

The Doctrine of Divorce and Remarriage

How and Why It Was Changed!

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THE DOCTRINE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

How and Why It Was Changed!

After some forty years, the Church of God changed the doctrine of divorce and remarriage. Why was it changed? How was it changed? What is the truth, the behind-the-scenes action that brought about the change? Was it inspired of God?

Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God from all over the world assembled in the beautiful, new Ambassador College Auditorium in Pasadena, California, on May 6, 1974, for formal dedication ceremonies. Truly, this building dedicated to God is one of the finest on earth, a magnificent structure.

They assembled to honor God, to commemorate and dedicate a building to His service. What was heard that momentous morning was far more than a dedication ceremony!

There is an exact, word-for-word, official transcript of that entire dedication ceremony. It is some 89 pages long, containing approximately 20,000 words. There are 13 pages of introduction, a one-page dedication prayer, and 75 pages of explanation of what turned out to be one of the most shocking announcements ever made by the Church of God. In this article we will share with you what was said, answering the questions of how and why the change. But even more important is the behind-the-scenes action that fostered the change in doctrine. That, too, will be faithfully and accurately reported.

First Reactions

When the announcement was made that most of those divorced were now free to remarry and that God had not bound their marriages, there was stunned silence! While this "new truth" was being explained, some of God's ministers sat ashen-faced in unbelief of what they were hearing.

Forty years' foundational doctrine upholding the sanctity of marriage was dramatically changed in one fleeting moment. It is now of lesser significance than that which is commonly taught by all other "Christian" religions. The "new truth," the "new doctrine of divorce and remarriage," differed only in minor technical details from what most Protestants believe—that divorce is sanctioned by God!

As the explanation proceeded, those few who had fostered the change began applauding! They were jubilant with the decision! They had waited and worked a long time for the change. Others joined in the applause—some vigorously, some apologetically—while a few refrained. At the close of the session men quickly sought out

their close friends to discuss this new change. One subject, and one only, was on the lips and minds of God's ministers assembled from all over the world. The hallways reverberated with the sound of voices. Some whispered and some spoke in normal tones—while others strongly, vociferously, and fearlessly denounced what they had heard. In the front of the auditorium small groups rushed to congratulate one another—shaking hands, embracing—ecstatic over their triumph in getting the doctrine of divorce and remarriage changed.

One evangelist audibly raised his voice in expressing his displeasure with the decision. "This is lunacy," he said. "It's unbelievable! I'll never in my life consent to such an ungodly doctrine of error." Others standing by tried to quiet him. An evangelist friend took him by the arm, saying, ". . . this is not the time or place to discuss it—do you want to get all of us, including yourself, in trouble?"

Of fourteen evangelists only four had been actively involved in promoting the new doctrine. Of those remaining, five were known to be strongly opposed to the change. The remaining five evangelists held their silence—that is, publicly—and it was impossible to know their true feelings in the matter.

Two Weeks Prior to the Change

Several weeks prior to the change it was generally known by the upper echelon of Headquarters executives that a select group was going to encounter Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and pressure him for the change. One evangelist met another minister in the Hall of Administration. This evangelist was visibly shaken with what was about to transpire. He asked the minister to come with him to a second evangelist's office to discuss the matter. In the privacy of that office the first evangelist went through the Scriptures—especially First Corinthians, chapter seven and Romans, chapter seven—emphatically, dynamically explaining that the group fostering the change was Biblically wrong. They were in conference for quite some time, mostly listening and following along in their Bibles. The conclusion was that it was Biblically impossible for that "select" group to persuade Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong of such an ungodly thing!

Some fourteen days prior to the change a minister went to see a different evangelist who is known as a scholar. This minister was deeply disturbed over the upcoming change and over the way it was being "railroaded" with total disregard for God's Word. They sat and talked. The evangelist assured this minister that, Biblically, there was no possible way for such a change in doctrine. Confidentially, he reassured the minister, "You have no need for concern. I will personally put down any such attempt." Fourteen days later it was that very evangelist who gave Mr. Armstrong "the key" for the change! When asked why he had done such a thing, he said, "Why, I never knew what Mr. Armstrong wanted. When I knew, I gave it to him."

What Was the Root Cause of the Change?

For years prior to the change some of those working in the executive offices knew that the top evangelist at Headquarters totally disagreed with most, if not all, of the Church's doctrines—especially divorce and remarriage! He was actively committing adultery on a regular basis, having at least one known mistress. At the start only a few ministers knew of the matter. Most learned of the problem in early 1972. By that time several other ministers were also involved in the same sin.

A month or two prior to Pentecost 1974 this top-ranking minister (mentioned above) met with another minister in the privacy of his home about a matter totally unrelated to doctrine. During the conversation he told this minister, as a friend, a little of his plans for promoting the changes in doctrine. He also told whom he had removed and whom he would remove later. This minister walked home incredulous, not believing what he had heard—for, what was said privately did not agree with what was said publicly.

