

Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

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Various Views of D&R

July 31, 2023

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Marriage to Outsiders

In marriage, members are expected to marry each other and not outsiders. Their support for this practice is 2 Corinthians 6:14 – *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath right with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

Marriage to outsiders (being unequally yoked) is strongly discouraged. Depending on their location, those who marry outsiders so may be banned from participation in meetings, including communion. The length of the temporary ban is not usually specified up front. Some workers have indicated the purpose of the ban is to shame or to make them an example to the unmarried.

Worker Quote: *It is sad to see some of our young people who have gone away from the way of God. They have married outsiders.*

They have lost their taste for the way of God. Maybe some have got offended because of what someone said or did. They start staying away from meetings. They are not seeing the importance of the meetings anymore. Afterwards, they are not hearing the voice

of God anymore. Where are they today? They are not here. They are far away. We hope they come nearer (**Alec Wright, Serima, Zimbabwe Conv., 2006**).

What the Workers have to say about Marriage

Some time after Jack Carroll died in 1957, the Divorce and Remarriage (aka D&R) issue polarized considerably between the East and West. In an attempt to come to a unified nationwide policy concerning Divorce and Remarriage among the friends, a momentous East-West meeting was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1975, which was attended by eight senior Overseers; four from the West and four from the East. The meeting did not accomplish its goal. A letter dated **January 24, 1987** by Tharold Sylvester (Western Overseer) provides insight into the two prevailing D&R perspectives.

Some years ago, the Eastern Alliance decided that Divorce and Remarriage would be permitted in certain cases and would be decided on an individual basis. Over the years the practice became much more widespread. Remarried couples may attend Fellowship Meetings, but some are denied the privilege of speaking and communion.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Western Alliance still holds to the Divorce and Remarriage decision made in 1938. Many Workers feel strongly that God was with the workers in 1938, and their decision was Spirit guided. They do not allow professing people who were divorced and remarried to attend Fellowship Meetings. However, those who were remarried before they professed are given full privileges of fellowship.

The 1938 World Council

It was decided that professing people who were divorced and remarried should not be permitted to come to fellowship meetings. However, those who were in that situation before they professed would have full privileges of fellowship. Many feel strongly that God was with the workers in 1938, and their decision was Spirit guided.

At the beginning of the 21st century, in Western U.S. and Western Canada, they still uphold this decision. However, it was decided in Eastern U.S. and Eastern Canada some years back that Divorce and Remarriage would be permitted in certain cases, to be decided on an individual basis.

1938: JULY: Meetings were held of sixteen of the most senior Gospel overseers worldwide, who agreed and confirmed a new policy relating to future divorce and remarriage situations. This worldwide meeting was held in England and involved all the countries where there were Workers laboring at that time. North and South America (Argentina & ?), England, Scotland and Ireland, India and Australia and probably at least France, in Western Europe.

1938 Ship Manifest for Jack Carroll and two 2 other worker who traveled with him on the same ship showed they were going to: c/o J. Humphries, West Hanney, Wantage, Berks. This is the Oxfordshire, England convention grounds. It is also the location of a previous English Council Meeting that was held July 19-20, 1930. It is highly probable that West Hanney was also the location of this 1938 English Council Meeting. It stands to reason that they would schedule the Council Meeting to be held at the time of a regular convention, so the workers could preach there.

All the ship manifests for the following 10 possibly 11 Workers traveling in 1938 to England showed their professions as Minister or Evangelist. They are listed below in order by their arrival dates in England. Some travelled together. There would also have been the 5 Overseers from Scotland (Joe Twamley), Ireland (Irvine Pearson or Wilson Reid?), England (Willie Gill), France and India for whom travel details were not found.

1938 June 1 **Alexander Pearce** – arrived Southampton, Eng. on SS Windhuk from Laurence Marques, Mozambique, age 65

1938 June 10 **Samuel Jones** arrived in London, Eng. on SS Mooltan from Brisbane, age 60

1938 June 10 **John Hardie** arrived in London. Eng. on SS Mooltan from Brisbane, age 64

1938 June 21 **Alex Scott** arrived at Southampton. Eng. NOTE this **MAYBE** the Worker. The manifest was too blurry to read occupation, shows age 71, DOB abt 1867. Review of Hymns shows 1868-1968 from Scotland. A. Scott attended the 1930 English Council.

1938 July 14 **Jack Carroll** arrived in Southampton, Eng. on SS Empress of Britain from Quebec; Destination: c/o J. Humphries, **West Hanney, Wantage, Berks**, age 60

1938 July 14 **Robert Chambers** (same JC above) age 37

1938 July 14 **Hugh Mathews** (same JC as above), age 60

1938 July 17 **George Walker** arrived in London, Eng. on SS Ausonia from Montreal Quebec, age 61

1938 July 17 **John Doak** (same as GW above) age 59

1938 July 17 **Alex Dougal** (same as GW above) age 39

1938 July 18 **John S. Jackson** arrived Southampton on SS Alcantara from Buenos Aires, Argentina, age 57

Teaching for doctrine the Commandments of Men

By Graham Thompson

New Zealand Worker who Resigned in January 2014

In reference to the English Council of July 1938 you wrote (to C) that “meetings were held of sixteen of the most senior Gospel overseers worldwide, who agreed and confirmed that God’s servants could accept....”etc, etc (relating to the divorce and remarriage question). I have been in the ministry for more than 30 years now, and have been acquainted with the Gospel for 50 years, and this is the first time in my knowledge that this information has been so clearly declared.

I am devastated and appalled. All my life I have heard the Gospel message that the true doctrine is from above, taught and revealed by the Holy Spirit. We have heard, and we have preached, that no man, or group of men, has the power or right to determine doctrine or of themselves to decide or declare what is pleasing to God. We have heard, and have preached, that what we have is from the beginning, untainted by the thinking of man and unchanged by the passage of time. And now I find that you, while preaching the same and while hearing others preach the same, were fully aware of the edict of the English Council and knew that it makes a mockery of our preaching, and makes your ministry one of brazen hypocrisy.

It has always been evident that the guideline followed is not a Godly standard for it genders nothing but inconsistency and confusion, making a division in the fellowship; this view is shared by many. I have been aware of that, as I have been aware of Nathan McCarthy’s feeling, acknowledged to me, that there was another view that was on a better foundation but still he held to the prevailing protocol (at that time I had no idea where it came from).

But, as much in error as the edict is, the far greater error is in the belief that 16 men, OR ANY MEN, ANYWHERE OR AT ANY TIME, had the right to sit down together and come to a consensus decision among themselves about what God must accept, and had the right to issue an edict on the matter, and that others were willing to accept it as a Godly directive. And so, if any were to enquire of the basis of this guideline – which is taught as sound doctrine – the only answer which can be given of it is that it comes from a council of men in England in 1938. It is not soundly based in Scripture, and it has no history before that date.

This is not good enough – we strongly preach against such man-made doctrine for we strive to stand upon the platform of Truth. It belongs to false religion and is in no way different from the excesses and errors of the papists and all other religious systems of men. Even the stupid terms in which you wrote should have alerted you to the shakiness of your position, by saying that 16 men have agreed and confirmed that God’s servants could accept (etc). What? They being God’s servants, is it not He – the One they serve, their Master – Who is the One to make it clear to them what He wills them to teach and hold to? You are acknowledging that men have made themselves masters of the ministry, and usurped the position which belongs only to the Holy Spirit as He who guides into all Truth.

In September 2007 the following was written in a letter to an elder of the church in South Australia and later copied to you as part of the representation made to your overseer group (and so was accepted by you without dispute at the Adelaide meeting);

They apparently consider themselves to be in a position of determining doctrine and arbitrating standards according to their own views. In fact, it is even possible and proper to say that they have exalted themselves above the Word of God and the Spirit of God. They have turned the fellowship of God's people and servants from the Body which is guided and kept by the Spirit into a body which is governed (in their minds) by the eldership – in other words are attempting to convert the fellowship into an episcopalian movement.

This was already valid comment from what I had observed and experienced to that time (this present matter being unknown to me then), but in your writing you provide incontrovertible, hard evidence of its validity by your own hand. You therefore confirm and validate the position taken in that letter, which is (quoting again) –

I believe that we have received the Word of Truth, and through it we have Life. I believe that the Gospel we have is true. I believe that the Ministry of which I am a part is the true Ministry, and I believe that the fruit of that ministry in the Word of Truth is the true church.

But I do not believe in the administration manifested presently in the eldership system. I do not believe it is part of the Kingdom, nor part of the Gospel. I do not believe it has any foundation in Scripture – not in the word of the Lord nor in any parallel or precedent that can be found in the Apostles' traditions. I have no confidence in the uprightness of any of the decisions that are being made. I believe the current administration is nothing more than a hierarchical body which pursues a very dubious agenda and it does so by political processes and without the will to do what pleases God alone.

This history uncovered seems to make it so clear why there is such confusion and disorder in the ministry, and why we have such blind megalomaniacs controlling things. The willingness to set up a council of bishops and then bind the ministry to their decision prescribes this outcome. By doing such they set the ministry on a course that guaranteed the dominance of man and the thoughts of man, the elevation of man, and in the end the worship of Satan as sitting (disguised) in the temple of God.

Graham Thompson's Resignation:

Masterton.

Monday, January 6, 2014

This is to advise you that I will not be going to the Wellington mission field this year, or any other field.

This is a conscience decision, based on principle. What I have observed and experienced in the eldership of the ministry over the years can not be reconciled with Scripture and is not according to Christ, and I can not participate in it or support it until this iniquity is purged.

I have waited until the present to take this step in the expectation that some steps would be taken to address this issue. That being not the case, I am left with no option as I can not support the lie.

I love the Gospel, the Flock, and I love our Lord Jesus. There is no other reason which would cause me to take this step; I do this solely because of the errors in the eldership which mean that I can not support this and consider myself a faithful servant of God and follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Graham Thompson

William Lewis

On Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

INTRODUCTION: It has come into my heart to write some of the facts of my experience and some of the personal visits and conversations I have had with various of my brethren and companions over the years concerning the matter of

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the light of the best understanding of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, that we arrived at prayerfully and out of great concern for ourselves and for those we were responsible to guide and counsel in the fear of the Lord.

I have not held on to any interpretation that a good many of my closest brethren and companions did not agree with; just as all doctrine of the Lord is understood, so this was "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little," Is. 28:10. Concern in these matters for me goes back to my earliest years in the work of the Gospel and the beginning of my studies of the Bible with my companion; a concern that has intensified as my responsibilities to enter into judgments affecting the souls of others has increased.

Let me say that I sought the counsel and aid of older brothers in deciding some cases that were in my field of responsibility, from the time I became responsible, nearly 30 years ago; **and what some may look upon as being a change cannot appear so to me, due to that fact.** Even then, we were considering cases, as we are now, and looking back have not been disappointed in the outcome of any of them, as there has been good evidence of the Lord's pleasure in them.

There was a general feeling and desire among us that discussed this, that there would be some day a meeting of our elders to settle this question definitely and for all, and in the area of my responsibilities it has been. There never was, in my mind, nor even voiced by those with whom I discussed it, any criticism of those who went before us, for we did then as now..."weigh as one who dreads dissent and fears a doubt as wrong" to quote Whittier. It was just that we felt in our own souls that we were lacking. The decision (Par.3) was that every case be examined and decided upon its own merits and the circumstances peculiar to it.

1. Matt. 5:32, 19:9, Ps 56:5-6 Remarriage-exceptive clause of fornication. Attention is especially drawn to the exception Jesus made where fornication was concerned. It seems evident that remarriage was in question; if there had been no "marrying of another" involved, Jesus would have made no such exception, since no question of possible sin could arise if a union had been dissolved by death; but this was a case of putting away, questioning its legality.

2. Remarriage of the innocent party. (Ps 55:11-15) Jesus included the exceptive clause to make it clear that the remarriage of the innocent party was not a sinful action where fornication was involved. I Cor. 7:27-28. This is confirmed by Paul. A difference is made here between those who were "bound to" or "loosed from" a wife, and one who had never been married, virgins. In both cases marrying was not a sin, which could not have been referred to if the "loosing from" had been by death. Again no questions in that case. **The questioning arose in my heart in view of the fact that we were treating all cases of abandonment and divorce of spouses amongst us more or less the same.**

3. Job 31:9-12 Remarriage only where fornication has taken place. In a meeting of our elders it was decided that only cases where fornication was involved would the question of remarriage be included. It was also agreed that 3 overseers would consider and render judgment; not 1 or 2. This is very much in line with what Job said about it in his day before the law and in all probability before there was any written guidance. It was a matter for the Judges to decide; note the plural.

4. Meaning of fornication. As to the meaning of fornication, it has seemed to me that Jesus deliberately chose the word in order to cover all sexually related vice, foreseeing our time and the perversion that would overspread the race. If He had said "except it be for adultery," He would have confined it to that particular form of fornication; fornication being a general term that did cover all as stated before. The man in I Cor. 5:1 was guilty of fornication because of an adulterous relationship with his father's wife and in both Old and New Testament, the word is used to describe the sins of married women.

5. Ezekiel 16:32-38, Jer. 3:1 Fornication dissolves the marriage bond, possibility of reconciliation. In one chapter in Ezekiel, ch. 16, the term harlotry, whoredom and adultery are referred to as being a multiplication of Israel's fornications, and she is called "a wife that committeth adultery" to be judges as women that break wedlock, from which we may rightly conclude that fornication dissolves the marriage bond. Not that it cannot be repaired, indeed that was the Lord's offer to Israel, contingent upon their repentance and return to Him. In Jer. He ____?? that is something the Law did not require a man to do, and it would be an act of great compassion and forgiveness for him to do it, an evidence of godliness in the man and testimony to a justice that only God could impart to him. The first attempt should be to effect such a reconciliation ____?? where there is ____?? pursuit of fornication and willful departure from one's faithful mate, that same justice demands that the guilty bear punishment and not the innocent.

