

Divorce and Remarriage 1_2_19750104_WCG_IPM

Good morning to all of you and to Dr. Zimmerman.

I talked to Mr. Hague Bowles at Selma Hague Lave, and I extended him his brother's best wishes.

He's from Northern Ireland, and presently, as some of you may know, anyway, the conference we did have briefly with the minister's administration and some of the staff in England turned out very well.

I would like to practice the background to help you understand a little bit of what can occur.

In a sense, we went over there having in mind what we assumed, but the problem is not fundamentally the question of an explanation of doctrine, but rather analysis of attitude, for the simple reason that a number of individuals over there for several years had been learning headquarters of what was taking place right here in terms of some who used to be among us in the West, at the highest level of an administration.

And because it wasn't heated, and it wasn't in time, and there were plenty of warning, but sometimes we're so close to people who become problems that we don't see the problem, and we're not always as realistic as we might be.

And part of the reason, therefore, for our trip was to resolve the problem that was still, I think, in the minds of a number, and that is, if we didn't understand and sometimes didn't take action and time over the last year to two years, then what is the spiritual state of those who are here? Well, happily, I think we addressed the problem of the spiritual state of affairs in its proper way so that doctrine was seen in perspective, because, after all, if the decision rendered at the May conference with respect to our new grasp and understanding of marriage and divorce is correct, then it is correct because Christ leads the Church, and He leads it here, because this is head clappers.

And necessarily what we really had to do was to let them know what Christ was doing in the work and what the understanding and purpose of those who are here is, and when we have that grasp and approach, then we need not be concerned about their understanding of doctrine, because if they have respect and recognition of the responsibility of those who are here, and this includes Mr. Herbert Armstrong and Mr. Ted Armstrong, it includes certainly Dr.

Zimmerman, Mr. Berg, Mr. Tkach, and others in whom I think most of them have confidence and this does not mean those I don't name, they didn't have confidence in, but sometimes they can get so close to the problems that they don't realize that there are people here who have never been a part of that kind of problem.

And with the assurance of the men who went over to England, I was certainly pleased to see that they came to recognize indeed that we all come to know that Christ is head of the Church, and if there are mistakes that are made, we must correct them, and that as long as Christ uses the Church and guides it, that we can be sure of that guidance and we don't have to have doubts.

For the doubts essentially evaporated, and once the doubt about the responsibility of headquarters evaporated, then the subject, the doctrine of divorce and understanding of marriage, became clear quite quickly.

I had the chance to help explain Mr. Cole, Dr. Kuhn, Mr. Hunting, sometimes spoke on behalf of the group there to make everybody welcome, to explain the basic understanding that we have come to not only during the May conference but since.

I had a chance also to speak to, in the Bible study, the Wicked Whip congregation Friday evening and Sabbath morning, and Dr. Kuhn and Mr. Cole spoke in the afternoon, and then I addressed the congregation in London North Church where quite a number of brethren are from the Caribbean area, are Black brethren there who sometimes being British citizens find it opportune financially to reside for some time in England.

If any of you know of them, I certainly would extend their best wishes to all of you, and for some of you who know, I'll certainly extend the best wishes of my former secretary, Olet Merritt, who is studying at the University of London.

Most of you may not know if you haven't met her.

She is a Black girl from New York, as most of you do know, who are Blacks in the congregation here.

I spent a few minutes with another man at the place where she resides, where there is an older family staying, though she at that time, when we first arrived, had already gone to London for her classes, and then I saw her Friday evening, and I'm very glad that she is able to do what she has been thus far accomplishing.

Today, then, what we should do is take a look at the questions before us that we might have in our minds, to bear in mind also that these questions may not be fundamental when we see the overall picture.

In fact, many of the queries that the ministry asked in the various sessions during the May Conference were not fundamental to the issue, and were not even relevant when we came to see the total picture.

I would like to go back and explain what it is we came to see and why in early years of the Church and how we grow and understanding in all subjects, including this particular one.

But before I do, I want to mention what I did again last night in the study, for some few who may not have been there, and that is that there is, of course, a very grave tendency in the Church, among some, to take upon themselves the responsibility of making decisions in terms of whether a marriage is bound or not, and in so doing, sometimes breaking up a union that God himself does not allow to be broken up by any basis of Scripture.

