

## Fellowship on Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

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In the late 1840s, a small group of Christian men met in a room in Cincinnati, Ohio and made some decisions that affected every church of Christ in America. The action of those men resulted in the American Christian Missionary Society, which in turn produced two coalitions of churches—those for the society and those against it.

In the latter part of that same century, another group of men met in Ridgeway, Kentucky and made some decisions that again influenced every church of Christ in America. Their decision concerned the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. Their action resulted in another denominational split within churches of Christ, i.e., two camps of churches—those churches for it and those against it.

In the mid-1900s, a small group of men met in a room in Abilene, Texas and made decisions that impacted every church of Christ in America. The elders of the Fifth and Highland Church of Christ determined to be a sponsoring church, i.e., to oversee the work of thousands of churches of Christ across the land. It was a decision that affected every church of Christ in America. Their action resulted in two parties of churches of Christ—those against the concept and those for it.

Most of us are indignant at the idea that anyone could meet in Cincinnati and make decisions that impacted every local church, and it

makes us realize that some unhealthy relationships existed between those churches, for such a division to take place. We are also provoked that men could meet in Ridgeway and make decisions with similar results, and we realize that again, some unhealthy relationships existed between those churches that participated in the division. Likewise, we realize that had churches of Christ been as independent as they claimed, such a division could not have arisen from a meeting in Abilene. The very idea that anyone could meet anywhere, especially Cincinnati, Ridgeway, or Abilene, and make decisions that influenced every local church in America, ought to exasperate us all.

However, in 1988, a small number of men met concerning a small church in Belen, New Mexico and made decisions that again threaten to affect every church of Christ in America. It is a fact that a great controversy confronts churches of Christ, this time, on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Although there is not just one issue, but many, the question arises as to what we should tell those we attempt to reconcile to Christ to do, when they have been involved in divorce and remarriage situations. This chapter does not attempt to deal with those important issues, but rather with how a local congregation should conduct itself in the midst of controversy. Its main thrust is *that each local church should study the issues for itself, determine its own conduct on these matters, and not allow any outside preacher, paper, college, or coalition of congregations to determine its action*. This is not to say that a preacher, paper, or college might not aid in the procedure of determining what that local group of Christians conceives to please God, but that they should not interfere with that church's study, deliberation, and determination of its own action.

## History of Denominational Divisions Among Churches of Christ

### Missionary Society Issue in Mid-1800s

When a doctrinal split occurred over whether local churches could support an external organization to preach the gospel, the history of the “restoration movement” shows that the split occurred before very much study took place on this issue. Brethren chose up sides and an ugly grab for the loyalty of congregations took place. The result was a denominational split among churches of Christ. By denominational, we mean that by and large, two camps, or coalitions of churches resulted. It was denominational in nature, because that's exactly what a

denomination is—a coalition of congregations. Such a split could not have taken place without denominational concepts of the body of Christ. Had congregations been more independent, not allowing preachers, papers, or colleges to exercise undue influence on their study and to determine their own congregational action, it could never have occurred. This was evidenced by the fact that Christians on both sides of the issue were not that familiar with the others' arguments. The split took place before much study had been done.

### Instrumental Music in Latter 1800s

The split over whether Christians should use instruments of music in their worship also occurred before much study was done by Christians in general. Line-ups of congregations resulted, due to unwarranted influence by preachers, papers, and colleges, which in many cases precluded open study and deliberation on the part of each congregation.

During this controversy, David Lipscomb, a highly regarded preacher of the gospel and editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, constantly upheld the importance of open discussion in local churches:

The Church that stifles investigation, but [only—SGD] prepares and nourishes the elements of violent explosion and division within its own bosom. We will freely, gladly hear ourselves and let our readers hear both sides of every question we present. (David Lipscomb, *Gospel Advocate*, 1866, p. 111.)

I would like to see all of us get along pleasantly and harmoniously in obeying the commands of God. But if the *Gospel Advocate* were to adopt this policy of criticizing others and refusing to let them reply, I would cease to read it. (David Lipscomb, *Gospel Advocate*, 1912, pp. 44, 45.)

Congregations, which did not discuss these issues for themselves, and determine their own action, were doomed to participate in another denominational split.

### Institutional Controversy of 1950s

Likewise, the split over institutionalism occurred without much study. Many congregations split before brethren really understood the arguments on both sides. Preachers and papers quarantined each other,

and applied great pressure to side with this group or that. Lipscomb's own *Gospel Advocate* initiated a quarantine, so that had Lipscomb still been alive, he wouldn't have read it! This split occurred because of undue outside influence which in many cases precluded much deliberation and study. The idea that a meeting of “sponsoring-church elders” in Abilene, Texas could affect congregations across the land is abhorrent to many. A denominational split could not have occurred without a denominational idea of the body of Christ. Had congregations been independent, such a split would have been impossible.

At the time, Reuel Lemmons, editor of the *Firm Foundation* spoke well of the need for independent congregational study:

I don't want any committee of editors deciding for me what the truth is. I will decide that for myself. And every reader of every paper in the brotherhood should feel the same way. Neither an infallible man nor an infallible paper exists. Not man, nor committee of men—even though they be editors—can tell me what to believe. (Reuel Lemmons, *Firm Foundation*, May 28, 1957, cited by Herbert E. Winkler, *Congregational Cooperation of the Churches of Christ* [Herbert E. Winkler Publisher, 1961], p. 10.)

### Another Denominational Split Coming

The author prepared this chapter because the same process began happening again. Brethren have differed long about the various issues encompassed within marriage, divorce, and remarriage. But all of a sudden, though, a few preachers and editors felt that congregations must line up, and that open discussion and study in each congregation was dangerous. These few began advocating that lines of fellowship must be drawn. They began bringing undue influence to bear on congregations, which will inevitably result in many congregations being split, and there will be another denominational line-up of congregations.

It's not the author's responsibility to ensure the independence of all congregations. That is the responsibility of each congregation. But the author does have the responsibility to teach how we should behave ourselves in the midst of this controversy. Thus, this chapter doesn't deal with the various doctrinal issues of divorce and remarriage. Rather, it deals with how individual Christians and local churches should conduct themselves to avoid participation in another denominational split.