6. II Kings 9:22, Hosea 2:2, Amos 7:7, I Cor. 5:1, Rev. 2:20-21. Fornication and adultery synonymous. It has been interesting to learn that the Greek word used in the Gospel for fornication is porn, which is employed in the Septuagint speaking of women (married) in the following cases, among others, (1st 3 above... the last 2 using the word to fornicate.) The same Greek word issued in I Cor. 5 and Rev. 2, in one verse to commit fornication and in the other to commit adultery. Happily a knowledge of Greek is not necessary to understand the Scriptures, but it's reassuring when the Greek and Hebrew texts confirm what the Holy Ghost has given to us from what is available in our own language.

7. Lev. 20:10, Gen. 20:3, John 8. Death the penalty for adultery in the law. There are commandments in the law concerning these matters, one given by God carried the death penalty for both parties proven guilty of a willful act of adultery, and such punishment must have preceded the law. It seems to me that the only time Jesus dealt with this was in John 8, and He did not impose the death penalty that the Scribes and Pharisees were urging by the law, because He had come to abolish the death penalty of the law and bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel, to forgive repentant sins, except one, which we are certain was not fornication.

8. Deut. 24:1-4 Moses commandment of divorce for restraint. The other commandment was written by Moses for hard hearted men, not to encourage or sanction divorce "for every cause," but to restrain and guide as much as possible a practice that was never pleasing or acceptable to God. Jesus confirmed this by His own words to those who questioned Him about it. If we are to understand His teaching on the subject, we must take this into account, for in all other places than John 8, He was dealing with Moses' commandment, explaining why He would say, "but I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery". Matt. 5:32, 19:9, Mark 10:12 and "I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication and shall marry another, committeth adultery and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." All the participants in this arrangement were held responsible, being the instigator. Is. 54:4-6. In those days it was not possible for a woman to readily support herself and her recourse was to find another man who would marry her. In Isaiah the Lord reveals His heart feelings for a woman so treated, according her the dignity and consolation of widowhood, when in reality she was a forsaken woman in youth. He was willing to take such to be His wife, to remove her shame and reproach, pleading with Israel in this vein.

9. I Cor. 7:25, 40 The innocent party divorcing. If a man or woman be put away for fornication, then they who put her away would not be the author of adultery in remarriage, since it was for that cause that he or she was put away. Doubtless the free and conscienceless use of Moses' precept; and the Pharisees instance that Jesus declare His interpretation of it was the reason for the Lord's words on the subject. He did not cover all the ground on it and the related circumstances that would arise, Thus Paul saying to the Corinthians, "I have no commandment of the Lord (concerning virgins) yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" and "after my judgment, I think also that I have the Spirit of the Lord."

10. John 14:26, 16:13, Matt. 18:18-20 The guidance of the Holy Ghost. Jesus made it very clear that the Holy Ghost would come and teach them all things and bring to remembrance "all things that I have said unto you" and "He will guide you into all truth." We cannot escape the responsibility that was laid on the early Apostles in this regard if we are

to be true to our profession to be followers of them. It is most awesome being charged to obtain the guidance of the Holy Ghost, so that judgment we give would be equitable and merciful, acceptable to and binding in Heaven, following this with the answer to Peter's question about forgiveness. emphasizing compassions and reminding us all of our utter dependence on the merciful and forgiving God, so that we would not deny to another what we must have ourselves.

11. O.T. parallel teaching. Ps. 94:20-21 Again we have 2-3 involved in settling whatever controversy had arisen. A parallel teaching may be found in the O.T. showing that all matters were not covered by the law and had to be taken to Judges in that event. To attempt to settle questions that arise in our day by law would bring up the question that is asked in Ps. 94 and result in the answer in the following verse, I greatly fear.

12. I Cor. 7:8-11. Distinction between Classes. There are a number of classes, different classes, husbands and wives, married people, divorced people and widows. In two verses making a distinction between them, putting the woman who departed from her husband (not an adulterous mate) in the unmarried state and not responsible to remain so or to be reconciled to her husband.

13. I Cor. 7. Unbelieving partners. Paul also had advice for unbelieving mates, making it clear that their unbelief was not grounds for putting them away, if they were pleased to dwell with them, to do so would again, exercising Moses' precept, "for every cause." On the other hand if unbelieving depart, let him depart, a brother, a sister is not under bondage in such.

14. I Cor. 7:39 Wife bound by the law: The word bondage used here carries the same meaning as "bound by." The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth. (Husband not an adulterous, departed mate.) It is significant that Paul uses the word bondage 6 times in the Galatian epistle in reference to the law and its bondage. Again I understand that the Greek words for "leave" and "put away" and "depart" are all correctly translated to mean separation by divorce, permissible for the Christian for only one cause, fornication. Gal. 2:4, 4:3, 9, 24, 25; 5:1.

15. Hosea 2:2 Innocent party free to marry. The clear intent of the teaching every place is that the innocent victim of divorce for that cause is free from the law of husband and wife because an adulterous mate is no longer husband or wife. **It was never possible for me to accept that the law offered a more equitable solution to the problem than our Lord, in that the penalty for the guilty** under the law was death; harsh, but just; leaving the innocent free and not in an untenable position through a compelling human desire and God-given inclination to seek the love and compassion of a true mate.

16. The celibate life is of free will. Matt. 19:11-12, 1 Cor. 7:9, 37. Our Creator saw it was not good for a man to be alone, and Jesus confessed that every man could not live a celibate life in connection with His teaching concerning divorce. One might inject the question of the power and grace of God to enable a man or woman to remain unmarried in such circumstances, and far be it from me to minimize that possibility, but Jesus put it upon the individual's own ability to do so and so did Paul, "but if they cannot contain, let them marry" and "nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but having power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his own heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well."

17. I Cor. 7:37 Marriage is ordained of God and typifies Christ and the Church. This verse in I Cor., of course, was directed to ones who had never been married and by all understanding would find it easier to maintain a celibate life than those who had experienced the married state. It seems very clear that in all the Bible, God expected most men and women to seek a mate and enjoy the love and companionship that its union affords; the closest human tie as the most sacred. It is, in its purity, representing the relationship intended between Christ and His church. There is nothing in the Scripture to lead us to believe that any man or woman was expected to go through life alone, except by choice, and that, primarily, for the King of Heaven's sake. We have that example in Paul, Jesus and others, but not to the exclusivity of those who were married.

18. Adultery, an heinous crime. Job 31:11, Prov. 6:32-35 In conclusion, adultery is not unforgivable, but it is still what Job said it to be, an heinous crime, certain of punishment most damaging and dishonouring personally and with the longest lasting consequences for all those concerned. An offence that may not be purged by rewards and gifts, and we who have been called to try to mitigate these consequences know what a wounding it is, and we sadly conclude with Sol. "but whose committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding. I have not written this to rebut arguments to the contrary, not even to try to convince skeptics, but that my friends might know my firm convictions and from whence they came.

Jack Carroll Announcement re Married Workers

Jack Carroll – Only Two Places for Marriage Ceremonies to be held

Letter by Jack Carroll

2010 Rainer Avenue
Everett, Washington
February 12, 1942

Dear Brother,

An inquiry has reached me recently regarding the marriage ceremony and letters relating thereto. This letter is for your information and guidance.

There are just two places where we can encourage marriage of those professing to be the Lord's people to be held and two only — the home or the office of the Justice of Peace or Judge. The farther we keep from the customs of the world in this matter the better. For any to send a wide or general invitation to the Lord's people in any city or community is entirely out of order. The parties getting married should remember that the friends to whom each invitation are sent are only theirs as a result of the labor and sacrifice of others and that they never would have known them apart from the Gospel. It has been said that the underlying purpose of this needless advertisement is usually selfish and mercenary. It is not necessary, but should suffice for the relatives and a few personal friends of both parties that have been meeting in the same church to be present at the ceremony in the home. Any more than this savors of the world and its ways, and leads to many difficulties.

We have heard of "showers" in connection with some marriages accompanied by lightness and a spirit of frivolity most unbecoming to the children of God. We cannot approve of such gathering. If any wish to make a present to either party, they can send it by mail or deliver it personally and thus avoid any conditions or circumstances that would grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

You will, of course, understand that the foregoing has to do only with those professing to be in fellowship with God's people. We cannot interfere with the liberty of those who do not profess even though their parents may. We feel, however, that the parents even of children who do not profess should be very careful that everything in connection with their marriage should not hinder their personal fellowship with God nor affect their own testimony as God's children.

You are at liberty to read this letter to any to whom it may be a help — especially those who possibly need guidance with regard to this matter.

Yours sincerely in Christ's service,

Signed: (John T. Carroll)

Following written by John (Jack) Carroll:

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND THE QUESTION OF RE-MARRIAGE

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Deut. 22:22-24. The penalty for unfaithfulness in the marriage relationship (adultery) where both parties were guilty, was death.

Deut. 22:25-27. The penalty for fornication (unchastity of unmarried persons) where the man only is guilty, was death.

Deut. 22:28-29. The penalty for fornication where both are guilty, was a fine and compulsory marriage.

The above references and definitions will help us understand Deut. 24:1-4. The woman mentioned in these verses could not have been an adulteress, for the penalty for adultery was death. The uncleanness mentioned in verse 1 must have been some immodest, indecent, unchaste behaviour before marriage. Moses permitted divorce and re-marriage in such cases "because of the hardness of their hearts." Matthew 19:3-9. Adultery is not charged or suggested against either person.

NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

- Mark 10:2-12
- Luke 16:18
- Romans 7:1-3
- I Cor. 10:2-12
- Matthew 5:32
- Matthew 19:9

Mark, Luke, and Paul are in absolute agreement. There is no ambiguity or uncertainty about what they sought to express. "A three-fold cord is not easily broken," and this triple witness ought to have weight in interpreting Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

If we only had in our possession the Gospels of Mark and Luke and the Epistles of Paul there would be absolutely no question re the right of divorced persons to re-marry. In Mark 10:10 when in the privacy of the house, the disciples asked for more light on the subject,

"He saith unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

This statement from the lips of the Lord Jesus could not be clearer or more emphatic, is repeated almost word for word in Luke 16:18, and is confirmed by Paul's interpretation in Romans 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:10-11. The meaning is plain and unmistakable, that the re-marriage of divorced persons is adultery.

The difficulty in understanding Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, disappears in the light of the three-fold witness of Mark, Luke and Paul, and the right interpretation of Deut. 24:1-4. There is a clear reference to this latter passage in Matthew 5:31-33 and Matthew 19:3-9, and in these verses there is no mention or suggestion of adultery. Permission is given to "put away" and to re-marry, with the restriction that the woman's former husband should not take her again to be his wife.

The cause for "putting away" was not adultery, but some unchaste behaviour before marriage. Jesus clearly taught that the permission to "put away" for unchastity before marriage, and to re-marry (Deut.. 24:1-4), did not represent the real mind of God, but was a concession to their "hardness of heart", and reverted to the original purpose of God when marriage was instituted.

"But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. And they twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 10:6-9.

In Matthew 5:32, Jesus permits "putting away" for fornication (unchastity before marriage, or probably would include after marriage also), but unlike Moses, who because of the "hardness of their hearts" permitted re-marriage, He absolutely prohibited this. In these verses Jesus teaches that only one cause justifies "putting away," and if a man puts away his wife for this cause, and re-marries, he commits adultery.

In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus is contrasting His teaching with that of the Old Testament, and if we conclude that verse 32 permits the remarriage of divorced persons, then there is neither difference nor contrast between His teaching and the popular belief of that day. His teaching would not have raised marriage any higher than the level of Moses. The words “saving for” of Matthew 5:32 and “except” of Matthew 19:9 relate to the “putting away,” and the only justifying cause for so doing. The words which follow plainly teach that re-marrying after “putting away” is adultery.

Paul's interpretation of the Lord's mind on this subject is given in I Cor. 7:10-17, which makes clear that his teaching is not a matter of personal opinion, but has the authority of Christ Himself:

“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband; but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife.”

Seeing that Paul's interpretation of the Lord's mind agrees absolutely with Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18, and the verses in Matthew, when interpreted in the light of these passages, it is wisest and safest for us to accept his interpretation, rather than presume to put forward an interpretation based on what may be the “leaven of the Pharisees” working in our minds, or preconceived ideas of our own, or influenced by our personal sympathy for individuals.

The teaching then of the New Testament on this subject is:

“Marriage is honorable in all.” Hebrews 13:4

Separation under certain circumstances is permissible, but not re-marriage.

I Cor. 7:10-11.

Divorce with the right to re-marry is absolutely prohibited.

March (sic) 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3, I Cor. 7:10, 11, 39.

J.C.

Written by Jack Carroll:

REPLY TO CRITICISM OF NOTES ON “MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND QUESTION OF RE-MARRIAGE”

The statement ***“when our interpretation of any portion of Scripture leads us to conclusions which are obviously not in keeping with God's standard of righteousness and judgment, then we have grave reasons for doubting the correctness of our interpretation”*** is absolutely safe and one which all can heartily endorse and which will be kept in mind in writing all that follows.

1. The reference to Matt. 1:18-19 has no bearing whatsoever on the subject. Marriage not having taken place, Joseph would have been justified under the law, in doing as he was “minded”. If marriage had taken place, Deut. 24:1-4 covered just such cases. We should forever thank God that Joseph was “just” and submissive to the revealed will of God and for the simplicity of Mary's surrender to the same will. Both had difficulties and risked much, but faith triumphed.

2. It is generally believed that Mark's Gospel was written first and for Gentiles, the material being furnished by Peter; that Luke's Gospel was also written for Gentiles, the material being furnished by what Mark had already written, as well as free “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”, Luke 1:1-2. ***The claim that Matthew alone was an “eyewitness” and therefore his Gospel has more weight than Mark's or Luke's*** is not sound. The fact is, Matthew, in writing his Gospel, had Jewish readers, familiar with Old Testament Scripture, continually before him and felt it necessary to go more into detail in matters that might lead to questions and controversy. Knowing Jewish readers would be familiar with Deut. 24:1-4 he makes clear that there is but one cause that would justify a man “putting away his wife”, but unlike Moses who in such cases, “Because of the hardness of their hearts” permitted the re-marriage of both parties-Deut. 24:1-4 – Jesus absolutely prohibited this and states emphatically contrary to what Moses permitted, that the remarriage of either party was adultery.

