in my opinion, is when it is established and defended as a private educational business enterprise of a group of brethren, operated similar to a publishing company. If you would like to read an instance in which a brother took a well deserved cleaning on this point, read the Sommer-McQuiddy debate. Brother McQuiddy tried to defend the college as a method of teaching (page 17, 26) parallel to blackboards and gospel meetings. If A. C. C. is just a method through which the church may function, why is not the U. C. M. S. just a method???

Lest Brother Thomas be misrepresented in the matter, let it be understood that he does not endorse the missionary society of the Christian church. I am not sure that he could or would object to all humanly devised missionary societies, because his objection to the United Christian Missionary Society is not because it is an unauthorized human organization doing the work of the church. He thinks that is all right. I am not at all sure that he would object to a missionary society if it omitted one feature from its make-up. If the board at Boles Home, Inc., should begin to accept church contributions to propagate the gospel rather than to help needy children, I believe Brother Thomas would endorse it—if it still operated as it does presently. What about it Brother Thomas? Would you endorse a missionary society conducted in this fashion.

Brother Thomas' only objection to the U. C. M. S.

It is evident from reading his book that Brother Thomas does not object to the missionary society on the basis that it is an unauthorized human organization built and maintained to do the work God assigned to the church which He built. In his book, *We Be Brethren*, he argues at length to prove "that a human institution or organization can be used in doing the work of the Lord . . ." (page 154.) He, along with some other prominent brethren, is trying to tell us now that the strongest argument made throughout the years against the missionary society **will not stand and is not true**. They inform us that the missionary society is not wrong because it is an unauthorized human organization usurping the function of the church. A human organization to do the work of the church is perfectly all right with these brethren.

Nevertheless, Brother Thomas does not think the United Christian Missionary Society of the Christian Church is right. He has just one objection to it. He says:

"The **only** qualification, legalistically speaking, of any organization's doing the work for the church is that in doing so they be able to classify as an expedient method, and . . . that they do not usurp the local church autonomy." (page 168).

An institution to be legitimate must be an "expedient method". Well, Brother Thomas says the missionary society can meet this requirement. He says:

"Now to illustrate; The Missionary Society, in relation to the required pattern, "Go Preach", **could be classified as an optional expedient**, or as an "aid", . . . as it is indeed considered by those who use it." (Page 34.)

So, the missionary society can meet the first part of Brother Thomas's requisites for a scriptural human organization to do the work of the church. It is an expedient method. It is only at the second part that the U.C.M.S. falls down insofar as Brother Thomas is concerned.

Our brother's second requirement for a "scriptural human organization" through which the church may function is "that they do not usurp the local church autonomy". The missionary society is wrong, Brother Thomas says, "since it is by its nature a clear-cut violation of the local church's autonomy". (page 35.) Brother Thomas' only objection to the missionary society is that it violates the local autonomy of a church. Hear him state this:

"The exact point of this 'parallelism to the Missionary Society' is that these 'societies' (i.e. orphan homes—CW) are supposed also to violate and contradict the principle of the autonomy of the local church. It is admitted by all of us that the Missionary Society is guilty here, **AND THIS IS REALLY THE ONE AND ONLY THING THAT IS WRONG WITH IT** — however, this is sufficient to make it sinful and wrong." (page 137.)

Brother Thomas insists that "ways of sending money to a preacher are purely optional and we must not make binding what God hasn't! The fact of getting money to a preacher is important, but how many hands it goes through in getting to him or whose hands they are, are purely incidental and in no sense binding." (page 74.) According to Brother Thomas' definition, the Missionary Society is a "way" to get money to a preacher and it would be an "expedient way", if it did not violate local autonomy. This is the sole basis of his objection to it. He concludes, "and consequently there is no such thing as a pattern for cooperation!" (Page 80.) Therefore the Missionary Society could not be wrong because it violates the pattern for cooperation, for no such pattern exists. He says further, "there is no such thing as a binding method of how cooperation must be done, and we are therefore free to choose any method of cooperation." (page 81.) The Missionary Society is a "method of cooperation" its advocates maintain, and Brother Thomas admits, and it would be perfectly legitimate if it did not violate congregational autonomy.

Unfortunately Brother Thomas has not been alone in his advocacy that the Missionary Society is not wrong because it is a human organization doing the work of the church. Several years ago Brother J. C. McQuiddy shocked the brethren when he said, "Whether an organization is right or wrong depends entirely upon what it does. A missionary society is wrong, not because it is an organization, but because it is more than a method of teaching and preaching and usurps the functions of the church by taking upon itself control of the churches." Brother Tom Warren takes about the same position. As I understand him, he says that the only thing wrong with the missionary society is its delegate feature. He says in his "famous lectures",

"But there is something that I would like for someone to do. So far, I haven't been able to persuade anybody to even try the job. Here's the job I would like for some of these objectors to try their hand on: list the component parts of the Missionary Society as it was when it was started—'without the abuses that now characterize it'. Then let them point out the component part which made the Society

unscriptural. And bear in mind that it must not be this delegate legislative matter which I have already spoken. They cry 'that was just an abuse.' It will be interesting to see them try that, although I doubt that I will ever have the pleasure of seeing any of them try it." (Lectures, page 119.)

Now, if Brother Warren would just take time to read the Otey-Briney debate printed in 1908 he would find where some one objected to something in the missionary; society on grounds other than its "delegate feature". If he will read several decades of the **Gospel Advocate**, when the controversy was being so heatedly waged, he will find several objections in addition to its delegate feature I, and thousands more, object to the missionary society **because it is a human institution through which the church undertakes to discharge its duty and for which there is no scriptural authority**, and not only because of its delegate feature.

Brethren Thomas and Warren are objecting to the missionary society on one basis: i.e. its legislative power through its delegate system. Brother Thomas says again,

"What we mean by 'control', is that the Missionary Society is an organization whose board 'legislates', or passes rules that they expect to be binding upon the member churches and where the member churches expect to be so bound." (page 141)

But remember that the board that runs the Orphan Home "passes rules", and the eldership running Herald of Truth "passes rules", and the churches that contribute to the orphan home and to the Herald of Truth are bound by these rules. But someone says the churches "elect" to be so bound. So do the Christian Churches that are bound by the decision of the board of the Society. They "elected" to be so bound. Brother Warren gives an explanation which "explains what is wrong with the Missionary Society: it is a legislative body with 'every church represented in that body obligated to every measure adopted'." (page 118.) He further explains that local autonomy is violated by the missionary society because if on a given point three delegates are instructed to vote "yes" and one church instructs its delegate to vote "no", the "yes" decision would be rendered, and the church which voted "no" is therefore bound by a "yes" decision. But suppose a church that contributes to the board that provides an orphan home thinks that frame houses are adequate, but the board votes to provide brick houses. Is not this church which voted "frame" bound by a "brick" decision? You say, "They have the liberty not to give". So does the Christian Church that voted "no" in Brother Warren's illustration.

The point these brethren make is that the delegate system removes the congregation's voice in its own work. Question for brethren Thomas and Warren — if the **Missionary Society should begin acting only upon decisions rendered unanimously, would its work then be alright?** Each church would have its own way. No church voting "no" would be **bound by a "yes"** decision. Would this change of policy make an unscriptural organization scriptural? The Christian Church might be willing to make this "minor concession" to

Brethren Thomas and Warren in order to "take them in". Brother Thomas says this feature of the Society is "REALLY THE ONE AND ONLY THING WRONG WITH IT." Brother Warren obviously concurs.

It is becoming more and more obvious that some brethren have taken in so much of the modern institutional spirit that they really no longer have any solid basis upon which to object to the U.C.M.S.

Misrepresenting the U.C.M.S.

In our criticisms of the Missionary Society, it is often easy to misrepresent. We should be careful that our objections to the missionary society are not founded upon misrepresentations of it. We have mentioned before that though Brother Thomas does not object to the organization of a society through which the church may function, he does object to the Missionary Society of the Christian Church. Brother Thomas evidently believes that the Missionary Society and the institutional orphan home are both human institutions engaged in work assigned to the church; i.e. evangelism and benevolence. Brother Thomas endorses the benevolent institution through which the church undertakes to operate, while he condemns the Christian Church Missionary Society. In order to do this, he must show some characteristics of the Missionary Society that do not inhere in the Orphan Home.

Brother Thomas says:

"The Society dominates the churches, can coerce them and bring authoritative, **organic** pressure upon them if they do not live up to the demands which the Society makes of them." (page 142.)

Recently I wrote the president of the United Christian Missionary Society located in Indianapolis, Indiana, Mr. A. Dale Fiers, and asked him some questions. I tried to use the very words of Brother Thomas. Remember that this alleged dominating feature of the society is "the one and only thing wrong with it," according to Brother Thomas. I numbered my questions and Mr. Fiers numbered his replies and we give you this material in order:

Question No. 1. "Inherent in the U.C.M.S. is there any legislative control or authoritative organic pressure that binds the contributing churches?"

Answer No. 1. "No".

Question No. 2. "Is a local Christian church free either to contribute or not to the U. C. M. S.?"

Answer No. 2. "Yes".

Brethren, remember that the Missionary Society is an organization to which Christian Churches become voluntarily related. The benevolent organizations endorsed and supported by the churches of Christ are organizations to which contributions are **voluntarily made**. Thus far the two institutions (benevolent and evangelistic) are oneequal footing.

Question No. 3. "Are there any adverse consequences if a local church elects not to contribute, but to spend its money in some other way?"

Answer No. 3. "Adverse consequences would not in any way arise from legislative action. I believe there would be adverse consequences to the work which the United Society is chartered to do because of lessened contributions. There would be adverse consequences for the church because of weakened ties with the United Society and consequently a weakening of those mutual relationships which enable us to fulfill the scriptural admonition to edify one another and build each other up in Christ".

Now would this not also be true if more of the churches elected not to support our "benevolent societies"? There would certainly be "adverse consequences to the work which the benevolent society is chartered to do" And we must add that there are "adverse consequences for the church" or the Christian individual who opposes these benevolent societies or who elects not to support them — "because of weakened ties with the benevolent society". The brethren today say that giving to the institutions is optional, but woe be unto you if you decide not to give for conscience sake! You will be castigated, boycotted, anathematized, quarantined and probably crucified if they had the legal power to accomplish it. Witness the recent attacks made in the pages of the leading "institutional Advocate" against brethren and their work because they have refused to become a part of the institutional movement.

The fourth and fifth question asked were given but one answer as they involved the same point.

Question No. 4. "Does the U.C.M.S. have any way of exercising dominating or controlling authority over the churches?"

Question No. 5. "Does the U.C.M.S. have any power of coercion over the churches?"

Answer No's 4 and 5. "No. The only authority that the United Society has over the churches is the authority which arises out of voluntary cooperation or contractual authority in which a local church agrees with the United Society to enter into certain mutual relationships having to do with property, program, or leadership.

I asked questions four and five because Brother Thomas said, "The society can coerce the churches". Actually the U.C.M.S. has no organizational or legal way to coerce the

churches any more than "our" benevolent societies or human arrangements through the sponsoring church. It misrepresents them to say they do. A church might be "isolated" and "quarantined", as we have suggested, if it decides to have nothing to do with the U. C. M. S. but so will the church that decides to have nothing to do with the "advocated" institutions among our brethren today.

Mr. Fiers gives us an example of his answer to questions 4 and 5. He says that the U.C.M.S. may agree to assist in the local preacher's support "upon the condition that the employment of such a minister will be mutually satisfactory . . . The church may withdraw from such a contract at any time". You can see by these points that the M.S. and the churches enter **voluntarily** into their relationship. According to Mr. Fiers, the Society has no control over the churches unless the churches are willing for the society to have such control. The benevolent societies among us today exercise authority over work said to belong to local churches, but brethren attempt to justify this control on the basis that the local church agreed to enter into such a relationship. So did these Christian Churches mentioned in President Fier's letter.

Question No. 6. "Does a contributing church lose its autonomy by contributing?"

Answer No. 6. "No".

The advocates of the M. S. say a church can give to the U.C.M.S. without losing its autonomy. The advocates of the benevolent societies say that a church **cannot** give to the M. S. without losing its autonomy. But these benevolent society advocates say that a church can give to their benevolent institutions without losing its autonomy. Which institutional advocate can be believed? But Brother Thomas says:

"They (i.e. the objectors—CW) must **PROVE** that the will and choice of the contributing church is subservient to the will and choice of the receiving or forwarding church; or to that of the group which makes **OFFICIAL DECISIONS** for the orphan home." (PP 142, 143)

Now you notice that one group "makes official decisions for the orphan home." Suppose the will and choice of this group which "makes official decisions" should be different from the will and choice of the "contributing church." Which group's "will and choice" would be followed? Not the churches! The churches that contribute to these institutions are never asked about the work of these institutions nor invited to even register a protest. They have no voice in the control. They are asked for just one thing —**MONEY!** Brother Thomas says the missionary society is wrong and sinful because the will and choice of the contributing churches is made subservient to the will and choice of the board that runs the society. But the will and choice of the contributing churches is also made subservient to the "group which makes official decisions for the orphan home."

Brother Thomas again misrepresents the Missionary Society that he might have something upon which to object to it that will not also be true of his benevolent societies which he tries to defend. He says, "The churches are expected to do all of their missionary work through the Society and to do none of their own planning." (page 142.)

Question No. 7. "Can a congregation spend part of its mission money through U.C.M.S. and the rest in works other than U.C.M.S. works?"

Answer No. 7. "Yes".

So Brother Thomas did not correctly represent the facts. If one stands on the truth, he will not have to misrepresent an institution like the U.C.M.S. in order to find out what is wrong with it. Brother Thomas sees so little wrong with it that he has difficulty establishing even one thing.

Brother Thomas says the M.S. "assesses contributions" and "brings organic pressure upon them (churches—CW) if they do not live up to the **demands** which the Society makes of them." (Page 142)

Question No. 8. "Is a member church **assessed and compelled** to contribute a certain amount? "

Answer No. 8. "No".

So Brother Thomas has failed once again to show a difference between the U.C.M.S. and the institutional orphan home. He says the board of the home is "in position only to 'suggest' and 'request'; and they are totally dependent upon the choice and/or the mercy of the contributing churches". (page 142.) But this same is true of the Missionary Society. They are also in position only to "suggest" and "request". Neither are very reluctant to "suggest" and "request". We know the benevolent societies are not. Most of them have come to think of the fifth Sunday contribution as belonging to them.

The U.C.M.S. is an institution of human origin, without divine authority therefore, undertaking to do a work God gave the Divine Organization, the church, to do. So the institution is wrong, whether it dominates, coerces legislates, or brings authoritative, organic pressure upon the churches or not. If the U.C.M.S. eliminated its delegate feature, and if it brought no "authoritative organic pressure" upon contributing churches, and if each church is free either to send or not to send, I still maintain that man has no right to insult the intelligence of God by building and maintaining a human institution whose purpose is to usurp the function of the Church; whether this institution functions in benevolence or evangelism does not change the point one whit.

The institutional brethren have been for some time moving closer and closer to defending the missionary society. For some time Brother Warren seemed to be in the forefront, but he now has been surpassed by the audacity of Brother Thomas. In my opinion, it will be some time before the mass of the institutional brethren are ready to accept the positions of Brother Thomas. But don't be impatient, Brother Thomas. Some are coming your way! Don't be surprised if they have a Missionary Society with them when they get there!

An Interesting Sidelight

(Roy E. Cogdill)

As an interesting sidelight to the above article written by brother Cecil Willis, there was an exchange of letters between brother Willis and brother Thomas involving a particular question which was asked brother Thomas. We will not make the article too lengthy by reproducing the entire correspondence but we do want our readers to have the benefit of the direct question asked and the response to it.

Question by Brother Willis: "In order to clarify your position in my mind, would you please answer the following question. You make the point that the board of the orphan homes does not violate congregational autonomy. So this question: If the board that directs Boles Orphan Home were to decide to change its mission from care of orphans, or to enlarge its mission, so as to include gospel preaching, operated just as it is now, except that its work changed, would you endorse it? Could congregations send money to that board and the board make arrangements for the gospel to be preached, just as it does for children's care to be provided?" (letter—Nov. 15, 1958)

Answer by Brother Thomas: "In reply to your specific question, I believe that my book answers your problems already on page 181 and again on page 192. I list some organizations outside of the framework of the local church that can scripturally be used in doing the work of the church. I would not, of course, want to make a general blanket statement that might be applied by others to any and all situations in various contexts. I simply believe, in view of the above, that churches can use certain types of organizations for carrying out the Lord's work where there is no trace whatever of usurpation of autonomy, as my book points out." (letter—Jan. 12, 1959.)

Question by brother Willis: "Your argument in your book was that the UCMS violates the autonomy of the local congregation. But you also argued that a congregation's autonomy is not violated when it gives to the board that operates an orphan home. So I asked a very specific question: 'If the board that directs Boles Orphan Home were to decide to change its mission from care of orphans, or to enlarge its mission, so as to include gospel preaching, operated just as it is now, except that its work has changed, would you endorse it?' In light of what you say about autonomy not being violated when churches now give to

the board, I cannot see how changing the mission from benevolence to evangelism would change the nature of the board and its relationship to the congregation. So would you please give a reply to the above question". (letter Jan. 15, 1959.)

Answer by brother Thomas: "In further reply to your last letter, my purpose has been to deal with principles and to try to help brethren to think clearly with respect to them. There is no point in my making specific application of the principles as brethren should be able to do that.

"Specifically the question that you asked me to give a yes or no answer to is definitely "loaded" and I would be doing an injustice to answer it in that manner. You know no doubt, that many questions cannot be answered in such a fashion without laying the matter open to various misinterpretations.

"If your purpose is simply to understand my views, I ask you to check the illustrations found on pages 150-156 in my book, especially the one on pages 150-152, and as mentioned in my last letter refer again to pages 181 and 192. A correct solution to the problem you pose can be had, I think, if you will consider the illustration I gave in my last letter to you; namely, Can a church buy subscriptions from one of our brotherhood papers out of the church treasury? In this case I think you would find that this would be a church paying money to a human institution to discharge a part of its teaching responsibility. When you answer this question I think you will have a good answer to the one that you ask." (letter Jan. 26, 1959.)

Question by Brother Willis: "I am disappointed that this is now the third letter I have written you trying to get an answer of a single question. Of course, you say you have already answered the question. So I cannot understand your reluctance to tell me what your answer was.

"I simply want to know if you would endorse evangelistic work being done through the board that operates Boles Home, if they were to change their activities from the benevolent realm to that of evangelism .

"Twice you have asked if I thought a church could purchase papers from a business enterprise in the religious publication business. I reply, "yes". Would you now be so kind as to give the same kind of an answer to my question? I do not believe that a church could subsidize that private business by its contributions, but I do believe that it could buy services.

"Now, do you believe that churches can make contributions to a board (such as runs Boles Home) so that this board can employ evangelists to proclaim God's word? I believe that you endorse such. Now will you please either admit it or deny it?" (letter Feb. 2, 1959.)

Answer by Brother Thomas: "Not simply to carry on what may turn out to be an

unprofitable correspondence, but simply to drop one additional thought.

"It seems to me that when a church buys subscriptions to a brotherhood paper in advance without knowing who is going to write what articles, it is in fact not simply "buying a service", but it is in truth subsidizing a human institution that will use its own judgment in doing teaching work for the church". (letter Feb. 11, 1959.)

You can see by the above exchange that our learned professor knows how to dodge the issue. We guess he learned that from the sectarian training he had in S.M.U. and Chicago University.

Wonder if it would help the situation for a church to know who is going to write what articles before paying for subscriptions to literature? Would that have anything to do with whether or not it would be a contribution or paying for service? According to such twisting as that an eldership would have to take a preacher aside and make him preach all his sermons to them privately before they engaged to pay him or support him or advanced any part of his travel fund or expenses to send him to a distant field! If they didn't, they would not be supporting him for his services rendered but simply making him a contribution on a charitable basis, I suppose! Then how could they know when they sent him out that he would preach the same sermons that he had recited to them? Or how would they know that he did unless they went along and heard them? How ridiculous can a Ph. D. get anyway?

We do not blame brother Thomas for dodging the issue raised by brother Willis' question. He cannot answer it without committing himself to something that he knows the "BROTHERHOOD" is not ready for! You won't have to wait too long, brother Thomas, until your "institutional advocates" will go along with you. They are in the awkward position now of having two positions or "patterns": one for benevolence and one for evangelism. It is all right to have an outside organization—a corporate body—to do the benevolence of the church but it is wrong to have the same kind of an organization to do the evangelistic work of the church. Why? Would it be unscriptural to incorporate the Herald of Truth? You could even make the elders at Highland the board of directors like Sunny Glenn and Tipton homes have done. You could also claim that the purpose of incorporating it is to protect the elders of Highland Church from personal liability and then if it goes into bankruptcy like the Christian Chronicle Publishing Company did, they would not get hurt. They might even come out of it in better shape. Sometimes men do.

LEGALISM-- A REVIEW OF "WE BE BRETHERN"

Roy E. Cogdill

(This is the eleventh article in REVIEW of the book, "We Be Brethren" written by J. D. Thomas, Professor of Bible, Abilene Christian College, Abilene, Texas.)

In continuation of the review of what our brother J. D. Thomas has written in his book, "We Be Brethren", we consider some of the things he has said concerning "Legalists" and "Liberalists". He evidently does not think he is a "Liberalist" and wrote a chapter trying to prove that he is not. But he does think that all who oppose the benevolent societies which the brethren have built to do the work of the church, and the arrangement whereby one congregation has the oversight of the funds of many churches and directs their use in doing the work of those churches, are "Legalists". We want to examine what he has had to say and see how accurate he is in his definitions of these terms and how fair he is in their usage.

It needs first to be recognized that these expressions are not used in the scriptures and there is therefore no Bible definition for them. To define them we must turn to some human authority or allow their usage to determine their meaning. I know of no congress in the religious world that has the authority to fix the standard of either term and classify any individual or group arbitrarily as belonging in either class. Neither does Brother Thomas have such arbitrary authority. He employs these terms in his book, however, in the same way he uses his "Diagram Of Authority" to distinguish between generic and specific matters, and his so-called principle or rule by which he undertakes to determine for all of us when an example is binding and when it is not binding. He uses them to suit his own purposes, by his own will and wisdom, standards and prejudices, and classifies his "BRETHREN", as he always refers to them in his book, without straining himself any as to charity or kindness. This we shall be able to see from the very statements we shall quote from his book on these terms.

There are some other things, however, concerning the teaching of the Word of God on a proper attitude toward that Word that we want to notice first. We need to ascertain what proper respect for the Word of God requires in order that we may see if this is what our brother means by a "Legalist".

1. It is not "legalism" to recognize and subscribe to the absolute and exclusive authority of Christ as King of the Kingdom and Head of the Body for the teaching of New Testament scriptures requires that!

Consider and read these passages on this point: Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 1:20-23. They teach that "all authority" belongs to Christ in this dispensation and that he is the "head over all things to the church". His authority in the church and over it is absolute and exclusive.

This is a matter of faith.

2. It is not "legalistic" to recognize and subscribe to the fact that the Holy Spirit—solely and alone can reveal the mind of God about anything and therefore, if the Holy Spirit has not revealed a thing, it is not God's will.

