

meeting on the subject of tithing administration. Sixteen were in attendance.

Dennis Pyle presented a paper analyzing the present third tithe system (or lack of it!). He pointed out that we have gone some 30,000 dollars *over* our budget for July in dispensing third tithe help. The cost of medical expenses — and even such things as hairdos and piano lessons — have taken chunks out of the third tithe fund. Some widows have actually committed themselves to purchases first and then have requested third tithe to help meet the payments later!

Herman Hoeh summarized the discussion and pointed out that we have risen above the question of whether tithing was a Levitical law since tithing was already an on-going practice when incorporated in the law as God's method of support of the Levites.

C. Wayne Cole then addressed the question of what topics need to be considered in future doctrinal meetings — with the emphasis put on input from the entire ministry.

Seventeen members of the doctrinal committee met Tuesday, September 10 to discuss the preparation of a "white paper" on tithing to be sent to the field ministry. So far, eight papers have been prepared which (subject to further editing) will be included in the research paper. The subjects include Tithing Before Moses; Numbers 18; Tithing and Malachi; Matthew 23:23; I Cor. 9; The Law of Hebrews 7; Tithing in Christendom.

Further material will be included from Garner Ted Armstrong based on comments made in a plenary session last month.

A summary will be added of the general understanding of the doctrine as it presently stands.

No further meetings are planned on tithing at present. However, the committee will be considering other subjects after the Feast of Tabernacles such as the old and new covenants, makeup, church government, etc. Most members of the committee are editing final papers and preparing for the coming feast days, so there will be some slowing down of doctrinal meetings. However, it is planned to have the white paper on tithing completed before the Feast.

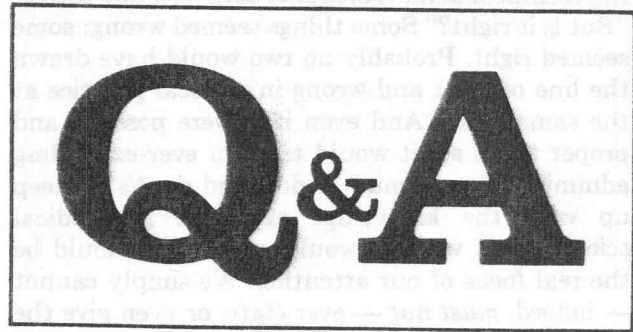
MAIL PROCESSING

(Continued from page 488)

Brown shoes
Drawing board
A belt
45RPM record spindle

— Richard Rice

(Continued on page 506)



Editor's Note: This issue's responses to questions about marriage and divorce were prepared by the Theological Research Department under the direction of Charles V. Dorothy, and in cooperation with Herman L. Hoeh and Clint C. Zimmerman. We recognize the difficulty of responding to general or hypothetical questions regarding marriage and/or divorce. Consequently your continuing questions and comments will be appreciated.

Q. When two unconverted people marry and both later come into the Church, when are they bound? Is it the date of their baptism? Or When?

A. The Bible is clear that for unconverted individuals it is the lawful ceremony of the wedding day which makes a marriage legally binding. The consummation of the marriage, of course, occurs later. In this world cut off from Him, God constituted the authority of the state to regulate marriage, which authority God has delegated. Otherwise, the sexual union prior to conversion would always be fornication which is absurd.

The Scripture says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:1-2).

After conversion, the marriage is certainly blessed by the new knowledge of the meaning and purpose of godly marriage and the presence of God — but the marriage was bound long before — when both took each other as husband and wife.

God and Paul regarded civil marriages, entered into according to the laws of whatever time and place, as legally *bound*. So civilly contracted marriages which take place before conversion and/or baptism are recognized by God as legally bound.

The marriage is bound when the two people, before witnesses, officially take each other as husband and wife in accordance with the laws and customs of whatever state or society they dwell in.

The consummation of the marriage is not what binds. If the ceremony had not already bound the

pair, it would be illegal for them to begin to live sexually together! (However, if a marriage were entered into and never consummated, man's legal authority from God would no doubt be easily persuaded to dissolve such a contract.)

The same principles apply to a common law union. Human jurisdictions differ in their recognition of common law union, and all legalities should be met since God has allowed the State to regulate such matters. God recognizes the States' determination in these cases when the unconverted parties involved agree to be husband and wife.

Q. Are weddings performed by the Church of God more binding than those performed in the world? Or is it the holy character of godly matrimony that differs so greatly?

A. There is no Bible indication that the validity (or binding quality) of a marriage has anything to do with who legally performs the ceremony, whether ministers, priests, justices of the peace, ship captains, etc. A marriage is a marriage. Why? Because it is based, not alone on the officiator at a wedding, but on the agreement and *covenant* (Mal. 2:14) of two eligible people — converted or not — to take each other as man and wife. But who, knowing the truth, would want to go to the world for a civil ceremony when God's Church is authorized by Jesus Himself to perform a ceremony that is appropriately called holy matrimony and bound in heaven by God Himself who is a party to the ceremony.

Furthermore, there is an important element of our ceremony, which Mr. H. W. Armstrong has emphasized: the real, vital and dynamic blessing which we ask for the couple. As Mr. Armstrong has pointed out, we do not have to ask that blessing, but *who* — other than the ministers of God — has the authority to call on this divine help which may spare the young couple the hardships or even breakup?

Q. What does "pleased to dwell with" mean in I Corinthians 7:12, 13?

A. The simple intent of the apostle Paul's regulation was that the unconverted partner of a Corinthian Church member was "pleased" if he or she did remain. (Beyond this, there may have been cases where one wished with all his heart he had never married the mate he had, but because of special circumstances simply could not leave, who certainly was not pleased to dwell with his mate.)