Although there has been disagreement and discomfort over marriage, divorce and remarriage since the earliest days of the “restoration movement,” the present heated controversy began in Belen, New Mexico in March, 1988. At that time, Homer Hailey, a gospel preacher highly regarded for decades, was involved. For forty-five years, he held a different-than-mainstream position on divorce and remarriage, and was asked to come to Belen to explain his position in a private congregational study. Many of the preachers who later attacked Hailey had known of his position for those forty-five years, but since Hailey didn't openly propagate it, they were content to leave him alone. The study in Belen was to be private, as Hailey said:

The meeting was private, and they insisted we keep it that way. A friend of mine from a different congregation wanted to attend, but they did not want it. The meeting was to be private. We sat around a table, fourteen or sixteen, I believe, and for an hour and a half I went through the Scriptures pointing out the ground of my position; then we spent an hour asking and answering questions. I then left. They had assured me that what they wanted was my view to compare with the differing view, that they might make a decision. I didn't even make any special preparation, just went as one would meet and discuss a matter. (Homer Hailey, Letter to *Christianity Magazine*, November 1988, p. 7.)

The session was videotaped, and the tape was then widely circulated across the United States. Had the study remained private, the resulting controversy would not have ensued. With the widespread distribution of the tape, many became alarmed.

Connie Adams, editor of *Searching the Scriptures* and one who was aware of Hailey's position for nearly forty-five years, wrote one of the first articles citing the “potential for all out war,” because Hailey was openly preaching his position. The author's purpose is not to defend Hailey at all, but to ask, was this alarm the result of Hailey teaching his position to less than twenty people sitting around a table in Belen, New Mexico (at their request), or because some didn't leave a private study private?

At that same time, some raised a voice against harsh treatment of a brother of Hailey's stature, among them Ed Harrell, co-editor of *Christianity Magazine*:

Must we label every person who disagrees with us a false teacher? Then I must surely judge almost every other brother to be a false teacher in some regard. The end of such thinking is rampant factionalism.

A false teacher is surely one whose dishonest motives and/or ignorance distinguish him from the sincere brother who has reached an erroneous conclusion. If that is not the case, then I am surrounded by false teachers.

I judge him to be one of the most godly and learned men I have ever known. I have walked proudly with him through the years, learning, and loving, finding him always willing to probe those questions where his views conflicted with mine. Through sixty years of service Hailey has proven himself to be a tireless student, a profound preacher and a selfless builder of the cause of Christ. He has left behind a trail of praiseworthy achievements. He is a great and a good man, and brethren have sought to use him and to honor him. At this late date, he deserves nothing less. (Ed Harrell, *Christianity Magazine*, November 1988, p. 9.)

The author agrees with these remarks, but they were too limited. We should not have treated Hailey right because of his advanced years; we all need to treat each other right, regardless of our years! Everyone won't, but that shouldn't keep the rest of us from behaving ourselves.

As expected, Harrell's plea to treat Hailey right brought abuse upon him. Ken Leach, in a bulletin circulated across the United States, was quick to charge Harrell with thinking too highly of men:

A perfect example of thinking more highly of man than one ought to think is the Ed Harrell editorial (“Homer Hailey: False Teacher”) in *Christianity Magazine*, November, 1988 issue. In spite of admitting that Hailey believes and teaches error on divorce and remarriage, brother Harrell writes:

[Quotation from Harrell is given above and is not repeated here.]

The scriptures teach to expose those who teach such false doctrines as does Hailey (Eph. 5:11) and to rebuke

them (Titus 2:15). This is to be done openly (I Tim. 5:20), sharply (Titus 1:3) and towards repentance (Rev. 3:19). Ones providing shelter and safety for those teaching such things as Hailey teaches on divorce and remarriage stand in violation of 2 John 9-11 and share in the evil deeds.

Recommending that congregations disregard Hailey's teaching on divorce and remarriage and continue to use him for gospel meetings is not according to truth.

Leach didn't point out what was wrong with Hailey's teaching, but decided that Harrell's disagreement with parts of it should be good enough for his readers. He, thus, assumed that Hailey taught false doctrine, deserved national rebuke, and admonished congregations not to listen to Hailey.

Did Hailey deserve sharp national rebuke for a private study? No, these admonitions resulted because the church in Belen didn't leave it private. The issue is not what Hailey believed. The issue is whether these men and papers had the right to decide who congregations ought to listen to, and when all out war was necessary.

## These Men Are Not Qualified to Incite a Split

After congregations study these questions for themselves, and prayerfully deliberate how the scriptures should be applied to real situations, there may still have to be lines of fellowship drawn *within those congregations*. However, the author simply agrees with David Lipscomb that there should be much study before matters arrive at that dismal result:

When differences exist, the discussion of these differences is the only hope of union. The suppression of discussion is the direct and open road to division. Whoever opposes the free discussion of differences among brethren, in that favors speedy division. Differences existing will manifest themselves. If they are discussed freely, there is hope of reconciliation and harmony. Suppress the discussion, and unless the strong hand of arbitrary and despotic power holds by the terror of physical force, disruption and division must follow. When persons having a community of interest differ, so

long as those who differ show a kindly interest in the others, listen to the remonstrances, treat with considerate kindness their feelings, wishes, and reasonings, they remain one. The moment the one party says: "We wish to hear no more your reasonings; we intend no longer to regard your feelings or wishes; we intend to go our own way, regardless of your course or purposes," those people become two distinct people. Division or an unmanly and unchristian submission to what we believe to be wrong is the only alternative. (*Gospel Advocate*, 1906, p. 552.)

In other words, Christians should have the character to treat each other right while they study controversial questions. In addition, *these men who pressed for division, and would draw lines of fellowship within congregations and between congregations that have not seriously studied these issues, are not themselves qualified to incite such a split:*

### J. T. Smith, Editor of *Torch Magazine*

For example, one of the preachers who pressed for division, J. T. Smith, participated in four debates (each six months apart over two years, 1976-1978) with Glen Lovelady, Lyle McCollum, Bob Melear, and Jack Gibbert. He contradicted himself on the definition of adultery, a concept basic to the whole topic. In the first two debates, Smith limited adultery to fornication involving a spouse. In the last two, Smith abandoned this position and said that adultery could be committed by two people, neither of whom had a spouse. Notice, in his debate with Lyle McCollum, he responded to a formal question:

Do you agree that the definition of adultery is limited to sexual intercourse with the spouse of another? Yes. (Smith-McCollum Debate, Night 1, October 4, 1976, Question No. 5.)