On this point Paul declares in I Cor. 2:10-11:

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God".

This also is not "legalism" but simply a matter of faith.

3. It is not being a "legalist" to recognize and subscribe to the authority of the Apostles of Christ— alone and solely — in "binding and loosing" matters pertaining to the will of God today.

Jesus specifically gave such authority to the apostles alone and they alone exercised it in the early church directed by the Holy Spirit. Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:18; Acts 15:23-29; 16:4. **This is likewise a matter of faith.**

4. It is not being a "legalist" to recognize and subscribe to the scriptures as the sole and exclusive medium through which apostolic authority is exercised in divine affairs today.

The Apostle said,

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." II Pet. 1 :16-20.

Again Paul said,

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in

few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit". Eph. 3:2-5.

This is, then, the means by which God has made known unto us the Gospel of Christ today. The apostles were eyewitnesses and by the power of the Holy Spirit they were caused to remember all they had seen and heard and were guided into all the truth, even those things which Jesus had not disclosed to them concerning the will of heaven. These things thus revealed they declared in words of the Spirit's choosing. I Cor. 2:12-13. These scriptures thus spoken and now written are a divinely recorded deposition of the testimony of the eye and ear witnesses of the Lord under the prompting and direction of the Holy Spirit, a proper representative of Heaven's court, giving us the will of the Lord in His own Words. This is the source of all we know about Heaven's will and it cannot be augmented by all that might be learned in Chicago University or anywhere else in the world. The New Testament Scriptures are our only source of authority. Whatever is God's will must be found therein and no one has the right to go beyond. **This too, then, is a matter of faith.**

This applies both positively and negatively. 1) We are necessarily bound by what the scriptures teach and only by what they teach. No man has any right to bind anything in the Church of our Lord today except it be found in the teaching of Christ and the apostles in the pages of the New Testament. 2) It is just as true that no man has any right to loose or release any Christian from any duty, obligation, or truth that is taught to be the will of Christ in the pages of New Testament scriptures. No man can exercise proper faith in the word of the Lord who is not willing for the scriptures alone to "bind and loose".

If refusing to accept and practice anything that cannot be found taught in the New Testament in language that anyone of ordinary intelligence can understand without the aid of a PH. D. is "legalism", then simple faith and so-called "legalism" must be identical.

Right Attitude Toward Divine Will

In order to see just how much reverence and respect a man must have toward the will and word of God, let us look at some recorded facts:

1. When Jesus came into the world he was God's prophet to mankind yet he was bound and restricted by the message he received from the Father and could only "speak where the father had spoken". He had no message of his own for the world but delivered only the message received from the Father. John 8:26-29. John 12:44-50. John 17:1-8.

Jesus taught that the commandments of God must be kept in order for men to inherit eternal life and that they must not be broken. Matt. 19:16-17. Luke 10:25-28. John 10:35. He declared that all which had been written of him in the law, prophets and the Psalms must

needs be fulfilled. Luke 24:44. When the Jews thought that his teaching would destroy the law, he promised that not one "jot or little" of the law would be done away until all was fulfilled. Matt. 5:17-19. According to our brother Thomas, Jesus was an extreme "legalist" unless he was laboring under a misapprehension and of course, he wasn't.

2. In the work which the Holy Spirit came into the world to do He was limited to the word received from the Father. He was not free to testify of himself or deliver a message of his own but could only "speak— whatsoever he shall hear". John 16:13-15.

3. When the apostles were sent out to make known the Gospel they were forbidden to go beyond the message given them by the authority of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Gal. 1:6-11. Even an angel from heaven stands condemned if he should preach any other message than that preached by the apostles of our Lord. Is this "legalism"?

4. Men today are condemned if they go beyond and teach anything which is not taught in the word of the Lord. Gal. 1:6-11. II Cor. 4:13. I Cor. 4:6. Phil. 4:9. II John 9-11. Rev. 22:18-19.

If this kind of reverence for the word of the Lord, because it is the word of the Lord, is "legalism", then God is pleased with "legalism" and it is simple faith. But it is self evident that if such a regard and respect for the word of God should be stigmatized as "legalistic" it could only be done by one who does not have such regard for God's word in his heart. Will brother Thomas plead guilty to this?

Brother Thomas' Conception of "Legalism"

In order to see what our brother regards as a "Legalist" we need only to look at some of the definitions by which he designates what he calls a "Legalist". Since "legalist" and "liberalist" are opposite terms, it is especially interesting to note that the converse of everything which he condemns as "legalism" determines what it takes to make a "Liberalist".

1. A "Legalist" is "sometimes designated as an 'anti'," (page 29) our brother tells us and in the "Glossary" (page 249) he defines "Anti" as "A term sometimes applied to some types of Legalism". This is not merely a comment on how the term is generally used but the inference our brother wants left. He wants to leave the impression that one who opposes institutionalism — (anti-institutionalism) is a "legalist" because he is opposed (anti) something in his attitude and activity. If you're wondering what a "Glossary" is, it is written by a "Glossarist" and the purpose of it is evidently to "gloss" over some of the subtlety used in getting across what he wants to say by defining in his own way the terms he uses. Of course the definitions are no more reliable than the use of the - terms which are being "glossed" in the "glossary". On this point it is interested to note that one of the meanings of the term "gloss" is to "palliate by specious explanation". Maybe this is what our brother meant

by this section of his book.

If being an "anti" (opposed to) anything makes man a "legalist" then our brother would become on with the rest of us **if he is opposed to anything**. If he is "anti" anything at all, then to that extent he is "legalist" by his own "glossary". Or is it just those who are opposed to human institutions and arrangement built by the churches to do their work, when there is no scriptural authority for them, who are "anti"?

Opposition to anything unscriptural and unrighteous would make a man an "anti" and being an "anti" he would be a "legalist" by such a ridiculous definition an. usage of the term as our brother makes. But one cannot be a Christian without being opposed (anti) to those things which are contrary to the will of God for this is the obligation of every child of God. "Abhor that which is evil." "Fight the good fight of faith". "Contend earnestly for the faith". These are common exhortation to Christian duty. If this is "Legalism", then one cannot be a Christian without being a "legalist"! What a predicament our brother gets into! Does he favor compromising with sin and error or opposing it? Is he "anti" anything?

But if being an "anti" makes one a "legalist" and our brother is "anti" anything, he is a "legalist" himself and it would be a case of the "pot and the kettle". But if he is not opposed to anything, (not "anti" anything) then he cannot escape being a "liberal". His own rule' always get him into trouble as this one demonstrates Sophistry will work on either side of the tongue, Brothel Thomas. It is sauce for both the goose and the gander.

In view of all the piety and brotherly love and praying for unity among "BRETHREN" which our brother professes, we would have thought that he would have avoided the use of such terms and epithets as "anti". It is simply a means used by many of the "institutional advocates" to discredit, arouse prejudice, and curry favor.

2. A "Legalist" is one who "makes laws where God did not". (page 29) When a man makes a law where God did not, he insults heaven for he undertakes to make himself equal with the authority of heaven in legislative right. There is no justification for such. God has especially condemned this sin. Jesus refused to bow to the laws which men had made to govern righteousness and religion and refused to require his disciples to keep these human laws. Matt. 15:1-14. He taught that human traditions make void the word of God and make our religion vain. Mat. 15:6-9. We shall discuss this matter of making laws where God has not made them a little more fully later in this article when we study Matt. 15. Exercising authority that belongs only to God has a dual application which our brother fails to recognize. But if a "legalist" is one who "makes laws where God did not", then the converse of that rule would determine what a "Liberalist" is and a "Liberalist" would be one who "makes void by his traditions" laws that God has made. This is our brother's tragic sin. He would by his own authority, wisdom, and decree relax the organization ordained by God for his church, its form specified in the scriptures (the local church) pervert its function, substitute human

organizations built by the brethren to function in its stead, and ignore the divine arrangement. Nowhere in his book does he honor and plead what for its scriptural form. He seems to think that the only prerequisite of a scriptural organization is that it shall have "local autonomy" and he doesn't seem to know what that means. A purely human organization can have that characteristic, brother Thomas!

3. A "Legalist", according to our brother, is one who "does not appreciate being guided by 'principles'— (important generic truths that may cover many matters)" (Page 29)

We have wondered if this is a reference to brother Harper's "Principle Eternal" which he tried to substitute for Bible authority. It covered many matters not covered by the Bible nor authorized therein. It sounds vague, enough to be what our author has in mind. Webster defines the word "principle" as having these meanings:

"1. A source or cause from which a thing proceeds. 2. That which is inherent in anything, determining its nature; essential character; essence. 3. A general truth or proposition. 4. A settled law or rule of action, especially of right action, conscientiously adopted."

As the use of the word concerns "divine principles" the source is the will of God which determines what is right and that, of course, is settled in heaven. Psalms 119:89. The inherent nature of divine principles is the "righteousness of God". Psalms 119:137,144. That righteousness is revealed in the Gospel of Christ. Rom. 1:17. A general truth or proposition which constitutes a divine principle setting forth the righteousness of God must be taught or affirmed in the scriptures. If it isn't revealed in the Gospel, taught therein, found expressed in the revelation of God's will, then it is not a "divine principle" and could not therefore be "eternal". There is no "principle of truth", general or otherwise which the Bible does not teach. It classifies as human philosophy if it is not taught in plain language in the Bible. It is human wisdom and righteousness when it is not expressed in the word of God. A rule of "right action conscientiously adopted means respect enough for what God has revealed to make it our course of conduct. We would like to ask brother Thomas to give us a "principle" that is not taught in plain language in the word of God. When it is, it becomes divine law! Whether general or specific that does not matter, if God said it.

As in all of his definitions, this one, too, rebounds and lodges in our brother's own lap. If a "Legalist" doesn't like principles to guide him but likes "nice little cut and dried laws", then a "Liberalist" is one who wants "principles eternal" and rejects the authority of "cut and dried laws" as "little" and not "nice". God ordained government for his church— the congregation — and its form — divinely specified — (Phil. 1:1) is "a nice little cut and dried law" to our brother and he would like to swap it off for a luscious, broad, fat, general principle that would permit what he prefers. He designates his own party clearly enough by his own definitions!

4. A "Legalist" (Page 30) is one who "binds optional matters". This sounds like an

indictment of himself and the whole crowd of "institutional advocates" among the brethren. They say the support of these human arrangements is "an optional matter". Brother Thomas labors throughout his book to try to prove that they belong in the "optional" classification and the best evidence he can produce is his own "ipse dixit".

If this is so, then why do they draw the line against those of us who, because we believe they are "matters of faith", cannot "conscientiously" go along in these areas of so-called "human judgment" (according to their proponents and advocates)? We regard them as violations of the divine will and disrespectful of the authority of Christ. They will not use us, fellowship us, or cooperate with any effort we make. They black-ball, quarantine, castigate, abuse, and seek to destroy any influence we might have — all over what they consider an "optional matter".

Goodpasture, who is the "vicar of Christ" to a lot of these institutional idolaters, says he believes there is more than one way to take care of orphans and the chief lieutenant and "bouncer" for the "Institutional Advocate", Guy N. Woods, tells his readers that we misrepresented him. We alleged that he said that the church cannot do it and there is no other way to do it but through these "benevolent organizations" which have been built to "restore the home" which the orphans have lost. Of course, the best way to provoke brother Woods to hurl the charge of "mix-representation" is just to quote something he has said somewhere at some other time that doesn't serve his purpose now. He has no objection to accusing "out of one side of his mouth" what he has said out of the "other side of his mouth" of misrepresenting him. He has misrepresented himself more than any one we know unless it is Ruel Lemmons.

If they believe there is more than the one way—the "institutional home" way — they are inexcusable for being so self-willed and idolatrous as to want and demand their way of doing it to the disruption of the fellowship of brethren and the peace of the whole family of God. This would be sinful to the ultimate degree. They would be in far better shape if their contention was a "matter of faith" with them rather than something which is not essential but "optional". Actually they are trying to bind on us what they say is not bound by the Lord but which is, in their own understanding and judgment, an "optional matter". Brother Thomas is not justified in the supreme effort he makes in his book to defend and justify these "human efforts", if they are purely "optional". More especially should he take a different attitude if he is pleading only for his own wisdom and not for the word of God.

But to apply his own rule, if a man is a "Legalist" who binds "optional matters", then **one is a "Liberalist" who makes optional or looses a matter that is "bound"**. This is exactly what our **brother does with the form** of church government the Lord has ordained to accomplish the mission of his church—the local church—and with the equality of congregations also. Again he writes his own indictment!

5. A "Legalist", according to our brother, is "the man who says that generic authority is not adequate authority". (Page 30) Now we do not know who this could possibly be unless our brother has in mind the idea that the Bible must "specifically exclude" a thing in order for it to be wrong. It would certainly be no more incorrect to say that the Bible must specifically authorize a thing in order for it to be right than it is to say that the Bible must specifically exclude a thing in order for it to be wrong. We had as soon belong to one class as the other.

As in the other cases, the rule he gives us to try to get his indictment across is his own accuser. If a man is a "Legalist" who requires "specific" authority for what is right, then one must be a "Liberalist" when he thinks he is at liberty to do anything that is not "specifically excluded" or condemned. This is the kind of liberty our brother claims as we have proven in former articles. Review Article three of this series. (See pages 268-269ff — Gospel Guardian, Vol. 11) He has contended that "unless the 'sponsoring church' type of cooperation can be proven to classify clearly on the Diagram of Authority as an **excluded specific** (emphasis mine, R.E.C.) its clear and obvious classification as an optional expedient to the generic requirement, 'Go, Preach', makes it unquestionably scriptural" (Page 46). There it is! It must be specifically excluded or it is unquestionably scriptural! J. D. Thomas said so! Thus by his own standard he has proven himself a "Liberalist".

We charge him with complete misrepresentation of this point. We will deal particularly with it in another article but want to say in this connection that we know of no one who has said or written anything of the kind who stands or has stood within recent years with the "Brethren." We do not believe brother Thomas can produce from such a person the contention which he credits us with. His charge is born either of ignorance of the contentions we make or it is wilfull misrepresentation. He can take his choice. We have never said anything or written anything that even begins to contend that "generic authority" is not sufficient to warrant whatever action it includes. We have always contended for exactly the opposite to that.

While he is working on this, we call again upon him to produce any statement, or example, or inference, in the Word of God which "generically" includes what he tries to justify. If he will produce even "generic authority" for his contentions, we will accept it without question. We believe and contend that God has specified the form of organization for his church through which to do its work. It is the local church. We know of no authority either generic or specific that gives the churches of Christ the right to build anything else. If our brother does, then he should get the passage out before us.

6. A "Legalist", according to our brother again, is "one who says that pattern authority exists in the teaching of certain examples which really do not bind". (Page 30)

We have already, in previous articles, seen that our brother thinks he is capable of

classifying the examples of the New Testament for us and designating which are binding and which are not binding. He makes them serve his own arbitrary purpose allowing those which will not prohibit what he wants to do and rejecting those which would prohibit actions in which he wants to engage.

As we have abundantly shown, he thinks the examples of the New Testament must be understood by an entirely different system of "interpretation" to other New Testament teaching and after much hard labor came up with the profound pronouncement that if an example in the New Testament was a required action of the principals involved, and they so understood it, then it would be required of us now and if it was not binding action then, it would not be binding action now. Our brother thinks this is a great contribution to the solution of our problems. Who did not know it?

The real question is how do we determine whether or not the action exemplified is binding or not. The only answer is that we must determine the nature of the thing done from what else the New Testament teaches. We can not allow our brother because of the wisdom which he thinks he possesses to arbitrarily sit in judgment on these Bible examples any more than we can allow him to classify the facts and commandments of the Bible for us. If a man made a mistake and followed a New Testament example because he thought it was binding when it really was not, would he be in as much error as the man who disregarded a New Testament example because he thought it was not binding when it really was?

Moreover, if it is "Legalism" to mistake, for ignorance or any other reason that is honest, concerning an example and regard it as binding when it is not, then wouldn't it be "liberalism" to fail to follow an example that is binding? The same rule would work both ways and on the same ground, we can charge Brother Thomas with being a "Liberalist" because he disregards New Testament examples which are binding and which concern "required matters".

7. A "Legalist" according to our brother's definition is one who "insists that an optional expedient is not scriptural, unless an example (of the same type of expedient) can be found in the New Testament itself". (Page 30)

We call upon our brother to point out who has done this. It becomes more apparent all the time why he did not cite the quotations and references in his book and identify them. Some of them would be too easily exposed. Who, in all of his life, has ever heard anyone take the position that the New Testament teaches and authorizes by examples alone??? Who is it Brother Thomas? We dare you to produce your witness! No respectable and respected man among us has ever taken such a foolish position. But our brother had to have something that he could make look ridiculous so he built himself a straw man. It is a complete misrepresentation of the position of that great body of preachers and Christians that stand opposed to what our brother is trying to promote. He will meet it in the judgment if he does

not retract and apologize for it. Think about a "BROTHER" so falsely accusing his "BRETHREN" when he professes such love and piety and to "BE ON HIS KNEES PRAYING FOR UNITY". His ignorance is either appalling or his hypocrisy astounding.

But to take his own definition, if a "legalist" is one who requires an example of an "optional thing" before he will recognize its authority, then a "Liberalist" is bound to be one who rejects the binding force and authority of all examples or least of those that he wants to get rid of because they would restrict his activity. Page G. K. Wallace for the first and our brother Thomas would at least fall in the last category. In fact, of course, his position in the book as we have shown in former articles is that an example is not binding unless other passages make it so. He so deals with Acts 20:7. Thus either way he goes he must classify, according to his own definition, as a "Liberalist".

Matt. 15:1-14. Mark 7:1-13.

In Mat. 15 and in Mark 7 we have the interesting incident of the pharisees and certain of the scribes condemning Jesus and his disciples because they did not keep the "tradition of the elders". The discussion which followed could serve to enlighten many of us considerably about the place of authority and law in God's plan.

When Jesus came into the world the law which God had given was almost literally covered up with Jewish traditions. Law has always had three sources among men. They are: 1) statutory, 2) judicial decision, 3) traditional practice which according to the rule (in the absence of either of the other two sources) must have continued so long that the "memory of man runneth not to the contrary". But with God there is but one source of law. That is His Word. Christ has all authority of every kind in the Christian dispensation. Human tradition can have but one effect upon the law of God and that is to make it void and our religion vain. This is the lesson Jesus taught the Jews in this passage.

Human tradition, when we make it law rather than custom and give it place with the Will of God, operates both positively and negatively. It will bind upon us things which God's Word no where binds and hence claims the same force as the Word of God and equal respect from those who are willing to observe it. This is doing violence to the Word of God, disrespecting it, and it means that man has undertaken to exercise authority equal with Heaven. This is sinful and severely condemned in the scriptures. Even in the scriptures of the New Testament it is severely condemned. Gal. 1:6-11. II Cor. 4:13. I Cor. 4:6. II John 9-11. Rev. 22:18-19. It rests upon the same **disrespect** in New Testament times as in the Old Testament day. It is disrespect now as it was then and accursed now as it was then.

Negatively the recognition of human tradition simply releases men from that which God has bound. This is just as great a sin as to bind where God has not bound. The Pharisees hound the "washing of hands before eating" as a religious law upon men and yet they

recognized that it came from the traditions of the elders and made no claim of divine origin for it. On the other hand, they taught men that they could substitute their own practice for that which God ordained and be released from the necessity of doing that which God had commanded. God had commanded, "Honor thy Father and thy Mother". This included providing for them the necessaries of life. The Pharisees taught that when a man used his resources for some other good purpose he could say to his parents, "What I might have given to you I have spent in another good cause", and thus he would be released from the necessity of providing for them.

Jesus taught that whether it was in their binding where God had not bound or in loosing where God had bound, their human traditions made void the commandments of God.

"And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." Mark 7:9

"Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do." Mark. 1:13.

"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of man." Matt. 16 :7-9.

What our brother Thomas calls "Legalism" Jesus called binding human traditions or teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. Not all of it was laying down rules or requiring action where God had not. Some of those human traditions loosed and exempted men from God's commandments by offering them a substitute for what God had said do. To do either is to stand condemned and under God's anathema. For that great number of gospel preachers and simple Christians who oppose the churches building human organizations to do the work which God gave a divine organization, the congregation, to do, and for those who resent and oppose making a "brotherhood agency" out of a local church we want to positively enter the denial of "binding where God has not bound". Brother Thomas and other institutional advocates charge us with binding as to method. This is maliciously false. We have insisted on no method or particular means and Brother Thomas cannot establish such a charge. It is not so and we shall show that in another article dealing with some of his misrepresentations of our contention. What we do insist upon is that **God has bound the organization** through which the work of the church is to be done—not the means or methods particularly to be used by that organization in doing its work. We need to get the issue straight. It is not one of "means and methods" but which organization will do the work God has assigned for the church to do in this world? Human or divine? Brother Thomas needs to deal fairly and honestly with the issue as well as with the "BRETHREN" and he will not be so much concerned with trying to designate them by some epithet or with name calling.

"CERTAIN EXPRESSIONS AND THE FRUITS OF LIBERALISM"

Roy E. Cogdill, Nacogdoches. Texas

(This is the twelfth in a series of articles reviewing the book, "We Be Brethren," which was written by J. D. Thomas, Professor of Bible in the Bible Department of Abilene Christian College and Lectureship Director)

In the outset of this series we pointed out that we differed with brother Thomas as to the fundamental cause of our difficulties. He ascribes our difficulties to differences in "methods of interpretation" in our study of the Bible. We ascribe them primarily to a difference in attitude toward the scriptures and divine authority. Brother Thomas evidently recognizes the problem of different attitudes for he spent three chapters and many other references in his book undertaking to deal with this problem. He describes these attitudes as "Legalism and Liberalism". Of course he denied that he belonged to either class but in his zeal to pin the tag of "legalism" on those who differ with him on the problems of how churches of Christ can scripturally cooperate in performing their mission he incriminated himself as we demonstrated fully in the article preceding this one. Every effort he made to describe and define opposition to human societies substituted to accomplish the work of the church as "Legalism" came home to roost over his own door simply by being applied conversely to these same problems.

He was very meticulous and devoted much space and effort in trying to label all of us with "Legalism" but when he wrote the chapter on "Liberalism" he narrowed its definition to a very fine point. Hear him:

"A Liberal, or a Modernist, for our specific point under consideration just now, is one who says that there is no such thing as required, 'pattern,' definite, revealed authority. He rejects the inspired Bible and thinks that final authority is within man himself, based upon his experiences and his own reason". (Page 28)

"Theological "Liberalism" is a term that properly applies to one of the major "camps of Modernism". . . . "All Modernists reject the idea of "chapter and verse" authority (in any sense) for the Bible. Authority for the religious Liberal is man's own experience. This means that "revelation" need not have "truth content" or be expressible as words or ideas. The Liberal is under the influence of naturalism and has an almost unbounded reverence for empirical science."