It is well to remember that Deut. 24:1-4 does not deal with adultery but with some unchastity before marriage and that the New Testament makes a difference between “fornication” and “adultery”. Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:21; Gal. 5:19. Jesus

abolished the permission Moses granted but allowed a cause for “putting away” but not the absolute dissolution of the marriage bond.

3. The statement that **“Deut. 24:1-4 does definitely establish the fact that with a legal or scriptural divorce went the right to remarry”** is only true in cases where there was evidence of unchastity before marriage, not for adultery. The penalty for adultery was death. Moses never gave a writing of divorcement in the case of adultery. This was given only in cases where the question of unchastity before marriage arose and as a concession to the hardness of their hearts. Jesus did not endorse this concession but appeals to the original ideal of marriage.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, For me hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”

March (sic) 10:5-12

4. The statements that **“according to Matthew’s Gospel Jesus replaces the Old Testament death penalty with divorce”** and **“therefore, divorce is no less sacred than marriage”**; that **“the God who instituted marriage also instituted divorce”** are not true or scriptural.

The teaching of the Old Testament re divorce is given in Deut. 24:1-4 and as stated above, has no reference to adultery but to cases of unchastity before marriage. The right to divorce and remarriage was a concession to their hardness of heart and was not endorsed by Jesus. Mark 10:5-9.

Jesus did not substitute absolute divorce with the right to re-marry for the Old Testament death penalty, neither is there any scripture to prove that the unfaithful wife or husband is to be considered as “one dead” and that the aggrieved party is free to marry again. On the contrary, the Scriptures emphatically teach that marriage can only be dissolved by death. Rom. 7:2-3; I Cor. 7:39.

“For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” Rom. 7:2-3

“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.” I Cor. 7:39

“Putting away” or separation for certain causes is permitted but not remarriage during the lifetime of either party. When two people marry, they “become one flesh, are no more twain”. A marriage is a divine institution and according to God’s mind and order, this was to be a life relationship that no man had any right to interfere with or part asunder.

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.” Gen. 2:24.

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.” Mark 10:7-9

To say adultery annuls marriage degrades marriage, and puts a premium on adultery. Death and death alone can dissolve the bond uniting husband and wife.

5. The statement, **“Paul’s suggestion (I Cor. 7:11) that the aggrieved (sic) party be reconciled to the other would hardly have been given to a person who had left or put away an adulterous mate”** touches on what seems to be the real difficulty in the minds of most. To hint that even in such cases there should be no mercy or forgiveness contradicts the whole teaching and example of Jesus. Are the children of God to be encouraged to forgive every other sin but this? Is this the one sin for which there can be no forgiveness; no reconciliation, no restoration to the former relationship? Is the door of the home to be forever shut against the weak, erring husband or wife? Is the aggrieved party to consider the sinner as “one dead” and take another woman or man as wife or husband and thus close the door forever for forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration? Surely this cannot be the teaching of Jesus in the light of Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21, 22, 35; Mark 11:25-26; John 8:7-11, etc. If He taught anything clearly by example and precept, it was

that there should be no limit to our forgiveness as there was not limit to his. We are to be merciful and forgiving as He. In Eph. 8:1 we are encouraged to "be followers of God as dear children, and if the aggrieved children of God follow His example in His relationship with and attitude towards adulterous Israel, the door will always be left open for repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

Some of us know children of God who forgave and took back the erring and repentant wife or husband and are today rejoicing in the reconciliation and restoration to confidence and fellowship. To have encouraged them to have done otherwise would have done infinite harm and violated the teaching and spirit of Jesus. Even though to some it may seem a hardship and severe test of faith, it is more in keeping with the teaching of Jesus to encourage any aggrieved child of God to be patient, merciful, forgiving and take no step that would make it impossible to manifest the Spirit of Jesus toward the erring husband or wife.

It is God's will that marriage should be a lifelong union that can only be dissolved by death. For the sake of the home and family and for the unity and happiness of God's people, the only safe course, no matter how hard it may seem to some, is to adhere to the teaching of the New Testament which encourages those who have been sinned against to follow Christ in manifesting to the limit the mercy, forgiveness and love of God to the sinner.

J.C.

Outline to California Workers by Eldon Tenniswood

Divorce & Remarriage November 1, 1964

This outline is to the California workers, and if any questions arise you can feel free to discuss them with me. Some have written to me asking about the position people are in after hearing the Gospel and making their choice, then are divorced and remarry. The only thing I have to go by are the passages of scripture given to us.

Romans 7:2-3 "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

I Cor. 7:39 "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

I Cor. 7:10-11 "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."

Luke 16:18: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."

Mark 10:11-12 "And he saith unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

Matt. 5:32 "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

Matt. 19:9 "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

We know that the scriptures do not contradict one another, so it is emphatic that the wife is bound to her husband as long as he liveth, or vice versa. In Matt. 5:31 Jesus quoted these words, 'whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement,' which would refer us to Deut. 24:1. In Matt. 19:3 the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it

lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The question here was in connection with a man putting away his wife. Jesus answered and said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife: and they shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

In the first two references, Rom. 7:2-3, I Cor. 7:39, we are taught the wife is bound to her husband as long as he liveth. In I Cor. 7:10-11, Luke 16:18 and in Mark 10:11-12 we are taught, "If a man putteth away his wife and marrieth another, he committeth adultery". The portions of scripture in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 would have to do with the scripture taught in Deut. 22:12-21 and Deut. 24:1 or else the scripture would contradict itself.

In my mind the reference to fornication in Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9 is in connection with a woman's relationship with men before marriage, Deut. 22:20. In both scriptures, Deut. 22:13-21 and Deut. 24:1, it has to do with a man taking a bride and then accusing her of not being a virgin. If she was not a virgin, he had the right to put her away, but this was in the first days of marriage. If it was proven by her parents, that she was a virgin at marriage, Deut. 22:19, her husband could not put her away all his days.

According to the words of Jesus, whoever puts away his wife and marries again while his wife is still living, commits adultery. The instruction given in I Cor. 5:9-13, I Cor. 6: 9-10, Gal. 5:19-21 shows clearly how God looks upon fornicators and adulterers: "They which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." These things must be put away.

This question is sometimes asked by those insisting on taking part meetings, while living in adultery: "Is adultery an unpardonable sin?" No, it is not an unpardonable sin. We are taught in Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." There would be no mercy or forgiveness until the adultery is put away.

Let us remember what Jesus taught in I Cor. 7:10-11, "Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." It is the words of Jesus which will judge us in the last day. John 12:48-50, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken. The same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me the commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

There are blessings in store for us if we obey His commandments; Rev. 22:14, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Notice the solemn warning given in Rev. 22:18-19, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book."

Your brother in His service,

Signed: Eldon Tenniswood

Cover Letter of Eldon Tenniswood containing above Outline for Divorce & Remarriage

November 30, 1976

The reason I wrote the above article was due to four people, in four different fields in California, who once professed, married, then divorced and were remarried, who requested to have a part in our fellowship meetings. Due to illness, I

could not visit the workers in those fields or the people concerned. After studying the scripture on the subject and remembering what George Walker, Jimmy and Nicol Jardine, Charlie Hughes, Jack Jackson, Jim Hamilton and Sam Charlton taught us workers while I labored in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, I outlined this study on divorce and remarriage,

Shortly after I wrote this article, eight of the older workers came to visit me in Napa, California. Among them were Willie Jamieson, Stanley Watchorn, Ernest Nelson, Tharold Sylvester and Howard Mooney. I asked those men if they could refute anything in the article, and they said they couldn't. Then I asked if it would be all right to send a copy to the California workers and elders. They replied, "Yes, and we also would like a copy."

Signed: Eldon Tenniswood

Cover Letter to Meeting Elders about Divorce & Remarriage by Eldon Tenniswood

9911 Stonybrook Drive
Anaheim, California 92804
July 5, 1972

Dear brother,

During the past year there have been a number of inquiries made regarding people that once professed and divorced and re-married, or those that have married divorced persons, and their status in our fellowship. In order to clarify this to all you elders in the States of California, Arizona, Nevada and Hawaii, I would like to send to you an outline that I made in 1964. After making this outline I showed it to Willie Jamieson, Tharold Sylvester, Howard Mooney, Ernest Nelson and Dan Hilton and asked them if there was anything in what is written here that was in any way contradictory to the teachings of Jesus. No one brought up any subjects, and they felt that was the stand that they would like to take. Since then, other workers have seen this article and so far no one has refuted the statements that are written in this enclosed article concerning divorce and re-marriage.

To me, these are the teachings of Jesus, and it would be impossible for me to stand with anyone that takes any stand other than what Jesus has taught. I hope you will study these over so that it will enable you to be able to give others an exact understanding of what Jesus taught regarding this matter, and it will strengthen the foundation on which we stand, the Truth of Jesus Christ.

We have appreciated each one of you and your deep interest in the Kingdom of God, and we would like to see this interest deepening, and the nearer we come to that eternal reward the more valuable it will be to have the favor of God, no matter what it might mean or cost.

We hope you are having real good days of fellowship with the little flock. Remember the admonishing that Paul gave the elders at Ephesus, Acts 20:28-32, as this will help you to see your responsibility, the dangers that surround the little flock, how precious they are to God because He has purchased them with the blood of Jesus, and as we seek His face He will give us wisdom and understanding so that we can do our part in feeding and watching over God's precious lambs and sheep,

Kindest greetings and very best wishes in Christ.

Your brother in His service,

(Signed) Eldon Tenniswood

Analogy of Adultery

"This question is sometimes asked by those insisting on taking part in our meetings, while living in adultery: 'Is adultery an unpardonable sin?' No, it is not an unpardonable sin. We are taught in Prov. 28:13, 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' There would be no mercy or forgiveness until the adultery is put away." [Eldon Tenniswood's comments to California Workers on Divorce & Remarriage dated 11/1/64]

An analogy used by Eldon Tenniswood to support his stand on the divorce and remarriage issue goes something like this. If a man robbed a bank and then repented, but kept the money, we would not believe that he had really repented. To show the true signs of repentance, he would need to make restitution. Eldon then draws a comparison to two people who divorce and remarry, and after a short time, return to meetings repentant. According to Eldon, if they were *truly* repentant, they would give up their marriage, just as a robber would give up money he had stolen. Is there any merit to this analogy?

He attempts to prove that just as a repentant robber should give back the stolen money, so also a repentant remarried divorcee should give up his/her new spouse. Two categories of people and two actions are compared; a thief robbing a bank and a couple who get married after both were divorced earlier. Analogies do not prove a point when the situations are not in the same class or category, and there are significant differences in the two items being compared.

1. Remarriage and robbery—and money and human beings—are not in the same class.
2. The analogy overlooks the significant difference that money has no feelings or choice about who possesses it; while a wife/husband does.
3. The analogy overlooks the significant difference that generally speaking, robbing a bank is far more destructive than remarriage after divorce. Marrying someone—even after a divorce—is hardly equal to waltzing away with \$100,000 from a bank heist.
4. The analogy overlooks the significant difference that robbery is intentional and divorce is not intentional. No one enters a marriage *INTENDING* to make it fail. It is entered into with hopes, dreams for a long and wonderful mutual relationship. Failure for a marriage to work out is a great disappointment. The mistake and failure are grievous to those involved. Many are extremely sorry for the failure of their marriage; and are repentant over their mistake or weak will, and ask God to forgive them. God forgives those who ask, and remembers their sin no more. He wipes out their mistake—the first marriage. They have a clean slate. The analogy doesn't take into account the passages of scripture that contradict its conclusion, namely:

(1) THAT: *"Marriage is honorable for all"* doesn't exclude divorcees OR workers.

(2) THAT: *"To avoid fornication, let EVERY man have his own wife, and let EVERY woman have her own husband"*

1 Cor. 7:2-5

It is true that repentance offered absolutely *VOLUNTARILY* and not due to any outside force or pressure is generally viewed as pure repentance. To whom is repentance due? You? Me? The Church? The Workers? NO! One repents to those they have wronged—to God and to anyone else they have harmed or offended. The thief wronged the money owner. However, it is not always the case that divorcees have wronged their ex-spouses. Some have been deserted (1 Cor 7:15); some had adulterous spouses (Matt 5:32 & 19:9), etc. in which cases, the Bible specifically says that remarriage is acceptable.

The analogy is based on several UNPROVEN ASSERTIONS:

THAT the couple **should be** repentant about their remarriage.

THAT ONLY death can sever a marriage.

THAT remarriage constitutes *"living in adultery"*

Ralph Woodrow evaluates a similar analogy sometimes used, in his book ***Divorce & Remarriage***, pp 77-78:

"THE CAR THIEF"

"But,' some object, 1a couple in a second marriage must breakup in order for God to forgive them just like a man who steals a car must return it!' We agree that a man who took a car should not keep driving around in a stolen car. He should return it to the rightful owner—if he can! But in many cases he can not. It may have been years before that the crime was committed. He may not even know who the car belonged to. The former owner may have already collected insurance. He may be dead. Does this man who took a car remain forever unforgiven because circumstances will not permit a return? In such complex situations, God simply forgives a repentant heart and gives the man a clean slate.

"Besides, the return of a car and the return of a wife, as it were, do not provide a valid comparison. A car is a thing, not a person. A car does not love, does not have emotions, does not think, does not involve children. Did the man who is remarried actually steal the woman? Did he take her against her will? Was not the marriage by mutual agreement? The concept of returning stolen property could seldom apply here.

"For people in second marriages to return to their first mates is, in the vast majority of cases, impossible. God does not require the impossible. He simply forgives and that's that. According to Deuteronomy 24:4, at least, once one had actually remarried, there was to be no return to the previous mate, even if the second husband died. Only in a very unique situation might it be otherwise (cf. Jer. 3:1).

