

Dear brother Fred:

Loving Greetings

Dec 16, 1977

Thank you for your subscription, and your kind and brotherly letter.

I fully share your concern for the welfare and unity of the brotherhood, and I am dead against either lowering the scriptural standard set forth so ably by bre Thomas and Roberts, or presuming to go beyond it.

Many have, with assumption of greater knowledge and ability than these brethren, gone beyond to what they consider a "higher" standard than these brethren (like the brother who accused you of being a 'blasphemer' because you agree with the pioneers on the points you mention).

Others have let themselves slip below the standards of the pioneers. Both extremes are unwise, and are to be avoided. The Berean Fellowship has never lowered the scriptural standards set by these brethren but has tried, and is trying, to hold to them, deviating neither to right hand or left.

I believe you could greatly help the welfare and unity of the brotherhood and set concern at rest by pointing out to any who may be uncertain, the teaching of our pioneers on this vexing problem. I am enclosing the teachings of bro Roberts, who was very clear, but never blew this matter up beyond its proper place. You are also aware that brother Thomas similarly wrote: –

"Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry thou hast not sinned. This of course is for brethren in Christ, not outsiders, for, says Paul, 'what have I to do to judge them that are without?' Still, on the principle of being 'subject to the ordinances of men for the Lord's sake,' it would be necessary for such not to marry a second contemporary wife without a legal divorce" (Herald, 1860).

"Jesus forbad divorce upon any other ground than the wife's unfaithfulness. A saint regulated by the word would have only one wife at a time. He would seek divorce only on scriptural ground." (Christadelphian, 1866).

Those who go beyond this are not setting a 'higher' standard. God's own standard is the highest and wisest possible, and these faithful pioneer brethren well understood it. The problem and sin is not divorce but adultery. Divorce is the remedy God has provided the partner. Certainly a brother should forgive 70 X 7. Certainly a brother should 'eat no meat' if it will offend anyone. But God knows the human constitution, and he has made a provision that I would not presume to take

away, or judge a brother on. Better, says Paul, to stay single from the beginning. How true! But am I going to force a brother into this “better” way, if God has made provision for his weakness? Each has his proper gift in this respect from God.

I am sure you deeply respect the ability, knowledge, sincerity and high standards of these two pioneer brethren. You could put troubled minds at rest by calling attention to their wise counsel.

The Old Paths group have recently broken in half over the divorce issue. Many of those that remain with them have now gone from the one extreme of advocating suing at law against another to the other extreme of the Dawn view. They are at present deeply divided.

I do not say the Berean Fellowship is entirely agreed on this matter, but as a Body we have not swung from one extreme to the other as Old Paths has, but have gradually drawn closer to the sound teachings of our pioneer brethren. Old Paths have swung from beyond these brethren on the one side to now beyond them on the other. This is not stability. Where next?

The points you raise well illustrates the wisdom and necessity of holding to the sound, balanced teaching of our pioneers. You are, of course, right about a couple coming out of darkness, and you are in harmony with the pioneers on this.

I cannot agree Old Paths holds a “better” stand than the Bereans. We are not wiser than God. Nor are we wiser than brethren Thomas and Roberts. Old Paths would be much wiser and more stable if they gave more weight to the teachings of brethren Thomas and Roberts.

With much love in the truth.

(signed) Rene

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*With much love in the Truth
Rene*