Five months later, in his debate with Bob Melear, Smith asserted that adultery was not limited to sexual sins with another's spouse. Commenting on Mt. 5.28, Smith said:

If it does not include one who is single looking on one who is single, then, according to that, that means, as we've already pointed out, and as one commentator said, that it does not involve them, and therefore they're free

to look on them and lust after them as they will. (Smith-Melear Debate, March 8, 1977.)

That same night, Smith said:

The word adultery in the Old Testament does include those who are not married as well as those who are married because this is the only instruction that God gave: “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and the word fornication is not used. (Smith-Melear Debate, March 8, 1977.)

The issue in this chapter is not the definition of adultery, and it's certainly not Smith's integrity, intelligence, or sincerity. The issue is whether one who doesn't even know the definition of the word adultery has any business telling people to separate and instigating drawing lines of fellowship between brethren.

Likewise, Smith gave conflicting answers on another question. He was asked in all four debates how a put-away fornicator would answer Paul's question in I Cor. 7.27-28, “Art thou loosed from a wife?” In the first debate, he told Glen Lovelady:

How can the put-away fornicator answer Paul's question on I Cor. 7.27b, “Art thou loosed from a wife?” No. (*Smith-Lovelady Debate*, March 26, 1976, question 4 [Brooks, KY: Searching The Scriptures, 1976], p. 265.)

Then he told Lyle McCollum seven months later:

How would the put-away fornicator answer Paul's question, art thou loosed from a wife, I Cor. 7.27? Yes, but I've been divorced for fornication and would be guilty of adultery if I married. (Smith-McCollum Debate, October 7, 1976, Question 1.)

In response to the same question five months later, he told Bob Melear:

Do you say that the put-away fornicator is loosed from a mate as per I Cor. 7.27 but nevertheless bound or obligated to the law of her husband? I don't know what loosing Paul is discussing in the passage. He does not say. (Smith-Melear Debate, March 8, 1977, Question 2.)

Finally, thirteen months later, Smith answered Jack Gibbert this way:

What answer would a put-away fornicator give the apostle Paul? I presume with reference to what was asked in question five. The put-away fornicator would say no to this and we'll see why as the discussion continues. (Smith-Gibbert Debate, April 17, 1978, Question 6.)

The issue is not that some disagree with Smith on I Cor. 7.27-28—even he does that! The issue is that one who answers the same question by “No,” “Yes,” “I don't know,” and “No,” needs to get his own answers straight before debating and drawing lines of fellowship. Should he tell people to separate and participate in an all out war?

Smith also gave inconsistent answers to the question of whether one must remain bound to an adulterous mate. In the Lovelady debate, March 22, 1976, he said:

Must a mate remain bound to an adulterous partner? No, if the adulterous partner does not repent. (*Ibid.*, p. 36.)

The next evening, Smith responded just the opposite:

If an innocent woman is put away by her husband for no cause, not for fornication, and then that man marries another, and thereby commits adultery, can the innocent, put-away one, now put away her adulterous mate, or must she remain bound to that adulterer? She is not free. She is not free.

Likewise, in the Melear debate, Smith again answered the same question two different ways. On the first night, he responded:

Does God require that one must remain bound to either his adulterous partner or to the law of his adulterous partner? No. (Smith-Melear Debate, March 10, 1977, question 1.)

The next night he said:

Doesn't the proposition you affirmed last night demand that the put-away woman remain bound by the law to her adulterous husband? Yes, but her husband was not an

adulterer when they got a divorce. (Smith-Melear Debate, March 11, 1977, Question 3.)

About a year later, he told Gibbert:

Must any innocent woman remain bound to an adulterous mate? It depends on whether it's before or after the fact. (Smith-Gibbert Debate, April 2, 1978, Question 3.)

As stated before, the issue is not what Smith believes or his sincerity. The issue is whether or not a man who answers the same question “Yes,” “No,” and “It depends,” has his own thinking together enough on the subject to qualify him to take such hard stands on these issues and to insist that others stand with him.

### **Connie Adams and H. E. Phillips, Editors of *Searching the Scriptures***

Likewise, Connie Adams, editor of *Searching the Scriptures*, is not qualified to determine when “all out war” ought to take place, because of the careless way he bandies about inflammatory terms, particularly the term “Moyer Position.” Lloyd Moyer taught in the 1950s that when a man was unfaithful to his wife, the first act of fornication breaks his old marriage, and the second makes a new one. A concise statement of Lloyd Moyer's position follows:

That first marriage has been destroyed by the sin of fornication (illicit or unlawful sexual intercourse). Though adultery was committed when they first joined themselves together in intercourse because they were still the husband or wife of someone else, subsequent sexual intercourse between them is not adultery. They are no longer the husband or wife of someone else. And by this sin of adultery they cause their previous marriage to be dissolved. When a marriage is thus dissolved, the innocent is no longer married to the guilty, nor is the guilty any longer married to the innocent. No marriage exists. Where no marriage exists, the parties may marry someone else. We have shown that by the very act of adultery the first marriage was defiled, adulterated and therefore dissolved. Subsequent sexual intercourse would not be adultery. It would be simply a man and his

wife cohabiting in the confines of marriage. (Lloyd Moyer, *Gospel Guardian*, Aug. 22 and 29, 1963, pp. 253, 257.)

Lloyd was the only Moyer who taught this position. Both his brothers rejected it for the same reason many people do: fornication never made a marriage bond, and it never broke one, that is, without a putting away for fornication.

At the time of the Smith-Lovelady debate, H. E. Phillips, editor of *Searching the Scriptures*, moderated for Smith. In this debate, neither Smith nor Lovelady believed the Moyer position, nor did the only Moyer who attended the debate believe that position. The word “Moyer” was in none of the propositions, and no one spoke the word “Moyer” in the course of the debate. In fact, Gene Frost, another prolific writer on the subject has said:

I know of no one today who believes the position that brother Moyer took. (“The Divorce Issue,” *Gospel Anchor*, July 1978, pp. 2-7.)

But Connie Adams and H. E. Phillips, editors of *Searching the Scriptures*, published the debate, and their advertisements said, “This debate examines the Moyer Position.” Even if it did, the debate must not have done a very good job of it, since the word “Moyer” never occurred the whole week! We have no problem with the sincerity or integrity of Connie Adams and H. E. Phillips, but as they bandied that term about, they either didn't know enough about it, or weren't careful enough, to be qualified to decide when “all out war” should take place.