.... "The main value of the Bible to him is that it is a kind of help in generating religious experiences, but it is in no wise infallible nor inerrant and no part of it is authority simply because it is the Bible." (page 215)

"No man is a Modernist who accepts the Bible, rightly interpreted, as full and final authority". (page 216)

"There are, however, some of our preaching BRETHREN, who have earned a reputation as Liberals or Modernists that are no doubt under the influence of certain facets of true Modernism even more than they realize. They question the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible and indeed say that is not the letter (or mere words) that are significant anyway but only the spirit (inner, figurative, or allegorical meaning). Yet the most of these brethren probably are not full-fledged Modernists, as they still believe in some sense at least in the authoritativeness of the Bible. They feel that their teachings are in perfect harmony with the Bible when it is rightly understood and they believe that they are perfectly respectful of the New Testament as the revealed will of Christ. In general they have a high regard for their own intellectual grasp of true Christianity and they are prone to look at the rest of us as thoroughgoing Legalists and as extremely naive. Their Liberalism or Modernism is (at least those this author has acquaintance with) a modified form and perhaps is not beyond redemption in some cases. It is a pretty dangerous attitude, however when any man decides he knows more than everybody else and thus shuts himself off from the opportunity to learn from them. If these BRETHREN could come to have intellectual respect for some of us who hold to **pattern authority in the express words of God's will**, perhaps that would help them to begin to rethink their position. Further, they could do well to analyze our Standard Authority Diagram and learn what Modernism is." (Page 217)

Some of the above statements are very enlightening. When you put them all together they have you running in a circle as is usually the case if you follow our brother closely in his efforts. According to his first definition of a "Liberalist" and "Modernist" only an out and out infidel could qualify and we are not sure that it would not require complete atheism. But he leaves the limited circle of his definition for "Theological Liberalism" and admits that there are some who are not full-fledged. I suppose that a man "who accepts the Bible, rightly interpreted, as full and final authority" would not be called anything but a Christian by any responsible person. There are, of course, many who profess to do so who actually do not. There are also many religious people in the world who verily think they believe the Bible to be the Word of God who are not willing for what it plainly says to settle the issue unless it is what they want. Many, many times we have come face to face with people who simply would not accept what the word plainly said about something for it was not what they wanted to believe.

In the pulpits of this country there are hundreds and thousands of men who spend their lives preaching some things which they find in the Bible. If you accused them of being unbelievers they would be insulted, but they do not hesitate to deny and dispute what the Bible records about many things. A few years ago a gospel preacher who was attending S. M. U. in Dallas told us that he had heard the head of the Bible department in that school

actually deny that Jesus was raised bodily from the grave. Many deny the virgin birth of the Christ, and the genuineness of his miracles, who will not admit that they are "full-fledged Modernists" or outright infidels. They simply deny what they do not want to accept and undertake to explain it away in some manner and accept only what their own intellects approve. These may not be what our brother would call "Theological Liberals" or "full-fledged Modernists" but without the qualifying modifiers, they are in our language -- both "Liberals and Modernists".

In the last paragraph quoted (page 217) our brother gives what we regard as a fairly accurate description of himself and the attitude of his book. The "Liberalism" or "Modernism" that characterizes his writings in this book we are reviewing, and that is all that I know about him, except hearsay reports from others, would be described as a **modified form**. One could certainly find very definite indications of his "high regard for their own intellectual grasp of true Christianity and they are prone to look at the rest of us as thoroughgoing Legalists and as extremely naive". I could not better describe the attitude displayed in his book if I were to try at length. We certainly hope that our brother is not "beyond redemption". We could not however, describe him as he describes himself as one "who holds to pattern authority in the express words of God's will". Of course he does believe that the Word of God must expressly or specifically exclude a thing in order for it to be wrong, but when it specifically sets forth the organization of the New Testament church and the function of that organization he is not willing to recognize that such specific authority excludes anything that he wants to do. He is willing to accept Bible authority only when he can put his "interpretation" on it. That is what he means by "rightly interpreted".

In the town of Lufkin a few years ago we were told by a good woman that she had been present at a certain club meeting at which the "pastor" of the First Christian Church, made a speech. In that speech he told the ladies that they were not to believe that the Old Testament incident of Noah and the flood actually occurred. Neither were they to believe that the story of Jonah and the big fish was an actual happening. These were simply stories by which a lesson was taught. They were to be allegorically understood. I am sure that he would readily deny being a Modernist though—especially a full-fledged one.

About ten years ago in a gathering of preachers in Long Beach, California, several of the preachers and teachers on the faculty of George Pepperdine College in Los Angeles took issue with this writer about some matters which had been preached by him on that occasion. The incident was written up and published in the "Bible Banner" as a correct report over the signature of about a dozen preachers who were "eye-ball" witnesses of the discussion. In that discussion one of the Pepperdine teachers, Wade Ruby, advocated that men can find and know God, though they could not correctly worship him, who had never directly or indirectly come in contact with a Bible or anything it contains. He and Woodrow Whitten took the position that a man can learn what is right and wrong, therefore know sin, without a Bible or a knowledge of what it taught either directly or indirectly gained from it. Whitten stated

that some of the things that Jesus taught came from the human philosophers prior to his day. To this number were added Hubert Derrick and a brother named Morgan who had come out of the Christian Church who joined with the first two in advocating such teaching and also contended that a man can go to heaven in any church provided he is baptized right if he is honest and sincere. Ralph Wilburn, known to be a modernist was in the school at that time also. He is now in the Christian Church. The others mentioned are still in the school as far as we know. James Arthur Warren who advocated similar views has quit the church also. In recent months Pat Hardeman has quit the church and gone into the Unitarian movement where nearly everybody is an infidel. He started in by questioning the binding force of New Testament examples.

A good many years ago Carl Etter and another brother on the West Coast went over to the Congregationalists where you can believe anything or nothing. Prior to that time Carl had appeared on the Abilene Lectureship and severely criticized the churches for doing nothing and openly advocated that it is better to do something even though you do it in the wrong way than to do nothing at all. That was the beginning of his defection. Today we are facing a worse situation than simply the defection of preachers — one by one. That is tragic and pitiable. But when hundreds of young preachers have gone out from "our schools" into the pulpits to preach who have sat under such teaching as many of them are hearing in "our schools" and who are better qualified as "promoters" than they are as gospel preachers, it is no wonder that the "defection" has gone beyond the individual stage and whole churches are rapidly becoming so soft and liberal and modernistic that anything under heaven but the truth is acceptable to them. More tragic still are the older preachers who have known and preached the truth in years past but who find themselves enmeshed in the "liberal" movement among the churches and do not have the strength of character to extricate themselves therefrom and stand firm for the "faith once delivered". To a very great extent we have a generation in the churches who do not know what New Testament teaching is and could not contrast it with denominationalism if their lives depended upon it. They have not studied the Bible for themselves but have listened only to the pleasant and fair speeches of teachers and preachers who have sought only to scratch "itching ears." It is manifest in the worldliness, looseness in moral living, the "social gospel" attitude, emphasis on numbers and size outwardly rather than spiritual stature, glorying in men rather than the Lord (witness the banqueting and feteing of prominent men in the church), the youth centered movements among brethren, building human institutions, increasing power and influence of big churches, the mounting domination and dictation by human institutions and their propaganda, the spirit of compromise with error and a general softening of the opposition of churches, preachers and members to anything that is popular. We have watered down our convictions, sweetened up our dispositions, and become so sophisticated with worldly wisdom and intoxicated with our "place in the sun" of prominence in the religious world that we are impotent in the face of error and evil. Still our brother Thomas thinks that there is no "liberalism" apparent until one becomes an out and out infidel. Even Pat Hardeman in his complete apostasy from the faith would not admit that he is an atheist or infidel but classifies himself as a "Liberal

Religionist".

A man cannot disbelieve what the Bible says about one thing and believe what it says about another. It is either believe it all or reject it all. When the testimony of a witness is impeached, it is discarded. Neither can a man select those commandments of God that he is willing to obey and reject those that he thinks unnecessary or too demanding. He is pleasing himself and is not obeying God in anything when he undertakes it. In exactly the same way, men cannot respect Bible Authority when it proposes and establishes what they want to do and reject it and find a way around when it does not authorize what they want to practice. We must either accept what it teaches as our sole guide in every matter or eventually be driven away from any consistent claim for any respect for Bible authority at all. To override in one point is to reject the whole program of divine guidance in the sufficiency of the scriptures.

Brother Thomas cannot teach the young men and women who sit in his classes at Abilene to be satisfied with what the Bible teaches and respect and do only what is included within its authority for he doesn't believe in doing it. His whole effort, expressions, and the fruit of it will produce either sectarians or unbelievers. We know one young man who after attending Southern Methodist University went to Abilene with the idea of preaching and became disheartened and quit and went into the business world. He is still a faithful Christian and told us when he quit that J. D. Thomas was a modernist. Now even he, perhaps, did not mean a "full-fledged" Modernist. Modernism is, for all practical purposes, simply the worship of one's own intellect to the point that one tries to be selective upon the basis of his own wisdom in dealing with things divine whether it be facts, commandments, or authority, or the inspiration of the scriptures. It is in fact an attitude toward things divine. It will lead man to deny the verbal inspiration, hence the inerrancy of the scriptures. It will manifest itself sometimes in denying the miracles recorded in the word of God. It will sometimes result in defying the will of God as expressed in his divine commandments. It sometimes denies the sufficiency of the Bible and its authority. It sometimes denies the sufficiency of the church to do what God has commanded it to accomplish in the world. All of this is the same attitude fundamentally and it is "Liberal" and "Modernistic". One of its manifestations is no worse than any other.

"Certain Expressions of Liberalism"

1. Brother Thomas' "Liberalism" in his book is evident in his treatment of the organization of the "local church". He talks out of both sides of his mouth on this subject like he does all others. With one breath he professes to recognize the scriptural form of organization and in the next refuses to be confined to it or to recognize the limitations of its proper functioning. We have suggested before that he seems to think that the only prerequisite of scriptural church organization is "local autonomy". This is seen from a study of his charts—see page 35—where he lists "local autonomy" as a coordinate with the "Missionary Society". But you could have a missionary society with local autonomy. We

have seen too that the "Missionary Society" denies that it interferes with "local autonomy". Brother Thomas should have put in the square instead of "local autonomy" the "local church" or "congregation". This is a coordinate of the Missionary Society and it has form or organic existence given by God in the scriptures.

"One of the by-products of failing to curb ourselves in legalistic tendencies is that some of us have come to conceive of the church itself as a sharply defined "institution," with circumscribing legalistic lines drawn about it (or in a figure, a "high board fence" which forces upon it a rigid mechanical sense.

"The church of our Lord is not a human earthly, rigidly and mechanical circumscribed and legalistically limited institution, obligated to operate within "airtight" congregational or "parish" boundaries and separated units. with a group of men having complete dictatorial powers over each, but whose power and authority and responsibility become absolutely nil when they get to the "parish boundary"!"

"Rather, the church is a spiritual body, where every Christian has experienced a new birth, where all are priests and have direct communion with God without any officiating hierarchal group being needed, where all are "members one of another"—not just "congregational-wise", but including every son and daughter of God, everywhere. The spiritual union and relationship between the Christian and God and between all of God's children is not to be interfered with by congregational "parish boundaries." It should always flow freely without any impediment and there should always be a strong bond of unity and love between all of God's children, and with never any sense of congregational competition or limitation. God did not intend for the existence of congregations to impede the free flow and free action of spirituality — not even to the spiritual obligations of getting money to missionaries or caring for homeless children.

"This tendency to "institutionalize" the church itself is therefore not a Biblical concept. The true organizational set-up for the Lord's church is only **functional**" (Pages 160-161)

In the above quotation we have given enough of our brother's dictum about the local church to show that he has no true understanding of either the will of the Lord or the present issues disturbing the church or he misrepresents both of them. It is not the obligation of this writer to say which is his difficulty but one or the other is certain.

There is no one—absolutely NO ONE—known to this writer that contends that any congregation should recognize any geographical boundary such as our brother describes and intimates to be our position in the matter. If Brother Thomas doesn't know better than this he did not have any business injecting himself into any discussion about it until he found out what it is all about. Congregational "limitations" are not geographical, circumscribed by "high board fences" literally or imaginary lines prescribing a "geographical boundary". His

inference in this direction is ridiculous and silly as well as untrue and completely deceptive. Our brother should rise above this sort of thing but his book is filled with it.

The **limitations of a congregation** are imposed because of relationship. Part of that relationship is between the Elders of a congregation and its members. They owe duties and obligations toward each other respectively that neither owe to either outside of the congregational relationship. That is the reason that God has prescribed the **jurisdiction** of an eldership. That jurisdiction is over the members, resources, program of worship, work, and fellowship of the congregation where they are elders. They have no responsibility **as elders** outside of the relationship they sustain as such to the congregation where they are elders. The very responsibility given them in their functioning as elders is **oversight**. Surely their responsibility is **functional**. That function is oversight— not legislative —not dictatorial—but oversight of the congregation in all of its affairs and they are charged not with doing their own will but seeing to it that the will of Christ is done.

But our brother says that the **congregational set-up** is "only functional". He says further that the elders of the local church only have "functional" power vested in them. Well, who claims that there is anything honorary about it. Those who perform their function well are to receive "double honor" in the sense of being sustained in the work they do. But it is not an honorary office or work. The trouble with our brother Thomas is that he thinks the function of neither the congregation or its elders is limited to that relationship.

On Page 183 of his book he takes the position that the eldership of one congregation can serve as a committee for distributing benevolent funds among other churches and he cites Acts 11:30 as proof. Of course only a casual reading of this passage will show that there is not one word or syllable in it that says anything about one group of elders distributing benevolent funds among many churches. The elders in the passage were among the brethren in Judea. The brethren in Judea were divided into several churches. I Thess. 2:14. Did these brethren in several congregations in Judea have and recognize a common eldership? That is what our brother infers. If they didn't then each church must have had its own eldership as God ordained. Acts 14:23. Brother Thomas could not prove, if his life depended upon it, that the eldership of one congregation in Judea received the funds and distributed them. When he does he will establish the "presiding eldership" idea of the Methodist church. It is not in the Bible. This is just another case of his scriptural perversion. If this is the kind of Bible teaching he does in his classes at Abilene, he handles the word of God too carelessly to teach anybody anything about it.

Suppose our brother enlightens us by showing us the passage that teaches what the elders of one congregation can oversee in the work of another church. That would be his obligation if they can oversee anything. Fellowship is a congregational matter. Paul "assayed to join himself to the disciples" in Jerusalem. Acts 9:26. He was already a child of God, but he was not "joined to the saints" in Jerusalem because that is what he was trying to do. According

to our brother there should not be any "impeding" or interfering with our "being members one of another" by congregational boundaries even as to relationship. But there was in the case of Paul and his action was foolish, if he already was a member of the Jerusalem body of disciples. More than that, they were about to refuse to accept him into their fellowship — allow him to become one of them—until Barnabas commended him unto them.

Paul taught the Corinthian Church in I Corinthians chapter five, to excommunicate a certain ungodly member from their fellowship— turn him over unto Satan. Can the eldership of one congregation exercise the oversight of such an action as this in another congregation? Can one congregation withdraw from, discipline in any manner the members of another congregation? Our brother would have to say yes or swallow much that he has already said.

Do the resources of one congregation, the funds contributed by the members of that congregation on the Lord's Day, belong to every other congregation just as much as to the one where the contributing was done? The elders of such churches as Highland in Abilene, promoters of the Herald of Truth, think so. They would make another eldership think by their propaganda that if they do not "come across" with the part of their resources that Highland needs to pay their bills they will be lost in eternity. But it is not so!

Brother Thomas hoots at the idea of an eldership and membership of a congregation being any more responsible for the members of "their own" congregation who are in need than they are for those of another church. But is it any more unreasonable to recognize that they are more responsible in benevolence for "their own" than to conclude that the scriptures teach that they are more responsible for the spiritual needs of those who are "their own" or would our brother dissolve all congregational obligations and relations and just have the church universal in spiritual obligations as well as in benevolent ? It would be interesting to have Brother Thomas tell us just what the function is that a congregation is designed to perform outside of maintaining the Lord's Day assembly to break bread and even then whose responsibility would it be to do so in any locality if no one is any more responsible for the work of the congregation where he is a member than for the work of any other. With the "liberty" he thinks he has the privilege of exercising, there is no "function" which would depend upon any congregation or the elders of any congregation that could not just as well be performed without such an organization. This would have to be the conclusion to what our brother teaches. But the crossing of congregational lines of "relationship" would destroy the organization of a congregation itself and its function. Our brother is too much of a "liberalist" when he relaxes and "looses" anyone from the obligations to be discharged through this divine arrangement which God's plan provides.

On the same point he teaches that the elders of one congregation can "as a group plan and carry out teaching programs in other congregations". (Page 172) This he tries to prove from Acts 15:22-31; 15:4. Again we say that if this is a demonstration of the kind of Bible teaching he does in his work in Abilene College, he is entirely too careless in his teaching

to be instructing young Christians, or old for that matter, about the work of the Lord's church. His misuse of the word of God and perversion of it is amazing.

The decision made in the Jerusalem gathering attended by Paul and others from Antioch concerning the matter of circumcision and relationship of Gentiles who had been converted to Christ to the Law of Moses was the decision of the Holy Spirit—revealed by the Holy Spirit as heaven's will. Acts 15:28. In this decision of the Holy Spirit, the apostles of our Lord concurred, of course. Acts 15:23-25. The elders of the Jerusalem church likewise concurred in such a divine decision. But it was not the decision of the elders or else they had legislative authority! It was a divinely revealed matter which had not been made known unto the churches with a Gentile element in them. Hence it became the duty of the apostles, elders, and members of the Lord's church in Jerusalem to carry this divine revelation to the other churches. For this reason the letter was written—evidently by James — Gal. 2:12 — and sent out by messenger to all the churches. From this our brother concludes that elders of a congregation in one locality today have the right to "plan and carry out a teaching program in another congregation". If they have that right, then the congregation in which they plan to do the teaching would not have the right to deny them their right. That means that any local church would have the undeniable privilege of foisting upon the members of another congregation whatever they wanted to teach. Move over, Brother Thomas, several of us would like to come where you preach and teach them the truth that you have not been teaching concerning "congregational cooperation". I don't believe the brother believes it! But this is the best he can do in finding justification in the word of God for what he is trying to teach. If the eldership of one congregation can oversee the distribution of benevolence among the members of another congregation, and if they can likewise plan and carry out a teaching program in another congregation, what is that thing that the elders of one church cannot oversee in another congregation, brother Thomas?

2. The "Liberalism" manifested in brother Thomas' book is seen in the fact that he arbitrarily rejects the force of plain examples of church action in the New Testament day and projects action for the churches for which there is neither precept or example. This is exercising liberty that our brother has no right to exercise.

The only example of churches sending a contribution to another church in the New Testament scripture is that of sending to a church in need, that is, when the receiving church had more needy and destitute members than it could care for. There is nothing in the New Testament that teaches that a church should send to another church under any other circumstances (no precept authorizing it) and neither is there any example in the scriptures of a church that did. Yet our brother claims the liberty of declaring that what the New Testament has recorded as a fact concerning this is not to be regarded as "binding" when nothing else was practiced or taught but this. This is too much liberty for our brother to exercise. Where is the precept or example (notice Brother Thomas that we are not calling for **example only** as you represent) but for either precept or example in New Testament

scriptures for one church sending to another church a contribution out of its treasury to help it pay for a big work it wants to promote but can't pay for???? We can find what we preach exemplified in New Testament history. Do these examples mean anything or teach anything?

Then we have pointed out that there are examples of New Testament churches sending directly to a Gospel preacher to enable him to carry on his work. There is neither precept or example for a church sending a contribution to another church with which to support a preacher. If so, where is it? Let brother Thomas point out either the precept (notice, brother Thomas, we are not calling for an example only) or example that sets forth such a practice and we will accept it. But we do not think he has the liberty and authority to grant such a privilege. He must find it in the word of God for it to mean anything. Our brother takes too much liberty in his conclusions.

3. Our brother in his book manifests the attitude of a "Liberalist" again when he pays lip service to New Testament authority—professes to be "perfectly respectful of the New Testament as the revealed will of Christ" —but discounts the necessity of teaching and practicing only those things which are taught therein by claiming the "liberty" to teach and practice many things which he can not find in the New Testament either expressly taught, exemplified, or as a reasonable inference.

He concludes that the eldership of one congregation can serve as "a committee to plan for and administer the care of orphans "of other churches". (Page 183) He offers no scripture where such is taught or was done or from which it can be inferred that it should be done. There isn't any! But our brother thinks that if it is not expressly prohibited or excluded — then the silence of the Bible justifies it. In other words it is right, in spite of the fact that God's word says nothing about it, just because God did not say, by any means, "thou shalt not"! This point has been amply covered in the articles already written. It is truly a sample of our brother's "Liberalism".

He concludes that the churches of Christ can build and maintain benevolent societies under a self-perpetuating board as a means of doing their work of benevolence (Page 182). The only effort he makes to justify such a conclusion from the scriptures is by three instances of recorded action. He relies a lot on "examples" when he wants and needs them. He introduces (Page 153-155) 1) "Paul and his company" Acts 13:13, Acts 13:3, Acts 14 :26,27, Acts 14 :23; 2) "a group of people who were not the church but who were going to do the work of the church, to do a teaching job" Acts 15:22, 16:4; 3) "a human organization, organized to do the church's work, and who apparently made some decisions" II Cor. 8:18-19. From these incidents he draws the conclusion that an "orphan home as it has been used in the brotherhood either organized with an eldership, or with a self-perpetuating group as its governing board, is perfectly scriptural in either case". (Page 182) We are amazed at such a conclusion. There is no remote hint of a human organization in either of these three instances cited. The brother has the idol of human organizations in his heart so established that he lets his imagination run riot in his use of the word of God. Think of "Paul and his

company" constituting a "human organization" and authorizing such under a "self-perpetuating board".

Here we have, according to our brother, a "human organization," „ justifying even A "self-perpetuating board", and they were appointing "elders in every church". Acts 14:23. That is a new theory; A human organization under a self perpetuating board to appoint elders in the congregations; SHADES OF LIBERALISM, INDEED!

What then can our brother condemn about the missionary society? This incident would make him swallow it for "Paul and his company" were doing the work of evangelism — they were preaching. To our learned brother, if there is more than one person, there is a human organization and that justifies a "self-perpetuating" board to run the affair. "Thomas and his company" means not those who accompany him hut those who with him have formed a "human organization" and Thomas is the president of the Board. Such is the pitiful attempt to justify human organizations formed by the brethren as a substitute for the church doing its own work. Don't blame our brother! That is as good as anyone can do from the scripture.

His conception of those who were sent out by the apostles, elders, and the church at Jerusalem to carry the decision of the Holy Spirit to the churches regarding the matter of circumcision is even more astounding, if possible. This justifies a "human organization— under either elders or a self-perpetuating board". HOW? They were simply chosen to travel together among the churches to deliver the "decrees of the apostles and elders" to the churches. Did they elect a president? Did they have a secretary treasurer ? Was there a vice president ? Did they have a charter and by laws ? How many constituted a quorum ? What did they decide that was a part of the work of the church anywhere? How could a man handle the Word of God deceitfully if this isn't it ?