Obviously one might be pleased at one time and later cease to be. Paul put no time limit on the situation. Why? Because Church regulations in administering God's law had no control over an unconverted person. If, much later, such a one wanted to leave, he or she would leave. Remember God is a realist.

In fact, it is most likely that an unconverted mate of a newly converted Church member would not even know for some time whether or not he or she was pleased with the new situation, or whether something vital to him or her had vanished at the conversion of the mate. Problems with the mate's observation or practice of the Christian religion might not arise all at once. It would not have been logical of God or of Paul to require an immediate, binding, irrevocable decision of an unconverted mate, with the prospect of later arising valid reasons (valid to the unconverted member) for changing his or her mind.

Whether the mate is converted or unconverted, a *Christian* has no option from God to take upon himself or herself to cause a desertion or divorce (except for *porneia*). It is only when the unconverted committed *porneia* or has already deserted, or has inflicted gross physical abuse on the other, that a converted mate has a warrant from Christ and from God to formally (legally) break the marriage tie which, in point of fact, has already occurred.

Q. Is divorce among the unconverted a sin?

A. God holds even unconverted couples and individuals accountable. It is a sin to divorce (except for *porneia*). The unconverted bring on themselves automatic psychological and perhaps physical penalties if they sin. When they repent (or become converted if they never were before), God forgives the spiritual sin, though He does not necessarily remove its physical side effects, which may mean they still have to live with problems they created for themselves. The legality of the former marriage contract is in the hands of the State, and if the State severed the union it is severed.

Q. What if a divorce is obtained by a person who was supposedly converted but who later leaves the Church? Is it valid?

A. It is sin. The sin must be truly repented of. But a legal divorce is a valid divorce. The marriage contract is broken and destroyed. The courts of the land have authority from God to act in these areas and to formally dissolve a marriage.

Q. Suppose a baptized and formerly Church-attending person deserts his or her mate and rejects Christ and the Church. Do we have to determine whether or not such a person was "ever converted" in order to know if the other is potentially free to remarry?

A. Whether such a one was converted or never converted is essentially irrelevant. One can become as an unbeliever even if he were once converted. One who deserts a family and fails to provide for the family is worse than an infidel — the lowest form of unbeliever! Jude 12 perhaps speaks of these as "twice dead" whose spiritual life through conversion has ceased. The marital status here is essentially the same as if one had been living with an unbeliever.

In any case of desertion where there has been no known divorce, a left-behind Christian should not presume himself or herself to be free to formalize the split by a legal divorce until a reasonable time has elapsed for the one who has departed to be sure of his own mind and to have a chance to return and be reconciled. A reconciliation would always be sought by the believer, and an attempt should be seriously made to locate a deserter who has vanished. There may even be legal requirements regarding such duration before a separation or divorce can be granted (which will differ in different legal jurisdictions). The civil law also contains another sound principle of built-in delay in requiring another waiting period before the divorce decree becomes final.

UPDATE (Continued from page 493)

Plans have been formalized for the dinner in Tel-Aviv on November 6, and it should be even more spectacular than originally planned. We had dinner last night with Professor Mazar and Dr. Aviram of Hebrew University.

We also had dinner twice with Mr. Ravid, who is more and more becoming of invaluable assistance to us in an informal but most effective manner. Tonight begins the Feast of Trumpets. Tomorrow night we will have as our guests Dr. Na'aman the President of Tev-Aviv University and Nobel laureate in physics, who visited us in Pasadena, and has also been in England.

We are, of course, hoping to leave here on Wednesday — as we have a dinner scheduled with the Mayor of Vienna on Wednesday evening, and an audience with the President of Austria early Thursday morning.

Mr. Armstrong will work on a Co-Worker letter, which will be dispatched before the 22nd.

Financial Affairs

At the time of this writing, the indicators for the Feast of Trumpets offering appear to be running behind last year's offering. Realistically, this situation was to be expected considering the battering the Church has taken since the beginning of the year. We have lost a certain number of members, adverse publicity has been widespread, and we have been attacked doctrinally virtually from within the Church itself. While I feel that the Church is strong enough and resilient enough to overcome these body blows, we may have to be prepared for a certain period of austerity and even hard times until God gives us a clearer indication as to which way He wants the Church to go.

Our general income is still showing an increase over last year of about 1.3% year to date. However, if the holy day offering shows a decrease, it will pull this figure down.

A combination of inflation and the loss of some tithe-paying members is bound to hurt our income picture. I do believe that the individual member is giving as much, if not more, than he has been in the past, but skyrocketing costs of personal living are making it increasingly difficult to hang on to a decent standard of living. Like most other organizations, we are going through a liquidity crunch. This means that while our income remains fairly flat and our fixed overheads remain the same, our operating costs continue to rise. It is this cushion of cash reserves that we have to build in order to remain flexible and dynamic.

It is becoming fairly evident now that we need to have a *good-sized increase* in the Atonement-Tabernacles offering, or a further cut in operating costs will have to be made. If our statistics on the Trumpets offering hold good, we will have to have at least a 5% increase in the next three offerings in order to offset that shortfall. Any meaningful increase will have to be *over and above* 5%. Incidentally, our present level of spending is significantly under what was budgeted, but our main problem lies in falling short of our increase in income, combined with undiminishing fixed overheads.

I am sure that some will read this report with a feeling of negativism and pessimism. We here in the Business Office, however, do not necessarily feel that the outlook is negative. Our income is still very healthy, but we do need to undergo a period of adjustment in order to compensate for the very unusual economic climate now existing,