Later, Connie Adams wrote about brother Hailey and the Bales position, and in so doing misrepresented Bales' position. Bales believes that all men are under law to Christ, but not that all men are under *all* the Law of Christ. Bales believes that aliens are under the entrance requirements, so they are not commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper, contribute to preaching the gospel, nor take the gospel to the lost. But Adams said that Bales doesn't believe alien sinners are under law to Christ at all. Bales also believes that alien sinners are condemned because they violate the law of their conscience. Adams asked why we should preach the gospel to aliens if they're not amenable to all the Law of Christ. He wonders how he got to be a sinner in the first place. Bales teaches that it's because he violated his conscience, just like the Gentiles Paul spoke of in Romans 1-2 violated the law of their conscience. One

who knows no more than this about the issue, isn't qualified to decide when "all out war" should take place.

### Gene Frost, Editor of *Gospel Anchor*

Gene Frost, editor of the *Gospel Anchor*, has also written a tremendous amount on this subject over the years, but the thing we wish to note is his disparagement of study:

The subject of divorce and remarriage is yet an unresolved study with many. It is one of controversy wherein many positions are advocated. And yet we must conclude that differences are the result of the weakness of man rather than a failure in the revelation of God. (Gene Frost, "Gift of Celibacy," *Gospel Anchor*, October 1976, pp. 20-22.)

If by weakness Frost means imperfect knowledge or limited intelligence, he is surely correct. But Frost didn't leave it at that. About Jack Gibbert, who debated Smith, he said:

Gibbert stated that the subject of divorce and remarriage is an "unsettled question." What false teacher would not subscribe to such a position? (Gene Frost, "The Divorce Issue," *Gospel Anchor*, July 1978, p. 4.)

Many conclude from this that *unresolved study* means one is *weak*, and is thus a *false teacher*. Many false teachers don't believe their question is unsettled (e.g., denominational preachers, Jehovah's Witnesses, premillennialists, Mormons, charismatics, etc.). Most seriously, this statement chills tremendously the atmosphere for study, and makes many Christians take hardened stands on matters which they haven't studied thoroughly themselves.

However, in his earlier days, Frost took a number of years for quiet study himself on this very subject:

Through the years following, I have had relatively little to say upon the subject, for the most part speaking on it as requested. My disposition has been to avoid a heated, brotherhood controversy in favor of a period of calm, deliberate study. ("The Divorce Issue," *Gospel Anchor*, July 1978, pp. 2-7.)

Don't we all need what Frost needed then? If not on divorce and remarriage, on some other subject? We do, and the next generation will, too. Just because Frost studied the issue out for himself, that doesn't mean that thousands now don't need to do the same thing. New converts will have to study, for surely we won't teach them to rely on Frost's conclusions, will we? *The conclusions of his study aren't "case law" for others.* When a state supreme court decides a matter, that decision becomes case law for the courts throughout the state. When the editor of a paper decides a matter, his decision does not become case law throughout the brotherhood. When prominent Jewish rabbis did this, they called it the *Talmud*! Why can Frost have years of calm, deliberate study, but others who claim it's an "unsettled question" are branded as false teachers? It's not fair for someone who has been able to study for years to write off someone else who hasn't, and is honestly searching for truth.

Recall Reuel Lemmon's statement concerning the earlier controversy on institutionalism:

I don't want any committee of editors deciding for me what the truth is. I will decide that for myself. And every reader of every paper in the brotherhood should feel the same way. Neither an infallible man nor an infallible paper exists. Not man, nor committee of men—even though they be editors—can tell me what to believe. (Reuel Lemmons, *Firm Foundation*, May 28, 1957.)

As with the others, the issue is not Frost's intelligence, sincerity, or love of the Lord at all. As Christians, we have the right and responsibility to study *any issue* for ourselves. We should be extremely leery of anyone who stifles study, whether it's the Catholic Church, or a preacher, paper, or anyone else.

### Sensible Words from James W. Adams, Editor of the *Gospel Guardian*

James W. Adams, former editor of the *Gospel Guardian*, wrote many sensible things about fellowship on divorce and remarriage several years before the controversy over Hailey's teaching began. His influence probably held off a denominational split among us in the mid-1970s. His comments don't deal with the truth on the issues as much as they deal with how we ought to treat each other while we're studying. In the *Gospel Guardian* of June 1, 1976, James Adams said:

The Marriage and Divorce Question, Carnal Warfare and Peace Officers, The Artificial Covering and Long Hair for Women. All of these matters and others which could be named have one thing in common. They have to do with the practice of the individual Christian and not of a congregation as a congregation. In this, they differ radically from questions concerning the support of human organizations and sponsoring churches by the congregations as congregations. The practice of a single individual in these areas does not of necessity involve the conscience or practice of another individual. They do not of necessity, therefore, have to become matters of fellowship on the congregational level. This is not to say that truth does not lie on one side or the other of every one of these matters. It is to say that they are to be dealt with in a manner different from that utilized in dealing with congregational matters.

I am not attempting, in this article, to pose a workable solution to our differences in these areas. I am attempting only to appeal to the good sense of serious, reflecting, dedicated brethren of good will not to press their views in these areas to the inevitable destruction of fellowship and peace. Some profess not to make such “tests of fellowship,” yet constantly harp upon these subjects in their preaching and in the church bulletins (many such bulletins are simply sounding boards for the preachers' idiosyncrasies and not mediums of the congregation at all). (James W. Adams, “False Conclusions from Just Principles,” *Gospel Guardian*, pp. 220-221.)

Two years later, Adams wrote:

The divorce and remarriage question is highly complex. Many suppose that their *ipse dixit* in the matter constitute Revelation or Law. Over-simplification of the issue coupled with arbitrary dictums have obscured rather than exposed truth on the question. Too many hesitate not to play god with the lives of other people. I have no disposition whatsoever to adjust God's will to make it compatible with the permissive ethics of our

time, nor do I have any disposition to usurp Divine prerogatives in making overly human, arbitrary, and uncertain application of Divine principles to particular situations. I understand the stated principles of Holy Scripture on divorce and remarriage and preach them unequivocally. However, I am not always absolutely certain how they may apply in complex marital difficulties involving divorce and remarriage. In this respect, I do not know as much as some brethren. Where I am uncertain, I move with great caution. In my teaching, I maintain unequivocally that marriage is for life—one man and one woman and that divorce and remarriage are only permissible when there is violation of the marriage vows—fornication. In a class situation, I do not permit open discussion of the solution of either hypothetical or real situations. (James W. Adams, “Speak for Yourself John,” *Gospel Guardian*, January 15, 1978, p. 29.)

