

SPELLING OUT THE OFFICIAL DOCTRINE ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

By Herbert W. Armstrong

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IT seems we never did "spell out" the details of how the 1974 decision on D&R should be applied in various cases. Result: There has been a grievous watering down.

THERE is ONE great difference between the law of God and the laws made by human government. God has given us His law in form of general principles to be applied in various cases, whereas in national laws, state laws and city ordinances, MAN tries to make multiple thousands of laws, "spelling out" every little detail in a separate law.

It is made clear for us in the third chapter of II Corinthians. "[God] also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit" (verse 6).

God's law is given in one single word - LOVE. God is love, His law is love - that word sums up God's CHARACTER. The law then is amplified into the two Great Laws, love toward God, and love toward neighbor. God amplifies it a little further in the Ten Commandments - the first four giving the broad principles of how to love God and the last six how to love neighbor. But God intended us to understand the PRINCIPLE involved and apply it honestly.

Now it comes to my attention that many are finding gray areas in the D&R law. I will try to spell out a little further, in a general way, and those who seek the WAY OF GOD instead of their own way will have, I hope, no difficulty in applying God's law properly according to its intended spirit. Otherwise, those who try to reason around God's law to have their own way will stand condemned in the sight of God.

GOD DOES NOT COMPROMISE WITH OR WATER DOWN His LAW. Rather than that He GAVE His only begotten Son Jesus to pay the penalty of repented sin in our stead.

Two major categories

Actually what happened in 1974 was not a CHANGE in the Church's definition of God's law, but the ADDITION of a second reason for divorce and remarriage we should have, but did not see before - so now we have the TWO categories.

First, just as we understood it in the Church before, Jesus gave fornication (prior to marriage) as the grounds for nullifying a marriage. This clearly was a form of fraud. When discovered (in nearly all cases) immediately after marriage, it simply meant God, knowing of this fraud, had actually not bound the marriage - and what followed therefore was actually an annulment, not a divorce.

However this did not apply in cases of marriage by unconverted people. God never bound them anyway - they were bound by man's law, and any divorce and/or remarriage would be according to man's civil law. But the Church would not apply this annulment if the couple had continued living together for a period of time. There could be other types of fraud - such as a marriage enforced at the point of a gun.

The second cause for divorce, affirmed by the Church through Christ's apostle in 1974, was based on I Corinthians 7.

This matter of D&R was the biggest, most troublesome problem in the Church. One day my son, Garner Ted, came to me saying it did not appear to be a problem in the early Church at all according to the book of Acts and Paul's epistles. He asked why. Dr. Herman Hoeh then added something to the problem, and we discovered this teaching in I Corinthians 7. We had been very familiar with I Corinthians 7 before, but had not recognized this D&R teaching in it.

Paul there speaks, verses 8-9, to the unmarried and widows. In verses 10-11 he speaks to the married. Beginning verse 12 he speaks to "the rest." If a converted man has a wife who is an unbeliever, causing trouble and disrupting the marriage because of the man's religion (NOTICE IT CAREFULLY), if she is pleased to live with him, he must not divorce her - he has NO GROUNDS for divorce and remarriage.

Likewise the woman in God's Church, if she has an unbelieving husband, and he is willing to live with her despite her religion, she shall not leave him (verse 13).

But if the unbelieving one leaves - cuts off the marriage because of the Church member's religion - let him or her depart. Now NOTICE THIS! The believing Church member is not given grounds for breaking off the marriage. It is only IF the unbelieving one leaves or severs the marriage relationship - then and only then is the believer (Church member) no longer bound and free to obtain a divorce (verse 15).

I conceive of this occurring in at least two ways. 1) The believing Church member has been newly converted, and the mate refuses to live with him or her because of the religion. 2) Both had been in the Church, but one falls away, turns bitter against the Church, refuses to live as husband or wife with the still loyal member. In this case the embittered one, leaving the Church, has become an unbeliever.

Sanctified by the converted mate

Now Paul gives an important REASON for the converted mate CONTINUING in the marriage, IF the unbelieving one is willing. Notice verse 14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy."