"Some teach that if it is impossible to go back to a first husband or wife, then a person must live single. But a forced celibacy is not God's plan. Suppose a car thief repents and tries to return a stolen car. He cannot find the owner. He feels it would be wrong for him to keep the car. So he takes it and pushes it over a cliff. The car is destroyed: no one has the benefit of it. As silly as this is, this is the "logic" of those who insist that people with previous marriages must separate and remain single. Who benefits? A woman does not have a husband, a husband does not have a wife, children do not have their parents, their economic situation suffers, two residences must be maintained, etc. Such is legalism—that one should push his happiness, his effectiveness, his peace of mind, his marriage, over a cliff—all because of an interpretation some have forced on a very tiny portion of scripture!"

To learn more about Evaluation of Faulty Analogies, [Click Here](#)

Author of following notes is unknown:

Matt. 5:27-29

I Cor. 6:18-20

Luke 16:18

This matter of fornication and adultery is serious in the eyes of God because it has to do with new life. There is nothing else that happens on this earth that has an equal with regard to God being in the picture. If someone makes a wheelbarrow, well, God's not really in the picture, but when a child is born a soul is given and that is eternal, that soul comes from God. We need to be very careful, very aware of the consequences of our actions concerning these things.

God treats this subject different than anything else, too, because this type of relationship is a picture of things that are divine, for life is involved. People should not be free in these things. We could even say that God is the "senior partner" when this is taking place, and that is why the Bible is very explicit as to what a right relationship is before God. The sexual urge is the strongest there is between two people, and God asks us to submit this thing which is strongest of all to His will.

The reason God planned courtship and marriage was just to show us a little picture of the spiritual courtship and marriage that is found between God and his Bride (his people). We are in the "courtship" now — that is the time when both parties find out if they are compatible. So often this word is misunderstood — almost everyone can be sexually compatible, but that is really a very small part of marriage. The courtship is to be spent finding out how compatible both parties are as far as interests, likes, etc. Someday we will be the Bride of Christ, and God is asking today just how much our interests and likes are in common with His. Then someday we will attend the marriage supper, and we will be the Lord's forever. We will never serve the Devil again. That is a true marriage — faithfulness to one partner forever.

As far as having these desires in our heart, we should just remember — our thoughts should be the best part of us. If our actions are better than our thoughts, we're just hypocrites.

If we sin in any way — having the wrong spirit, etc. — it is as if we are having relations with the Devil, and have lost our virginity. It is only through the blood of Christ that we can become pure again, and when one day we will be claimed by the Lord for his Bride, we will again be a "chaste virgin" and the past is as if it had never been. That is not physically possible for us on the earth, but by remaining chaste in body until marriage, we have the privilege of bowing our strong

wills before God, indicating a bowing before God, a respect for the sacredness of marriage both on earth and later in eternity.

There is no sin in divorce. If you re-marry after you are divorced, however, you are living in sin. There is no forgiveness for you while you live in it. It's like washing the dog while it's still in the mud puddle.

Divorce & Remarriage

Thoughts of Adrian Oldham

In answer to your questions concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage, I will try to share with you some of the thoughts that have been made real to me. After over 30 years of wondering about and trying to understand some verses in the Bible and not succeeding, the Lord has opened them up to me recently. With this revelation along with other scriptures that fit in perfectly, I know that what I will attempt to share with you is safe. In Matt. 19:4-6 Jesus answered the people of His day by going back to what the Lord planned in the beginning with quotes from Gen. 1:27 and 2:23. "And he answered and said unto them Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore, they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." We see this plan holds true throughout the scriptures.

In Deut. 22:13-19, a man tried to break the bond of marriage by bringing a false accusation against his wife, but the Lord said in vs. 19, "she shall be his wife. He may not put her away all their days." In Deut. 22:28-29, if a man lay with a damsel who is a virgin and not betrothed (vs. 29), "she shall be his wife because he has humbled her, he may not put her away all his days." In Malachi 2:1-14 to those who did not have the right attitude and spirit toward their wives, he warned them in vs. 16. "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away". In Rom. 7:2 "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so, long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." In 1 Cor. 7:39, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." 1 Cor. 7:10-11, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Let not the wife depart from her husband; but and if she departs, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife."

In vs. 12-14, Paul is telling these in a divided home that the believing husband is not to put away the unbelieving wife. The believing wife is not to put away the unbelieving husband. Vs. 15, "But; if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases but God hath called us to peace. Paul had put the "believing," under bondage to stay with the unbelieving, but if the unbelieving departs, the believing are not in bondage to try to stay with the one who is departing. "But God has called us to peace." It would not be a very peaceful situation if the unbelieving was determined to leave and the "believing" was determined to stay with them.

In 1 Sam. 25:44, David's wife was given to another man. All the while she was living with another man, she was living in adultery, yet David knew she was still his wife. When he was in a position to do so, he sent for her and brought her back to himself. (2 Sam 3:13). He manifested the same spirit the Lord showed toward His Bride in Jer. 3:1, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord." In vs. 14 he says, "I am married to you."

Even those who were making no attempt to serve the Lord or to please him any way, were not excluded from the Lord's plan for man and wife. In Matt 14:1-11, John was beheaded for telling an unrighteous king it wasn't lawful for him to have his brother's wife. In 1 Cor. 6:16, "What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body, for two saith He shall be one flesh?" No one could be more adulterous than a harlot, There is evidence the couple had a legal and honorable marriage, yet Paul said as far as the Lord was concerned, they were man and wife.

Seeing the Lord made no provision for divorce and remarriage, we might wonder why Moses gave permission for the Jews to give a bill of divorcement and put the wife away. We get a little glimpse as to why he may have done this in Deut. 22: 13-21.

We see there were those who were so hard hearted and so cruel they would bring a false accusation against their wives. If for some reason the wife was unable to prove her innocence she could be stoned to death. In Matt. 19:8, Jesus told the Jews it was because of the hardness of their hearts that Moses gave them the precept of Divorce,

In Deut. 24:1-4, Moses let a man bring a lesser charge against his wife (one that didn't carry the death penalty), give her a bill of divorcement and then put her away. This, no doubt, was to save innocent lives. This bill of divorcement was not given to the righteous but to the disobedient. In John 8:3-11, Jesus did away with the stoning, when the woman accused of adultery was brought to him. In vs. 7, "He said unto them, he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Vs. 9, "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." In Rom. 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God. In James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." There is no one without sin, so there is no one worthy of casting stones at another. There is no need for the provision Moses gave for putting away by a bill of divorcement. Jesus made it plain he was not honoring the bill of divorcement that Moses gave them. Matt. 5:31-32 "It has been said whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement, But I say unto you" making it plain He wasn't accepting what Moses had said, but was giving them a different message that was in accordance with what the Lord had planned in the beginning. So, now instead of adultery and fornication being punishable by death as in the old Law (Deut. 22:22-24) they are now sins among many sins that have no place in the Kingdom of God.

The scripture also shows the position a person is in if they do divorce and marry another while their spouse is still living. Rom. 7:2-3, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth. But if the husband be dead she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband be dead, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." Luke 16:18, "Whomsoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery." Mark 10:11-12: "And he saith unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9 are the verses that for a long time I was unable to understand and the Lord opened them up to me. They are very simple when we know who Jesus was speaking about and why. There are two couples of a different status whom the Jews call man and wife. One is the couple who is already married, and the other is the couple who is engaged to be married but not married yet. The Scripture uses the terms "espoused" and "betrothed" instead of "engaged." We see these couples spoken of as man and wife in Deut, 22:23-24 "If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband and a man find her in the city, and lie with her, then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of the city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel because she cried not, being in the city, and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife. The same is true in the N.T. In Matt. 1:18, we can see Joseph and Mary were espoused to be married but hadn't come together in marriage yet. In vs. 19, Joseph was referred to as Mary's husband. In vs. 20, Mary is called Joseph's wife. Let us look at Matt. 19:9, "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Notice it mentions both adultery and fornication in the same vs.

There are some sins called fornication mentioned in the Bible that anyone can be guilty of, but the fornication Jesus is dealing with here is a sin of the flesh that Paul mentions in 1 Cor. 7:1-2, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. (Vs. 2) Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. This fornication is a sin of the unmarried. Jesus makes it plain that adultery is a sin of the married. Matt. 5:32, the last part of the verse says "and whosoever shall marry that is divorced committeth adultery." Paul makes it plain also that there is a difference between adultery and fornication by listing them as two different sins in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, "know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, etc. shall inherit the Kingdom of God." He also lists them as separate sins in Gal. 5:19. So, in Matt. 5:26-28 and Matt. 19, Jesus is referring to adultery among the married and fornication among the unmarried who were engaged to be married (called man and wife by the Jews). An engagement to be married (betrothal) was much more binding to a Jew, than for a couple in the Western World. So much so that they were caused to feel that what applied to a married man and his wife also applied to a man and his betrothed wife. The law, no doubt, helped this thought, since the penalty for an unfaithful wife (Deut. 22:22) and an unfaithful betrothed wife (fiancee) (Deut. 22:23-24) was the same—death by stoning. This thinking is what

Jesus was trying to correct. So, in Matt. 19:9 (speaking of the married) “And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another, committeth adultery and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery.” The exception, “except it be for fornication” is the unmarried man and his espoused wife (fiancee). If he puts away his wife (fiancee) who has been unfaithful, and he then marries another, he isn’t committing adultery. Neither is she if she married someone else. And the man who married her, isn’t committing adultery.

In Matt. 5:32 of the married, “But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Jesus knew that most divorced people would marry again. The “put away” wife and the man she married were both guilty of adultery but the husband was the cause of it for having put her away. “Saving for the cause of fornication” are the unmarried who are in a different situation altogether. Joseph thought he was caught in this position of having an espoused wife, guilty of fornication. Matt. 1:18, he and Mary were espoused (engaged to be married) but had not come together in marriage yet. Mary was found to be with child. Joseph knew it wasn’t his child, so with only the understanding he had at this time, it could mean only one thing. Mary was guilty of fornication; she had been unfaithful. He planned to put her away privately, which he had every right to do as they were not yet married. Then, the Lord spoke, “Fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife.”

In Matt. 19, we see even the disciples were slow to grasp what Jesus was trying to show them. Vs. 10, his disciples say unto him, “If the case of a man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” They still thought if it is wrong for a married man to divorce his wife and marry another, it was also wrong for an unmarried man to put away his espoused wife and marry someone else. They thought he should live an unmarried life without a woman as an eunuch. Jesus didn’t agree; the man was unmarried and free to marry if he wished. Jesus then names those it would be expected of to remain unmarried in vs. 12.

****Adrian Oldham is a deceased ex-worker who was married to ex-worker Sherlene Wisdom and lived in Oceanside, CA.***

**My reasons for believing what I do
Re Divorce and Remarriage
By R. G. Stratford***

Jesus said, “These things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. Matt. 11. This calls us to approach this question in the attitude and spirit of a child. The “wise and prudent approach” is that of a lawyer, who searches for points, Greek meanings, drawing conclusions and inferences from remote verses in Old and New Testaments; eager to build up a case that in itself is not obvious, or clearly stated; and applying scriptures out of their context or original meaning. Let us face this question in the spirit of a child.

Luke says, Luke 1:1-4, “as others have declared those things that are most surely believed among us...it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things, to write unto thee in order that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.”

As a child, let us now turn to what was most surely believed among God’s people in respect to divorce and remarriage, as shown in ch. 16:18. It reads: “whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.” This was surely believed among God’s children then. Should it not be most surely believed among us today?

In 1 Cor. 7:11, Paul says regarding the departing wife, “But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or let her be reconciled to her husband.” Reconciliation was proposed, but never remarriage to another man. This is proof positive that the departing of one partner, does not dissolve the entire marriage as some affirm: the departing one breaks their own vows, but the place of repentance remains. The wronged partner does not seek satisfaction in a divorce court and then look for peace in the embrace of another mate. The Master said, “Pray for those who despitefully use you.” A true child of God, will do what God has done...keep the door open for the sinner’s return, and love and cherish, and pray for their erring partner in hope of their return again.

The “writing of divorcement” that Moses permitted, was not endorsed by Jesus. He said, “in the beginning it was not so.” Matt. 19:8, and immediately followed with, “And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife (except it be for fornication) and shall marry another commiteth adultery.” Fornication here, as in all other times when used by Jesus, is a word denoting unclean living before marriage. Hence the marriage is contracted under false pretences, and therefore regarded as deception.

There are two single verses in the New Test. where Jesus enumerated a list of sinful things, and in both, we see He speaks of fornication as a separate item from adultery. (Matt. 15:19 and Mark 7:21) Paul does exactly the same in I Cor. 6:9 and Gal. 5:19. Could any thing be clearer than what we have in 1 Cor. 7:2 ? It is so obvious that Paul is speaking to unmarried persons there! Some translations are also very definite that Paul meant unmarried men in 1 Cor. 7:27. Otherwise the scripture would contradict what Paul had written in. verse 11 in the same chapter. There is no place in the New Test. where fornication and adultery are used synonymously. Even in Rev. 2:21-22, where reference is made to “that woman Jezebel.” She is mentioned in the symbolic narrative as a fornicator, while men who commit adultery with her will be cast together with her, into great tribulation. It is significant that the words are used, but only fornication is applied to her; for the meaning of the word Jezebel is unmarried. In no place in the four Gospels does Jesus condone divorce and remarriage.

We notice in Matt. 19:3, that the Pharisees came tempting Him, asking if it was right for a man to put away (divorce) his wife for every (or any) cause. Jesus immediately referred them to what was from the beginning, and added, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.” “Cleave” here means to hold on to tenaciously or permanently until death brings the parting. “What therefore God hath joined, let not man put asunder.”

The natural marriage is meant to reflect the union of the Bride and heavenly Bridegroom...Eph. 5:31. God does not divorce the sinner, and shut the door forever against him. Jesus spoke of the Father's love for the Prodigal. This erring son was not disowned, and another man given his place, and his name forever erased from the father's love. A true father cannot, in his heart, disown his son, nor can a true wife in her heart, disown her prodigal husband.