Adams' sensible attitude on conduct during study has prevented him from making many mistakes. He hasn't contradicted himself on the definition of adultery. We don't find him making contradictory statements about I Cor. 7.27-28. He doesn't contradict himself on the “bound to fornicator” position. He doesn't carelessly bandy about prejudicial terms like “Moyer Position.” Neither has he discouraged others from studying for themselves.

A few months later, Adams wrote:

Recently, I wrote an editorial entitled: “Johnny-Come-Lately-Sommerites” in which I addressed my remarks to the senseless and potentially ruinous spirit at work, among conservatives which is ready at “the drop of a hat” to divide and disfellowship over every divergent point of view. Since becoming editor of the paper, I have not written anything in it which has evoked more universal approval than this article. Brethren everywhere are becoming increasingly tired of senseless strife and bickering over every difference. Some are slow to learn (among them, my correspondents) and slower still to cease their activities, but their tirades must not be allowed to obstruct reasonable, scriptural, and patient handling of said differences among us. Love, mercy,

patience, forbearance, longsuffering, and “the unity of the Spirit” must not be sacrificed on the altar of sectarian bigotry and pride. (James W. Adams, “Every Way of Man is Right In His Own Eyes,” *Gospel Guardian*, XXX, No. 10, May 15, 1978, p. 221.)

Note particularly Adams' reference to “sectarian bigotry.” If we substitute the position of a coalition of congregations imposed by preachers or papers (a denominational idea) for our own independent congregational study, *we are indeed sectarian!*

About debates on the issue, Adams wrote:

Formal, oral, public debates that are designed for the benefit of the brotherhood at large, are advertised as such, and are participated in on that basis have a tendency to promote the party spirit among brethren as no other medium of discussion does. There is something so intimately personal about such face to face confrontations when coupled with the inevitable temptation to save face and preserve reputation that causes such confrontations to polarize rather than eradicate divergent views. The result is party alignment and disruption of fellowship. This does not indict all debates nor does it preclude debates between brethren. There can be a place and need for such debates when they are properly arranged, involve qualified and representative disputants, and the propositions for discussion involve matters that have become an issue of sufficient magnitude to affect the unity and fellowship of the Lord's disciples generally. However, to invoke this means of dealing with moot questions in the realm of personal morals and individual responsibilities to God and thereby project them into “tests of fellowship” falls infinitely below what is ordinarily connoted by the term “folly.” (James W. Adams, *Gospel Guardian*, XXX, No. 12, July, 1978, p. 269.)

Concerning fellowship in general, Adams said:

Brethren, we cannot make everything about which we disagree a test of fellowship. Some things in individual practice about which we differ are just going to have to be tolerated. We are just going to have to let the Lord

decide about some things. I confess that I do not have all the answers to all problems in these realms. We can live together concerning these matters if we are satisfied not to *press* our divergent views. Let those with permissive views hold them, not press them. Let those with conservative views in these matters not arrogate to themselves prerogatives of judgment that belong only to “Him who judgeth wisely.” On the basis of charity, I might conceivably have fellowship with some person in this life whose life in the Lord will in the judgment judge as not having been worthy of such fellowship. I think, however, I had rather risk this than to run the risk of driving away from the Lord, as did Diotrophes, those worthy of my fellowship in the eyes of the Lord and thus become the cause of the loss of their souls and the souls of those whom they influence in the world to come. My plea is for sanity, forbearance, and tolerance in these areas of disagreement in which the matter is individual and not collective in character.

I will take second place to no person in my absolute respect for the institution of marriage as ordained by God. The principle of one man and one woman for life, I unequivocally accept. That there is only one cause for divorce and remarriage acceptable to God, fornication, I believe unreservedly. However, relative to how to solve the problems caused by sinful breaking of marriages by imperfect human beings so as to be infallibly certain of the eternal security of those involved, I must often confess my ignorance and even bewilderment. In this respect, others seem to know a great deal more about the subject than do I. My own lack of knowledge and the acute consciousness of my own fallibility cause me to move with great caution. I do not anticipate a time when it will be different. If others, out of a false sense of devotion to a Divine institution, wish to usurp Divine prerogatives and pronounce infallible judgments, so be it. The risk is theirs, and they are welcome to it. (James W. Adams, *Gospel Guardian*, XXX, No. 13, August 1978, pp. 303-304.)

After the attack on Hailey, Adams wrote, in an article entitled “Splendid Murder” (so named from what an eighteenth century Scottish poet wrote concerning war: “Rash, fruitless war, from wanton glory waged, is only splendid murder”):

I admit with embarrassment and shame that such “murder” is committed by professed New Testament Christians in our time. Whenever otherwise faithful brethren are openly and publicly attacked because of difference of understanding some point of Bible teaching when the point of view has been merely voiced as a personal conviction and no effort has been made to press the view upon others, such warfare is both “rash and fruitless.” This being true, for what purpose could it be waged but for “wanton glory?” We presume not to judge, but maintain the right to ask the question.

Spiritual warfare is right, but let us always be sure that the cause justifies the response. A doctor does not remove a leg because of a lesion when an antibiotic will effect a cure. Your automobile may not be legally searched on the highway by an officer of the Law unless he can show “probable cause.” In the church of the Lord, one does not seek to manufacture issues. There are plenty of real ones without unnecessarily creating others. Too often, strife and division, intrachurch or interchurch, which claim a doctrinal basis and profess to be for “love of the truth,” at their root emanate from “lusts that war in our members” or “wanton glory.” There is not even “probable cause,” much less “adequate cause.” It is possible to hide this embarrassing fact from ourselves by convincing ourselves that we are nobly motivated by devotion to a “thus saith the Lord.” This article pleads only for the principle of fighting only when we have to! (James W. Adams, “Splendid Murder,” *The Apostolic Messenger*, July 1989, p. 3.)