And this, of course, is usually the result of the carnality, usually the result of, in fact, the attitude or spirit of adultery.

When the question originally arose, the Mr. Armstrong, of course, was concerned about a general understanding of marriage in the 1930s when weddings came to be performed.

But the real critical issue arose at the late 1940s when a sister of one of those who has been in the ministry for some years now, at that time, was thinking of marrying a man who was not in the Church and a divorcee at that.

And this precipitated the original booklet which Mr. Armstrong wrote.

Now, what he was really writing, too, if you understand the story, he was writing, if you please, to the Church about what marriage is.

Now, there has been no question either then or now as to what marriage is that God intended it to be, and I should not have to redefine that.

The question that was never really faced at the time was rather not a doctrinal but an administrative question, and that is, in fact, what was rendered in May.

What was rendered in May was, in fact, not a doctrinal issue at all, but it was an administrative issue. That is, how it was when administrative the issues involved in marriage when controversies regarding a marriage contract arise. Now, we should understand what marriage is.

If you don't, Mr. Armstrong's booklet on why marriage, I think, should clarify that.

There are more things that we can always add as we study.

But the question is, it's administration. And when we see it in this light, I think that many of the problems suddenly take on a new perspective. Because in those earlier days, 30 years ago or less, we saw the doctrine clearly in terms of what God intended marriage to be. We then took for granted something. Seeing that what God intended marriage to be was not what marriage was often like under the Old Covenant, we assumed that how it was under the Old Covenant relationship with the carnal Israel must not be how it should be among us.

Now, before I clarify that, rest you must understand, you all do recognize that there are differences in administration. There was an administration of death, there was the presence of divorce, there was a bill of divorcement, there was slavery, indeed there was war, there were any number of aspects of society in the Old Testament period that differ from our own, certainly around this end in the Church. But at that time, we saw that so many of these things seemed to be different from what Jesus himself wanted. Now, what we then assumed was that what Jesus wanted is the way we should administer it and apply it to all people all times.

And we did not realize at that time that what Jesus intends marriage to be, what it was after beginning when God instituted it in the Garden of Eden before man's sin, that that is what God wants your marriage to be or become. And we assumed that that is how we should administer all our past relationships when many or most of you were unconverted before marriage.

So the issue, brethren, is not then doctrine. The issue was and is administration. How does one administer the questions that might arise in terms of marriages entered into prior to conversion or problems or questions that might arise when such problems do occur in marriages after conversion? It's an administrative matter. Marriage is intended to be for life. And I know, of course, that there are many who have various interpretations, some of whom are among us.

When the doctrine was being examined, I think that there were tendencies, as with any doctrine, at such a time to run away from some verses that seemed to support what we have always understood.

This happened in Pentecost. It can happen in anything. We tend to shy away from what could be, indeed, an answer that was correct all along.

Let's leave what is correct correct and let's correct what is an error. That's not way aside, what doesn't have to be laid aside. And so I'll turn plainly to Romans 7, which I think makes very plain what marriage is intended to be. And there should be no argument over this, but if we see it in its light and with the light of other scriptures, there was the need of doctrine or examination and the need of administrative change. No, you're not brethren. That is not talking to non-brethren. He's talking to brethren, Romans 7. No, you're not brethren, for I speak to those that know the law. He's addressing brethren. Now, there were some who might not really have been brethren at home, and

he's assuming that the brethren are those who know the law. Now, whether you know the law of the land, at least you ought to know the law of God.

But the law has dominion over man as long as it is. If there is a requirement of law that you entered into that governs your relationship as long as you're alive, the law regulates that.

For the woman that has a husband is bound by the law to a husband so long as he is.

And if the husband be dead, if she is lost from the law of her husband, now that's a fundamental principle. If a woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband, this is as long as he or she lives. But if the husband be dead, then the law no longer requires her to live with such. So that if while a husband lives, she be married to another, she shall be called into darkness. Now, there are some people who, having heard the decision in May, decided to leave their husbands because they didn't understand the decision.