Those who advocate that a deserted wife is no longer under the marriage bond at all, and that an unfaithful husband can, and does, put asunder what God has joined, and dissolves the marriage by this lapse of fidelity, are ignoring the law of love, and control of the Spirit of God in a saved woman's heart. She is not of those who act as the world would act; she is a new creature in Christ. Does being “born again” mean no more than just a pious belief? Or is it a complete change of control in the life? Can we not expect to see a person so controlled, to act entirely different under life's disappointments and trials, than an unsaved person of the world?

It was for the Hebrew's hardness of heart that Moses, permitted them to seek recourse in divorce. Do God's children find any provision for hardness of heart in the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament? The Spirit of God imparts a new heart and mind to those who obey Him. Hence, a wronged man or woman does not turn to the divorce court for satisfaction, or to remarriage for peace. They find the peace of a good conscience is theirs, as they do not break their marriage vows when their erring, partner breaks his. But on the contrary, they continue to love, cherish, and to pray for the one who has wronged them, keeping the door open for repentance to bring their loved one home again.

Advocates of remarriage contend, that it is unreasonable to expect anyone who has known the pleasure and comfort of married life, to henceforth remain as a celibate (sic), when by remarriage, they could again share in the protection and comfort of a true companion. In Rom. 13:14, Paul writes, “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” The comforts of the flesh are not as important as abiding by the words of Jesus, and living according to the direction of His word. For Jesus has spoken, and as Jack Forbes used to say, “It doesn't matter where our sympathies lie, we cannot go beyond the words of Jesus.”

The marriage bond is just part of the bond of Christ that God's children come under. For the husband and wife relationship, when lived in the fear of God reflects what Paul calls a great mystery, and he added, “I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:32). It is a sacred bond. Not just written on paper, but engraved in the heart. It is not annulled or dissolved just by infidelity of one partner. The unfaithful one breaks his or her vows, sometimes just for a few days or maybe for a few months, or perhaps years; and then repents and returns home again to find his faithful

partner waiting with the door open, with her vows unbroken, and her love for him, and her conscience toward God keeping peace in her soul.

We have seen this very thing happen, where an unfaithful husband departed from his wife. The marriage did not become dissolved at all; on the contrary, the wronged wife kept her vows intact; namely to love, cherish, and pray, as a true wife waiting for her husband to come home! Which he did after sane time. He was sincerely repentant, and filled his place gratefully and honourably in the home. He expressed his humble repentance and regret before the church, and got completely freed from his wrong ways. He has since passed on to the presence of God, a repentant and restored child of God.

Those who oppose the thought of fornication, being a word used by Jesus and by Paul in regard to unclean living before marriage, believe they see evidence in 1 Cor 7:15, a complete dissolution of the marriage. Yet they ignore the preceding verses where the departing wife is commanded to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. (vs. 11) How is reconciliation possible if the marriage has already been dissolved? And why are they still called 'husband and wife' in vs. 16, if neither are now not married at all!! And why does the chapter end with Paul declaring that the wife is bound to the husband as long as he liveth, and is free to marry another only after he is dead? The same is given in Rom. 7:2. Can one single word in the whole of 1st Cor. (and that given different meaning by different translators of the Bible) become a foundation on which to build a whole theory of the New Testament teaching regarding divorce and remarriage? The word is 'bondage' in vs. 15. It is wisely said, "Admit not doctrine as part of the gospel, that is not in agreement to the general tenor of the whole." The scripture stands so deliberately challenging before us; namely, "what God has joined let not man put asunder." And "Whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery, and whosoever marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery."

In all our quest for the answer to the divorce and remarriage question, we are confronted with the inescapable example of God, and of Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit. We see it in the attitude of the Father toward the departing Israel. These words of love, "yet return again to me." (Jer. 3:1) And in the parable of Jesus, where the father waits in love for the return of his prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32) They do not divorce a sinner, and seek another in their place. But in all cases, the opportunity is given for repentance, and love and mercy of God restores, renews, and receives. The theory of the abolished and dissolved marriage, just because one of the partners 'departs', does not spring from the One who said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Some would try to equalize the role of the Old Test. judges, with the responsibility laid upon the disciples of Jesus, when He said He would give the keys of the kingdom to Peter, and when He 'breathed' upon the disciples and said, "Receive ye the holy Ghost." The Old Testament judges were never asked to pass judgment on any matter in which God had already given specific commandments. Whereas, the disciples were equipped to carry Christ's expressed gospel to all the world, declaring and teaching only those things that He had commanded them. Their remitting or retaining of sins was not through their own judgment, but by the gospel, "which is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe." (Rom. 1:16) So let not any servant of God in these days claim a mandate from Jesus to 'bind or loose', 'remit or retain' any sin or burden, or responsibility, except in the taking of the gospel to the world of sinners. As Jesus said, "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." His grace is sufficient to meet every need, and charity (the love of God) enables His little ones to suffer long, and be kind.

Luke's words come back to mind again, (Luke 1:1), "a declaration of those things that are most surely believed among us." His church is founded on him. We need no changes, no reformation; but we need to bow our heads and hearts to His every word; those words which will never pass away. Those words which will judge us in the last days. We need to adore Him who is the WORD of LIFE.

R. G. Stratford

****Reg G. Stratford is from Australia and also labored in India***

**Letters by Workers
On Divorce & Remarriage**

Letter by Berlin Raymond

June 24, 1986

To whom it may concern:

I for a No. of years have been distressed because of the division of the east and west in this fellowship. I was not very long in the truth when I saw there was a separation of fellowship between the ones that Jack Carroll and the ones that George Walker was supervising. And this distressed me and I talked to several about that situation. It seemed only some personal grievances that made the division. I was young in the truth at that time and thought that it would soon pass, but as I grew older in the truth it seemed to continue.

I thought after Jack's passing that that would be the end of the division but it seemed to continue. And when George died I thought surely that will be the end of the division. But no, it still existed. And soon this question of divorce and remarriage seemed to be the thing that separated the east and west.

I know that both in my earlier days was against separations and divorce. But the last few years it has been very clear that a number of workers was all for letting those that were divorced and remarried take part in the meetings. This has distressed me to no end as I know that Jesus did not teach that doctrine neither did Paul nor any of the apostles. I have studied the scripture extensively and can't find any place where divorce and remarrying was acceptable with Christ teaching. Paul said as long as a woman's husband lived she was under the law of her husband. But if he be dead she is free to marry whom she would, only in the Lord. This would apply to a man also the way I see it.

This situation grieves me because of the distress it brings upon a lot of the saints as they think of their children and grand children that are to face this situation in life. We can see that Jesus so often prayed that the disciples would all be one even as He and the Father was one. If men are led by the Holy Spirit of God I can't see why they can't get together and take the word of God and come to an agreement according to the scripture. That is what they did in the Acts of the apostles.

I was in a meeting once when three states with their overseers was met together and two of the overseers said that we were all together on this subject and I knew that was not true as I was not and I knew several in that meeting that was not in agreement with it. I do not want to be dogmatic about this but would like to see a Godly agreement reached so that God's people could be one in heart and mind and doctrine as they were in the Acts. And that is what Jesus prayed for in the last days of his ministry with the disciples. I think of the young workers coming on and the impression they will have if there can't be unity among the older ones. I made a list of all the overseers in the states and made it a point to pray that God will direct them in the affairs of the Kingdom and in this way they could make right decisions if they are led by the Spirit of Lord instead of their own opinion.

Berlin Raymond

Letter by Lecil Sullivan

5006 Bleckley Ct.

Wichita, KS 67218

Jan. 31, 1987

My dear brethren

My recent visit to the Northwest was very enjoyable. I appreciated the invitation to go there and valued so much the privilege of being among God's servants and saints in that part of our country.

However, there was – and still is – a persistent aching. In my heart because of the rift that exists between the East and the West. If this truth we are a part of were a denomination, it would have been split a many ways long ago. But it isn't a denomination, and it is not divided that way. The same seeds of the gospel are being sown, and the same fruit is being harvested in all areas of the world.

I ask myself, "Why should the Great Divide of the Rockies come between God's people?" And why should Satan be allowed this advantage? This "thorn" may be more painful to some of us who have labored on both sides of those

mountains, and have come to know and respect and love God's servants and His saints in all places.

I am certain that God did not cause this rift, nor want it. And I am just as sure that He wants to heal it. Jesus' fervent prayer to God in John 17 has come to mind many times – especially vs. 21, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee..." also Paul's exhortation in Eph. 4:3 "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And numerous places that speak of one Spirit, one mind, one accord, I so long to see that among us.

The real question doesn't seem to be a matter of what is right or wrong, but how to deal with wrong. Everyone knows that divorce is not right. Everyone knows that fornication and adultery are exceeding sinful. The difference seems to lie in how to deal with those who have been taken in these things. I confess that I do not know the answer. But there is an assurance in my heart that God Who made man knows all the answers.

I have confidence to believe that He has faithful, holy, godly men in the world today, whom He can use to resolve this issue, and any others that could arise. I believe that God has men who can come together in the spirit of humbleness, meekness and love to talk with each other and listen to each other. I believe that, through His Spirit and through His Word, God can reveal to such men the course that should be followed. Then, in every part of the earth, God's servants and His saints can stand united in saying, "This is what we believe, and this is what we stand for, because of God's Spirit and because of God's Word." This was done in Acts 15

In the recent past a group of men from various parts of the globe came together to discuss and agree upon a new hymnbook for God's people of the English speaking countries. Could not elder servants of God from all parts of the earth come together to discuss – and agree upon – matters that are vital to the Everlasting Kingdom? I think so.

Please do not feel that this is written haughtily or presumptuously. Rather, it is a plea from a heart that is torn by this controversy.

In the bonds of love,

Your brother,

Lecil Sullivan

Letter by Willis Propp

January 22, 1986

To whom it may concern:

In the prayer of Jesus that last night of His life, He placed before us not alone a golden ideal, but a twofold responsibility — unity of the New Testament ministry and unity of the New Testament fellowship. (JOHN 17:11 & 20-21.)

For many years there has existed a difference and lack of this unity, particularly in the ministry, between Eastern and Western Canada and the United States. The coming and going of workers at Conventions and Special Meetings has been a great help in feeding and caring for God's People, yet it has not been at all effective in erasing this difference.

To the contrary, there has been a growing awareness of two very distinct lines of thought emerging with regard to some of the fundamental teachings of Christ and His early apostles. Workers, young and old, both in the East and West, are becoming more and more alarmed as to where this may lead us. Our friends in the more recent years, due to the increase in travel etc., are beginning to question us: "Are there two Standards in this Kingdom? Our young workers are now being confronted with this and are at a loss to know how to answer this vital question.

Absolute unity in the fundamental teachings of Christ which promotes this unity of the faith and unity of the body of Christ is so necessary. Grave danger looms that two camps polarized from one another will result. We all know that united we stand and divided we fall. The enemy of our souls would like nothing better than to see such a tragedy happen.

A gathering such as was held in Acts 15 where unity was so threatened, and where the Holy Spirit guided and promoted unifying results is urgently needed. We earnestly request such a gathering at this time where a restoration to harmony can be realized, so the preservation of a united Kingdom can be maintained. There are some of us nearing the end of our journey in life. We take this opportunity to plead for a positive and Godly approach to this matter, lest

we leave such a distressing issue upon the shoulders of younger men who will be taking up the torch of the testimony when we must lay it down.

Willis Propp

Letter by Tharold Sylvester and Mike Thorsteinson

c/o 5408 S. Brandon

Seattle, WA 98118

January 24, 1987

Your call to my companion was appreciated and I can understand your distress. Twelve years ago [1975], Eldon, Earnest, Howard and I met Andrew, Garret, Murray and Taylor in Minneapolis where this question was brought up. There Andrew read 1 Cor. 7:10-11. He asked us if we believed and taught that, and we told him, "Absolutely." Then he read verses 12-15, and asked us if we believed that, and we told him, "Yes." He went further then, and said that when the unbelieving departed, the forsaken party was not in bondage in such cases. Contending that that meant such were free to get married again. However, they had no other verses to prove that. When we would not agree, Andrew closed the meeting, and promised we would have another in two years.

Before that time came, Andrew had a stroke. However he did write asking if we wanted another meeting. We answered, "Yes." Because I wanted to share the confirmation God had given me his answer. He replied that if we could not meet in full agreement with them, we would not meet.

Since then, they have been restoring divorced and remarried people to full fellowship in every place they can. On the contrary, we have had over 20 cases who have become entangled in that here in the West, and they became so distressed that they have gone to court and obtained a divorce, because of the Holy Spirit convicting them of their wrong. They are now back in fellowship, having returned as prodigals—feeling like they sinned against heaven. This in itself proves God has a way of restoring people, and we would like to share that with them. They still refuse to have another meeting to discuss this matter, and have not invited us to come to any of their conventions.

We are determined to abide by what Jesus taught. We still teach, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever," and we'll stand with anyone who will honestly stand for that. Remember John the Baptist's uncompromising position regarding Herod.

If you have any further questions please write or call. We are interested in standing on the word of the Lord and not on the ideas of men. Don't let winds of false doctrine turn you from the Lord, as this could be the "falling away" mentioned in the Bible before Christ returns. He wants saints who have been tested in every way to be with Him forever. Excuse more and best wishes.

Your's for Christ Sake,

Signed: Tharold Sylvester

Mike Thorsteinson

Letter by Doyle Copeland

Box 86

Whitewood, SD 57793

Dear co-workers and friends,

Many of you are aware that I have not been in harmony with a new doctrine of divorce and remarriage for professing people that has sprung up amongst us in recent years. I first was made conscious of it about 10 years ago, and from the first I felt it was out of line with the Will of God. All my life I have been taught that divorce and remarriage was wrong, even in my unsaved days were led to believe it was wrong. Then after I heard the Gospel, and yielded my life to its claims, there was still the feeling that such was wrong.