### **Guardian of Truth Magazine Pressed for Break in Fellowship**

The irony of this is that when James Adams wrote the above article, he also wrote articles published in the *Guardian of Truth* which said that

such views as his on fellowship were worse than false doctrine on marriage, divorce, and remarriage itself! For example, Mike Willis, editor of *Guardian of Truth* (whose roots go back to the *Gospel Guardian* and *Truth Magazine*), wrote of the Hailey conflict in this way:

As this issue was discussed among us, another group of brethren began teaching that the divorce and remarriage issue should not be made a test of fellowship. In many respects this looser view of fellowship is a more dangerous doctrine than is the loose view of divorce and remarriage. (Mike Willis, “Fellowship and the Divorce and Remarriage Issue,” *Guardian of Truth*, XXXVI, No. 1, January 2, 1992, p. 1.)

In the same issue, Tom Roberts wrote:

Truthfully, these arguments to encourage fellowship on the marriage-divorce-remarriage issue are more dangerous, if possible, than the marriage-divorce-remarriage issue itself. (Tom Roberts, *Ibid.*, p. 17.)

On the next page, Mike Willis, in an article entitled, “Just Like the War Question,” wrote:

Some have argued, “The differences over divorce and remarriage are just like our differences over the war question.” (*Ibid.*, p. 18.)

Willis was correct, some had argued so. But did these men actually believe that James W. Adams, who wrote the following words earlier in the *Gospel Guardian*, was more dangerous than the ones who held false doctrine on divorce and remarriage? Adams wrote:

The Marriage and Divorce Question, Carnal Warfare and Peace Officers, The Artificial Covering and Long Hair for Women. All of these matters and others which could be named have one thing in common. They have to do with the practice of the individual Christian and not of a congregation as a congregation. (James W. Adams, “False Conclusions from Just Principles,” *Gospel Guardian*, June 1, 1976, p. 220.)

If, as Willis said, one who holds such views was more dangerous than the false teacher on divorce and remarriage, could Willis still use

James W. Adams' material in the *Guardian of Truth*? Was this the “unity in diversity” he so readily decried in his paper regarding others? Could it have been that his own concept of fellowship was loose, or perhaps he just didn't realize what Adams' views were? Willis would have done well to have dwelt on these words of Adams:

My own lack of knowledge and the acute consciousness of my own fallibility cause me to move with great caution. I do not anticipate a time when it will be different. If others, out of a false sense of devotion to a Divine institution, wish to usurp Divine prerogatives and pronounce infallible judgments, so be it. The risk is theirs, and they are welcome to it. (James W. Adams, *Gospel Guardian*, XXX, No. 13, August, 1978, pp. 303-304.)

We shouldn't leave the view that Willis' special issue on Fellowship on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage was completely unfruitful as far as wise counsel on this subject. Not surprisingly, Bill Cavender gave several recommendations to promote unity, peace, and good will among brethren:

We can cease using papers published by brethren and churches for dissections of opinions and foolish questions which engender strife. No one's opinion on matters of personal faith or “conscience” are necessary to salvation, and are not to be bound upon anyone in their service and worship to God. We have so many divisive opinions among us nowadays, so many written and unwritten party “shibboleths,” that we are rapidly appearing as a sect, a part of divided people, who have no certain foundations, doctrines and directions to offer the world of saints and sinners alike, and are not sure anymore of anything we say and teach. We are “shooting ourselves in the feet,” decimating ourselves in numbers, diminishing our resources by divisions, beginning churches which are not needed, and discouraging brethren who do want to do God's will. There is hardly a growing “conservative” church of Christ anymore, i.e., growing by baptisms, restorations, and internal spiritual development. (*Ibid.*, p. 5.)

Likewise, Colly Caldwell wrote:

...all decisions on unity must be decided personally or congregationally, not nationally or by some individual Christian or association of Christians for all other Christians. (*Ibid.*, p. 6.)

Again, the issue is not Willis' intelligence, sincerity, or love for Christ. The issue is that he might have been more unified with diversity than he realized, and didn't need to be inciting breaks in fellowship, as the following section suggests.

## Always Have Been Differences, and Still Are

### Always Been Differences

There have been significant differences on these issues since the beginning of the restoration of the New Testament way of Christ in America. For example, Alexander Campbell in the *Millennial Harbinger* of 1834, pp. 70-72, took the same position as James Bales. Campbell took the position that I Cor. 7.12-15 had not been legislated on by the Lord when he gave the legislation of Mt. 19.9, and that when the unbeliever deserted, the believer was free from the marriage bond and could scripturally remarry. He also said that one should accept aliens who had been divorced and remarried while in the world. At the conclusion of the article, he said that Walter Scott also approved of that position. Alexander Campbell had tremendous influence among millions for calling people back to the proper standard for Christians, the Bible. Walter Scott won renown for formulating the “invitation” at the conclusion of services as we know it today. R. L. Whiteside, the author of many books we use today, took the same position on I Cor. 7.10-15. (*Reflections of Robertson L. Whiteside* [Denton, TX: Inys Whiteside, 1965], pp. 102, 107.) David Lipscomb, in the *Gospel Advocate*, advised the young preacher G. C. Brewer, who later became a tremendously influential gospel preacher, regarding this matter. (James D. Bales, *Shall We Splinter?* [Searcy, AR: J. D. Bales Publisher, n.d.], p. 4.) Brewer had baptized someone who had been divorced and remarried. Some members of the congregation objected because the person did not leave his wife. Lipscomb counseled him to let such cases alone instead of separating them.

J. W. McGarvey, a truly great scholar, who wrote several commentaries still popular today, took the position that the put-away

fornicator could remarry. The renowned gospel preacher John T. Lewis said he would not tell aliens to separate. W. W. Otey, who we esteem for his opposition to the missionary society in the early 1900s and the sponsoring church concept in the 1950s, didn't tell divorced aliens to separate when they obeyed the gospel. F. B. Srygley, another giant of earlier times, believed a put-away fornicator could remarry, and quoted McGarvey in his argumentation. The esteemed N. B. Hardeman believed I Cor. 7.15 gave a deserted believer the right to remarry. R. L. Whiteside, as query editor of the *Gospel Advocate* in the 1930s, took the same position. Foy Wallace, Jr. said it was a presumptuous procedure to break up families in *The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State*. (Nashville, TN: Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, 1967, p. 41.)