Then in II Cor. 8:18-19 our brother thinks he finds a "board" elected by the churches as a "messenger organization". (Page 181). This is another perversion of the word of God. These messengers were chosen individually by each congregation. I Cor. 16:1-4. **Each church chose its own.** Each church raised its own money. Each church entrusted her contribution to the individual messenger she had selected. That is the plain truth. Certainly a messenger could be approved by more than one church and entrusted with the contribution of each church selecting or approving him. But in that case, he was approved by each church separately, and became the messenger of each church **separately**, and acted as the agent of each church **separately**. Our brother could not find group action upon the part of churches under any kind of a head in this passage if he had to in order to save his life. When men handle the word of God in any such fashion and then are respected by churches and schools as a faithful teacher and preacher of the gospel, it makes us wonder how far a man would have to go before he would be regarded as a false teacher. We have not witnessed in our life time more wresting of the scripture and a more deceitful use of it to teach error than the book under review contains. Our brother would wrest the passage in II Cor. 8:18,19 to make it

justify a religious convention of church representatives and the election of a group of delegates clothed with authority given by the churches represented in that assembly. This is what our sectarian friends of the Methodist and Christian Churches and others have been claiming from this passage all these years and according to brother Thomas they have been right and we have been wrong about it. Wouldn't he do a wonderful job of teaching young preachers how to defend the truth on this point against sectarian error? His policy would be to agree with them and join them rather than "contend", with them.

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**"CERTAIN EXPRESSIONS AND THE FRUITS OF LIBERALISM" --
(Continued)**

Roy Cogdill, Nacogoches, Texas

(This is article No. 13 in review of "We Be Brethren", a book by J. D. Thomas, Abilene Christian College, Abilene, Texas)

In the former article on this subject—last week in the Gospel Guardian—we pointed out that our brother's "Liberalism" is evidenced in his book by 1) His misconceptions and mix-applications of scripture concerning the local church and its organization and the resulting failure to properly respect this divine organization; (2) the fact that he arbitrarily rejects the force of plain examples of church action in the New Testament day and his projection of action for the churches for which there is neither precept nor example, thus exercising liberty that he has no right to exercise; and 3) His paying lip-service to New Testament authority while he discounts the necessity of teaching and practicing only things which are taught in the New Testament.

We continue our review by noticing some further indications (certain expressions) of "Liberalism" in this book, "We Be Brethren".

4. The "Liberalism" in our brother's book is seen again in the affirmation that it was more necessary to keep God's commandments under the Old Covenant than to do the will of Christ under the New Covenant. We quote:

"(2) Also, in the Bible sense, a Legalist is one who thinks that the Christian system is merely a "new law" or a mere legal code (in the same sense) that the law of Moses was a mere legal code, so that he trusts in Christian "rule-keeping" rather than in the blood of Christ as his sin-offering, which is freely available to us by God's grace and on the condition of our faith. The book of James does speak of the "perfect law of liberty, and the entire New Testament abounds in "commandments" which must be kept; but the Christian system is not a "mere legal code" as was the law of Moses—rather it has a saviour, and it is his merit and not our

own achievement that saves. Certainly we must obey, but this obedience serves merely to "meet the conditions" of receiving the gift of salvation, which is grounded upon the principle of faith. (See also on this point Romans 1:7, 3:20, 25, 26; 4:1-5; Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:21, 25.)

"The Christian religion is a "faith" system as opposed to a legal religion, and its rules or commands should be recognized as being valuable because of their relation to the 'crucified Christ' and not because they are simply a group of unrelated laws, listed as a legal code or as a mere set of rules." (Page 111)

"True religion deals with attitudes; and faith in the broad sense is required. Christianity is concerned with "mercy and justice" and the "weightier matters." Woe be to that man who tries to make it into a bundle of little detailed rules, mere technicalities! The law of Moses was done away because law-keeping cannot save! "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"—Romans 3:20. "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law"—Romans 3:28" (Page 117-118)

This sounds like pure sectarianism. It is the same attitude toward the word of God and the necessity of obedience to what Christ commands that we have had to meet from denominationalists all through the years. It sounds strange coming from one who professes to be a single Christian.

(1) In the first place, it is an imagined problem. Who does our brother think is guilty of regarding the "New Covenant" as a "bundle of little detailed rules, mere technicalities" ? Is any man willing to pay it any heed unless he believes it to be the will of Christ ? How can a man believe in his word who does not believe in Christ ? How can any man believe in the importance of obeying the word of Christ, who does not believe in Christ? How can any man put any confidence in the saving power of the Gospel except as he believes in the atoning power of the blood of Christ? These are imaginary problems for there is not the slightest possibility of believing in the Gospel, obeying the Gospel, or realizing the necessity of teaching others to do so except as one believes in Christ. The whole thing is relationship with Christ made possible by faith in him that impels respect for and obedience to his word. Surely no one who claims to be a Christian would contend for anything else.

(2) Regard for any law rests upon the respect that one has for the authority that establishes that law and enforces it. The only basis for regard for the law of Christ, the Gospel, is that degree of faith in Christ that respects the fact that he has "all authority both in heaven and on earth". He has therefore the right to command and to demand obedience. He is not only our redeemer but our Lord! We must respect every syllable of his divine law for the reason that we believe in him with all of our hearts as both ruler and redeemer! In order to respect his word, we must respect his authority and in order to respect his authority, we must believe in his present position at the Father's right hand as both Lord and Christ!

As an instance of the liberty our learned professor thinks he can take with the law of God we quote:

"c) The extreme Legalist recognizes that the scriptures authorizes church enrollment and support of certain sixty-year-old widows (I Tim. 5:9,10), but he would be willing to let a fifty-nine-year-old widow starve! being "scriptural" to him means no more than meeting a technical demand. There is no "spirituality" involved—no concern with right "attitudes." (Page 115)

Here is another supposed case that is plain misrepresentation with evident purpose of arousing prejudice. These men who think God doesn't mean exactly what he says, if it doesn't suit them, like to represent their opposition as being so "legalistic" or "hard-hearted" that they would let a little child starve, or a "fifty-nine-year-old widow" starve to death, or a man hit by a car and lying bleeding out in the street die because he was not a saint or because they were not to be provided for out of the church treasury. Their notion of "spirituality" is thus to misrepresent those who disagree with them. We have another name for such a disposition! Does brother Thomas think he knows any brethren who would do what he describes? What evidence has he seen of such an attitude upon the part of any of his brethren? We dare say that evidence of such an attitude exists only in his own imagination and uncharitable disposition toward those with whom he differs and no where else.

But how old must a widow be before the **church "enrolls" her to be "relieved"**? Our brother thinks that if you insist on her being sixty years of age you are a **"legalist"**! How much short of sixty does he think she can be and yet be subject to the "enrollment for relief" of which Paul writes to Timothy? He feels that sixty in this passage should be allowed to mean "fifty-nine" at least. Well would he stand by and let a **fifty-eight,-year-old widow** starve to death? If he did would he not be a legalist? Why would allowing a **fifty-nine-year-old** to starve make one a legalist if allowing a **fifty-eight-year-old** widow to starve would not make one a legalist? And if **sixty years old** includes fifty nine, then why would it not include fifty-eight? And if it includes fifty-eight why would it not include fifty-seven, and if fifty-seven, then why not fifty-six, and if you reasoned your liberty to allow you to get this far away from sixty, then why set any age limit at all? Brother Thomas does not like "nice little cut-and-dried laws" and he thinks when Paul said, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under three-score years old", that means take one of any age that seems right to you. If that is so, then "having been the wife of one man," means she could have had at least two or maybe more, because we don't want to be "legalists" by insisting on taking the "letter" of the law and not being "spiritual". Moreover. if "sixty-years" means younger than that, then the "younger widows" of verse 11 would mean that some of the "older" widows could be refused also; and "let not the church be charged" in verse 16 would mean that the church could be charged! Now you couldn't call that a shade of "gray", could you? That is our professor's "method of interpreting" the word of God! That is the kind of teaching in Bible that our young people are getting at Abilene College!

Our brother reasons in a very careless manner when he concludes that because a "widow" **cannot be enrolled by the church that she could not be helped by Christians.** This is the ridiculous conclusion that must be reached, we suppose, when one does not know the difference between the **church and the Christian individual** and this is one of our brother's basic troubles. He thinks such a difference is a "mere technical difficulty" and that it is "legalistic" to try to make a difference between the "Lord's money" and one's own money. We knew an elder once who was treasurer of the congregation who didn't know the difference until some of the brethren caught him dipping into the contribution on Lord's Day to put some of the Lord's money into his own pocket and they taught him that there is quite a bit of difference between the church and the Christian individual.

If there is a "widow" who is destitute that cannot "be relieved" out of the church treasury for the reason that there is no authority for doing so, let us not allow her to starve to death, brother Thomas, but let us help her out of the money still in our possession—out of our own resources—and leave the Lord's money to be used according to his will. That is exactly what Paul taught in I Tim. 5:16, "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed". Keep the church free from obligations that God did not put upon it so that it may do what the Lord intended for it to do. This is our obligation.

Our brother would delete every passage that teaches that it is even more necessary today to respect the law of Christ than it was ever necessary to respect and obey the law of Moses. Let us listen to New Testament teaching and see what impression we get:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him". Heb. 2:1-3.

Here Paul reasons that it is more important to hear and obey the gospel (not neglect it) than it ever was to hear and obey the law of Moses. It has been delivered by heaven's most important messenger! Indeed! God is speaking to us today through his son! We are under greater obligation to hear the word and carry it out in every respect because of the faith we have in and the love and respect we have in our hearts for that Son of God.

But listen to Paul again:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For

if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb. 10:25-29

The Holy Spirit in this passage emphasizes the greater punishment that will be meted out to those who do not obey the law of Christ than was ever possible under the Law of Moses. Brother Thomas would reverse the order! The New Testament abounds with warnings like these that emphasize the necessity of complying with the terms and conditions of the New Covenant. It is a covenant exactly as the Old Testament was a covenant except that this covenant has been sealed with the blood of Christ. The man would be silly indeed who would adopt the terms and conditions of the New Covenant and worship them enough to be willing to obey them and put his trust in them without believing in the Lord and the saving power of his shed blood. The New Covenant without his death is not even in effect. Any adoption of it without its relation to the Lord would be upon the basis of what human wisdom saw in it and that is contrary to what the word of God says about it. Its terms and conditions rest upon only one ground and that is not the wisdom that men see in it but their willingness to become the "fool of God" in order that they might be made wise with the wisdom of God and because of their faith in it. I Cor. 1.

Brother Thomas' charge in his book then that some are legalistic in that they trust in the "mere technicalities" of the New Testament as a "bundle of little detailed rules" is not only false and deceitful but too silly and ridiculous to have come from him. He should get off of the old sour sectarian note that would discount reverence for the will of Christ and obedience to his commandments. There is no conflict between the doctrine of justification by faith and the necessity of complying with the law of Christ!

5. But our brother's "Liberalism" is again evident in the fact that he infers many times, in his attempt to saddle what he calls "Legalism" off on those who differ with him on these issues of cooperation, that we are not under a "legal system" or a "law" at all today but under a system of grace only.

This again is the old sour note of sectarianism that has been sounded all through the ages by those who want their own way and will not respect the way of the Lord. Our brother has evidently fallen for it. Hear him:

"Thus the Bible condemns our trusting in our obedience to a **mere legal code** or a plan and in our own human "achieved" righteousness rather than in the blood of the cross which is provided by God's grace.

(2) Also in the Bible sense, a Legalist is one who thinks that the Christian system is merely a "new law" or a mere legal code (in the same sense) that the law of Moses was a mere legal code, so that he trusts in Christian "rule-keeping" rather than in the blood of Christ as his sin-offering, which is freely available to us by God's grace and on the condition of our faith". (Page 10-111).

"Reverence for the bare externals of law-keeping predominates; there is no appreciation of the true inner spirit of Christianity or for God's grace. Obedience is motivated only by fear or self interest". (Page 112)

"In summary, a short definition of "Legalism" is that it is **an over-concern for mere law**, as such. Ways in which such over-concern is often expressed are:

(1) Considering Christianity as a mere legal system rather than a grace-faith system.

(2) Dependence upon "law-keeping" for salvation rather than upon Christ." (Page 113)

"Many have emphasized baptism, and the "steps" of the plan of salvation, to the neglect of "Christ crucified." In opposing the denominations, which has of course been necessary, we have emphasized our differences with them so long and so much that we have actually taken for granted the preaching of Christ and God's grace—so that these really central doctrines have been shunted to one side. We fear that even today this wrong emphasis is still with us in some quarters, to the extent that some of us do not know what is being discussed when we hear someone speak of being saved by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8); and there is the feeling that the really central thing about the gospel is not Christ crucified, but rather faith, repentance, confession, and baptism!" (Page 116-117)

In the midst of all these uncharitable inferences toward someone, our brother stops to say, "We would not attempt to assess motives for the attitudes and actions of any of our BRETHREN." (Page 119) About whom is he talking then when he charges that some obey because of their reverence for the law and not because of their trust in the blood of Christ and the grace of God? How could he know this ? Again, of whom does he speak when he charges that some have "no appreciation of the true spirit of Christianity or for God's grace. Obedience is motivated only by fear or self interest"? If he isn't talking about the BRETHREN, he should tell us of whom he is talking. We can't believe him in these disavowals when he hits one of his pious streaks and denies that he has those who oppose him in mind! He is talking about the BRETHREN all right but he isn't telling the truth about his brethren. Again we say that such an attitude as he builds up in his straw man is too absurd for any man with enough intelligence to go home by himself to have. If there is anything that men cannot do, it is to accept and follow the requirements of the Gospel in their entirety for self interest or because of the reverence they have for the bare externals of law-keeping. The

Gospel is too contrary to human wisdom and philosophy for that. It demands too many sacrifices and runs counter to everything in the world too much for that. A man who would keep the law of Christ for these reasons should be excused. God will take care of him. As a good brother in Louisiana said one time, "He will get in at the fool-hole". The greatest sin our brother has committed in such handling of the word of God and such an effort to deprecate the conditions and requirements of the will of Christ and the importance of complying with them is the inference that constantly recurs in his book when he is discussing these attitudes that there is some conflict between law and grace—faith and obedience—the blood of Christ and the waters of baptism—the spirit of Christianity and its expression in obedience to the will of Christ. This is the same old sectarian, denominational misrepresentation of truth that we have had to meet all of our lives. It is not so! Such error will confront our brother in the judgment. It is an evidence of his liberalistic, sectarian lack of conviction as well as his uncharitable self-righteous, pharisaic attitude.

What does the New Testament scriptures say about our being under law today? Look at the passages which say that we are and the very description of the law which governs us and demands obedience to the will of Christ.

(1.) God said the New Covenant would be new in the sense that "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts". Jer. 31. Heb. 8:10. Brother Thomas thinks the difference is between having a law and not having one.

(2.) Paul declares that the Gospel is the "law of faith" and that it precludes the reliance of the Jew upon works done under the law of Moses. Rom. 3:27. Our brother Thomas thinks there is a difference in law and faith. He does not recognize the "law of faith" that impels obedience as an expression of our trust in him rather than in either the works of the law of Moses or the works of man's righteousness.

(3.) Paul said again, "Yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.... To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law". I Cor. 9:19-21. Maybe our brother misunderstands this passage and thinks that Paul meant that we should talk and make out like we are not under law to fool those who are not willing to accept the law of Christ while at the same time we are actually under the law of Christ. But that is not the meaning of the verse. When Paul was among the Jews he went as far as truth and conscience would let him go in accommodating himself to their customs and ways in order to win them. He did exactly the same thing when among the Gentiles in order that he might win them. He was and we are under law to Christ.

(4) In Romans 8:1-4 Paul discusses the transition of God's people from the rule of a system of carnal commandments to a "law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus". Our brother thinks there is a conflict between spirit and law keeping evidently. He contrasts Christ and

the law! The Spirit and the law! Faith and the law! Grace and law! But there is no contrast between them.

(5) The grace of God has appeared "teaching us". Titus 2:11-12. When the gospel was preached in the New Testament days and men were taught to believe in Christ as the Son of God and obey him in confession, repentance, and baptism, and they did so, it was a manifestation of the grace of God. Acts 11:20-23. There is no conflict between grace and divine law. Such is only fictitious and imaginary and on a parallel with the old sectarian charge all through the years that man cannot be saved by grace and salvation be conditioned upon certain terms and requirements at the same time. The very Gospel whose terms and conditions they would discount on the ground of exalting grace is itself the "gospel of the grace of God", (Acts 20:24). "The word of his grace", (Acts 20:32, 14:3.)

The grace of God has made three provisions for man's salvation: 1) Christ as a savior, 2) The Gospel as a message of life and salvation, and 3) the church as a saved relationship. They are all provisions of divine grace and the grace of God can be disregarded and nullified at either point. There are many of us who preach "salvation by grace" as fully and earnestly as brother Thomas or any sectarian in the country but we pay it more than lip service for we preach the "gospel of the grace of God" in its fullness also, without any "softening or watering down". We also preach the church as the perfect and sufficient provision of God's grace, both organically and otherwise, through which to accomplish God's purposes. Eph. 1:23. It is the fullness of God's grace as well as the manifestation of his wisdom. Eph. 3:10-20. We not only believe God's grace provided it and can therefore be recognized and honored in it but we believe also that God can be glorified through it and in it through Jesus Christ. We resent to the fullness of our being any professed Bible teacher or preacher who would infer that to be satisfied to serve God and his purposes in and through that organization which he has given in divine wisdom for the accomplishment of his purposes on earth is in any way in conflict with God's grace. It is not so! It is "Liberalism" to think so.

(6.) Another demonstration of the "Liberalism" of our brother's book is seen in his effort to separate the "doctrine" of Christ from "Faith in Christ". We see this in the following quotations:

"3. The Legalist is disposed to try to convert a man to a creedal point only (i.e., to win an argument)—such as, to the view that the 'Church of Christ is the right church'; or 'baptism is necessary to salvation;' but he is not interested in converting the man to Christ himself! These doctrinal points are of course true, but they have meaning in Christianity only because of their relation to the crucified Saviour'. Paul preached 'Christ and Him crucified!' and so must we. We must forget any centrality of creedal statements as such, and must let Christ be central in our preaching." (Page 115-116)

"Another way in which we have had Legalistic tendencies in the past is that of

emphasis! Many have emphasized baptism, and the 'steps' of the plan of salvation, to the neglect of 'Christ crucified.' (Page 116)

"True religion deals with attitudes; and faith in the broad sense is required." (Page 117-118)

We have had this idea to combat all through the years we have been preaching the Gospel of Christ. Baptist preachers and debaters have always insisted that the "faith that saves" is not "faith in the doctrines Christ taught" but "faith in Christ as a personal saviour". We have had men like D. N. Jackson insist in public debate that if a man apostatized and backslid to the point of denying what Christ teaches in the New Testament yet believed in his heart in Jesus Christ as a saviour, he would still have faith enough to save him. This is what they mean by the "security of the believer". They argue that all such warnings as "erring concerning the faith", "falling away from the faith". "denying the faith". "casting off their first faith", "making shipwreck of the faith", and many more like them in the New Testament only concerned a man's reverence and respect for what Christ taught and that it is impossible for a man to lose his personal faith in Christ as saviour when he once really believed. We wonder what kind of an answer our brother Thomas would make to them. He couldn't make any for evidently he thinks there is such a thing as "faith in the broad sense" or faith in Christ without reverence for what Christ teaches. If he doesn't, then his statements quoted above do not make good nonsense and much less do they make sense!

A few years ago some of our "liberals" in certain "high places" contended that the statement in II John, verse 9, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." had been misused all through the years by our brethren; that this passage does not prohibit going beyond the "teaching" of Christ but it means only departing from the doctrine that "Jesus is the Christ". Brother Thomas sounds like he might belong to this same class.

But genuine faith in Christ, as contrasted with feigned faith in the Lord, cannot be separated from his "teaching". We must believe in his "teaching" because we believe in Him! No man can believe in Christ as the Son of God, actually, who does not gladly accept and reverence everything Christ taught. Neither can any man truly believe in Christ as the Son of God and the New Testament as His word who is willing to go beyond and exalt human philosophy, wisdom and authority to a level of the will, word, and authority of the Lord. Christ is our creed! To be sure! But **how can a man believe** in Christ with all of his heart and not believe that Baptism is for the remission of his sins ? Then, how can a man really believe in "baptism for the remission of sins" or that "the church of Christ is the right church" without believing it because the Lord taught it ? The two cannot be separated! The challenge of Christ to the Jew was "If you believe in me, why do ye not believe in my words ? "

When they preached "Christ and him crucified" in the New Testament day they preached

"baptism for the remission of sins", the "plan of salvation" and whatever "steps" were required in it, and that the "church of Christ" —the one Jesus built—is the only saved relationship. One cannot preach Christ crucified without preaching these fundamental doctrines of Christ! Peter and Phillip could not and J. D. Thomas can not. Paul, in his recorded writings, would be a "legalist" because of the emphasis he placed on such teaching of Christ, according to our brother. We think rather, that in his attempt to de-emphasize such Bible doctrines our brother demonstrates his "liberalism" and lack of faith.

(7.) Again we point out our brother's "Liberalism" in his book by the mis-use he makes of the expressions "spirit and letter" and by his effort to discount the "letter" (specific requirements) of the law of the Lord.

"2. The normal Legalist is a man who loves the letter, but ignores the spirit, of God's will. He does not want to be bothered with 'meditating on God's will day and night!' He wants to know the exact minimum legal requirement and to obey it (only because of his self-interest), and then he wants to relax and spend the rest of his time, his money, and his interest in lavish selfishness." (Page 115)

This is a pretty bad picture of anybody. Of course, since our brother wrote his book in an effort to reply to some things some of the rest of us have said, his inference is that we are guilty of such hard-hearted, uncharitable, hypocrisy as he describes above. We deny the charge, as far as we are concerned, and brand such a hypercritical and censorious judgment as unchristian in the extreme. It makes rank and pure hypocrisy a statement later on in the chapter, "We would not attempt to assess motives for the attitudes and activities of any of our BRETHREN. That is between them and God. We could not judge if we wanted to." (page 119) Then why did you do it, brother Thomas? Such severe and uncharitable statements as this, in which your book abounds, cannot allow to be credited with any degree of sincerity the pretended piety, love for brethren, prayerful concern over dis-unity, and many other professed and expressed sentiments found upon the pages of your book. The same heart and mouth cannot breathe both blessings and cursings with sincerity.

In the same way that our brother reverses himself and talks out of both sides of his mouth about so many other things, he also reverses himself in the use of the expressions of "letter and spirit" as he applies them to the law of Christ. In one breath he exalts the "spirit" of Christianity and belittles the "letter" and in the next points out that such a distinction is impossible. Let us see!