Misunderstood the doctrine and exercised authority on their own, instead of letting the ministry explain it properly. And they did get involved in this very thing, condemned in verse 3.

So if the husband be dead, she's free from the law, she's no longer in the notice, she should be married to another man. Now, what we need to come to understand is, by the way, that marriage, as God had ordained it in the beginning, is what Christ wants it to be, and that's what we want to have among ourselves if we come voluntarily under the government of God and under God's law. As long as you are willing to submit to the government of God, as long as Christ is your head, the head of this church, and as long as you seek the kingdom of God, you are in the position of a person who, if you are bound by the law to a mate, you are bound by that person till death. So there is no difference here in Romans 7 or 1 Corinthians 7.

But when it comes to the administration of the matter, we shall see what the rest of scripture says, because this is addressed to brethren, those who have surrendered to the government of God, to the authority of God, to the law of God. And as long as you are under the government of God, that's the law, that's the teaching of marriage, and that hasn't changed.

So in 1 Corinthians 7 we read very plainly in answer to a series of questions Paul deals with some problems I won't deal with here that pertain to relationships in marriage.

But now we'll pick it up at verse 10. To the married I command, yet not I, 1 Corinthians 7-10, but the Lord, and when it's the Lord who commands, this is normally Paul's reference to Jesus Christ.

Let not the wife depart from her husband, and that's Christ teaching in the gospel.

So Dr. Zimmerman would understand, I'm addressing you in a different way than I addressed the ministry in England, because each group has perhaps a different approach, and I'm addressing you as lay men and women in the church, not as ministers who have all kinds of other questions that have come to you, that the substance will be the same. So I'm starting here with those positive verses that make very clear that the doctrine of what marriage is, as Mr. Wayne Cole said over there, every time has been strengthened and was not the issue and was not changed.

So listen carefully to the married, I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband, but and if she depart.

Sorry, I lost my verse here. But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried.

Let her remain unmarried, that is the statement, or be reconciled to her husband, and let not the husband put away his wife. Now listen carefully to this. This is addressed to brethren, the

congregation of Corinth. Life is not to depart from her husband, but if she does separate, that's what depart means, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.

Let not the husband put away his wife. That's the fundamental teaching.

That's what God intended of Adam and Eve. Now even in this you also see a permission where Jesus recognized that in some rare instances it's probably easier for people to live separate.

But since God intended marriage to be for life, that's what he intended it to be, that if you separate, therefore you're not to remarry someone else as long as the mate to whom you are bound is living.

That's true. That's the teaching that has not been changed, but we will expound further so we understand. You see, there is a responsibility that is very important when you enter into such a contract, and this contract is binding because there are no exceptions that pertain to you.

Now there are exceptions, porneia as well, called fornication in the King James Version, but as long as there are no exceptions, when you enter into this contract and you have accepted one another, you are allowed on occasion, if that's your problem, to separate, but you are not allowed to divorce and remarry so long as your other mate lives.

That is the doctrine. That is unaltered because God intends one to live with the person to whom God has bound you, if there be no exceptions that pertain to you and to your contract.

Now we will examine the rest of the story. I wanted to be sure we had that clearly in mind.

Let us take then Jesus' teaching and we'll pick it up where Paul is talking about the principle.

In the first Gospel, chapter 5 of Matthew, I will pick it up here so that you can see Jesus' basic approach in terms of marriage under the terms and conditions of the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant was predicated on the Ten Commandments Fundamentally.

That is, it was a marriage agreement. The Old Covenant was which pertained to agreeing to the Law of God. The Law of God was stated in such a simple term as this. You have heard that it was said by them of old time. Verse 27, Thou shalt not commit adultery. So under the terms of the Old Covenant, you were forbidden to commit adultery. Now before we go any further, let me explain very clearly. One of the Ten Commandments says, Thou shalt not commit adultery. Now adultery in the Hebrew, in the Greek, and in the English may be summarized simply as to break an agreement pertaining to marriage. That is what it refers to. All of the Commandments says is that Thou shalt not violate the terms of the agreement pertaining to marriage.