Later it was my privilege to be called by the Lord unto His Harvest Field, and it was still my feelings, and also the feelings of my companions, that such was not right in the sight of God. Therefore when it was first brot to my attention of a new approach to this situation, I never could accept it. My conscience would not allow me to. I talked with others, and found that most of our overseers accepted this new approach to divorce and remarriage for professing people, under certain conditions. And may I sincerely say, this brot many days and nights of concern. For sure, I have never felt my ideas were above others, rather the thots and ideas of others were always of concern to me, and I accepting such, when my conscience would allow me to. When my mind was in such a turmoil, I did write to some overseers whom I had heard did not accept this new approach to divorce and remarriage for professing people, and they have brot me much comfort, just to know that others felt the same as I. There was a great concern as to what the Bible taught in re this, and I studied it carefully in the light of this matter, and the more I sought unto it, the more deeply assured I became that what I had been taught was right. No need to change, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I was advised by one of our senior workers to not act hastily in re this matter, and feel his advice was good. Now, for some 9 years have tried to cooperate with my overseers in the varied problems of the times. Am sure our overseers have some trying decisions to make and I do pray for them. But I cannot cooperate with them in this matter of divorce and remarriage for professing people. Please do not feel that I consider my ideas on this superior to theirs. But I do feel Gods Word is the final decision, I must go by what it says. With this in mind, I have personally contacted 3 of our senior overseers, asking them to transfer me to some area where I could labor in harmony with my overseers, but this was to no avail.

I am leaving the work in S. Dak. after the Black Hills Conv. is over. Not leaving in anger, nor with malice toward any. But I want that my remaining days, or years in Gods great Harvest Field be spent in some area where I can cooperate fully with my overseers. There can be no real fellowship where there is discord over such a weighty matter as I have just referred to. And where there is no fellowship, there is not much of worth. I am leaving my poor life open for invitations from any worker, or overseer to come and labor in their area of overseership. I do hot expect any place above others, I will gladly take the lowest place, just so I can labor in harmony with others.

My immediate plans are indefinite. I do want to visit in former fields of labor this summer, also to visit my sisters, none of whom profess, have never been in 2 of their present homes.

May I close with sincere thanks to all for what you have done for me, both in your homes in the way of genuine hospitality, and with my companions help in our varied missions, and with the staff in preps and sp. mtgs., and with our labor of moving the Conv. to this present location. May good days be yours, and my prayer is that this problem of divorce and remarriage for professing people be resolved, so that peace and harmony can prevail. I believe this to be Gods true and only Way, and am sure He can overrule that His people can have that rest of heart and peace of mind that is so vital to Christian living. I am behind with my writing for reasons you all know about, but will be glad to correspond with any who care to write me.

A Friend thru the Gospel,

Doyle Copeland

Anonymous Letter Concerning Divorce

December 2009

This letter has been in the making for about two years. This study was the result of learning about a man who was divorced and remarried and was told that he couldn't even go to meeting. A short time later, this led him to commit suicide.

In the case of the children of Israel bringing the Ark of the Covenant home, and when Uzzah reached out his hand and touched the ark and was stricken dead. Yes, it was God that smote him, but when there is a death under circumstances like these, it is appropriate to go back and examine the scripture. Were the restrictions that were put upon him too heavy to bear? I know assuredly, if were in his shoes, I have no doubt that the restrictions would be too much to bear.

From the outset I put a great deal of thought and prayer into this subject, and the writing of this letter. My earnest prayer and desire was to learn what God's mind is regarding divorce and remarriage. I feel a bit like Abraham when he came

before the Lord to intercede on the behalf of Lot and any righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham felt it important to intercede, and at the same time he approached the Lord in all humility. I want to convey my desire to intercede, but also that you would know that it is with all humility.

It is often preached in the gospel meetings that the way of God is the same everywhere, when in fact it is not. This has been disconcerting to many faithful saints and faithful elders and to a number of workers as well. Our young people are especially confused by the inconsistencies. Our young people are traveling a great deal more and are very much aware that in some places it is okay to be divorced and remarried, and take part in meetings, and in some places, it is not okay.

Even in the West, there are some that are divorced and remarried and being allowed to take part while other members of the same extended family are not allowed to do so. This shows "respect of persons", which is something that Jesus and Paul advised against. The very fact that there isn't agreement brings to light that something isn't right about this. In light of this, we need to delve into the scripture and make a real earnest study of this and pray and seek out the mind of God in this matter. This issue has become a heavy burden, not just on those who are divorced, but also upon those who meeting with them, on our young people, and workers who are troubled by such a law.

Do we change things because of this? Yes, but only if it is scripturally sound. I have endeavored through prayer and reading [to] seek only the mind of God in this. matter, not mine own nor some man's idea, only God's. I have done a lot of searching, and what I have learned is that God hates a man "putting away" his wife and not supporting her. That is not divorce, but separation without divorce.

The reason God would hate that so much is that a wife was to be supported by her husband, even if they were separated. Because of the hardness of the husband's heart, he dealt treacherously with her and did not support her. God through Moses let it be known that that was not what He wanted. So God commanded the steps that a man needed to take to divorce his wife, Deuteronomy 24:1-3. (1) Let him write a bill of divorcement; (2) Put it in her hand; (3) Send her out of his house. **And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.** That is very clear, isn't it?

A marriage can be dissolved by divorce, and God does recognize this fact. God Himself put away Israel and gave her a bill of divorce. God said in Jeremiah 3:8, "And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce...."

Jesus said a "put away" woman commits adultery when she marries. So, perhaps it is vitally important that we understand just what was meant by "put away."

If a husband and wife get into a fight and the woman screams, "Get out! I hate you! I don't EVER want to see you again"! Are they divorced? If he leaves, as she commanded, has she divorced him? The answer is really obvious, isn't it? This sort of thing happens with couples all the time. Usually after [they] cool down, they reconcile. If this "putting away" were the same as divorce, they would be divorced. So it becomes apparent that a "sent away" spouse who did not receive a "bill of divorcement" is not divorced—not according to Moses and not according to the law of our land.

God in His mercy gave a three-part procedure for divorce: 1. Write a bill of divorcement; 2. Put it into her hand; 3. Send her out of the house. Deuteronomy 24:1 The following verse says, **"and when she is departed out his house, she may go and be another man's wife."** Without the bill of divorcement there was no divorce—at least not according to God's definition.

Actually, when you look carefully at the wording of Deut. 24:1, 2 and Mark 10:3-5 it becomes evident that the "bill of divorcement" was a command, meaning it was an essential part of the divorce procedure. And we know that God said, "Let not man put asunder" Man cannot end a marriage his way (which is "putting away"), but he can do it God's way. Man's way results in treachery (Mal 2:14-16) and adultery (Mat 19:9). According to Moses the "bill of divorcement" allowed the woman to "go be another man's wife". Without it she could not do so—it would be adultery. Why, because they would still be married.

Even in our society, it is very difficult for a woman to support herself and children; most often they end up living in poverty. Additionally trying to raise children under those circumstances in the way of God, is not like really raising them

in truth because many workers will not even visit a family with a single mother or a single father at the head of the house. So the children grow up with scarcely knowing what it is like having workers in the home. Some children from a certain family, who had expressed a desire to make their choice, and the older brother in the field was contacted regarding this. He refused to come and visit those children. Those children's souls were not important to him because he, apparently, despised their divorced mother. Is this the spirit Christ manifested? (John 8 would tell otherwise)

Malachi 2 makes it very clear that God hates the treachery of a husband who sends her away ("putting away") and not supporting her. In reality, the law of not permitting those who are divorced to remarry in essence has brought the treachery that God hates, back into the picture. Treachery, not only because of not having the emotional, physical, and monetary support and help of a husband, but also the treachery of very often not having the spiritual support and emotional support of many of the workers who will scarcely acknowledge those who are divorced.

That treachery is also carried out by many of the saints who seldom, if ever, invite divorced individuals to their homes, and feel justified in so doing because of the obvious attitude of many of the workers towards those who are divorced. Spiritually, where does this leave those who have dealt treacherously against those who are divorced and those who are divorced and remarried? Jesus said to the lawyers in Luke 11:46, "woe unto you also, ye lawyers! For ye have laden men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers".

This law is a grievous burden upon the kingdom. Now is the time for this grievous burden to be lifted. A very wise and godly older sister made this statement, "You cannot lay down laws for God's people; those who are willing will become self righteous, and those who aren't willing will become rebellious."

So what about the fact that the Bible says in Matthew 5:32 that whosoever marries her that is divorced commits adultery? A closer look at the Greek text shows that a literal translation in that verse would be "whosoever shall marry her that is **put away** commits adultery".

The Greek word *apoluo*, Strong's number 630, is used here and for some reason was translated "divorced" instead of "put away". The King James translators were not consistent in translating *apoluo* or "put away" or "send away" or "sent away" as they did more than 25 times in other verses. In fact, *apoluo* appears in the *Greek Textus Receptus* (from which the King James was translated) more than 65 times, but was translated "divorce" only once, and that was in Matthew 5:32. The Greek word *apoluo* was correctly translated "put away" in Matthew 5:32, for example, in the ASV 1901. *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (1898), and the *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* translated by Jay P. Green. A margin note in the Geneva Bible translated from the Textus Receptus in 1560 (about 50 years before the KJV) concerning the term put away said "that is, was not lawfully divorced."

Jesus did NOT say whosoever shall marry her that has been given a bill of divorce (*biblion*, 975 and *apostasion* 647) commits adultery (Matthew 5:43; 19:9; Luke 16:18). Likewise, Jesus did NOT say whosoever shall give a bill of divorce (*biblion* 975 and *apostasion* 647) to his wife causes her to commit adultery, but rather whosoever shall **put away** (*apoluo* 630) his wife (except for fornication) causes her to commit adultery (Matthew 5:32). And Jesus did NOT say whosoever shall give his wife a bill of divorce (*biblion* 975 and *apostasion* 647) and marry another commits adultery, but rather whosoever shall **put away** (*apoluo* 630) his wife (except for fornication) and shall marry another commits adultery (Mat 19:9; Luke 16:18). And Jesus did NOT say if a woman shall give her husband a bill of divorce (*biblion* 975 and *apostasion* 647) and be married to another she commits adultery, but rather if a woman shall **put away** (*apoluo* 630) her husband and be married to another she commits adultery (Mk 10:12)

One more thought: Last night I dreamed a dream and when I awoke it was very vivid, and I believe that God gave me this dream as a parable to share with you. In my dream I was at dinner with a number of people and workers in a large rambling home. There were several tables in different rooms and people eating dinner. At my table was an elderly brother worker in his 80's (he has long labored overseas), after dinner he stood up and said, "I sat too long". He was in pain and weak and soon collapsed to the floor. I ran to him and held his head and shoulders up. I needed help carrying him to his room. One by one, some of the brothers came forward and looked but made (*sic*) an excuse about not carrying him and backed away. After a long time when no one would come to help me carry him, I picked him up and carried him by myself down a long hall into another part of the house through another dining room and kitchen and finally reached his bedroom and laid him down. When I awoke this morning, I was so amazed that no one was willing to

help me carry the burden of this weak brother. Then I realized it was a parable. The question is: Will you be willing to help lift the burden of your weaker brethren, or will you make some excuse and just back away after seeing the burden and the need at hand?

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Ken Paginton on Difference in *Divorce* and *Putting Away*, 1996

It would be wrong in our attitude to give the impression that married couples who may be having difficulties could go "outside", divorce and remarry, then just work back in again, Yet we could err in being too rigid. The old Law in Lev 20:10 gave sentence of death for adultery, yet in John 8, Jesus did not act on that. Also in the case of David and Bathsheba, 2 Sam 11:12, they were not put to death. Afterwards, God accepted that union and chose Solomon from it. Matthew 1:6 calls her the wife of Uriah.

But certainly, there are cases of broken marriages where, for one party, there has never been any question of marital or sexual infidelity. Under the old law there was never any restriction on the remarriage of the innocent party. Romans 7:2 "the woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives". If the law was applied to a guilty husband, he would be dead anyway. Mat 19:3-9 Marriage in the beginning was more than a physical act (marriage ceremony), it was much deeper.

It is generally accepted among us that if people have been married, divorced and remarried before they accepted the gospel, then it is not held against them. There is repentance, forgiveness, and a clean sheet. It's not right to forbid people to come to listen to the Gospel (unless they just want to cause trouble). However bad sinners were, Jesus spoke to them to help them.

The word *fornication* should be checked in different translations of the Bible. It can have different meanings. Read Mat 5:32, 19:9, Gal 5:19, 1 Cor 5:1, Jude 7, and 1 Cor 5:9

For example, say Mr. B was a good faithful husband to his wife; and she ran off with another man. He would like her back, but she refuses. Later he comes to gospel meetings and professes. Later, he would like to marry in the Truth, but there are some that would say no. He has been married before. Mr. X on the other hand lived with 3 or 4 different women, comes to meetings and professes, and later would like to marry a professing lady. Some in this case would say yes, because he was never married before. In both cases, the men had never heard the gospel before, so should they both not get a clean sheet?

John and Mary are a worldly couple. Mary happens to work in an office with one of the friends. Through that contact, Mary comes to meetings and makes her choice. John doesn't want anything to do with the meetings or religion and tells her that she must quit the meetings, or he will leave her. She holds to the truth, and later walks out and divorces her. John moves away, remarries, and later comes to meetings, and he and his new wife profess. Later, Mary would like to marry, and there are some that would say no. John has been given a clean sheet, and his 2nd marriage accepted. Could we punish Mary for the rest of her life for a fault that was John's, and who has been forgiven for it? Would that be righteous judgment?

A young boy or girl 10-14 professes, but later loses out, and goes out into the world and gets married, and then divorced. Then comes back very repentant and makes a good start. Are they to be told that they can never marry, never find a partner, because they made a profession at that tender and not yet developed age? Is that fair judgment.

I hope this letter does not give the impression that I am wanting to open the way to a lot of divorce and remarriage amongst us. I am not. I am concerned and feel that we are not altogether in line with what our gracious and merciful Lord would do.