"Sanctified" does NOT mean made sanctimonious or holy. "Sanctified" means "set apart" or put in a separate category.

To thoroughly understand this we need to go clear back to Adam and Eve. When God drove them out of the Garden of Eden, and with sword-flaming angels barred

anyone from going back in - or having access to the tree of life (the HOLY SPIRIT) - God said, in effect:

"You have made your decision. You have rebelled against me, denied me as your GOD, your Revealer of knowledge, your Ruler. Therefore I sentence you and the WORLD that shall be born from you to 6,000 years of being CUT OFF from me - except for the VERY FEW I shall specially call into my service to prepare for the KINGDOM OF GOD."

Jesus confirmed this when He said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).

Now the nation of ancient Israel was specially called by God the Father for a special purpose - even though they were still cut off from receiving the Holy Spirit.

But the unconverted mate is put in a special category - NOT CALLED NECESSARILY TO RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT OR SPIRITUAL CONVERSION - but simply NOT CUT OFF from God. They are free to seek God, IF THEY WILL, and to become converted. They are placed in a special category, neither converted, or CALLED for God's special duty in conversion - but, on the other hand, NOT actually CUT OFF - not in the category Jesus spoke of, saying no such unbeliever CAN come to Jesus, except by special call to salvation by-God the Father. They are free to SEEK GOD and to SEEK conversion IF THEY WILL - not CUT OFF!

Applies to children also

This same status applies to the children of the converted mate. They are neither CALLED to salvation NOR cut off from God. They may be taught by the believing parent, and, reaching maturity, IF they will, to SEEK CONVERSION. They are free to seek it - no longer CUT OFF from Christ.

Notice I Corinthians 7, verse 16: "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

If the husband or wife who is IN the Church divorces the unbelieving non-member who is willing to continue the marriage, that Church member puts the unconverted mate in the CUTOFF category-whereas such nonmember mate might have been saved for eternal life in God's Kingdom.

Don't twist God's Truth

NOW WHY - OH WHY? - do professing members of God's Church seek to reason their way around God's plain teaching, and those in the Church who are NOT eligible for divorce, seek to use human reason to TWIST these scriptures into allowing a divorce and remarriage that GOD'S WORD DOES NOT ALLOW?

Yet many, professing to be converted members of God's Church, have done just that! Brethren, have I labored IN VAIN to open your minds to GOD'S GLORIOUS TRUTH, and yet you despise the Word of God and twist a gray area situation by your own

faulty reasons to HAVE YOUR OWN WAY, contrary to God's Word? Have I labored so long among you IN VAIN?

Some have falsely claimed theirs is a borderline case, and used their own selfish and erroneous REASON to enter into a D&R situation CONTRARY TO GOD'S WORD!

Even after the 1974 D&R ruling, my son Garner Ted Armstrong frowned upon D&R decisions made by the Church or its ministers. I am informed that Wayne Cole and Ron Dart, in offices of Pastoral Administration, tried-to avoid committing themselves in any such case.

In cases where a man and wife have been married for almost a quarter of a century, human reason has been used by Church members to allow divorce and both parties to remarry! In one case, the wife of nearly 25 years, who had actually "pursued" her husband prior to marriage, claimed she just didn't love him anymore. Both she and her husband are now remarried!

Such cases are a STENCH in the nostrils of a just GOD! They are a disgrace to a church calling itself GOD'S CHURCH! Such liberal decisions and actions SHALL NO LONGER BE TOLERATED in the Church of GOD, preparing now for Christ's second coming!

The matter of fornication or other fraud prior to marriage CANNOT BE USED AS GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE, after the couple have gone on living together. Unless such fraud is acted on at once - as soon as discovered, IT is NO GROUNDS for divorce and remarriage!

Jesus said plainly, "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth, adultery" (Matt. 5:32).

We are living in the LAST DAYS! Jesus Christ is COMING AGAIN - SOON! When He comes His Church shall have made herself READY for the one SUPREME MARRIAGE TO CHRIST! We are NOT yet ready! We are full of spiritual blemishes, spots and wrinkles. We have been allowing lust, coveting and serious SINS to invade this Church!

I am now calling on this Church to CLEAN UP.