That is all it says. The Ten Commandments do not define the marriage contract. There is nothing in the Ten Commandments telling you what constitutes the marriage. You are only told that whatever does constitute the marriage, you are not to violate the contract that regulates.

But it does not define the regulation of it. It only tells you that you are not to violate it.

And some people then have read all kinds of things into that Commandment that isn't there, that aren't there. It does not tell you even what Romans 7 or 1 Corinthians 7 did.

There is no statement in the Ten Commandments telling you that marriage is for life.

There is no statement defining marriage in the Ten Commandments.

You have to go elsewhere. What is defined is that you are not to break the agreement.

You shall not commit a violation of that marriage contract. That's all that is said.

And we need to get that in mind because so often our problem arises by reading things into the scripture that would not be there. Let us now look further to what Jesus said.

That's what you heard it said. But I say unto you, Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her that hasn't either touched her or had sexual relations with her, that person himself has committed adultery with her already in his heart or name.

So Jesus here analyzes adultery. He's not defining marriage, he's analyzing adultery in terms of its ultimate intent, not merely an act, but its intent. Now in this connection, he says, If you're right, I offend you, pluck it out, cast it from you, it's profitable for you that one of your members should perish, that not the whole body should be cast into Gehenna.

If you're right, hand the fender, cut it off, cast it from you for it's profitable, for you that one of your members should perish and not your whole body be cast into Gehenna.

Now at this point Jesus here is taking the proverbial custom that was in the Middle East, that the thief had his hand cut off or an adult who had his eye plucked out.

And I have mentioned that it wasn't very long ago that an Arab saw a sack of gold in front of, in the capital of Saudi Arabia and one of the streets probably in front of a public building.

And he looked into the sack, found it was gold, and reported it to officials.

And the officials found that he had looked into the sack and for even having done that, they cut his hand off. Over here they'd let you get by in over the few years for stealing, but over there that's what they did for a man who didn't even take it, that even to look into what wasn't his they dealt with in that way.

See, thousands of interesting people now that do that. That's not quite the Anglo-Saxon approach.

But anyway, Jesus is taking that example in the world around him and pointing up that if your problem is adultery that you can't keep your eye off of some other woman or your hand off of her, and it's better for you figuratively in this case to remove the part of your body that causes it than to end in Gehenna fire for even doing something like this that doesn't even lead to the actual act of adultery, but is only in terms of your own thinking.

Now, the way to solve the problem is to ask God for his spirit to enable you to keep the law so that the woman, or in this case addressing men, so that the woman you're married to looks more beautiful and is more lovely than any woman in the world. That's what marriage is intended to make of two people. Jesus now goes on. It has been said, whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.

The command was not to put away your life, the command was to write a bill of divorce.

Jesus said, you've heard this. According to the Old Covenant, divorce was taken for granted as a practice. It was not commanded, it was just one of the things that were being practiced.

What Moses commanded is this, that if there is a divorce, you have to make it official by issuing a written statement to that effect, defining in writing, Deuteronomy 24, that the divorce has occurred. The law does not command the divorce. It says if or when. The law does command something.

It commands that a written statement of the divorce be made. Again, in the Arab world, the man says four times, I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you, and if he stops there, she's not divorced. If he said it once more, I divorce you, that's it. And there's nothing she can do about it. Moses does not allow this kind of thing. Moses said a writing of divorcement is required for the protection of the children that may be involved, for the protection of the woman and her property rights, who's put away, and for the protection legally also of the man asking for the divorce, or vice versa, a woman if that's the case.

The law in Deuteronomy 24 regulated divorce in the manner in which it is issued.

That was the command that it must be in writing. But now Jesus says, whosoever shall put away his wife, instead of just letting divorce be one of the things taken for granted under the Old Covenant, now Jesus says, let's look at the issue of divorce itself. We're no longer merely regulated. We're going to look at it as an institution.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery. This is Jesus teaching to the disciples. This is New Testament doctrine.

This is the doctrine that we have had for years. This is the doctrine that was renounced and made.

There is no change. Whosoever among you, brethren, shall put away his wife.

Excepted be for fornication, causes her to commit adultery on the assumption she'll get married again, or somebody wants to marry her. And whosoever shall marry her, that is, divorce, commits adultery.