One might wonder if the author believes all those positions. Of course not, no one could! The point is that we regard these men as giants, and rightly so. We use their commentaries, often quote from them, and are thankful for their service. Why all of a sudden must we now press each other to draw lines of fellowship when men of similar stature have such differences? Why must we now split because of a private study of less than twenty people in Belen, New Mexico, of all places? The last denominational split among us began in Abilene, a small, windblown town in West Texas. If this one starts in Belen, one wonders where the next one will start. Could it be Cut Bank, Montana?

### **Differences Exist Among Those Inciting a Denominational Split on Significant Aspects of Divorce and Remarriage**

Those who continue to press these issues to the division of fellowship are not immune from such a spectrum of differences either. They might give some people the impression that they hold to a monolithic position, but not so! Among them exist significant disagreements about what makes a marriage. They disagree about what divorce actually is. They disagree on their definition of adultery, some espousing definitions no one heard of until the last decade.

They even disagree on one of the major debate propositions: J. T. Smith debated that one unjustly put away cannot put away a fornicating spouse, and said that he draws lines of fellowship with those who disagree with his teaching in those debates. Concerning this proposition, James W. Adams wrote: "I do not believe it to be true! It is a human inference (opinion) from the teaching of Jesus that is purely gratuitous." (James W. Adams, "Identical Abominations," *Gospel Guardian*, XXX, No. XIII, August 1978, p. 302.) Yet Willis continues to publish articles

by both Smith and James W. Adams. Ron Halbrook and Marshall Patton also disagree with Smith on this proposition, but they're not drawing big, black, bold lines of fellowship on each other. Does Smith draw lines of fellowship on Halbrook and Patton? Does he draw them on any of the legendary restoration preachers? Does Mike Willis? If they don't, is this more "unity in diversity" that should be condemned? Why isn't it "unity in diversity" for Willis to continue to publish articles by both J. T. Smith and James W. Adams who differ on this very proposition? Someone has well said that *Pharisees are like lawyers, and you know how lawyers are: they build big fences around the laws that are important to them, but find loopholes around the ones that are not so important.*

### **What Is a False Teacher?**

All of this makes us wonder, just what is a false teacher, anyway? This term is bandied about quite casually, and many use it of just about anybody who is doctrinally off on nearly anything. For example, J. T. Smith said about Ed Harrell's plea for humane treatment of Hailey:

Brother Harrell thinks brother Hailey has been abused because he has been referred to as a false teacher, even though Ed says he "does not believe brother Hailey is correct." If he is not correct, then that means he is incorrect. (J. T. Smith, *Torch*, XXIV, No. 2, February 1989, p. 5.)

Note again that Harrell never pointed out where he disagreed with Hailey, or why. He didn't even prove Hailey was incorrect, yet Smith accepted that conclusion without question. Have we reached the point where if someone *says* someone is wrong, that *makes him* wrong? Smith argued from Harrell's disagreement with Hailey that therefore Hailey was not correct. Then Smith argued that if Hailey was not correct, he was incorrect, and thus he was a false teacher!

In contrast to the way some toss around the term "false teacher" so casually, the New Testament used the term only once, in II Pet. 2.1, "as also among you shall arise false teachers." Peter listed *twenty-nine characteristics* of these false teachers in verses 1-22. In verse 1, Peter mentioned their privily (sneakily) working, their heresies (divisive opinions) that will destroy their followers, and the fact that they deny Jesus! In verse 2, he described their lascivious doings, and that non-Christians would speak evil of the way because of them. In verse 3, he showed that they were covetous and used counterfeit words designed to make merchandise of Christians. This is a good description of some of

the “televangelists” of our day, but were these the characteristics of Homer Hailey, or just anyone else who is incorrect? In verse 10, Peter affirmed that these walked after the flesh, they operated from the lusts of defilement, and they despised dominion, and were daring, self-willed, and trembled not to rail at dignities. In verse 11, he said they railed in matters of which they were ignorant. In verse 13, Peter said they enjoyed the hire of wrongdoing, and counted it pleasure to revel in the daytime. He said they were spots and blemishes, reveling in the deceivings while they feasted with Christians. In verse 14, Peter explained that they had eyes full of adultery, could not cease from sin, and enticed unstedfast souls with hearts exercised in covetousness, and were thus children of cursing (destruction). In verse 15, Peter said they forsook the right way because they loved the hire of wrongdoing. In verse 18, he described how they uttered great swelling words of vanity while they enticed in the lusts of the flesh. In verse 19, he called them bondservants of corruption, and concluded in verse 21 by saying it were better for them to have never known the way of righteousness.

When some so casually describe Hailey and others as false teachers, are they using the term scripturally? Is it proper to use the term to describe anyone who is not correct, therefore incorrect, therefore a false teacher? If it's right to so use the term, who would that make a false teacher?

For example, J. T. Smith, who was incorrect in his definition of adultery at one time or the other, labels himself a false teacher by his own definition. Likewise, he has been incorrect in his interpretation of I Cor. 7.27-28, as evidenced by his inconsistent answers to questions on those verses. In addition, his inconsistencies about whether one must remain bound to an adulterous mate demonstrate that, *according to his own terminology*, he is a false teacher. Does Smith brand Ron Halbrook and Marshall Patton as false teachers when they disagree with him on one of his major debate propositions? Do they brand Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, and David Lipscomb as false teachers because they were incorrect? How about McGarvey, Otey, Srygley, Hardeman, Whiteside, and Wallace? According to Willis, Smith, Connie Adams, and Frost, none of these men could hold meetings in most churches today, nor could they write for most of the papers.

## **A Local Church Shouldn't Let Outsiders Determine Its Course of Action**

As Lipscomb wrote:

When differences exist, the discussion of these differences is the only hope of union. The suppression of discussion is the direct and open road to division. Whoever opposes the free discussion of differences among brethren, in that favors speedy division. Differences existing will manifest themselves. If they are discussed freely, there is hope of reconciliation and harmony. Suppress the discussion, and unless the strong hand of arbitrary and despotic power holds by the terror of physical force, disruption and division must follow. When persons having a community of interest differ, so long as those who differ show a kindly interest in the others, listen to the remonstrances, treat with considerate kindness their feelings, wishes, and reasonings, they remain one. The moment the one party says: “We wish to hear no more your reasonings; we intend no longer to regard your feelings or wishes; we intend to go our own way, regardless of your course or purposes,” those people become two distinct people. Division or an unmanly and unchristian submission to what we believe to be wrong is the only alternative. (*Gospel Advocate*, 1906, p. 552.)