"1. The general attitude that Christianity is simply a plan or set of laws without any special inward coherence, the strict keeping of which earns or achieves salvation. 'Good works' are 'exchanged' for salvation on a commercial basis. Reverence for the bare externals of law-keeping predominates, there is no appreciation of the true inner spirit of Christianity or for

God's grace. Obedience is motivated only by fear or self interest". (Page 112)

"The points (a) and (b) noted under definition No. 2 are truly legalism, because they indicate the attitude of definition No. 1—an over concern for strictness—a desire to have a stated law for every minor detail of action. Jesus spoke of 'justice and mercy' as being 'weightier matters', — as basic principles — which the Pharisees had overlooked in their meticulous concern for having strict, detailed laws for every little minor matter". (Page 113)

Such efforts to deprecate reverence for the requirements of the law of Christ and the obedience thereto demanded by the authority of heaven are numerous in the book, "We Be Brethren". Much of the book would make one think that all there is to the religion of Christ is "spirit", "liberty", "faith in the broad sense" "principle guidance", "weightier matters", without any specific requirements of any kind that demand positive definite obedience.

This inference is left throughout the book and the old sectarian, denominational approach to "grace and conditional salvation", "Faith and works", "obedience and the blood of Christ", "Christ as a saviour contrasted with the church as a saved relationship", and other like efforts are made repeatedly to belittle and minimize the necessity of doing exactly what the Bible does require as the Bible requires it to be done. If Brother Thomas was aiming all of his censorious and uncharitable insinuations concerning "legalism" at "making laws where God has not made them", then he missed the mark so far as present issues on congregational cooperation is concerned for that is not involved and if he thinks it is and continues to so charge he needs to study some of his own words such as these:

"In the spirit, then of brotherly love we should never use a term in misapplication derogatorily. If we do we will only betray the fact that we do not personally love the BROTHER whom we criticize, and we might incidentally betray our ignorance or even hatred if we call some BROTHER a Modernist (or a Legalist—R. E. C.) when our readers know better". (page 216)

He indicts himself as either wilfully "ignorant" or having "hatred" in his heart toward those of us whom he charges with "Legalism" and he makes that charge over and over in his book.

We would want no better way to answer our brother's use of "spirit and letter" and the "weightier matters of the law" than his own comments "out of the other side of his mouth" in his own book later on:

"Our 'liberally-minded' BRETHERN (if this be a fair way to distinguish them) accept the Bible as authority, but they want the 'spirit' and not the 'letter'! This really means that they are dangerously close to rejecting the Bible outright, since their 'spirit' of the Bible is just about as subjective as the full-Modernist's own mind—**his final** authority. After all, God's revelation **must** be communicated in a **pattern** of some sort, either

'spirit' or 'letter,' otherwise you do not have revelation. It must be definite and certain—a thus saith the Lord'. But how can you communicate or reveal a pattern by just 'spirit' without the 'letter' or words ? It cannot be done! Spirit could never be communicated without words, and accuracy in obtaining God's exact will is dependent upon the right use of words, and correct linguistic procedures. It just will not do to treat God's words lightly. (Page 218)

Thus our brother tries to keep a foot on each side of the fence when it comes to **liberalism** and **legalism**. He abundantly answers in the last paragraph quoted all of the loose, uncertain, attitudes of "liberalism" expressed by him so often in other pages of his book. We simply say in response to the paragraph given next above "Thou art the man!"

There is not one syllable that ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ or the apostles of Christ that in any sense deprecated or minimized the necessity of obedience to anything that God ever spoke. There is exactly the opposite attitude. Jesus did not condemn the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin in his reprimand of the Pharisees. Rather he said, "These ought ye to have done. and not to leave the other undone." Matt. 23:23. Brother Thomas misrepresents the teaching of Christ in this passage. To the multitude and his disciples he said "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." Not a breath from the Lord ever belittled the will of the Father as "mere rules" or "external law keeping" or in other such language as you find abounding in the book under review.

The expressions "spirit and letter" are used in the New Testament scriptures but they are not used in the sense that brother Thomas uses them in his book. In the New Testament they refer to the old and the new covenant—the "letter" as the old and the "spirit" as the "new." II Cor. 3:6. Romans 2 :28-29. Our brother uses them in an unscriptural sense altogether. Maybe he thinks that is another one of his "liberties". If so, we deny it! He knows better than to use it for prejudicial purposes as he did throughout his book for seemingly as an after thought he makes this statement:

"The terms 'spirit' and 'letter' are generally used together in the New Testament to distinguish the Old Covenant and the New—not to set the new covenant against itself". (Page 228)

Why then, brother Thomas, do you repeatedly use these words to set the "letter" of the new covenant against the "spirit" of the New Covenant all the way through your book ? In the last statement our brother pleads guilty to wilfully using these Bible expressions in an unscriptural fashion for he knew better all the time. The fact is that the Bible does not "generally" use these two expressions together to distinguish the Old Covenant from the New Covenant but they are always used that way when they are used together. Let our brother show us an exception! This is but another example from his book of the carelessness and

even deceitfulness with which he handles the scriptures. If he does so in his book, then he does in his preaching and in teaching his classes evidently. Is this the kind of Bible teaching that the school administration of Abilene College endorses? From what we can hear and from this sample we are forced to conclude that the whole school is shot through with "liberalism" if not with "full-fledged Modernism". Give it a little time and under the influence of Ph. D. teachers from Columbia, Chicago University, and elsewhere, it will run George Pepperdine and its Modernism and even Southern Methodist University and Texas Christian University a mighty close second.

(8.) Our brother's **liberalism** is again evident from the misconception and misuse that he makes of the "Liberty" that is in Christ. As in other matters he tries to leave the impression that there is a conflict between the "law of Christ" and the "liberty that is in Christ".

"The book of James **does** speak of the 'perfect law of liberty,' and the entire New Testament abounds in 'commandments' which must be kept but the Christian system is not a 'mere legal code' as was the law of Moses—rather it has a Saviour, and **it is his merit** and not our own achievement **that saves**". (Page 111)

It seems difficult for our brother to recognize and admit that obedience to the requirements of the gospel of Christ is necessary without at the same time taking a "back-handed lick" at the idea of doing so. He admits that the "New Testament abounds in 'commandments' which must be kept: BUT . . ." There is no "but . . ." to the matter and it cannot be qualified. While men cannot perfectly obey the commandments of the gospel of Christ and must trust in the grace and mercy of God to save them, yet unless we have complete reverence for all that God has said and to the best of our ability try to live by it, we will not be entitled to his mercy and grace. There are no qualifications and limitations to the "obedience" we must try to render to the gospel of Christ. There is no system of classifying the commandments of the gospel and graduating them as to importance. The same Lord gave them all and demands that we respect them all alike. When a man sets aside one thing the Bible teaches, he would set aside, and as far as his salvation is concerned he had just as well, set aside any other and all other things taught in the will of God. It is just as serious to disrespect divine authority at one point as at another. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law". James 2:10-11. We wonder if our brother thinks this applied only to the Jews and their keeping the law of Moses. This is what those religious leaders do to the epistle of James who want to cling to "justification by faith only" and deny the necessity of faith expressing itself in complete surrender and obedience to the will of Christ. Our brother's book could have been written in its greater part from this same point of view and gives those who hold to the idea that the gospel is a "grace only—faith only" system a great deal of comfort. There has not been as much concession along that line by a gospel preacher since K. C. Moser surrendered the truth of the gospel to this sectarian doctrine a good many years ago.

"The sharp jurisdictional lines that BRETHREN have been drawing to give elders all control within a congregation and **no responsibility** outside it, are not nearly as sharp as some may think. Paul has much to say about **liberty** in Christ, and we might do well to consider how much freedom the individual Christian has from any man-made legalistic restraint". (Page 164)

Since our brother here is talking about the jurisdictional oversight of elders and arguing that they are not limited by the congregational relationship, he evidently means to infer that such oversight being restrained to the congregation where they are elders is "man made legalistic restraint". He very definitely takes the position in his book that the elders have the right to do a great many things in connection with another congregation's work and even argues that one eldership can delegate its "responsibility and authority **to an eldership** of another church or to the governing organization of an orphan home". (Page 146) But this is what these human benevolent societies are denying at the present time. It is also denied by the elders of the Highland Church in Abilene in their operation as "brotherhood elders" of the Herald of Truth. Brother Thomas is only a little farther advanced than these brethren are willing to admit they are as yet. They really believe just as he does but are not ready to admit it for fear that the brethren are not prepared for it. Give them a little time. It is **de facto** now if not claimed by them as **de jure!** They will come to the latter. But let us get our brother's viewpoint on this matter of liberty and law. Concerning this writer in particular our brother has this to say:

"It is argued that Christians can do things that the church cannot. We must not 'make laws' here! One author has prepared a circular chart cut in sections like a pie with these divisions: the church; the community; the government; business enterprises; and the home. Then he has 'Christianity' written in circular fashion and included in each of these segments of the whole. This means that to this person Christianity and the church are different things, and I fear that **he allows 'Christianity' to have the freedom** that Paul described as **liberty** (from legal codes) — while he circumscribes the church with a full list of legalistic rules. Actually, no part of Christianity is legalistic—the 'church' is purely functional in its organization and is no more of a legalistic entity than is Christianity itself. It appears that some may love laws so well that they insist that the Christian system be a legalism in some respect or other". (Page 165)

Now if you were puzzled about whom our brother was levelling most of his charges of "Legalism" against, you now know. This chart referred to, originated with us and occurs in "Walking By Faith". But this "moves us not" for we have been called everything these brethren can think of that it is not both illegal and unchristian and they have not paid too much attention and been restrained too much by the Christian part of it. We were taught when a child by a saintly mother that we do not have to be what people who are angry at us

call us and have always been grateful for it.

But look for a moment at the implication of the above paragraph from the viewpoint of truth! Jesus Christ is no more the head of the church and exercises no more authority over it than he does every other relationship in the Christian life! I guess according to our brother's reasoning on that matter Jesus Christ has the same absolute authority over Abilene College and its activity that he has over the church of the Lord. No wonder he gets the school mixed up with the church in his thinking and can't tell the difference. He thinks that the Gospel of Christ is as much of a textbook on running the J. D. Thomas family affairs, and the administration of Abilene College as it is for the church of our Lord. What a conglomerated, mixed up conception of Christianity does this man have ? We have said that one of his basic errors is his complete failure to understand the difference between individual Christianity and church activity. We will abundantly show this in the article to follow.

But back to Christian liberty and divine law! Hear our brother again:

"Christianity is a religion of 'liberty,' as Paul points out in the Galatian letter. It has great freedom, in comparison to any Legalistic system. It is not cramped and limited by a lot of little detailed minutiae. It is a religion of principles, of fundamental truths, of primary and basic teachings. Matters such as 'Love the Lord with all your heart', and 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you', and 'Christ liveth in me', cannot be reduced to little precise legal obligations. Too many of us have thought of Christianity in too small terms and we have therefore failed to see its majesty and immensity and transcendent grandeur. We need to have such a glimpse, yea, even to enjoy the view, and to contemplate the fact that truly WE BE BRETHREN, in God's wondrous family! Perhaps if we can see this view, we ourselves will grow in stature and need no longer be little". (Page 239)

Our brother can get really eloquent when he gets to looking at things in a big, broad way. But he is looking in the wrong direction! Jesus said, "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life". Our brother is looking toward destruction, we fear, and needs to remember that such broad general principles as those he has mentioned were narrowed considerably by the Lord in his teaching. The trouble with our brother is that he can see quite a bit out of the corner of his eyes (spiritually) and is as "nearsighted" as almost anyone we have read after. On this matter of "love the Lord with all of your heart" he needs to see a little further and remember that Jesus said, "If you love me ye will keep my commandments". One cannot love the Lord with all of his heart and talk about the commandments of the Lord that require specific obedience as some people do.

Then on the matter of "Christ liveth in me" he needs to stretch his eyes a little further than he seems to be able to see and learn that Christ said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide

in me." John 15:4. In verse 7, Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And in verse 10, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love". Then read verse 14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you". The Lord does not live within or count any man as his friend who does not have complete respect for the AUTHORITY of his word.

The "Magna Carta" of Christian Liberty is the Galatian letter. Paul did not contrast **liberty with all law** in it or elsewhere in the New Testament. He did point out that Christians have been made free from 1) the law of Moses and the curse or condemnation pronounced by it; 2) the rudiments of the world or human authority and wisdom; 3) the love, dominion, and guilt of sin and therefore from condemnation. But he never encouraged anyone to think that in Christ liberty is license, or freedom from restraint, or absence of law. Without law liberty is impossible and it does not matter whether it is political, moral, or spiritual, it is still true. The trouble with our brother's book is that he leaves the impression that "rule-keeping" is non-essential and unimportant even if Christ did make the rule. Paul taught exactly the opposite. He taught that the Christian is the "bond-servant" of the Lord and obligated to do the Lord's will in all things.

When men decry "negativism" and want everything to be "positive"; when they rely upon human sophistry rather than the all-sufficiency of the Word of God; when problems of both moral living, and church action are resolved on the basis of "casuistry" rather than by the revelation of God's will as the only standard; when Christianity becomes such a system of "liberty" as will permit "loosing where God has bound", rank modernism and still more explicitly—outright infidelity is not far away. The outright infidel or **even the atheist** who denies the Bible account of creation is not to be feared as much as the man who under the cloak of piety, faith, and religion, will discount the necessity and importance of "Walking by Faith" in all matters divinely revealed. Teaching by an outright atheist, when expected and prepared for, is not as dangerous as teaching from a professed Christian that discounts and discredits the necessity of complete reverence for the divine will and claims the liberty to respect and obey only what part of the Lord's will and word their wisdom approves. This is the door through which the church of the Lord is being flooded with "Liberalism" and "Modernism" today.

**THE CHRISTIAN INDIVIDUAL, THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE CHURCH
UNIVERSAL**

Roy E. Cogdill, Nacogdoches, Texas

(This is article number fourteen in review of the book, "We Be Brethren", written by J. D. Thomas, Professor of Bible in Abilene Christian College)

In this article we want to deal with one of the most fundamental errors of which our brother, and many others **with him, are** guilty. It is an error so obvious that it becomes ridiculous when all subterfuge is removed. It is the contention that "whatever the individual Christian does, the church is doing". There are two extreme positions involving this idea: 1) whatever the individual Christian can do, the church can do; and 2) whatever the church cannot do, the individual Christian cannot do. The first position is taken by the liberals and "loose constructionists" among institutional advocates and the latter has been argued for years by those who have been called "Sommerites", though the use of that term is no more Christian in attitude and disposition than the use of the term "Campbellite". I had as soon be called by one human name as another but do not believe that a Christian will persist in calling any man by a name which is offensive to him. Descriptions are somewhat essential in dealing with attitudes and identifying phrases are sometimes necessary in discussing issues, but the use of "epithets" and ugly names is not Christian in either spirit or practice.

The position that there is no difference in the teaching of the scriptures between that which is individual Christian duty and that which is the mission and function of the church, is as fundamentally erroneous as the other extreme which has been the argument of those opposed to individuals supporting schools operated by the brethren in which the Bible is taught. Their opposition has been on the ground that if the church cannot do it, then the individual Christian cannot do it. Daniel Sommer contended years ago in his debate with Armstrong that the individual Christian's money and the Lord's money are all the same and if the schools could not be supported out of the treasury of the Lord's Church, then individual Christians could not support them either. This is substantially the same position taken by Brother Thomas in his book as we shall see in this article.

The idea that some of the brethren have hit upon today in defense of church contributions to human institutions doing the work of the church is but a variation of this conception. They argue now that if the church cannot contribute to human benevolent societies and allow them to do the work of the church, then the individual cannot contribute to even individually operated benevolent organizations with no religious connection or affiliation. It can be seen that they recognize that the argument will work just as well one way as the other. If brother Thomas is right in his statement, "when the members act, it is the church acting!" then when the church cannot act, the individual Christian cannot act either.

In fact, he makes this argument and aligns himself with those who have always contended that if the churches cannot support schools out of their treasuries, then individual Christians cannot. His statement in this connection is this:

"It seems to be a much safer course to say that if a church cannot scripturally support a certain project, that an individual Christian should also leave it alone". (Page 199)

We are sure that were Brother Sommer alive he would be exceedingly astonished to see those advocating church support for "our" colleges agreeing with him in the exact principle upon which he argued against church support for these institutions. Of course, his argument then was just as wrong as theirs is now, but it was timely in the fact that no one among the brethren then was willing to commit himself as being in favor of church support for these now recognized "church schools". Even when the aged Sommer not too long before his death visited some of these "church schools"—David Lipscomb and Freed Hardeman—N. B. Hardeman and others connected with these institutions deceived the old man into thinking that these were not church institutions and that they did not solicit or accept church support and he publicly expressed his regret for having opposed them upon that basis. They now openly admit their advocacy of churches contributing to them. Even Don Morris who a few years ago disavowed any intention in the \$3 million dollar campaign for Abilene College to try to get the school in the budget of the churches must now swallow and endorse such a view or publicly repudiate the book written by the director of the annual "lecture week" and one of the professors in his "Bible Department". We think he should have the courage and fairness to either endorse or disavow the doctrine taught in his school by his teachers. So far we have not been able to get him to do either. The only word we have had is that he "had not read the book" and didn't know what it had in it. We further think that he should inform himself, if he has not read it yet.

Preachers in the Christian Church in their efforts to defend instrumental music have fallen back on this same fallacy. They have insisted that, if it is all right to have instrumental music in the home, then it is permissible to have it in the church. It would be interesting to see how brother Thomas would rule this conclusion out, if he stands on the same position with reference to other matters. Their argument is as sound as his!

Here is our brother's way of putting this fallacy:

"The over concern with the congregation or the church as being marked off with legalistically determined lines, with all black on one side and all white on the other, results in a distinction between the church and Christianity; or a distinction between the church and the kingdom of God! It is argued that Christians can do things that the church cannot. We must not "make laws" here! One author has prepared a circular chart cut in sections like a pie, with these divisions: the church; the community; the government; business enterprises; and the home. Then he has "Christianity" written

in circular fashion and included in each of these segments of the whole. This means to this person Christianity and the church are different things, and I fear that he **allows 'Christianity' to have the freedom** that Paul described as **liberty**' (from legal codes)— while he circumscribes the church with a full list of legalistic rules. Actually no part of Christianity is legalistic—the 'church' is purely functional in its organization and is no more of a legalistic entity than is Christianity itself. It appears that some may love laws so well that they insist that the Christian system be a legalism in some respect or other." (Pages 164-165)

If our brother could not resort to his cry of "legalism", he would run short of something to say. We deny the allegation of making either Christianity or the church a "legalistic" system or what he calls that. We also deny his right to "liberalize" what the Lord has made it! We are prescribing no rules! We are simply insisting on honoring those the Lord has prescribed and which Brother Thomas thinks unnecessary. Anyone who has read his book with a fair and open mind recognizes, we are sure, that his cry of "legalism" is simply prejudicial, rabble rousing charge which he is unable to accurately and definitely identify and simply a cloak behind which he seeks to hide his own "liberalism".

From such quotations as this it becomes even more and more evident why our brother was not willing to name and specify about whom he was writing. He had rather call someone a name in the dark and under anonymity v hen he can get his prejudicial point across without giving the name of the individual he is talking about. And he had rather refer to an argument in general terms and to a chart by description rather than by reproduction because it is easier to dismiss it with a misrepresentation and a prejudicial statement than to deal fairly and fully with it. Our brother with all of his pretended piety and scholarship should have been above such practices. He admits in the Preface of his book that he "deliberately planned to omit the normal and scholarly practice of making definite reference to persons quoted" and he could have said to arguments and books quoted or referred to also. It is only fair and right to fully and correctly represent any contention or argument if you are going to deal with it at all. Our brother surely knows that, but it would not have served his cause as well to do so. In order that our readers may see for themselves the chart to which he refers as, "cut in sections like a pie", (and a sneer is almost detectable in such reference) we give you the chart and the contentions made from it: (reproduce the circular chart from page 30 of Walking by Faith)

From this chart we pointed out in "Walking By Faith" as we have in our preaching all over the country, 1) that every relationship in life must be brought into subjection to the will of Christ in the life of the Christian individual; that it is just as necessary to be a Christian and do the will of the Lord in business, at home, in society, in politics or relationship to the government as it is in the church. We contended 2) that there are many duties a Christian owes to the Lord in these individual relationships such as home, community, business, and government that affect his relationship to the Lord but yet are not obligations or privileges within the activity or work of the Lord's Church and which, therefore, canons be fulfilled in

the church. Among these we listed:

1. A Christian is under obligation to make a living for his family. He cannot shun this obligation and put it on the church. I Timothy 5:8,16.
2. A Christian is under obligation to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. While it is certainly right for the church to teach anybody, child or adult, whenever it has the opportunity, the church cannot take over the task of rearing our children for us. Ephesians 6:4.
3. The Christian individual is to engage in some sort of gainful occupation to provide for himself, those who have the right depend upon him, and in order to be able to give, but the church cannot engage in business or economic enterprise. I Thess. 4:11; I Timothy 5:8; II Thess. 3:10.
4. The Christian is subject to the government under which he lives as a citizen, but the church is not a political medium and has no relation to civil government. I Peter 2:13; Romans 13:1-8.
5. The Christian individual has obligations to his community, to the people with whom he associates, that is no part of the work of the Lord's church in any sense. Rom. 12:14-21.

(Walking By Faith Page 31)

We believe in the light of his reference to the book "Walking by Faith" and this chart our brother was under obligation to deal with these specific points and the scriptural teaching given and show them to be false. All he did was to cast a sneer, misrepresent them, and prejudicially give them the discrediting aspersions of "Legalism". That is the best he could do! Of course, in the remaining part of his book, he gives us to understand that he believes that the church of the Lord can do most of the above. But he does not prove it by the Bible! It is his own assertion and we are supposed to take Dr. Thomas for it instead of the word of God. The charge of legalism against plain Bible teaching is puerile and our learned professor should rise above such efforts to arouse prejudice and deal fairly with what he opposes. Such rabble rousing is everything in the world but scholarship or evidence of it.

His charge that we "circumscribe the church with a full list of legalistic rules" is completely false and unjustified. Does he not recognize that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head "over all things to the church which is His body" (Eph. 1:23) ? Is he not willing to recognize that the Church is the only body that Jesus Christ is head of in this world and that he exercises absolute authority in the realm of church activity and affairs ?

To our brother the church organization is purely "functional". Does that mean that Jesus Christ does not prescribe its function? Does his use of the term "functional" mean that he does not believe the organization of the Lord's church to be actual ? It would be interesting to know just what our learned professor means by his term "Functional". He seems rather fond of it and in the "glossary" he gives it this definition: "Performing a useful purpose,

discharging a regular normal work. (Here, as opposed to "merely official.") {Page 250} He could have said "as opposed to legal" for that is the sense in which he repeatedly uses the word. We have suggested that no one claims that the work of the elders, deacons, or anyone else in the church of the Lord is "purely official" in the sense that it is not functional too. He is chasing rabbits in such use of the word and in trying to refute such a contention for no one makes it. On the other hand, would he deny that the work of an elder is official? That it is authoritatively prescribed by Jesus Christ in New Testament scriptures? This seems to be his point or else he doesn't have any. The organization of the church is divinely prescribed and **it is given for the purpose of functioning—as an organization**—for the accomplishment of its mission in the world. Brother Thomas isn't willing for it to even be "functional" for he thinks and contends that the mission of the church, all and any part of it, can be accomplished through some other organization. That leaves God's organization no function and, since he thinks it isn't "official", then he eliminates the divine organization altogether! What other conclusion can we reach from his "ring-around-the-rosey" method of reasoning? The work of a policeman is both "official and functional". He is duly authorized to be what he is and do what he does? This is also true of the local church and every responsibility that the Lord has prescribed in it. None of it is of our doing! If there is any organization to it, and if there is any authority in it, and if there is any function for the local church to perform, then the Lord fixed it and not us! We cannot help it if the Lord did not fix it to suit our brethren and don't intend to try. We have not "circumscribed" the church of the Lord with anything! The Lord did all of the circumscribing needed when he gave his word as the only rule of "faith and practice" for his church! But that is "legalism" according to our brother. Our brother's doctrine of "functionalism" can be understood better if you turn from his "glossary" to Webster and read his definition of it—"theory or practice emphasizing the necessity of adapting the structure or design of anything to its function". Brother Thomas is struggling hard to "adapt" the organization of the church to his misconceptions of its mission on earth and he is having a hard time.