Now that's very strong, and that's violation in the letter of one of the Ten Commandments.

Now there is something here that we overlooked. There's an oversight, but in being so close to what God intended marriage to be, Mr. Armstrong and the rest of us came to the conclusion that, if that's what God intended marriage to be, then this explanation in verse 32 must pertain to an annulment. This is not the case. Now let me read it clearly. Whosoever shall put away, put away means to divorce in the Greek. It's the same root word, to sever, to cut off from the contract.

Whosoever shall divorce his wife, except for the cause of fornication. Now this means that you can then divorce your wife or your husband for the cause of fornication. Now that probably is the biggest change in our understanding, which is an administrative change, actually, that we have.

We tried to understand it as if when God has bound the marriage, if God has bound it, then it can never be severed, and if it could be severed by fornication or adultery, then it must not actually be bound, and so we call it an annulment. And we use the English term annulment, which never occurs in the Bible in this sense. The scripture here makes it plain that when a marriage has been bound by God in heaven, let's say, because he was asked to be a party to it, he said, Jesus is addressing the disciples. If God is a part of this marriage, whoever puts this woman away, except the divorce be for the cause of fornication, that's the same as saying, brethren, that a marriage that God has bound can be divorced for this reason. Now is that clear? That is a fundamental change at this point that church was mistaken, and we have corrected it. The exception clause here is an exception that pertains to the one valid reason for church members when both are converted, and as long as you are under the government of God to be divorced for the cause of fornication. Now, since most of the problems are not on this issue, and since we have not presented to Mr. Armstrong the final definition from our studies of fornication, I will not define it further except to say the following, but I think I can say the following. The word fornication cannot be used and is not used in scripture to be the equivalent of a singular act of adultery.

There are some who would like to have it, I don't say among us, to be absolutely the equivalent of a singular act of adultery. When there is a mistake that is made, an emotional crisis, let's say, in some woman or some man are involved in adultery, there's a single act, this is not the normal word used to describe it. Cornea would not be an appropriate word to describe that. Now, basically it does not exclude any of the past definitions the church has given.

It may include further definitions as we might see in examining other verses, but it is not proper at this moment until Mr. Armstrong has evaluated the definitions to go any further, because that's not really fundamental. Jesus even says this is an exception, but it cannot be understood as equivalent, and I think that I can say that very clearly.

I know Mr. Armstrong knows that, I know Dr. Zimmerman understands it that way, and all the ministers in England and all of us who went over there understood that that was not the intent of the meaning of that word, that it is a much different word, a different kind of word in its impact. So we learned from this something that we had not learned before, that a marriage whoever puts away his wife is involving himself. If you're in the church and you're subject to the law of God and the government of God, you're involving yourself in a violation of one of the Ten Commandments unless there is a cause which cause is defined in the Greek as porneia, and in this case certainly has the impact of promiscuity, and this allows for a divorce of a marriage that has been bound by God, because he's not addressing the carnal people, he's addressing the disciples. In other words, what we learn is that if marriage is a contract, then there are terms of the contract which determine when it is binding, and there are terms or definitions in the law that define when it also may be loosed.

So a marriage can be bound and a marriage can be loosed, but we have to find out the biblical definitions for it. I think we were far too close to what a marriage should be to see that a marriage can be bound and still loosed by God for this reason, so we had the reason that God didn't bind it in the first place, that's why we could call it an annulment, but that is not a valid way to define it. Let us now turn again to Matthew 19 to understand Jesus' teaching, because after all, this is important, and Jesus was not saying something that is other than clear to us what happened is that we didn't see the clear implications of his teaching. Because we were trying to safeguard the teaching of marriage, we read the doctrine into the administration instead of examining the administration after having understood what the doctrine is. Now, Matthew 19 verse 3 again, here in this case, a multitude came to Jesus, including Pharisees, with a sticky question. Is it lawful, they said, for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Now, Jesus did not directly answer them. Yes, it is lawful to put away a man or wife for every cause, or no, it is not. And then they would have counted with all kinds of arguments, tried to trap him. Now, he answered and said unto them, you ought to know the answer, haven't you read in the scripture that he which made them at the beginning, male and female, said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, clean to his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. Therefore, there are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder. And that's where he stopped.