Ken Paginton

Cor 7:1-16 (Paul's opinion)

LeRoy Lerwick on Divorce & Remarriage

One of the things that make us marvel regarding the way of God is the harmony of spirit that we enjoy on a worldwide level, which crosses the barriers of customs, languages, and cultures. I cannot think of an issue where there is not harmony among the servants in the entire world, regarding doctrine.

However, there is an issue where there is a need to arrive to a common thought and that is how to deal with the cases of marriages where there have been previous unions. Even in this, if we have different thoughts about how to treat cases, the Holy Spirit in us will not allow us to speak evil of a brother whose opinions may be different from ours, rather we respect the unity of the Spirit, something much more superior and valuable than our own level of understanding.

We all agree that it was the purpose of God that a man would leave father and mother and would join himself to his wife and that they would be one flesh and that it was the plan of God that it should be unto death. It is the model of the union between Jesus and the church, his bride, an eternal pact in His blood.

All agree that God hates putting away, or divorce, and that the law of divorce was given to man due to the hardness of the heart of man. Although God hates putting away, he hates unfaithfulness even more, and gave a bill of divorce to Israel for their unfaithfulness, for not having repented in spite of the patience of God and the efforts of his prophets, as we read in Jeremiah 3. His pact was an eternal pact, or covenant, and God cannot be unfaithful, Jesus cannot be unfaithful. Humanity, as the church and the bride of Christ, can be and has been unfaithful.

The traditional religion in Latin America teaches that marriage is indissoluble. Marriage is the model of the union between Christ and His church. If we teach that marriage is indissoluble, we would have to say that the covenant between God and His people, between us and God, is also indissoluble, even though we live unfaithfully, adulterating our union with false doctrines and adulterating with the world, God would have to take us to heaven. That is a doctrine which exists in the Catholic Church, with the baptism of children, supported by the doctrine of purgatory, masses for the dead, and in many evangelical churches which teach that once a child of God always a child of God and that one cannot lose their salvation, no matter what sins one commits.

The strongest argument that the Catholic Church uses to defend their doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage is that the covenant between God and man once made with baptism is indissoluble, and that the model of marriage has to be in agreement with this indissoluble covenant between God and man. It is true that the model has to agree with the spiritual that it represents, but the device of the devil in this is to twist the model so that it coincides with his false concept of the indissolubility of the covenant between God and man. Since they teach that marriage is indissoluble, they have had to invent another way of terminating a marriage, which is to declare it null and void, annulled.

This is the same as what the religious people who believe once saved always saved say when there is a case of one of their members who lives in a extremely unacceptable manner: he was not saved in the first place! When the Catholics annul a marriage, they say it was never a true marriage, even though the couple has been one flesh for many years, treated each other as man and wife, and had children. We know that this cannot be true. Every pact or business contract depends on the two parties to continue. If one party does not fulfill their part, the contract is terminated.

Some say that after a divorce, if they do not marry again, they are being true to their former marriage covenant and vows. But fulfilling a covenant is more than merely not forming another covenant. This would be the same as saying that he who does not join another religion is keeping his covenant with God even though he does not go to the meetings, does not read the scriptures, does not pray, and does not obey the word.

Under the law of God in the old covenant, unfaithfulness was punished by death, and thus terminated the marriage bond, and even if in mercy the offended husband gave a Bill of Divorcement to his unfaithful wife, as Joseph thought to do with Mary, unfaithfulness still terminates the marriage bond. The consequence of teaching that marriage is a sacrament, indissoluble, is that divorce becomes the sin, and unfaithfulness does not have the same consequence.

A woman who contaminates the bond by unfaithfulness thinks she can continue in the marriage bond, but when the offended seeks to be loosed from her by seeking a divorce she becomes the accuser, sees herself as the victim, and he is seen as the guilty one. Even though adultery is now not considered a crime worthy of death in the laws of many

countries, before God it is as serious now as it was under the first covenant. It still has the consequence of death, but it is our Lord Jesus Christ who bears the punishment of death.

To say that it is a continual sin to be married again and that there is no forgiveness is to say that Jesus' sacrifice has no value. The result of this confusion is that there is a degeneration of morality, and the institution of marriage suffers. It has the same effect on marriage as the work laws that protect the position of a worker who cannot be fired from his job, no matter how poorly he fulfills his function: such persons are careless in their work.

If it was still understood as it was in the old covenant that unfaithfulness terminated a union, one would be much more careful to avoid being unfaithful. Jesus confirmed this reality when he said that "except it be for unfaithfulness," the one who marries having been divorced or marries one who is divorced adulterates the previous union upon forming a second. If there has been unfaithfulness the first union has already been adulterated.

Another effect of the doctrine of indissolubility is that we end up concentrating on trying to avoid that a couple divorce or that the divorced marry, instead of putting the importance on the right order of the home, with the husband being the provider and the wife the home maker, which avoids many of the causes of the failure of a marriage. Many marriages have failed because the woman is working away from her home.

This is another distortion of the model from the man being the provider and protector and the wife using that provision to cover the needs of her home, representing Christ the provider and the church using that provision. Instead the wife who works and earns her own money becomes a model of the false church, which does her own works and does not submit to Christ as the provider.

One could think when reading what Jesus said about divorce—he that puts away his wife causes her to commit adultery, and he that marries the woman who has been put away adulterates—that Jesus was changing or annulling the law of divorce of the law of Moses. But Jesus first said that he could not change one jot or tittle of the law. All that he said in Mathew 5, 6, 7 was in no way a change of the laws of Moses. Jesus could not change anything of the law, but had to fulfill it perfectly and later replace it with the new covenant.

He makes a comparison with the righteousness which is of the law when men live under the law without the spirit of God, with the righteousness produced in those who lived under the law who had faith in Christ. They thought that to put away a wife was a right. It was not a right, and the man who put away his wife committed a sin that the law could not punish nor identify, just as the man who did not kill his brother, but hated him, was not guilty before the law, but was guilty before God.

He that lived by faith under the law would have lived according to all Jesus said in those three chapters, even before the coming of Jesus, and would have had salvation. It is the righteousness that saves and that has never changed. No true man with the Spirit of Christ would have sent away his wife, without a reason, and only would have given a Bill of Divorce in the case of unfaithfulness and having no confidence in her or no possibility to again be his wife, as Joseph thought to do with Mary, in which case it could not be out of hardness of heart that he would divorce her, rather out of compassion. The law made provision to accuse and judge an adulteress, but there was no obligation on the part of the offended husband, to denounce her, rather he could forgive her, and put her away so she could live.

The law of divorce in Israel did not disappear after what Jesus said in Mathew 5, nor were those who had been divorced obligated to separate from their new husband or wife, nor did the law of divorce disappear from the Roman law. If what Jesus said would have been taken as a change in the law in that moment and applied to all the people, it would have been an event very noticeable to history, and would have been noted in the scriptures as was the event in Ezra 10 when they had to put away their foreign wives. The then present laws of divorce continued for years, centuries, until they were eliminated by the Catholic Church in the countries where the Catholic Church had power over the governments.

A Bill of Divorce completely ended the union between a man and his wife, both in the law of Moses as in the law of the other nations. No one in the time of Jesus would have ever thought that a divorced woman was still married to her previous husband, before God, since God himself said she could not return to her first husband. A man who thus renounced his rights over his wife, in the law of Moses could not take her to wife again.

The Bill of Divorce was her salvation from being stoned as an adulteress. It was necessary in order to avoid shedding innocent blood. Without a Bill of Divorce, a man could cast his wife out of his home, and if she, out of need or obligation, would seek refuge under the roof of another man, her husband could then denounce her and take advantage of the law to have her stoned, using the law to assassinate his wife. For this reason, a woman had to have in her hands the document that proved she was forever free from her previous husband before she could safely join herself to another husband.

The Catholics try to make a difference between *repudiate* and *divorce*, but these words are synonyms. They say that Jesus was approving separation but not divorce. Others say that only if the couple were separated and not divorced would they be committing adultery if they married again. But with the danger of being stoned, no woman would have gone to be the wife of another man without the protection of the Bill of Divorce. Under the law of the Romans, the Jews no longer had permission to execute anyone, to stone an adulteress, and because of that divorce would have become the means to treat what before would have been resolved by stoning. For this reason, Jesus was given over to the Romans to be crucified instead of stoned. When Pilate said to take Jesus and judge him according to the laws of the Jews, they answered that it is not permitted for us to give death to any man.

Perhaps knowing that the Jews had no authority to stone, under the laws of the Romans, some woman abandoned by her husband would have dared to enter a new union without the Bill of Divorce, but also we see that, in spite of the prohibition to stone, the Jews with time did dare to do it, and in moments of anger forgot the prohibition; therefore, a woman would have had to secure her safety with a Bill of Divorcement.

This is also the reason that many were yet alive who were guilty of sins punishable by death who gladly listened to Jesus though the religious Jews considered them without salvation and without hope, being guilty of sins punishable by death. They condemned Jesus for offering the publicans, harlots and other sinners hope. Jesus was not crucified by the publicans and harlots, but by the religious Jews who trusted in their own righteousness which caused them to see Jesus as a sinner and friend of sinners.

Even today among practicing Jews, a woman who is divorced under the civil law has to get a Bill of Divorcement from the husband, called a *Get*, without any need of a lawyer or judge, before she can marry again as a Jew. When Jesus said, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder," he was not referring to a judge or lawyer, who in our day determine such cases, rather he is referring to another man who comes between a man and his wife, and breaks that union, joining himself to the married woman.

In the time of the Bible, it was not necessary to have a judge or lawyer, for a man to write a Bill of Divorce. Jesus did not say, "What God has joined together CANNOT be separated by man," as it is many times incorrectly cited. Yes, it can be put asunder. A man signed a paper saying that he renounced his right over his wife, and that she was free to all men.

There was much discussion among the Jews over what was the cause by which a man could give a Bill of Divorce to his wife. They wanted Jesus to give them a cause or causes that could justify putting away a wife. Although it has been interpreted as an answer to that request, what Jesus responded—that the only cause for which a man could put away his wife was unfaithfulness—that was not the intention of Jesus, to give them a cause and justification for divorcing their wife. Reconciliation might be possible with repentance on the part of the guilty and forgiveness on the part of the offended and would always be the best solution.

As in the other cases mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was indicating when putting away a wife could result in the sin of adulterating the previous union, and who would be responsible for it. In the moment that the repudiated wife joins herself to another husband, her first union would be adulterated unless it had already been adulterated by her infidelity. In Deuteronomy 24 it says, "If he find something unclean in her," he could give her a Bill of Divorcement, and it has been thought that perhaps if a man found his new bride not to be a virgin, he could give her a Bill of Divorcement and only under these circumstances was divorce used under the old covenant.

But later the second husband, "if he hate her," he also could give her a Bill of Divorce. He could not say he was divorcing her due to having found her not a virgin, having taken her knowing well she had been married and was not a

virgin. She would go out of his home with a second Bill of Divorcement that would save her from being stoned for adulterating her second union.

It was very important to God to avoid shedding innocent blood, and it was the responsibility of the Levites to avoid it. Not every man had the permission from the Levites to give a letter of divorce: the man who upon taking a wife would accuse her of not being a virgin, and later it is proved to be a false accusation, and the man who would humble a virgin by force, if her father accepted him, could not put her away all her life.

If a possibility to divorce a woman had not existed after the first few days of the marriage, it would not use the term to not put her away "all the days of her life." And the fact that there were exceptions stated indicates that putting away during their lifetime was a possibility. A priest could not marry a divorced woman, and if the law did not allow any man to marry a divorced woman, then it would have been unnecessary to state that a priest could not marry a woman who had been put away or divorced (Lev. 21:7).

Jesus indicated that if a marriage had not been adulterated by unfaithfulness, it would be adulterated upon forming a new union. Another source of confusion is that we follow traditions of the Roman Empire. In the Roman Empire there were three types of marriage: *confarreatio*, with the Flamen Dialis (the high priest of Jupiter) and the *pontifex maximus* (maximum priest as was the emperor called after the time of Cesar Augustus) present and corresponds to the ecclesiastic marriage of the Catholic church in the sense that divorce from this marriage was difficult if not impossible.

The second type was *coemptio*, comparable to the civil marriage of our time, and divorce was permitted. The third type, *usus*, is comparable to the free union marriage that exists in Latin America. If the couple lived together for a year, they were considered married. This was the most common type of marriage among the poor, the slaves, and those who were not Roman citizens. Many of Jesus' followers in that time would have lived under this third type of marriage.

The old law allowed a man to take a second wife, provided that the rights of the first were not diminished, and in no place did Jesus call this adultery. The second wife was not replacing the first one. God himself said to David when he corrected him for having taken Bathsheba that He had given into his breast his several wives. If it were a sin for David to have more than one wife, then God himself was guilty. It was not ideal, perhaps due to the many wars and the death of many men, God allowed it, and upon the arrival of Christ it was more clear that there is only one savior, and he has only one church, and therefore, it is not advisable for a man who had two wives to be the elder of a church, since the law that allowed a man to have more than one wife continued even to Jesus' time.

Some question today if a man who before he knew the Way was divorced and has married again could be the elder of a church, taking what Paul wrote to Timothy and to Titus of the requirement that he be the husband of one wife. But under no concept would such a man be the husband of two wives at the same time. For those who defend the Catholic doctrine that once married always married before God even though divorced and married to another wife, such a man does not have two wives, since they would believe that the second wife is no wife, and he is living in adultery with her.

It is impossible to live in adultery with one's wife. It is doubtful that they would confirm that such a man could go and have relations with his first wife from whom he is divorced and who is married to another man, even though they still would say that before God she is his wife. Therefore, they would have to say that such a man has no wife at all.

Those who recognize that divorce was as final as death would never think that such a man has two wives, and therefore cannot be an elder. He is married to his second wife and to no one else. If we believe that those who have been redeemed no longer have a past, it is a contradiction to again accuse them of what has been forgiven by the blood of Christ, the sins of their past. The father of the prodigal son did not accept the accusation of the elder brother, who wanted to remind his father how his brother had spent his inheritance with harlots and responded that "my son was dead and now he is alive." For God, one that has been forgiven is as if he had never sinned.