But perhaps the most serious misrepresentation, in the above paragraph, of our position and contention and the most needless and inexcusable one for him to make is this: "This means that to this person Christianity and the church are different things". This is subtle. The inference he would leave is that the two are entirely separated and distinct. This we do not believe and have never taught. We do believe that Christianity is the entire life of the individual—a way of life that determines our relationship with God—and a way of life that includes and controls every relationship and activity. It is also true that we believe that neither every relationship in that way of life nor every activity in all of these relationships in the life of an individual is the work of the church. Church activity is **collective Christian activity through the organization and relationship designed by divine wisdom--the local church**. But there are some things which a Christian is obligated to the Lord to do that are not collective but individual and that cannot be done through the church, or by the church, but must be performed through other organizations or relationships that likewise are in harmony with the will of the Lord.

Every Christian, as an individual, owes certain duties and responsibilities to God in the family relationship. These family duties must be performed in the family relationship and it would be completely wrong to try to fulfill them in the church. These family duties are as much the obligation of the Christian's life as the assembly on the first Day of the Week to break bread. But they cannot be discharged and fulfilled by the local church even though they are prescribed in New Testament scriptures and are an essential part of one's Christianity. Wherever the righteousness of God applies to the life of an individual member of the family, God's word has prescribed Christian duty. This does not mean that the Gospel is a text book on family affairs or that a Gospel preacher should train himself to be a specialist in family affairs and domestic difficulties and problems. What the Gospel teaches should be preached but about ninety per cent of what some churches and preachers are teaching concerning domestic problems is no part of the Gospel and its teaching but purely a matter of sociology, psychology, biology or some other related science. Every bit of it may be true and needed but teaching it is no part of gospel preaching and no part of the work of the church. But according to our brother such admonitions as "Husband love your wives"; "Wives be in subjection to your own husbands"; "fathers provoke not your children unto wrath"; and "children obey your parents in the Lord" are not directions to individual Christians to be fulfilled in the family relationship but are "church activity". I suppose, according to that, duty outlined in the above references are to all wives, husbands, and children in the church! How would our brother distinguish between his duty to his own family and his duty to other families in the congregation where he is a member? And since we are not to recognize congregational boundaries or geographical limitations in Christian duty and there is no difference in the local church and the church universal, according to him, he would have the same obligations to every Christian family wherever he goes that he has toward his own! If not, why not? Remember that he says that "When a Christian does a good deed, it is really the Lord's church that does it". (Page 165). Now fulfilling your family obligations is a good deed surely, therefore it is the Lord's church that does it and is obligated to do it. What rank foolishness!

We certainly do not believe that one can be a Christian out of the church. Neither do we believe that one can become a member of the Church without becoming a Christian. But we believe that the scriptures set forth many Christian duties that are not in any sense a part of the mission God has given his church. All that is the church is included in Christianity but all that is included in Christianity is certainly not the church or a part of its work. Unless this is true, then there can be no difference between the church and the home, the church and the government, the church and business enterprises, and the church and society. They are all within the church, its activity, and control and the Catholic church is right in its contention and we have been wrong. This concept that the entire life and activity of the Christian individual is in the church and a part of its activity and therefore under its control is purely and simply Catholicism. The Catholics have contended all along that they have a right to prescribe whom the individual can marry, how many children he should have, how they

should be educated, and that there is no secret in the family even between a man and his wife that the priest and the church does not have the right to know. They contend that the church can tell its members with whom they can do business and how to conduct it. They have always believed in uniting the church and state and that the church should have control of the state. In other words, they have always contended for exactly what our brother advocates that there is no difference between Christianity and the church. All of it is church activity! Brother Thomas you are headed toward Rome in more ways than one. Out of the corruption of the organization of the church such as you advocate Romanism grew in the beginning of Christianity and out of the corruption of the mission of the church (it's function) such as you advocate, one of the main contentions of Catholicism is sustained and supported. You have even agreed with the Catholics that we should have an "educated clergy" to "interpret" the word of God for us as we have shown in former articles. It may be that as Cardinal Gibbons said, "there may yet be a complete adoption of our faith". There is ground for their hope in that direction.

One of the most peculiar statements found in the question above given is this "the church is purely functional in its organization and is no more of a legalistic entity than Christianity itself". Our brother often makes such ambiguous statements. His book abounds in them. What does he mean by the above? An "entity" is something that "exists or may be supposed to exist; being". By "legalistic" in the above sentence does he mean to imply that the "church" does not have actual, organic, formal, existence in any sense and when it is referred to as having such that this is "legalism" ? If this is not his meaning, there is no meaning to the statement that makes any sense. He talks about the organization of the Lord's church (the local church) in the same way that a Baptist preacher talks about Baptism. They say that "Baptism formally saves"; that we are "baptized with reference to salvation" but that we are not actually saved when we are baptized but before, and that to preach that the act of obedience to Christ that the Bible calls Baptism is the point at which God saves the sinner is "legalism" and a "system of salvation by works" instead of "salvation by faith". Well, we have answered them all through the years by saying that if baptism "formally" saves, then until a man is baptized he is "formally lost"; or if baptism "formally" saves, then if a man is saved by faith only without and before being baptized, he is "informally" saved until he is baptized. Of course, all such is sheer nonsense and simply an effort made to avoid the truth by sophistry. We would answer Brother Thomas in the same way, viz; if it is "legalistic" to recognize a difference between "Christianity and the church" and giving the church "entity" (existence) is "legalism", then denying the difference between the two would deny the church "entity" (existence) and would have to be "liberalism". We affirm again that the brother does not or will not recognize the difference between the individual Christian's relationship to God, a relationship which all Christians universally enjoy, and the Christian's relationship to his fellow Christians in the local church and his duty to God in this relationship. He is either confused or is trying to confuse his readers about the difference between the individual Christian, the church in its universal sense, and the local church.

If there is no difference between the church universal, and the church local, then what

sense did Paul use the term "the churches of Christ salute you" (Romans 16:16)? Was this a reference to different denominational bodies or churches, or was it a reference to various congregations, local churches, all with the same relationship to the Lord but independent of each other and situated in various localities? Were these churches of Christ dependent upon the existence of each other or did they constitute a "church of Christ", complete and entire, within themselves? Were there any congregational lines, brother Thomas, between these churches? Did they have independent elderships? Was membership common among them or was it congregational? In other words, did these "churches of Christ" have "entity" or is it legalistic to think so? If they had entity, and were independent of each other in "oversight" and in "membership", is it legalism to conclude that the members, as well as the overseers, of these "Churches of Christ" had responsibilities and duties that were peculiar to the particular "church of Christ" of which they were a part?

But on this failure to recognize the organization of the local church as authoritative and binding, listen, to this quotation from "We Be Brethren":

"There is a spiritual unity and family relationship between congregations and between individual Christians the world over. There is a common faith, a common love, a common hope, and a common responsibility. All Christians share in these things, and congregational machinery was not supposed to draw sharp lines between them and to prevent their cooperating in doing the work of the Lord. We must not legalistically create a rigid, mechanical, limited system of congregational machinery that will stop normal Christian relationships and thus hinder the cause of Christ. We must not institutionalize the church in a way that the Lord hasn't. Congregational machinery is functional—not legalistic, neither hierarchal." (page 164)

If this does not completely deny any recognition to the independence of the local church and its organization, it comes very near to it. We deny that with such an attitude toward the only organic existence that God ever gave the church on this earth a man can properly respect the independence, autonomy, or equality of "churches of Christ."

But once more, in reference to the quotation given from pages 164 and 165 in the preceding part of this article, let us deny that he has correctly represented our position when he charges we make, "a distinction between the church and the kingdom of God". We believe and have always taught that there are a number of identifying phrases used to describe various aspects of the church, such as, "The kingdom of God", "body of Christ", etc. We do not believe there is any difference in the "kingdom of God", brother Thomas, and the "church of God". But we do not believe that every activity of the Christian life is "kingdom business" to use the phrase of one of our chief advocates of human institutionalism. Is Abilene Christian College within the "kingdom of God"? Is the United States Government, of which you are a citizen, in the affairs of which you likely take some part and which you support with your taxes as a Christian duty, a part of the kingdom of God? Is the Thomas family

within the kingdom of God, children and all? Our brother does-not know any more about the "kingdom" evidently than he does about the "church" We have never seen anyone so confused about Bible teaching.

In the chapter on "Church Finances" - The Use of the Church Treasury - Chapter XVI - page 197, our learned professor demonstrates that he really does not know the difference between the individual Christian and the Church. Hear Him:

"How are we to know when we can support a project individually but not collectively through the church treasury ? Is our judgment supposed to be better than that of the elders ? Why are funds of individual Christians which are usable for the Lord's work, which admittedly can be given to Orphan Homes or Christian Colleges, more exempt from legalistic restrictions than church funds which have been dropped in the contribution basket ? Do dollars become tainted or affected with some kind of taboo as soon as they fall in to the church treasury?" (Page 198)

He could have saved burdening his mind with such ridiculous sophistry if he had just stopped to recognize that consistency in his contention would eliminate the difference between individual funds and church funds to begin with. If his point is of any value, there isn't any difference between what an individual has and what the church has, in money or anything else. There would be no difference between the bank account of the church where Brother Thomas is a member and his own bank account. He has no right to **individual funds** for all of it belongs to the church anyway. And if what the individual does the church is doing, what would be the use of a treasury ? Why does he ridicule the idea of an individual Christian giving to any thing that is right, since it is the church doing it anyway ? What would the elders have to do with deciding what the church should support, if the individual sent the money directly, without contributing it into the treasury, it would be church action anyway, according to our brother, without the elders touching it! It could be no more the action of the church if sent through the treasury than if sent by the Christian individual, unless our brother's theory is completely false? Brother Thomas is in the peculiar position of either having to climate such a thing as a church treasury or the individual treasury one, since he contends that they are one and the same.

His position forces him to deny that there is any difference between the control the elders have over what is contributing on the Lord's Day and what each individual Christian has in his own bank account. They could write a check on the individual's account as well as on the church account since it is all the same. And it would work the other way around also; since there is no difference in the Christian individual and the church in such matters, the individual can write a check on the church account just as well as his own. This is the ridiculous absurdity to which our brother's position reduces itself. It looks like a college professor could see that! It is necessary and inescapable conclusion to his contention that "whatever the individual does the church is doing". On this point, our brother has paid little

attention to Acts, Chapter five. The disciples in the Jerusalem Church were selling their possessions and contributing into a common fund, congregational treasury, in order that the needy might be provided for out of that fund. Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession and kept back a part of the price. The remainder they gave into the fund - "laid it at the apostles' feet" as if they had given all that they had received for the possession. Peter took Ananias to task, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled shine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not shine own? and after it was sold, was it not in shine own power ? Why hast thou conceived this thing in shine heart?"

From this incident there are several things to observe:

1. It was not required that they sell their possessions and give all the price". Such action was voluntary.

2. While the possession remained unsold, title in their name, it was theirs and not a part of the common fund or church treasury. There is a difference in what a Christian has and what the church has in the way of resources. The New Testament recognizes the right of the individual Christian to some resources which do not belong to the church treasury. Giving them into the treasury of the church is a voluntary matter and the decision can rightfully be made by the Christian individual. There is no stipulated amount of one's personal possessions or earnings that must be given under the New Covenant. The grace of liberality and the need determines one's duty in such matters.

3. While the resources remain in the hands of the individual, control over them is retained by him and they are not subject to the control of the elders of the church or to brethren in the church where there are no elders. But when the resources are contributed by the individual into a common treasury according to God's plan, he surrenders control over those resources to the church - to elders, if any, - and to the church in general if there are none.

The funds given into this common treasury in Jerusalem were "laid at the apostles' feet". I take it that such was not literally done but that the expression simply indicates that they were turned over to apostolic control and direction. Up to this time there were no elders in Jerusalem as far as we know. Today, of course, such congregational funds would be controlled by the elders of the congregation where they are contributed. There is a vast deal of difference in an individual Christian controlling his own funds, elders controlling the funds contributed into the treasury of the church where they are elders. and a brotherhood eldership or some kind of conclave or board controlling the pooled resources of many churches.

There is a vast deal of difference in a number of Christian individuals contributing their

individual funds, as individuals, to some enterprise in which they might be commonly interested' right in its nature, but separate and apart from the work of the church, and those same individuals contributing on the first *day* of the week into the treasury of the church. Brother Thomas is unable to see this difference and "hoots" at the idea that there is any. According to him, if a number of Christians met on Saturday to engage in some kind of wholesome recreation such as fishing, made up a pot by contributing a like amount into a fund out of which to pay expenses and turned it over to a certain person in the group to disburse, they had just as well pay the expenses of that fishing trip out of the treasury of the church into which they contribute on the Lord's Day. I don't know whether there is any chance of helping an individual that blind! A man who doesn't know the difference between a group of individuals, all of them Christians, forming an organization to engage in some business enterprise and each of them contributing to the capital stock of that organization and those same individuals establishing a local congregation to carry on the work of the Lord in some community and that congregation having a treasury into which they contribute their proportionate part is so badly confused that I doubt if there is any help for him! It is amazing how little our brother knows about the church of the Lord.

If our brother is right in his contention that "whatever the individual does the church is doing" and there is no difference, then there is no difference in the obligations resting upon the elders of the church and the rest of the church. Elders are Christian individuals and what they do the church does, and whatever they can do, the church can do, then how on earth can they have any duties separate and apart from the duties of the church as a whole? They can be members of the body of Christ without serving as Elders! One does not have to be an elder in order to be a member of the body! Yet there are duties and obligations belonging peculiarly to the elders, as such, to be performed individually by them which the other members of the body cannot perform.

It is also true that those elders have duties as individual Christians even in the church which are no part of the peculiar duty belonging to one as an elder in the church of the Lord. Not all of their duty is "official" duty. Moreover they must perform many duties as Christian individuals which are no part of the work of the church, and which they do not perform as elders in the church. Suppose a man is an elder of the church and also a director in the bank in his town, are his duties in the bank the same as his duty as elder in the church? Does he exercise the same control by the same authority in both relationships? Surely not! Yet Brother Thomas does not know the difference. If a Christian engages in the grocery business, do the elders of the church have the same control over his grocery store that they do over the Church? According to our brother the answer would have to be yes!

Do the elders of the church have the right to control brother Thomas's household? Can they tell his wife how much she can afford to pay for a dress? Can they control how much is spent for a mace to live - a house ? Can they determine what kind of an automobile the Thomas family can drive? Determine how many children they shall try to rear? In what they shall make an investment? When their children need discipline and what kind ? Do the elders

of the congregation where Brother Thomas is a member have as much control over his family affairs as they do the affairs of the church? As Christian individuals we are subject to the elders in the church as long as they rule in harmony with the will of the Lord, but when they try to assume control over the affairs of our homes, we should and probably would rebel, The elders of the church, in the Lord's plan are over the church and nothing else!

Abilene College in which our brother is employed as a teacher is not under the control of an eldership. It should not be! But why ? Is it an association of Christians to do a good work! Doesn't that make a church out of it ? According to our brother's reasoning (?) it would! Brother Thomas actually does not know the difference between a group of Christian's getting together to have a picnic or pot-luck dinner and meeting to eat the Lord's supper on the First Day of the Week. He must not - for he doesn't know the difference between a group of Christians operating a school and the church doing so, In fact, his argument is that if individual Christians do it, the church is doing it.

4.) Our brother wants to know, "Do dollars become tainted or affected with some kind of taboo as soon as they fall into the church treasury?" (Page 198). No, they are not "taboo or tainted" but when an individual Christian gives his money on the Lord's Day into the treasury of the Lord's Church, that money then becomes the Lord's and passes under the control of the elders of the Lord's Church and can be expended by them only in accordance with apostolic authority. That is what "laying it at the Apostles' feet " signified in the Jerusalem church. After it enters the the treasury of the Lord, it can be used only for what the Lord has authorized and even the elders of the church cannot exercise their own will in the matter of what it can be contributed to or spent for but must be guided by heaven's will as revealed through the apostles in New Testament scriptures. What a group of individuals may decide to contribute to on Saturday is one thing and what the money in the treasury of the Lord's church can be used for is an entirely different thing.

It is amazing that a man who puts himself forward as a teacher of the Bible anywhere does not know that such a difference exists!

But we hear him again:

"Why do we feel in some cases that it would be sinful for a check to be drawn on the church treasury for a project, but we will permit a special service for the project ? Is Christianity this technical and legal. Does mere camouflage please God? Can we cover a sinful action with a little "window dressing" and make it holy?" (Page 198)

This is our brother's conception of the differences between us today concerning how to use the Lord's money. He either does not know what the issues are on these questions or he will not represent them correctly. A" collection taken in a church service" for any purpose is, of course, church action as anyone with any common sense should know. If it is for an

unscriptural purpose or wrong in any manner, it is sinful and displeasing to God and that displeasures would rest upon anyone taking part in it or assenting to it. If one in the audience in that church assembly could not conscientiously give to such a cause as that for which the collection was being made, then he could refrain and by doing so avoid violating his conscience. More than that he could file his protest against such action on the part of the church and thus fulfill his duty in the matter. But when an individual contributes his money in a service to a general fund out of which, by his knowledge, some unscriptural work is being supported there is no way in which he can avoid responsibility for taking part, in violation of his consciences, in that which to him is wrong. Rom. 14:23. If some liberal brethren should take a notion, and some of them likely will, to make a contribution out of the treasury of the church to a Billy Graham Revival Meeting, a conscientious Christian could not contribute into the treasury of that church. He would be as guilty as the rest if he did. If a group of the members of that same congregation were to make up a contribution, apart from the treasury of the church and the Lord's Day contribution, and send it to Mr. Graham's meeting, those conscientiously opposed would not be necessarily a party to such unscriptural procedure. (II Jno. 9-11) They would not only be privileged to refrain from giving of their own funds to such an unscriptural cause but they would be at liberty, consistently and sincerely, to try to teach those who did contribute to such a cause that it is wrong to do so. But our brother thinks that it doesn't matter what some of the members of the church contribute to on Saturday, it had just as well come out of the Lord's treasury into which they contributed on the Lord's Day.

We quote him further on this point:

"The consequences of this doctrine is that the church treasury is a 'bottleneck' and is a great limitation to the progress of the kingdom of God. By this doctrine, all Christians in a church could meet on Saturday, put their contributions into a common check for the Orphan Home and One for the Christian school, and their joint and collective action would be perfectly scriptural and would also be very efficient in promoting the welfare of the kingdom of God. But the same Christians could not put the same money into a common fund on Sunday and let the elders decide to send it to an Orphan Home or to a school—for this would be a rank sin. So this doctrine, means in consequence, **that the best way to get the Lord's work done,** is not to give it through the church, but for individuals to send this money to these "Lord's work" projects privately! Remember now, that those who oppose church support for orphan homes and colleges do however approve of the institutions as such, when privately supported! They believe them to be efficient and expedient!" (Page 198)

It would be difficult to find a paragraph anywhere containing more flagrant misrepresentations than this paragraph contains. 1) What is the **Lord's work to which** our brother refers? Is he talking about the work of the Lord's Church? If this is what he has in mind, then he is either ignorantly or willfully misrepresenting all of us. We readily and gladly deny that any institution to which an individual may rightfully contribute his money but to which the church cannot scripturally contribute is the "the Lord's work" in the sense that it

is any part of the work of the church. Abilene Christian College is not the "Lord's Work" in the sense that it comes within the scope of the mission divinely assigned to the church by the Lord. If our brother wants to affirm that it is, there there are many of us who will gladly deny his proposition. Even brother G. C. Brewer, as liberal as he was counted to be on this matter, refused to affirm that such schools as Abilene College came within the scope of the mission or work which the Lord assigned his church to do. We have him in writing to the effect that he would deny such a proposition. Such institutions cannot be supported by Christians individuals as "the Lord's work".

2) If by the "Lord's Work" our brother means such church established and supported institutions as "Boles Orphan Home, Inc.", then he is woefully misrepresenting us again. We do not agree or given any kind of assent to the idea that individual Christians can rightly support Boles Home as it is presently operated. In fact, we believe that one cannot contribute to this and like institutions in their status without being a party to the wrong they are committing any more than one can scripturally contribute to the Salvation Army or the Methodist Church. These organizations are "church institutions". Oh, we are fully aware that Gayle Oler denies that Boles Home is a church institution. He thinks by now that it belongs to him! That is very evident. But it was built by the churches before any "board" ever controlled it and before Oler became its superintendent. If it belongs to Oler and the "board" now, how did they get it? Did they buy it or have they just appropriated it ? The fact is that churches built it and churches have sustained it through the years and still sustain it and only a short while ago Oler was boldly affirming that it was "kingdom business". Because of its status as a church institution, without scriptural authority to exist as such, having fastened itself on to the church as an auxiliary organization to usurp the function and even control over the churches, it is a sin for any Christian to support it. So brother Thomas get it right and correct your misrepresentations.

This does not say that schools cannot be individually operated by Christians and supported by them out of their own funds, and the Bible be taught in them, if they **are not** made into **church institutions**. We have always defended the right of individual Christians to go into the "school business" and teach the word of God in that business just like they can in any other legitimate business, if they wish. These schools cannot be made into "societies of evangelism" however, as many of the brethren are trying to do now. There exists currently the idea and it is often expressed by "school enthusiasts"" among us. that the best way to "evangelize" a foreign field and build up the church is through building a school. This is rebellion against God and a complete reflection upon his wisdom in building the church. Any man who thinks the church of the Lord depends upon a school is first cousin to an outright unbeliever, if he knows anything at all about the will of the Lord. A school is a means of parents fulfilling their obligation to their children. to give them a proper education under the proper environment but they are unscriptural, sinful and wrong when we try to make them an adjunct to the church.

Neither does this say that individual Christians could not support an individually operated "orphan home" or benevolent institution of some other variety as long as it does not undertake to be an auxiliary institution to the church and do its work for it. This is the aspect that disregards God's divine arrangements, scraps his plan for the accomplishments of his work, abandons his way, and invents ways of man's own instead. God intended for his church to do the work he wants done. Brother Thomas, that is what we are insisting upon! Let the "Lord's work" be done by the organization which God has built to do it and to which the Lord assigned it. It is that simple.