Now, there Jesus gives the overview in an argument, and you must see and understand this in terms of the fact that Jesus simply shut their mouths by telling them what a marriage ought to be, and didn't even answer their question at all. He doesn't even give an exception here.

He's saying, well, look, if you understood what marriage was like at the beginning when there was no porneia between Adam and Eve, then you would know, and that's the case he's referring to, he's picking a case in which porneia couldn't even have been involved, because it hadn't been living with any other people or with any other people. So he says, look, if you want to know what a marriage is meant to be, go right back to where it started in the Garden of Eden, and this is where Mr. Armstrong

started when we presented the presentation at the end of April 2 for the May Conference. He says what marriage should be. It's defined here in terms of the original experience, and it is that they three or they four, it is they twain or two, the old English word, shall become one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder, and rebuilt the doctrine on that as well as on the other verses, but we did not, and it was a mistake. We did not examine the rest of the evidence sufficient in terms of how to administrate or adjudicate such a statement. Now, what therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder, Jesus already said in Matthew 5, has one exception, a divorce can be granted in a marriage that God has joined if it be for the cause of porno. So there are exceptional clauses, exception clauses, I should say. Well, this was a shocker because they didn't really get any answer. They only got what a marriage ought to be. Jesus was focusing their minds on what marriage should be. Well, he said unto him, then how do you explain why Moses commanded to give the writing of divorcement, to put it away? Now, what was commanded was not divorce, what was commanded was the writing of the divorcement. To put it in written form, Moses commanded that that be done.

Jesus said to them, Moses, because of the hardness of your heart, suffered you or permitted you to put away your words. From the beginning it wasn't so.

That's pretty strong talk. All right, Moses gave a permission. Now, how did Moses ever get his permission into the Bible? Well, he got it there because the Yahweh, the Jesus who was speaking here gave Moses the permission to give the people the permission.

Moses did not do this on his own authority because, very plainly and simply stated in Hebrews, Moses was faithful in all his house and everything he was commanded to do.

Moses didn't get this verse put in there on his own and God didn't see it in turn.

The Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, saw to it that this was put in because of the hardness of their hearts. And as we explained in England, the hardness of the human heart suddenly didn't become soft at pentecost all over the world. Human hearts are the same then and now until God deals with the individual. And so God gave Moses a permission that was not so from the beginning because of human conduct.

God does look down and see how weak human beings are. And in this measure, he allowed for the writing of divorcement, the commanded requirement, in cases where people put away their wives when they should not have. In other words, Moses so defined it. Now, we haven't read Moses' definition, but Moses then defined it in broader terms than were intended from the beginning.

Now we look further. And I say unto you, now here is the one who gave the permission to Moses to give the permission to the people, but now he's telling them, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for Pornia. And I would say here we are clearly dealing with the concept of promiscuity and not a single act of adultery.

And shall marry another, commits adultery, and whoever marries her, which is put away, commits adultery. But here you know again, whoever shall put away his wife for all these other reasons is involved in adultery. But if it is done for reasons of Pornia, this therefore is an exception that God would have permitted from the beginning. It wasn't necessary to define it to beginning because neither Adam nor Eve could have been involved in it because there weren't other people around. Here we have in Matthew 19.9 again a statement very clear and very direct, that Pornia is a reason for divorce or putting away not for an element. The concept of an element is not valid in the biblical

sense. It is a term that has been developed in human law, which is irrelevant to the fundamental issues.

So here Jesus makes very plain and he finally did answer their question.

And instead of saying not for every cause, he tells them what they could put away their lives for and that only. But it can be done. Now man should not put asunder that God is joined.

But when Jesus said that in verse 6, what therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder, he already adds an exception clause in verse 9. That is, what God has joined man is not to put asunder, except it be for Pornia. An exception clause then exists even in this situation. Now when his disciples heard that from him, this rather hit them, or if the case of a man be sold with his wife, that he can't put her away for every cause, on that basis knowing what women were like or at least knowing what those Jewish women were like.