Every false doctrine can be defended by some scripture, isolating certain verses, separating them from their context, and using other verses that do not have anything to do with the subject but can be given an interpretation that agrees with the false doctrine. To understand this subject correctly, we have to identify the scriptures that have to do with the subject and assure ourselves that we are not using certain scriptures that appear to defend a position, if they in really have nothing to do with the subject. If what we teach does not agree with all the scriptures that have to do with the subject, then it is not the true interpretation.

Some considerations:

In Romans 7, one could think that Paul is teaching that a person who marries after being divorced is “living” in adultery. Paul was not giving a teaching about marriage—rather he was using marriage as an example to teach that while the old law and covenant was in effect, to be subject to another covenant would be like a woman who subjects herself to another man while her husband is living, and she is still under his power. While the law of Moses was in effect, it was not possible to come under another covenant. Upon the death of the old covenant, we are free to come under the new.

He was not speaking of a divorced woman, since in the old covenant a divorced woman was free from the law of her first husband, as free as if he or she were dead. In Spanish, it says, “if in the life of her husband she join herself to another MAN.” It does not say, “if she MARRY another HUSBAND,” indicating that she is still married, not put away, not divorced. Later after the death of her husband, in Spanish it says if she join herself to another HUSBAND, she will not be called an adulteress. Unfortunately, the *King James Version* in English says, “if she be married to another,” and from that translation comes the idea that Paul is speaking of a divorced woman, since in our time a married woman cannot marry someone else unless she is first divorced, and for us the word *marry* means she goes to the courthouse and signs a marriage certificate.

The Greek word that is translated *marry* in English is not translated thus in any other verse. It is the fruit of imposing the customs of our times to the scriptures instead of applying the conditions of the time the scriptures were written.

Paul finishes the comparison saying that the children of the second union are superior to the children of the first union, as the righteousness that is by faith in Christ is superior to the righteousness produced by the law without faith in Christ.

One could think that John the Baptist was correcting Herod for having married a divorced woman, thinking that Jesus had or would strike down the divorce law, but in reality, the law of Moses was still in effect until it was nailed on the cross, and Jesus himself made that very clear that he could not change one jot or one tittle of the law until he fulfilled it by living it perfectly and paying the price of death on the cross for those who did not live it. The law of Moses prohibited that a man marry the wife of his brother, a brother in the flesh, even though the law permitted the wife of his brother, if she were divorced, to marry any other man, that was not her brother in law, Lev. 20:21. It was not legal for Herod to marry the wife of his brother, under the law of Moses.

We do not know for sure if she were divorced, nor do we know if they were married according to the law of the Jews or the Romans when John was advising him. Herod lived under the law of Moses and was obligated to obey the law, and John could not demand the true righteousness of Christ to a person that was not a believer. This scripture and Romans 7 should not be the basis of our understanding of the subject of divorce and marriage, but if our interpretation is not correct, it will be defended by scriptures that do not apply while the scriptures that should apply are ignored.

When Jesus spoke of the subject in Mathew 19, the reaction of the disciples was that if it be so the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry. They were not thinking of a man who had never been married, a single man, rather they were thinking of a man who has been married and his marriage has failed. Jesus did not say, “Yes, such a man must remain single or he will perish.” He said that not every man could receive this saying to not marry. Some are eunuchs for the cause of the kingdom, and he that can receive it let him receive it. This indicates that not even the Son of God taught that every divorced person is capable of living alone, nor was he demanding it.

Therefore, we should not take upon ourselves the authority to condemn nor approve when a person marries again, who first has been counseled to reconcile himself. It has been argued that God can give grace and power to the person who is separated or divorced so he or she can resist the temptation to fall in love again, and to suffer the loneliness, so that all can become “able” to live alone. If this is true, then we would have to say that God’s grace has to overcome some illness in us and heal us, since falling in love is also a process that has to do with our body’s metabolism, hormone levels.

This also would contradict what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “To avoid fornication let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband,” I Cor. 7:2. If to marry again meant to enter into a life of continual adultery thus making salvation impossible, and if before God such a person continues to be married to the first wife, Jesus could

have never answered as he did. To say that such a man was obligated to remain single when Jesus did not say it, is going beyond what our Lord taught, and would be sin on our part.

The result of teaching that all have to remain single is that those who are capable of living alone will continue in the faith, but perhaps will be contaminated by their pride in being able to do so, and condemning those who cannot, thus covering their own possible lack of forgiveness, towards their former mate, and those who cannot will feel condemned and will no longer go to the meetings, thus assuring their perdition. This scripture should be part of our understanding of the subject, and the verses in Mathew 5:32 and Mark 10:11 cannot be interpreted correctly if we ignore these words of Jesus in Mathew 19.

I Timothy 1:13 has been used to justify that those who have been divorced and married again, prior to listening to the servants and prior to knowing the Way, are forgiven and accepted because their previous divorce and remarriage was all done in ignorance. It may well be true that they did not have the help of God to avoid the failure of their marriage, it is NOT certain that they have done it in ignorance. Especially in these Catholic countries, no one could say that they have not known that marriage should be for all their life.

In this verse Paul is speaking specifically of the sin of blasphemy. Blasphemy is forgiven only if it is done in ignorance. To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit knowing that it is the work of the Spirit of God is the one sin that has no forgiveness. It is the only sin for which forgiveness depends upon having committed it in ignorance. God forgives other sins when there is true repentance, even though they have been committed knowing well that what we have done was wrong.

If our salvation depended on having sinned in ignorance, then none of us could be saved. The majority of our sins are committed out of weakness, temptation, carelessness, or rebellion. The sin of serving God in a mistaken manner may well be out of ignorance. The punishment is greater when one has sinned knowingly, but both sins in ignorance and sins committed knowing they are sins, are forgiven when there is repentance.

In the law of Moses there was a provision for both sins committed in ignorance as well as sins committed knowingly. The sins committed knowingly required restitution, were more costly to the guilty to rectify, but the sacrifice for forgiveness was the same for both sins: a ram without blemish. A couple who are serving God and decide to divorce will be more responsible before God than those who have done so without knowing God, and if there is sin involved, the remedy is the same for both cases: repentance. If it is forgivable for those who have done so without knowing the way, then it is forgivable for those who have done so, having walked in the way, if there is repentance. Forgiveness does not depend on us being ignorant or not. Therefore, this verse does not apply to the subject of divorce and remarriage.

I Corinthians 7:15, 27 do apply to the subject. Catholics call verse 15 the *Pauline Privilege* and they use it to justify that a Catholic married civilly to a non-Catholic may divorce and is free to marry ecclesiastically to a Catholic. They ignore that Paul said if the unbeliever consents to live with the believer, they should not separate, and abuse this scripture to be able to end a legal marriage with the non-Catholic (for them a non-believer is a non-Catholic). Paul said, if they separate, the believer is not in bondage in such cases, which means that the believer is not obligated to that union, but is free to marry another.

Verse 27 would not say "seek not to be loosed from a wife" if it were not possible to be loosed. If death were the only way that one could be loosed, Paul would never have said this. It would have to be interpreted that one should not commit suicide or assassinate his wife, to be free from her. More than 80 years ago, responsible servants of God applied these verses to a case of a brother whose wife left him because of the Way, and went to live with a man who was very much an enemy of the Way. This brother married again to a young professing woman, and they were a very useful couple in the kingdom with a church in their home for many years. No one questioned their salvation nor doubted that they had the spirit of God in their lives.

Jesus accused the Jews of teaching as doctrine the commandments of men, and the same happens today. In some countries it is law of the state and has been written in the constitution that marriage is indissoluble, as it was in the case of Brazil. Other countries traditionally Catholic with a strong intervention in politics on the part of the priest have not had a provision for divorce, result of the Catholic doctrine that marriage is indissoluble.

If we take into account all that Jesus taught regarding the subject, taking into account that he could not change one jot or tittle of the law, and that he indicated that no adultery is committed when two people whose former marriages were already adulterated by unfaithfulness, and that he himself did not impose on the separated and divorced that they had to remain alone, we would have to recognize that the doctrine of indissolubility of marriage is doctrine of men, and that the law of divorce with a right motive was the law of God. So, we also could be guilty of teaching as doctrine the commandments of men, and call doctrine of God what are only commandments of men.

Teaching that marriage is indissoluble and there is no remedy for those who fail in marriage, only encourages young people to not marry civilly, and that to live together without marrying is a better option than marrying. The end result is that the institution of marriage is weakened.

We certainly appreciate those who remain free, after a marriage failure, not only to not damage their testimony or risk losing their salvation, but to fortify the convictions of the youth among us that marriage should be for all their life, and they will have a great recompense if they do it with a pure motive, without any purpose of seeking glory before men, nor condemn those who have not been able to maintain themselves free of another union.

Our responsibility as servants, as parents, is to teach the youth that marriage should be till death, and that first they should seek the guide of God in such a decision, and enter in to their covenant with every purpose of being faithful and to support and suffer to the end of their strength, unto death. If there are difficulties, as we know there may be, our responsibility is to counsel and encourage reconciliation, and that they remain free of other unions with the hope of reconciliation.

Only God and the persons involved can know when there is no hope of reconciliation. In the case that someone marries again, we cannot say that in every case that there is sin involved in marrying again, if we take in to account that Jesus said except it be for fornication or unfaithfulness. It has been argued that only two verses indicate this condition, except it be for fornication, and since it is not found in Mark and Luke, it can be ignored. If we are to do so in this case, we could do so with many doctrines, including the teaching that God's servants should go two and two, since that is mentioned only twice.

There were cases where to divorce a wife was not due to hardness of heart, rather out of mercy, as in the case of Joseph, who thought not to make a scandal of Mary's state. To accuse or impute sin when God does not do so, would be sin on our part. As Jesus said, judge righteous judgment, and not according to appearance. It is necessary in many cases to wait until there is evidence of the acceptance of God, by His spirit of the condition of a life, whether it be because God does not impute sin or because there has been heartfelt repentance, and if we have the Spirit of God, we are going to recognize the work and presence of the Spirit in others.

If we cannot recognize the approval of the Spirit in a life, we have no right or authority to judge that person. Even in the cases where there appears to be unfaithfulness, we cannot always say for sure that there is not guilt on the part of both, because unfaithfulness many times can be the result of bad treatment or a bad relationship in the marriage. It is necessary to leave it in the power of the Holy Spirit that can convince of sin.

There is sin in not providing for one's children, not only in not providing for their physical needs, but also in their upbringing, providing the rights that children have to be with their two parents, even though circumstances do not always allow this. The Catholic Church teaches that only those who are married in the church are married before God, and those who only marry civilly live in fornication, also those who live in what is called *free union*.

Before God a man and woman who have relations become one flesh. If it is not a union that can be permanent, then it is sin. Paul asked if we do not know that he who joins himself to a harlot is one flesh with her. Our laws in these countries have a provision for free union, but it is in no way free, rather such have the same responsibility before God as if they had signed a paper in the courthouse.

Jesus said in Mathew 19 regarding divorce, that "in the beginning it was not so." Today we have the civil marriage, which is a written document and a ceremony, with vows, etc., but also "in the beginning it was not so." Isaac took Rebecca into his tent and she became his wife. If Isaac and Rebecca would appear among us today, some would say,

“They aren’t married; they are living in fornication!” The giving of themselves to each other before God made them married before God.

Even though we recognize that civil marriage as a law of the state is very important, it is not the document that makes a union of the couple, rather it is the union of a man and a woman that gives validity to the document. If the union of a couple married in the courthouse is not consummated, if they do not have intercourse, their marriage can be annulled.

We as servants of God cannot say that such a couple who have no certificate of marriage from the civil register can separate and marry someone else civilly. They would be adulterating their union. A couple who are united with the purpose of being true to each other but have no certificate of marriage are one flesh before God, and more acceptable before Him than a couple with a marriage certificate and married in the Catholic church who do not in their hearts have a conviction of being true till death. God judges according to the heart.

In conclusion, as a servant of God, I have a great responsibility to encourage our youth to choose a mate with the guidance of God, and afterwards, support them, counsel them, in their difficulties, to continue together in their tests and trials, and if they do separate, that it will not be with my approval, even though circumstances appear to justify and require it. It must be their decision with much prayer, but it is not for us as servants to approve or authorize it. If a separation occurs, we can only encourage reconciliation, and if with time, a new union is formed, in many cases it may be necessary to ask them not to participate in the meetings, even though it may be for a limited time, not because it is impossible for God to forgive them, but as an obligation to show that it is not an example to follow, nor be used to justify that someone else do the same.

The easiest thing to do would be to confirm and teach what has been the traditional thought on the subject, that divorce does not exist in God’s eyes, and believe that we are courageous in teaching it, comparing ourselves with John the Baptist who lost his life for teaching the truth. We do not even have to teach it, since it is what the entire world in Catholic countries think. Rather it takes courage to teach what agrees with all the scriptures even though it goes against tradition. Jesus did not teach the traditions of his day and the response on the part of those who defended them was to attack him personally.

People in such conditions need our support, compassion, and prayers, knowing the enemy will take advantage of the situation to discourage them. Jesus accused the religious Jews of having the key to the kingdom and that they were hindering that others enter. We cannot enter a person into the kingdom, we can permit that they go to the meetings and participate, but that does not guarantee they have salvation nor that they are in the kingdom.

If they are welcome in the meetings in spite of their condition, and are listening, they can be convicted of sin by the spirit if their condition is not acceptable before God. But yes, we can close the door of the kingdom, by saying to a person that they cannot be in the meetings, that there is no forgiveness, not visit them anymore, and if they believe us, because they believe we are servants of God, they will not be saved. If what we have told them is not true, their blood will be on our shoulders. Jesus accused the religious Jews of hindering those who wanted to enter—he did not accuse them of letting into the kingdom those who should not enter. We want to be faithful in our place, as servants of God, but not hinder the work of God and His spirit.

Go to: God’s Gift of Divorce & Remarriage by C. E.

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