On page 198 and 199 of his book our brother sneers again at an effort made upon the part of brethren somewhere to maintain fellowship in spite of their differences on these matters.

"A case is known where Legalistic influence is strong enough to make the elders afraid to send "church" money to a school, so the elders appointed another treasurer, separate from the regular church treasurer, and he collects "The Lord's money" individually from Christians and forwards it to the school. This sort of subterfuge of course satisfies the Legalist — he has no point at which to rest his criticism, but what we all need to see is that Christianity will never get very far unless it rises above Legalism and the hampering restrictions of petty creed-making. And something is definitely wrong with somebody's creed when the logical consequences of it are that we can do more and better work for the cause of Christ by making our contributions NOT through the church, but circumventing the church treasury and wise judgment of the elders! This doctrine means that the congregation hinders the cause of Christ, rather than helps!" (Page 199)

We do not know about this specific case to which he refers but we think there would be a good bit of "ground upon which to rest some criticism" of it that were our purpose. If, however, the purpose of the elders, in making some other means available to those who wanted to contribute to the school, was to avoid forcing those to contribute who were conscientiously opposed to the church doing so out of its treasury when they worshipped with that congregation and contributed in that worship, then we believe that they were more considerate of their brethren and more interested in BEING BRETHREN than brother Thomas is in spite of all his pretension. We believe it should have been left to the individuals without any arrangements upon the part of the elders. But at least they made it possible for brethren to continue to worship with them without being forced to violate their consciences. Brother Thomas would have forced his own judgment upon all of the rest. He would not have been "afraid" to do so! He would have taken the attitude of the instrumental music brethren of many years ago—you can either be a party to the church contributing to the school, violate your conscience or get out! He would have been "legalist" enough to lay his judgment down as the rule and demand that other opposed bow down to it in violation of their conscience or worship elsewhere. It is this kind of dominating "legalistic Liberalism" that is splitting the church all over the country today and it is over what our

brethren like J. D. Thomas admit to be an "optional expedient" in their conception of things. As long as they are willing to cram their "optional expedients" down the throats of their brethren or divide the church they had as well get up "off their knees" and quit praying for unity for they destroy it faster than their prayers can mend it. That much is sure!

If you are disposed to entertain the notion that our brother can be consistent in his twisting, turning, and meandering efforts to justify his "human organizations" then compare the above quoted paragraphs from page 198 and the paragraph that will follow from page 199 with this paragraph from page 162:

"We recognize, of course, that an elder's 'official' duties as an elder with oversight of Christians are limited to the congregation which he serves as an elder; but he has 'Christian' duties and obligations that are not so limited and, just as any Christian, should let his influence radiate far and wide—indeed just as far and wide as it will. Still further, the elder cannot even dominate and control all the details of the Christians living, the attitudes or the actions of the members of the congregation which he serves as elder. (Notice now - emphasis mine, R.E.C.) **There are many things a local Christian can do, such as choosing how and where he will contribute all of his money or whether he will help an orphan or a needy family, that are truly 'outside' the elder's normal oversight —unless the member should sin**" (Page 162)

Brother Thomas you have been telling us that it is all church action? Do you mean that the elder of the church can act as an individual too? Which time is it the church acting ? When he acts officially or unofficially ? What are the details of the Christian's life that the elders cannot control ? Do not the elders have the supervision of all the activity of the church over which they are bishops? Is not the church acting when the individual acts? Or are you surrendering your point so repeatedly emphasized in other connections? Do you mean by the last statement that it is all right for the individual to make a contribution out of his own judgment and his own resources, to something that the elders could not oversee? Would not the logical consequences of this be that "we can do more and better work for the cause of Christ by making our contributions NOT through the church, but by circumventing the church treasury and the wise judgment of the elders? This is what you charge on page 199 of your book when you are defending church contributions to schools. Which time do you mean what you say? The "legs of the lame are unequal" and your position is lame if one can be.

3) If, on the other hand, our brother in this reference, "those who oppose church support for orphan and colleges do however **approve of the institutions** as such when privately supported! They believe them to be efficient and expedient!" means those schools and orphan homes "established and maintained by churches" then again he has woefully misrepresented all of us. We know of no one who believes any such thing. If such institutions have a right to church connection and relation, then they have a right to church support. If they have no

right to church connection and relation, then it would be wrong for an individual to support them for the same reason that is wrong for the church to do so. They have no right to exist (notice brother Thomas) - as church institutions. Why can't you correctly represent the issues and those who differ with you?

God certainly intended for the treasury of the church to be a "bottleneck" small enough to strain out and prevent the church using the Lord's money to support anything which the Lord has not authorized the church to do. It is not a "bottleneck" in any sense for those "works" which come into the scope of the divine mission assigned it. But the man does not live who has the right to contribute "through the church" to anything which the Lord has not authorized the church to do. Use your "own" resources, while they remain in "shine own power" to sustain anything that is right and good that you desire, but when you contribute your money into the treasury of the Lord's Church, remember that it can then be distributed only by divine authority. There is no other principle that could direct the church in any of its activity. The best way to get the "Lord's work" done is through the church, if the work of the church is what you mean by the Lord's work, brother Thomas, but you have no right to support your own enterprises out of the resources that belong to the Lord's church. According to our brothers views, the money contributed into the Lord's treasury on the Lord's Day (I Cor. 16:1-4) has no more restrictions on it than a fund raised by a group of individuals on any other day and in any other way, provided they are members of the church. It is all church action anyway! Either the Lord has no more to say as to how the money given to His cause shall be used than he has to say as to how any other fund raised by Christians shall be used, or Christians have as much right to use the Lord's money as they wish without regard to whether or not the Lord authorizes it as they have to use any other funds they might have. Peter did not know what he was talking about when he said to Anannias "Whiles it remained, was it not shine own? and after it was sold, was it not in shine own power?" The Lord has not restricted, except by the principles of righteousness, the use of individual funds or the use of funds which by individuals might be combined or pooled in a community enterprise, but he has restricted the use of funds in the treasury of his church. They are under apostolic authority and eldership control.

I Timothy 5:16

"If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows—indeed."

In this passage of scripture we find specifically prescribed a matter of individual Christian duty which the church cannot do. Moreover we find also stated the reason the duty of the individual Christians must not be put off on the church. Paul specifies that if the Christian individual has a widow - that is in his family connection -he, the Christian individual is to relieve that widow. The eighth verse of the same chapter teaches that a man who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel and has denied the faith.

Then the apostle stipulates that the church is not to be charged or burdened with this obligation that belongs to individual Christians and the purpose is so that it (the church) might relieve them that are widows—indeed. We are to keep the church free from obligations and burdens that the Lord did not put on it in order that it may be able to do what the Lord intended for it to do. Brother Thomas' teaching makes sheer nonsense out of this divine instruction.

MISREPRESENTATIONS

Roy E. Cogdill, Nacogdoches, Texas

(This is article number fifteen in review of the book, "We Be Brethren", written by J. D. Thomas, Director of the Annual Lectureship, Professor of Bible in the Bible Department of Abilene Christian College)

It would be impossible in even several articles to deal with all of the misrepresentations in which brother Thomas engages in his book concerning the arguments and positions of those with whom he disagrees in the matter of "congregational cooperation". We do want to point out some of them in order that it may be clearly seen that either our brother does not know enough about the issues disturbing churches today to write about them or else he is careless and unreliable in his efforts to represent those who differ with him.

It is amazing that a man would inject himself into a discussion after as much writing and debating has been carried on about it as about these issues and yet either know as little as our brother knows about the actual contentions made or be so lacking in principle as to continually and constantly misrepresent those about whom he is writing. Did he expect his book to be read only by our enemies ? Surely he knew, that if we read it, his misrepresentations would be recognized and his hand would be called on them.

1. He charges that many of us are unwilling to recognize "generic authority" as adequate in establishing the scriptural right to employ an "aid or expediency" in doing the will of the Lord. We give some brief instances of this from his book:

"The Legalist, sometimes designated as an "anti", is one who has a great respect for the Bible's authority, but whose zeal for scripturalness is not always guided by sound interpretation, he does not appreciate being guided by principles — (important generic truths that may cover many minor matters." (Page 29)

"Another type of legalist is the man who says that generic authority is not adequate authority" (Page 30)

"(b) The making of an 'excluded specific' Box 'ES' type) matter out of an optional expedient. To do this is to reject generic authority as being adequate authority, by demanding a New Testament example of an expedient, before admitting that such expedient could be scriptural" (Page 112)

"In summary, a short definition of 'Legalism' is that it is an over-concern for mere law, as such.....

(3) An over concern to the point that one makes laws where God hasn't, because he feels that every detail must be covered by a sharp law, and generic authority only is too vague for a secure feeling.

In the light of the above, BRETHREN should realize that **optional matters**, such as the number of containers used in partaking of the fruit of the vine; the class method of teaching the Bible; the sponsoring-church method of church cooperation, and the use of orphan homes, **should not be made into laws!** But we constantly read in the writings of men who oppose each of the above, a challenge—WHERE IS THE EXAMPLE? Such men feel that because no exact example is produced, the item is therefore unscriptural! But to make such an argument is to **reject generic authority as adequate authority and is Legalism!**" (Page 113)

There can be found many misrepresentations in the above quotations and many others like these can be found in the book "We Be Brethren". We had hoped when brother Thomas's book was announced that we would find in it a scholarly treatise that would make a real contribution to the full and fair study of the issues before the brethren today and help to clarify the difficulties involved and improve the bitter feelings that have been agitated. We have been completely disappointed in it. There is nothing scholarly about it! It is the most rambling, hodge-podge — of misrepresentations and contradictions that we have ever seen. As to the improvement of any feeling of bitterness and tension, well, how could it when it is as manifestly unfair and completely unreliable in its charges and representations as anything which we have seen in all that has been written.

If our brother's life depended on it, he could not find where any of us who oppose his "idols" of human institutionalism have ever rejected generic authority in any sense. We have preached, taught, argued it and been guided by it all through the years. In the debates that have been held it has been contended for in every instance. In the book "Walking By Faith" that evidently inspired the production that we are reviewing, there is a lesson devoted to the establishment of scriptural authority and in that lesson (Lesson III—Page 13) we devoted space to the discussion of Generic and Specific Authority (V.) and illustrated the principle of generic authority by four specific commandments, (a. Go; b. Teach; c. Assemble; d. Sing.) Now brother Thomas may have had some ground to call in question our application of the principle but to accuse us of "rejecting generic authority as inadequate", is to willfully misrepresent us without excuse or justification. We call upon him to repent of this misrepresentation which occurs over and over in his book and correct it for the sake of his own soul.

When our conclusions differ about the application of a principle it is one thing and when we reject the principle being applied, it is another thing entirely. We differ widely with our

brother about what a commandment includes in many instances. We question his judgment in what he thinks is an expediency and aid in many instances. We deny that a benevolent society such as "Boles Orphan Home, Inc." and any others like it are included within the generic command or teaching in James 1:27, "visit the fatherless". Brother Thomas takes this for granted. We deny it and call on him for the proof. It is no more in the command to "visit" than the United Christian Missionary Society or one of its kind is included in the generic command "Go, Preach" or "Go, Teach". His conclusion does not establish the correctness of his contention. Neither his vaunted wisdom, scholarly attainments, or his noted position and accomplishments are sufficient to establish the truth of what he says. We need a little Bible teaching for it and that is all we are willing to accept. It is peculiar that for hundreds of years after New Testament revelation was completed the people of God did not know that these Bible commandments included "human organizations" as authorized "optional expedients". We are afraid that we will have to rely on the scriptures rather than our learned brother's judgment, especially when it comes to including "lemonade" as an "aid" in "teaching" in the activity of the church.

"The flowers and the lemonade are incidentals to and expedient "aids" to commands—to love one another, to be soul winners, and to make disciples. In the vacation Bible School the lemonade is an expedient that aids in the accomplishment of the goal of teaching, just like a blackboard and crayons are aids". (Page 200)

There is is in black and white—no shade of gray about that, brethren! We suppose that if the lemonade is pink—and maybe a little sherbert in it—we could win still more souls and make more disciples—provided everybody liked lemonade! Just how silly and ridiculous can a college professor get? How about giving a rub down and massage in connection with baptism, brother Thomas ? Don't you think that would help the church to grow ? Now, brethren, if you are wondering what is wrong with the church today, you can stop. Just such teaching in Abilene Christian (?) College and institutions of like nature all over the country are flooding the church with this sort of sectarian slush! That is what is the matter with churches!

A great "missionary" out in San Francisco, had a great scheme to put a steam bath and massage parlor on one floor, a haberdashery on another, a hotel on another, and a restaurant on another in the same building with a place for the church to assemble. He had the idea to gather all the derelicts, drunks, and downcasts of society off skid row and clean them up, dress them up, feed them up, rest them up, and then baptize them. He raised money all over the country from gullible brethren to help him do it too. Well, it would only be an enlargement on Thomas' idea of a vacation Bible School and the work of the church of the Lord in such. What are we coming to ?

2. Brother Thomas engages in another flagrant misrepresentation when he charges those of us who oppose building and maintaining human organizations to do the work of the

church with demanding an example as the only means of establishing New Testament authority. We have dealt with this to some extent in former articles but call your attention to it in this connection again as an example of unfairness and unreliability upon the part of our brother. If he didn't know better, he could have and should have informed himself before he scattered such a charge over a 260 page book.

"He insists that an optional expedient is not scriptural, unless an example (of the same type of expedient) can be found in the New Testament itself. Thus he makes the optional, expedient matter to be an "excluded specific". This group is represented by those who oppose the class method of teaching because no example of such can be found in the New Testament, and they say that such a method is therefore an excluded specific and sinful." (Page 30.)

"In the light of the above, BRETHREN should realize that **optional matters**, such as: the number of containers used in partaking of the fruit of the vine; the class method of teaching the Bible; the sponsoring-church method of cooperation; and the use of orphan homes, should not **be made into laws!** All these are optional expedients; and to make them into law when God has not, is legalism! (Proof of our view that each of the above is no more than an expedient will follow in later chapters.) But we constantly read in the writings of men who oppose each of the above, a challenge—WHERE IS THE EXAMPLE? Such men feel that because no exact example is produced, the item is therefore unscriptural!" (Page 113)

"Such organizations to do the work of the church or as a medium of cooperation for the churches are without divine authority and are therefore sinful because they violate the principle of walking by faith. (This is mere repetition. It really says, 'there is no New Testament example:' or 'they are not optional expedients.' But in all these so-called 'Scriptural Objections to Human Organizations,' there has been not one point of real facing of the issues—there has been only wordy claims.) (Page 137)

The bold face part of the above quotation was quoted in Brother Thomas' book from "Walking By Faith" by this author. This is a fair sample, brethren, of the way this man who claims to be a scholar deals with an argument. The book had emphasized over and over and over the argument that there is no authority, generic or specific, command, example, or inference, that includes a human organization built by the church to do the work God has commanded the church to do. Here it was being contended that because there is no New Testament **authority** (we did not say **example**, brother Thomas, but **authority**) such organizations are sinful because they violate the principle of walking by faith. Our brother answers the contention by saying "mere repetition"; it really says, there is no New Testament example". Brother Thomas, why did you mistake between the word AUTHORITY and the word EXAMPLE ? Don't you know the difference? If you do, you still didn't tell the truth about the statement. The statement says AUTHORITY AND YOU ALLEGE THAT

AUTHORITY MEANS EXAMPLE. That is either inexcusable ignorance or downright dishonesty in dealing with the matter. You can have your choice. In everything said about authority in the book there has always been the admission and recognition that authority can be established in three ways: (1) express commandment; (2) approved example; and (3) necessary inference. When you charge in your book brother Thomas that we call for and will recognize example only, your charge is a falsehood.

But our brother crosses his own trail again and becomes just about guilty of what he so falsely charges us with in this matter and we point it out by this quotation:

"The Scriptures do not furnish a pattern or an illustration of how to disfellowship a congregation. This indicates that it is questionable as to its ever being done." (Page 232)

Well, we would say that since the Scriptures do not furnish a pattern or illustration (example) of one congregation disfellowshipping another that it cannot be done. Our brother is right in this. It is strange that he cannot also see that the scriptures do not furnish a pattern or an illustration (example) of congregations building a human organization through which to do their benevolence; and neither do they furnish a pattern or illustration (example) of one congregation becoming a centralized brotherhood agency through which many churches undertake to do their work, hence, neither of them can be done, scripturally that is! No man is quite so blind as that man blinded by his own "idols".

3. We have called attention in former articles to the charge made by brother Thomas that we who oppose him on these matters rely upon the "rule of uniformity" alone in determining that an example is binding. This is, of course, just another of his false charges. It is not true in any sense of the word. He creates by it a false issue that only confuses the real issues involved in this discussion. He may not have maliciously raised this false issue for the purpose of confusing but if it was not done purposefully, then it is inexcusable that he should have read so carelessly or be so little informed of what he was trying to discuss. No one—absolutely no one!— that we know anything about, has contended for uniformity alone. Everyone recognizes, that has common sense enough to know anything about such matters, that uniformity might be found in matters that were purely custom in the New Testament day—"saluting one another with a holy kiss", etc. In the same chapter of the book "Walking by Faith" in which the rule of uniformity is discussed there are six other rules given, and they were enumerated, and their application to the question of whether or not an example is binding was discussed. Our brother refers to these rules in his book, dismisses most of them with some trite expressions such as "this is just a truism" and gives them no real consideration or refutation at all. Then as if he had not noticed them or they were not there, he boldly charges that we rely upon the "rule of uniformity alone" to determine when an example is binding! What kind of "Christian scholarship" is this? We would have expected better treatment at the hands of the bitterest sectarian than that.

But to show our readers that this charge was boldly made, we give you this quotation from "We Be Brethren".

"First, 'examples **of optional matters**' **could** be uniform in their details. These BRETHREN have not even considered the possibility of dealing with examples grouped as optional things and as required things. To do so and to study through several cases of examples that are clearly optional might show uniformity in important details, but such uniformity would not change the examples from the optional group into the required category". (Page 77)

Our learned brother **did not consider that we had given consideration** to this very point in more than one of the other rules given as the basis for the study of examples and their force as authority. Among these other rules was the "law of Materiality". Whether or not a thing is material certainly has to do with distinguishing between a matter that is "optional" and a "required matter". What does our professor think "material" means? If a matter is immaterial it would be "optional! It is not of the essence in or to the thing commanded, just like a petty requirement would not be of the essence of a contract, and hence if breached would not vitiate the contract. Surely our brother can understand a thing that simple.

This law of "materiality" is stated in this fashion, "Whether a thing is relevant, material, essential to the teaching or practice of God's will is a most important consideration. Incidental circumstances need to be separated from divine law in anything taught in God's word." Is it possible that he could not have understood such simple language as this? If he did then the charge was maliciously made in spite of the fact that he knew it had no basis! He referred to the rule, dismissed it as worthy of no consideration in these matters, then turned right around and charged us with giving it no consideration. This is the method of our BROTHER in dealing with his BRETHREN.

But listen to him further:

"An illustration of this point is that in all the examples and references in the New Testament about the partaking of the fruit of the vine, it is UNIFORMLY referred to as the 'cup' (singular), both in literal and figurative usages. If uniformity in examples were the thing that establishes patterns, then we sin today if we use more than one container. Again, the examples of the preaching of the apostles show that in all the cases of conversion recorded in Acts they uniformly preached faith and baptism, but there were variations in the examples as to whether the people were required to repent or confess; so, if uniformity is the criterion of pattern teaching then faith and baptism are required: but repentance and confession are optional! Who is ready to believe it? Even though repentance and confession were required of some of the exemplary

characters, what happened to them is an example to us, and it, therefore, definitely takes more than mere uniformity to set patterns!" (Page 78)

We have dealt with the silly and ridiculous points concerning the one "cup" and the so-called variations in the cases of conversion in other articles preceding this. Brother Thomas thinks the law of uniformity is that every time a matter is referred to in the New Testament the same information must be given so that there is no variations in delineating the action. In other words, in every case of conversion everything required must be set forth every time in order for the demand of uniformity to be met. He doesn't even know what the rule is evidently. Brother Thomas, the rule of uniformity is that there are no exceptions or variations from what is recorded. Every case of baptism may not delineate the fact that they went **down into the water and came up out** of the water as the case of Phillip and the Eunuch but there is no case recorded with any different action to that! It does not have to give that same information in every case! There is no case giving any different information to that! That is the point. It does not record that every church met as did the church at Troas - **on the First Day of the Week to break bread** (Acts 20:7) but there is no record of that or any church meeting on any other day of the week **to break bread**. Neither is there any commandment or inference that any church should. This information is without variation both in the divine record and among religious historians who were uninspired. Hence it sets forth the only pattern for worship in observing the Lord's Supper for there is no variation from that pattern and hence no authority for any other practice. When the church did what the Lord commanded the church to do and every reference in the New Testament that tells the story -whether one or many - sets forth an unvaried practice in that thing commanded, does such uniformity and singularity in the absence of anything in the way of a variation make any impression on your mind, brother Thomas? We believe that it should. But listen again:

A third illustration of multiple-example uniformity is in the instances of churches sending benevolent aid to the poor—we note that in each case it was delivered **by personal messengers!** (See Acts 11:27-30; I Car. 16:1-4; Rom. 15:25-29; II Cor. 8:18-20.) **If uniformity alone established patterns, we could not use the United States mail for these purposes today!"**

(Page 78)

The profound reasoning of our brother amazes us! We suppose that he would not recognize the United States Mail as a personal service agency now! Why, it is the most personalized service that we can think about. What in the world is our brother thinking about ? But suppose we couldn't use United States mail and had no such service— does that mean that the New Testament sets forth, either in direct precept or in example, that one congregation can become the messenger or agency for another congregation? No! Such reasoning would come as near proving that Paul was a brother to Caesar because he was a Roman citizen. It would have just about that much bearing. But this is the best our brother could do in the matter. He had to throw up some kind of subterfuge or smoke screen so he just said "If

uniformity alone established patterns, we could not use the United States mail for these purposes today". Well, who said uniformity alone did? Brother Thomas you just made that one up. You should repent of it.

4. Our brother charges in his book, "We Be Brethren", that those of us who object to the institutional orphan homes built by the churches to do their work and to the perversion of God's organization, a local church, into a brotherhood agency by the "sponsoring-church" plan of cooperation, are **binding methods** upon the churches of Christ that are matters of "expediency" and that hence we are guilty of "making laws where God has not legislated". This is one of his claims to support his charge of "legalism".

This is another of his false charges - straw men that he has set up to destroy that he might become the hero of the day by solving the problems of the churches and vanquishing the enemy. He is a full fledged "Don Quixote" fighting his windmills in imaginary battle. The whole truth is that in his book our learned professor does not even join issue on the real problem. He does not deal with the problem of finding scriptural authority that includes what he tries to justify. He admits the necessity of it and then assumes the very thing that he is under obligation to prove, viz., that these human institutions that have been built to do the work of the church and these human perversions of the function of God's divine order are mere matters of method or expediency - they belong in the realm of choice. Not once does he really face up to the task that he should have undertaken - that of proving that they come within the realm of that which the scriptures authorize the church to do. He makes assumption but there is no real effort seriously made in the book in that direction. The "ipse dixit" of a P.H.D. seems to be good enough authority to him. But it isn't to anybody that has an ounce of respect in his heart for the word of God.