A more modern expression of these sentiments is found in the words of Robert F. Turner, a gospel preacher universally respected for his calm, nondenominational views. Turner wrote:

If divided brethren are serious about wanting unity, they *must* keep open channels of communication with reference to God's word. The universal laboratory test to determine the spirit of man with reference to redemption and unity is his reaction to examination of his faith and practice in the light of the written sword of God's Spirit. When the door to further study of God's word is closed, we have closed the door to further *seeking* and *striving* in its light. We have closed the door to unity, and to heaven. It is here, and here only, that men learn and accept the power of God by which they are changed from darkness to light, and *become one*. May God help us to open our hearts to Him, and to one another. (Robert F. Turner, “The Biblical Concept of Unity,” 1982 *Florida College Lectures, Their Works Do Follow Them*)

[Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore], p. 15.)

Earlier in the same article, Turner spoke of sectarian or denominational attitudes which prevent continued, deliberative study:

Self-serving pride will prevent fellowship with God and with brethren. The sectarian spirit that separates us from God will splinter us as a people. To the extent we act like the Devil, we will be his children (Jn. 8:41-47) and will forfeit our place in the family of God and in a unified brotherhood. Brethren, we must quit kidding ourselves. God's kind of unity is as difficult, and no more so, as coming to God and being faithful to Him. It requires the same selfless dedication, commitment, and complete dependence upon God. "Narrow is the gate and few are they that find it" (Matt. 7:14). (Robert F. Turner, *Ibid.*, p. 10.)

Turner also warned of letting others do our study for us:

In the first place, many (perhaps most) divisions occur because people are stubborn and self-willed. With hurried and inadequate study, someone draws an erroneous conclusion—and would "split a hame" before he would admit he is wrong. Sides are drawn, and away we go. We compromise points to fit our background or to justify some human weakness, as a solution for what we consider some "greater" wrong, and so, on and on. Peer pressures cause many divisions, for we are often too lazy or feel ourselves incompetent to study for ourselves; so we "go along" with big-name preachers, papers, or other centers of influence. Pride is a great underlying factor. Serving self is more important to us than serving God. (Robert F. Turner, *Ibid.*, p. 13.)

On another occasion, Turner discussed a brotherhood debacle which illustrated his major proposition for an article:

ANY PROJECT OR INSTITUTION OPERATED BY OR FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE, "THE BROTHERHOOD," TENDS TO DENOMINATIONALIZE THAT BROTHERHOOD.

The institution itself may not be so much to blame as the "brotherhood" conceptions that produce and maintain the institution. Party ties are made and strengthened, opinions accepted by the majority become traditions, are crystallized into party tenets; and accepted in the second or third generation as proof of orthodoxy. When the "brotherhood" functions, there must be the acceptance of common direction and guidance; the "brotherhood voice" must be heard. And "brotherhood schools" have paved the way for denominational organizations among members of the Lord's church. No amount of denying can change this obvious historical and current fact. (Robert F. Turner, "The Schools, and Denominationalism," *The Preceptor*, XI, No. 8 [Beaumont, TX: The Preceptor Company, June 1962], p. 124.)

If we cannot properly conduct ourselves with each other in a local church, are we really the caliber of people who are qualified to tell others what to do in these matters? If we cannot study with each other, when we know we accept a common standard and are trying to live by God's word, how can we study with outsiders who don't share that common standard? *Thus, many in churches of Christ throughout the country have not only lost the ability to study with one another, they have lost the ability to study with those outside of Christ as well.* Lipscomb assailed the same problem in his day:

The Church that stifles investigation, but [only—SGD] prepares and nourishes the elements of violent explosion and division within its own bosom. We will freely, gladly hear ourselves and let our readers hear both sides of every question we present. (David Lipscomb, *Gospel Advocate*, 1866, p. 111.)

Rather than disparaging the need for study, we need to disparage the attitude that stifles it. Truth has nothing to fear in open investigation. Truth only gets brighter as it's polished in the search for truth. *When a congregation fails to do its own studying, but depends on papers, preachers, and other outsiders to do its studying, deliberation, and determination of its action, it participates in the inevitable denominational split.* History shows this procedure has always led to a denominational split before much study was done by a lot of good people

on both sides of the issue. This is evidenced by the missionary society, instrumental music, and institutional splits. Churches of Christ are doomed to undergo a series of splits until they learn how to study, give others the right to study, and behave themselves while they do it.

## What Should a Local Church Do?

The purpose of this chapter is to enhance study of these matters, and to elevate our behavior while we do it. It is not the author's purpose to suggest that the issues on divorce and remarriage are so complex that we cannot understand them. He doesn't believe it. But just because some have settled these issues for themselves doesn't mean that *all of us* have settled them, *for all time*.

If we want to avoid participating in the next denominational split, we must make sure that our congregation conforms to those churches pleasing to Christ in the New Testament. New Testament congregations were independent teams of disciples. "Disciples" means they were students, they were willing to study for themselves, and they did study. God intended for each congregation to be a working group, not two distinct people as Lipscomb described above. The congregations were independent in that each congregation determined its understanding of God's will for itself.

The congregation that will not or cannot study for itself, and behave itself while it does so, will have to depend on outside preachers and papers. It won't be an independent team of disciples. Regardless of which side of the issue it's on, *it will play a definite role in another denominational split*, this time on the subject of divorce and remarriage.

This chapter is not about the truth of various divorce and remarriage questions. We can and must study these issues for ourselves. This chapter is about how Christians in local churches can avoid letting outside forces propel them into another denominational split. As James W. Adams said:

Brethren of influence and ability can stop our progress toward oblivion on the road of "partyism" if they have the courage to speak out against it boldly and plainly. No one person, church, or paper can do it.

Note: You can help prevent a denominational split. This chapter is available in booklet form for your use. If you are a preacher and are agreed that local churches should be able to study these matters and determine local church action without outside interference, won't you

help get copies of the booklet into the hands of the local elders, and other influential members? Think of others who would benefit from being warned of the danger that confronts us all.

If you are an elder in a local church, you of all people should object to outside stifling of study within your local congregation. Copies of the booklet could help alert your members to the denominationalizing tendencies of previous divisions in churches of Christ, so they will not be willing to inadvertently participate in another one.

If you are a Christian who is a Bible student, copies of the booklet will serve to admonish those you influence to study for themselves.