This charge, viz., that we are binding method upon the church - legislating for the Lord - is entirely imaginary and false as are the rest of his charges. The organization of an institution like Boles Home is not a coordinate with a method. Boles Home is an incorporated institution. It is a legal entity - separate from everything else on earth and its purpose is to "provide a home". It is not the church. Neither is it a home! It is an organization - a society set up - organized according to its Charter - to provide a home for children. Honesty and sincerity demands that these brethren shall recognize this. They have tried **to make it simply a method** but it is no more a method of doing benevolent work than the missionary society is a method of doing evangelism. They are both organizations that employ methods! The incorporated body of Boles Home is made up of a number of directors who are empowered under the charter issued by the state to "provide a home". They are not the provision! They are not the home! They live at various places and come together at intervals to determine the matters concerning the home and its operation. They have some hired personnel - including the superintendent - to carry on the work under their supervision and control. They are the controlling, directing, body that provides facilities and personnel and necessary provisions for the work they are empowered to do. Brother Thomas, as smart as you are, you must be

able to see the difference between an organization that provides and controls the work and the work itself or those who actually do the work. The same thing is true of any other organization. The Board of Abilene Christian College are not the school. They provide and operate the school. Brother Thomas is a teacher in that school, using facilities provided and the opportunity granted to do what he does, but isn't a member of the board of directors, nor is he a part of the incorporated body that provided, and controls the school. Banking is a method or means of taking care of your money but the organization is not the means or method, they provide the facilities and direct the work of banking but there is a vast deal of difference between a person making use of the facilities provided and the organization that provides the facilities.

The real issue is just this simple: 1) God has given the church a work to do; 2) Ministering to the needy is a part of that work; 3) God has given the church an organization through which to perform its work; 4) That God-given organization is the local church with its elders - the congregation; 5) That organization is specifically authorized and set forth in New Testament scriptures; 6) That organization designed by God is sufficient to do everything God has charged the church to do in this world; 7) When churches of Christ build other organizations to do their work, any part of it, they do so without divine authority and are guilty of impeaching God's wisdom, and disrespecting his word. When they build other organizations they add to God's Word!

Again, let us put the matter like this: the work itself is not in issue. No one objects to providing shelter for these who do not have it. No one objects to providing the necessary things of life for those who are destitute of them. No one objects to making provision for those who are unable to care for themselves to be cared for as they need to be. **THE WORK IS NOT IN ISSUE.**

No one is specifying how the shelter shall be provided, as to method or means - whether rented, bought, leased, or furnished gratis. This is the expediency realm. No one is trying to specify how the necessary food, clothing, and other essential things which are needed shall be provided; whether they shall be bought with money which has been given or the commodities themselves shall be furnished or whether if they are bought, they shall be bought from one store or another, wholesale or retail, These matters again are in the realm of expediency. The same is true with the matter of personnel to care for those who are helpless. Whether it is service furnished gratis, service that must be bought and paid for, or how it is provided is not in issue.

What is the issue then? It is the question of **WHAT ORGANIZATION** shall do the work in this field of benevolence which God has commanded the church to do? Can the organization God has designed do the work God has designed it to do and shall we be satisfied with it and accomplish God's work through it or shall we build a substitute organization - such as Boles Home, Inc., which when it is built to do the work of the church

must employ means and methods just like the church would have to employ to begin with. This is the issue, Brother Thomas, NOT HOW, AS TO MEANS OR METHODS, BUT WHICH ORGANIZATION SHALL DO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH, A HUMAN ORGANIZATION BUILT BY MAN'S WISDOM, OR THE ORGANIZATION DESIGNED AND BUILT BY DIVINE WILL AND WISDOM! While you pray for unity and that **we shall brethren** won't you repent of this false charge that we are trying to bind methods - only matters of expediency or choice ? You don't designate God's organization just a matter of choice or expediency, do you?

5. While we are this close to the matter, let us discuss another misrepresentation of our position of which our brother is guilty. He charges that we condemn the churches contributing to such institutions as these church built and substained orphan homes and yet we believe that they are an expedient way of taking care of orphan children. This charge is false!

"On the contrary, those who oppose the Orphan Home classify it as an excluded specific (ES), and thus sinful. In this case they count it an exact parallel to the Missionary Society. They will admit that it is an expedient or advantageous way to care for orphans and if the only requirement or command that it had relation to was, "visit the fatherless", they could admit that it is an optional expedient and therefore scriptural. But, like the Missionary Society, they feel that it also has relation to the generic, "church government;" and since they feel that it also violates "Local Church Autonomy" (or the church government requirement in some way) it is an excluded specific, and thus sinful." (Page 38)

We could not know of whom our brother wrote this. He may somewhere have seen some statement written without proper thought and in no way representative of many at all when he states that "they (those who oppose Orphan homes. R.E.C.) will admit that it is an expedient or advantageous way to care for orphans, Who admits any such thing as that? Why every informed person knows that the institutional orphan home - the orphan asylum is about the poorest provision that can be made for the care of destitute children. There is hardly any other way of doing this work that is not better. Most of the states are turning away from state operated institutions to provide for destitute children by hiring them cared for in private homes. Many of the state operated institutions are closed and they are closing others as they can place their children. Brother Thomas is way behind on this matter.

Many of the denominations in the religious world, such as Baptist, are turning more and more from exclusive institutional care to a program of providing homes - actual homes - private homes - for children to live in. They are becoming more and more interested in and convinced that the best interest of the child can be served in a foster home, or an adoptive home rather than an institutional home. In our efforts to ape denominationalism in the work of building benevolent organizations we are running way behind. Experts in child care have

long since decided that institutional care is not productive of the best results. It is at best a very, very poor substitute.

But from the viewpoint of the work of the church and that is the connection that this discussion has - they are not **expedient organizations** even if they were the best means of providing for destitute children. They are unlawful! A thing cannot be expedient without first being lawful. (I Cor. 10 :23) They are without authority when built and sustained by the church. There is nothing that God has said that includes within its authorization the churches of Christ building any separate organization from the congregation to do anything and brother Thomas cannot produce it. We deny that these organizations are expedient organizations under any circumstance or in any connection. Get it straight, brother Thomas, for you have misrepresented us in the matter. Such organizations built by the church and sustained by them are without divine authority and therefore sinful if they do nothing at all! Their existence is sinful as church built and sustained organizations. If they never interfered with the autonomy of any local church - which they do - they would still be wrong and sinful as church built **and sustained organizations** for there is no authority for the churches of Christ to build anything of the kind!

Our brother's idea of "church government" seems not to be very clear and hence he has no clear idea of what our objection is to these extra organizations which are church built and supported as it relates to church government. In his diagrams on establishing authority, in his book, he thinks that under the generic - church government - the required specific is "local church autonomy" and its coordinate - the "excluded specific" is the missionary society. He goes on to state as we have shown in previous articles that the only thing wrong with the Missionary Society is that it infringes upon local church autonomy and usurps control over the churches. This, of course, the Missionary Society denies just like "our institutions" like Boles Home denies the same. This might be done to some extent, though it would not likely be as wide spread by an organization that had "local autonomy". Local autonomy is just one characteristic of the government for the church of which God is the author. The Lord gave specific form to the government, the only government, he ever gave his church. That form is specified in the Bible. Phil. 1:1. Paul wrote to "all the saints with the Bishops and deacons, which are at Philippi". This is the organization, the form of government, God gave his church. You could not elect a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and a board of directors to take the place of this organization which is divine, even if you gave such organization the element of "local autonomy", without setting aside God's government and becoming a spiritual anarchist. We have no right to substitute a human form for a divine plan. This is the "relation" which such church institutions as "Boles Home Inc." has to "church government." If such an institution comes within the scope of the work of the church at all, then it is actually performing a function which God gave his church to perform through a different body or government (organization). There is no authority for the church building or maintaining that different body or organization. Such institutions are sinful and wrong when they have any relation to the Lord's church in any way.

6. Another misrepresentation related to the two next above in this article is in his allegation that "In this case they (those who oppose Orphan homes, R. E. C.) count it an exact parallel to the Missionary Society". This allegation has been kicked around considerably in the discussion of these matters. It is always a misrepresentation. The man who wouldn't know that they are not "exact parallels" even by the fact that they are engaged in different works - one evangelism and the other benevolence - is too limited in his ability to comprehend to be helped. They are parallel in some points, however, though certainly not identical at every point. Here is the important point of their parallelism ? **Neither of them have any divine authority to exist.** You could point out many other points of similarity or parallelism but at that one point they are standing on exactly the same ground. They have been built by the church, to do the work of the church, and there is no Bible authority for any such organization.

7. In the following quotations is found another of his oft repeated misrepresentations:

"**Another optional** example that has been made into a law by some BRETHREN is that determined from several passages, but best represented by II Cor. 8:13-15: For I say not this that others may be eased and ye distressed; but by equality: your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want; that there may be equality; as it is written, He that gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack.

(Acts 11:27-30, I Cor. 16:1-4 and Romans 15:25-28 are also used in this connection)

This example is that of church cooperation; where one church sends to another some help for benevolent purposes, and in this particular circumstance the receiving church is in a distressed area and unable to meet all the demands. These BRETHREN add up these facts, and then they claim that this example establishes a pattern, namely, that **"The only way one church can help another in benevolent matters is in an emergency, and it must be a 'rich church helping a poor one.'** Such a pattern would be rather cumbersome, as it would require a perfect audit of the financial strength of each congregation. (If the auditor made a mistake, somebody would sin.) (Page 71-72).

Now we have no way of knowing where the quotation included in the above statement in brother Thomas' book came from. He was not fair enough to give the reference and he was unfair enough to give us all credit for that position. We would say that there is an inaccuracy in the quotation he gives that needs correction very badly and that is, "it must be a rich church". Certainly there is a very definite exception to this statement. It is the Macedonian brethren who had a part in the assistance that was sent to the saints in Jerusalem. Paul

describes their condition as one of "deep poverty". In spite of their deep poverty they abounded in the Christian grace of liberality and "gave beyond their power". They besought Paul to allow them to have a part in the relief that was to be sent. II Cor. 8:2-4.

But one of the prime elements of the example in this passage is the fact that the contribution, by whomsoever sent and whatever their ability to give, was sent to a church with more destitute saints in it than it could care for. That is the element always present. The ability to give varied with the givers and it was "acceptable as a man hath and not as he hath not"; but the receiving church was always destitute - that is unable to care for its own needs. There is no variation to this. It is one of the roots of the whole matter. Need is the basis for benevolence whether involving individuals or churches. Here is the principle and we challenge Brother Thomas to find anything in the New Testament that teaches differently: No local church ever sent a contribution out of its treasury, and there is nothing that teaches that one should, to another congregation unless the receiving church was destitute - in need—had more needy to care for than it could relieve. Today, one church promotes a work that it knows it cannot pay for and through its propaganda and pressure enlists other churches to send it enough money to meet its obligations. There has never been a greater program or a more highly organized, propagandized, and advertised promotion in any religious body than the "Herald of Truth". Yet, in New Testament scriptures, nothing that even begins to remotely resemble it can be found, either in precept or example. Let our professor undertake the task if he thinks he can do better than others have done.

The inference in the paragraph quoted above (page 72) is that the incident of Acts 11:27-30 and the contribution of II Cor. 8 and 9 are the same incident in New Testament history. Either the brother was intending to subtly deceive someone by thus combining them or else he is ignorant of simple New Testament history. Either horn of the dilemma is rather embarrassing, or should be, to a "professor of Bible in the Bible Department of Abilene Christian College" and it should embarrass those who are responsible for him being there.

The charge that we believe and teach that it must be a "rich church giving to a poor church" is repeated several times in the book. Such as this one found on page 77: "Between churches, cooperation must be only in emergencies, and the receiving church must be poorer than the giving church"; and again on page 80, "Rich church to a poor church and only in emergencies". Let us call the attention of our readers and brother Thomas, particularly, again to the primary element in the example and in New Testament teaching: The receiving church was always in need - destitute - unable to take care of its own need. There is no exception to this and this is the principle of New Testament teaching that rules out and eliminates completely the practice of one church sending to another church in order to help it promote a big work. The comparative strength of the receiving church and giving church is not necessarily involved in cooperation. In that there is no particular pattern, for the ability of the giving church evidently varied, as in the case of the Macedonian brethren and the brethren of Corinth or Achaia. But whether or not the Jerusalem church was poorer, or the Macedonian church was poorer, Paul allowed the Macedonian brethren to have a part, at their

insistence, in the work. The widow who cast her two mites into the treasury might have needed them worse than they were needed for the purpose to which she gave them but the Lord did not deny her the privilege of giving or restrain or rebuke her for giving too much, though she gave her living. The other end of the matter though does not vary. **THE RECEIVING CHURCH WAS ALWAYS DESTITUTE AND UNABLE TO CARE FOR ITS OWN!**

It becomes very evident that Paul did not put any pressure upon the Macedonian brethren. They besought him to accept the gift. But because of the ability of the Corinthian brethren and their obligation to share with those saints in Jerusalem who were in need, he did put some pressure by way of teaching them their duty. It was their "abundance" that was to supply the "want" of the Jerusalem saints that there might be "equality".

8. From the following quotations we give you in the author's own words the next misrepresentation that we want to deal with:

"B. They hold that the orphan homes as now organized can, and should, be supported by individual Christians, and also hold that individuals can contribute to sponsoring churches; but they would not allow that individual Christians could contribute to a Missionary Society. Thus they admit that they are not parallels.

"C. They admit that churches can scripturally 'buy the services' of the orphan homes, but they deny this could be done from Missionary Societies, so again there is no exact parallel in their view."

(Page 144)

I have not seen the admissions that brother Thomas talks about in these paragraphs and, of course, do not know to whom he refers. If they have ever been made, they are not general among those who oppose church support for these human arrangements. It is impossible to pin such accusations down until the author is willing to identify the source of such, if any. This sort of thing is like, "they say". It is impossible to find out who "they" are. Our readers can be certain though that such an admission is not representative of the vast bulk of brethren who oppose churches building and maintaining human organization to do their work. It is, at least, a misrepresentation of the most of us. If these human benevolent societies which churches have built and are maintaining and to which they delegate their work and their resources, have a right to exist at all they have a right to church support. "As now organized" we deny that they have any right to exist. It would be just as scriptural for an- individual Christian to contribute to a benevolent society built by the church to do its work as for that same individual to contribute to a missionary society to do the work of the church. Neither of them have any divine authority to exist in the realm of their activity - that is, to do the work of the church. The benevolent societies are exactly parallel to the missionary societies in the point that there is no divine authority for either as church institutions. They are not

parallel at every point but they are in that respect. Brother Thomas admits this himself!

In the correspondence with brother Cecil Willis, brother Thomas was asked this question, under date of Nov. 15, 1968, (see G. G. Vol. 11, Number 26, page 413)

"In order to clarify your position in my mind, would you please answer the following question. You make the point that the board of the orphan homes does not violate congregational autonomy. So this question: If the board that directs Boles Orphan Home were to decide to change its mission from care of orphans, or to enlarge its mission, so as to include gospel preaching, operated just as it is now, except that its work changed, would you endorse it? Could congregations send money to that board and the board make arrangements for the gospel to be preached, just as it does for children's care to be provided?"

Brother Thomas refused to answer the question directly after three letters were written pleading with him to do so. As near as he got to it was to say:

"In further reply to your last letter, my purpose has been to deal with principles and to try to help brethren to think clearly with respect to them. There is no point in my making specific application of the principles as brethren should be able to do that.

"Specifically the question that you asked me to give a yes or no answer to is definitely "loaded" and I would be doing an injustice to answer it in that manner". (same reference as above) (Letter written Jan. 26, 1959)

Now, brother Thomas should have done better than for brother Willis. Why wouldn't he answer the question, if not with yes or no, then fully enough to set forth his views on the matter? The answer is obvious when you remember just a few things in our brother's book.

(1.) Brother Thomas has endorsed completely and absolutely the principle of the Missionary Society. He has said that the only thing wrong with it is the fact that it controls and dominates the churches.

"This means, then, that the use of the Missionary Society is excluded and sinful, since it clearly involves an alternate or substitute form of church government. Where the Society functions it **dominates and controls** (in mission activity) the local congregation which comprise its membership and the 'local autonomy' pattern is definitely replaced." (Page 35)

"The exact point of this 'parallelism to the Missionary Society' is that these 'societies' are supposed also to violate and contradict the principle of the autonomy of the local church. It is admitted by all of us that the Missionary Society is guilty here, and this is really the one and only thing that is wrong with it — however, that is sufficient to make it sinful and

wrong". (Page 137)

Now "all of us" **do not admit that** the Missionary Society is guilty of any such thing. The governing officials of the United Christian Missionary Society deny that brother Thomas' statement is so. But suppose we grant that the

Missionary Society - any Missionary Society does control the churches and dominate them in their mission work and that is the "one and only thing that is wrong" with them. (Neither do "all of us" admit that) Then, if they did not or they should cease to dominate and control the churches in their mission work, they would be all right according to our brother and would not be wrong for the "one and only thing wrong" would have been eliminated. So he completely endorses the principle of the Missionary Society though he does not endorse what he believes is an abuse that condemns them.

(2.) Brother Thomas has also taken the position that certain arrangements found in the scriptures and used by brethren today justify the operation of an Orphan Home, as they are organized now, under self-perpetuating boards. (Page 180-181)

(3.) They can have the same form of organization as a missionary society provided they do not act like a missionary society in the control and domination of the churches. Such a form is scriptural, according to our brother.

(4.) The only way that such an orphan home can become unscriptural according to our brother is:

"for it to become like a missionary society in that:

- (1.) The will of the church becomes subservient to the will of the organization.
- (2.) The organization should legislate and the church obey.
- (3.) The organization should dominate and 'control' the church—choose and direct for it and even 'makes assignments,' and truly be its organic superior, with the right to apply organic pressure upon the church".

But suppose that we have a missionary society that does not do that ? Brother Thomas denies that the organization that provides the home for children at Quinlan, Boles Home, Inc. exercises any such dominion over the churches, though facts speak very differently in many instances. But suppose there is no such domination of churches as our brother would say makes it wrong, would it be scriptural for this same organization - Boles Home, Inc., to be the medium through which churches preach the gospel ? Brother Thomas admitted the parallel when he murmured, "That is a LOADED QUESTION" and we submit that he is entirely right about that.

Now to put his inconsistency back to him. Brother Thomas, if a Christian, as well as a

church, can support such an organization, under a self-perpetuating board of directors, to do benevolent work when it does not dominate the churches contributing to it, why can't both individual Christians and churches of Christ contribute to missionary societies under a self-perpetuating board to do the work of evangelism for the churches, if they do not control the churches and dominate them when they contribute to them? You must endorse both if they neither control and dominate the churches. The fact is that some of the scriptural instances that you pervert to serve your purpose (page 81) where instances of preaching and teaching instead of benevolence! Our brother cannot deny to reasonable and honest minds that he stands committed.

As to the second misrepresentation in the paragraph quoted above from page 144, "they also hold that individuals can contribute to sponsoring churches", that is just as untrue as the other. No reasonable and consistent mind is going to condemn a thing as unscriptural and then endorse the individual supporting it. II John, verses 9-11, would condemn that even as to a matter of teaching and more especially the supporting of that which is wrong.

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds".

The man who condemns a practice and then participates in it, condemns himself and separates himself from God. This is why so many brethren, as honest and sincere as anybody, have had to walk out of so many congregations all over the country in order to keep from violating their consciences and condemning themselves by practicing that which they condemned and verily believed to be wrong. Injecting the support of these human institutions that are doing the work of the church into the budget of the churches so that a part of every dime given by any member goes to their support makes it necessary for the individual that contributes in the worship of that congregation to participate in their support. If an individual Christian believes such to be contrary to the will of God, he can no more contribute to it than he could use instrumental music in the worship against his convictions and conscience. Forcing these matters into churches, even though their supporters admit that they are matters of expediency and therefore non-essential, either makes it necessary for those conscientiously opposed to violate their consciences or get out. That is what is causing the division that brother Thomas is praying for the Lord to heal! If he would leave his idols out, and accept some basis upon which all could conscientiously agree instead of insisting on his own way and judgment prevailing, then he could help answer his own prayer.

The third misrepresentation in the paragraph quoted from page 144 is this: "They admit that churches can scripturally 'buy the services' of the orphan homes, but they deny that this could be done from Missionary Societies". Our brother should have told us who "they" are.

This is a very general statement and certainly does not correctly represent any considerable number. It misrepresents clearly the convictions and attitude of many of us. The churches buying services would be patronizing a clearly unscriptural institution. Commodities might be bought from almost anyone without giving any endorsement whatever to the person or organization from whom they are bought under anything like ordinary circumstances. But to send children to a home such as Boles even to be cared for on a commercial or monetary basis or for a specified consideration and with the privilege of removing said children when you wished would give impetus and encouragement and would be construed as endorsement and most certainly would be misused just as our brother has misused even the idea of doing so. Brother Thomas when you represent all who oppose these human societies doing the work of the church as endorsing churches buying services from them, you misrepresent the most of us, if not all.

9. The final misrepresentation of our brother that we want to deal with in this article is found in this statement:

"D. Such BRETHREN have fellowship with Christians who believe and practice the sponsoring church method of cooperation church-support of orphan homes, but they do not have a similar attitude toward Missionary Societies"

Our brother should know that it isn't the "attitude" that is disfellowshipped. Where did any congregation ever refuse fellowship to any person simply because they regarded instrumental music or the missionary society to be all right? If they did not inject it into the worship and disturb the peace and harmony of the congregation by contending for it, they could be fully fellowshiped. Neither is it the attitude that is dividing brethren over these human societies that are being built by the churches to do their work. It is the fact that you cannot worship with these churches supporting them and contribute in that worship without participating in what you believe to be wrong. The line of fellowship is not drawn because of simply the attitude on either question but because of their being brought into the practice of the church. There are congregations all over the land where brethren differ about these matters but have left them out of the church and its practice and while they are issues that are being studied and discussed, they have brought no disruption of fellowship. We could name you many such places. But where there are those with convictions against such and enough courage of their convictions to be unwilling to participate in the support of these societies in violation of their consciences when they are brought into the practice of the church and crammed down their throats, they always bring a disruption of fellowship just like the practice of instrumental music did a hundred years ago.

As for those who have tried to preach and teach what we believe the Bible teaches contrary to these humanly built societies, the matter of fellowship has been no problem to us for we have been "quarantined", castigated, demeaned, lied about, persecuted, and called every ugly name in the catalog. Our BRETHREN who are praying for unity, like brother

Thomas, have taken care of the matter of fellowship, because of our opposition to their "idols". We get about as much "fellowship" at Abilene Christian College as we could at Baylor University. Don't construe this as a complaint or you will misconstrue it! "None of these things move us" one whit except we deplore the hypocrisy of those who pretend to be so interested in fellowship but are willing to extend it only when YOU meet their own terms.