The Birth of the Doctrinal Committee

The Doctrinal Committee was formed to bring about the desired changes. Only two men were involved in selecting members for the committee. Credentials for appointment were primarily that of being for change in divorce and remarriage, healing, Pentecost, etc. Two men who openly opposed the new belief on the liberality of divorce and remarriage were removed from the Doctrinal Committee in Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's absence. They were reinstated upon his return but were later removed a second time!

Finally, with the desired committee established, everything was "go" with the exception of one obstacle—how to change Mr. Armstrong's mind! There was general agreement that to change Mr. Armstrong's thinking in the doctrine of D&R would be most difficult! Therefore, of all the desired changes, they felt they had the best chance with Pentecost since it was perhaps the most debatable among the "scholars," and the one most difficult to prove in the Bible. They knew Mr. Armstrong was becoming more and more impressed, as the years went by, with the educated of this world—over and beyond even God's ministry!

Pentecost was changed in 1974. The official announcement came from Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in a letter dated February 11, 1974. It was changed on the basis that, "This church has always confessed and corrected error," and that we are to "grow in grace and knowledge." The Work of God was entering "a new era after forty years"—"it's like starting all over again." Verse 17 of II Peter 3 is a good verse to consider, before verse 18 which is the scripture that tells us to "grow in grace and knowledge."

Much time has passed since the changes in D&R and Pentecost were effected. Several members of the Doctrinal Committee have expressed dissatisfaction—not so much with the decisions as with the fact that they are not allowed to claim the decisions as "their work."

One well-educated member of the Doctrinal Committee stated on several occasions that he was unhappy, that he would no longer bother attending sessions except when necessary for maintaining his job. The procedure to find "truth" went something like this: "Mr. Ted Armstrong," he said, "calls Dr. Hoeh and gives him the subject he wants discussed and proceeds to give him his surmise of the matter. Then the Doctrinal Committee meets. We discuss the subject, all the pros and cons, in many long-hour sessions. When we are all finished, Dr. Hoeh writes a report and submits it to Mr. Ted Armstrong. No matter what is discussed, the report always coincides with Mr. Ted Armstrong's conclusion of the matter prior to discussion. So what's the use in discussing the question—the doctrine—in the first place?"

After the Pentecost Change

After Pentecost was changed it seemed the impossible quickly became the reality. What had been only imagined a year or more earlier rapidly became dogma virtually overnight!

Pentecost pictures the giving of God's Holy Spirit. Because some were denying it, trampling underfoot the day God made holy, God began to remove Himself from such people who now were rapidly becoming devoid of the knowledge of the Truth. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee . . ." (Hos. 4:6). God goes on to explain that it is His people who have forgotten His laws, and that His priests have erred (Mal. 2:7–8). The meaning is for the last days, Mal. 3:1–2, 18 and 4:1–3 give the time setting!

Deuteronomy, chapter thirty-two, speaks of a last-generation people of God who corrupt themselves! Someone who once knew THE TRUTH OF GOD in the last days (Deut. 31:29) grows careless with the doctrines, the Word of God, and "lightly esteems" salvation! Chapter eight of Deuteronomy shows God led our forefathers for forty years to prove them. He wanted to know if they would keep the truth which He had given them in the beginning. They, too, rejected God's Word. This last generation of God's called-out ones has become so bold as to accuse God of leading them in a spiritual wilderness filled with doctrinal error for forty long years (Jer. 2:31).

Isn't it amazing that after forty years the Church of God now rejects some of the major doctrines it was taught of God in the beginning?

The changes which have come about during the past few years are virtually unending, although some have not been officially announced. Divorce and remarriage, healing, Pentecost—just to name a few. In addition, the manner in which we are to keep the Sabbath and God's Holy Days has been liberalized. Interracial marriages have been given tacit approval. The Land Sabbath is optional. There is probably no "place of safety" except privately—your own mountain retreat. Prayer and study are not necessary on a day-to-day basis. Gambling is permissible. The Passover is either on the 14th or on the 15th—take your choice. Long hair for men, make-up and birthdays are now approved. Fasting and prayer for ordinations is out-of-date. The public is invited to God's holy convocations. Child rearing has been liberalized. Christmas is privately observed by many in the Church. The reasoning goes something like this: It's not really observing the day; we just don't want to offend the public. After all, it is claimed Jeremiah, chapter ten, does not refer to the Christmas tree, anyway.

Smoking and unclean meats are not considered important issues anymore with God. It is reasoned a little won't hurt you. Lying is permissible if you have to protect your interests. And tithing is now optional, except for the first tithe.

Not all the changes taught by Headquarters have filtered out to the Churches. Therefore, vigorous denial will be made that some of the changes have really occurred. Besides, it is said the "administration" has been changed," not the tradition or the doctrine."

With Pentecost changed, you probably can expect other changes to be announced officially. Actually, the list of changes appears endless. And notice, Christ did say that at His second coming, His People would be blind and naked (spiritually) and wouldn't know it (Rev. 3:17–18).

Initial Studies Regarding "How to Change D&R"

After it was decided and agreed that D&R must be changed, an intense study of how to change the doctrine began. For weeks and months, the Doctrinal Committee labored with the Greek word *porneia* and the meaning of other Greek and Hebrew words. They considered even the unclear scriptures, trying to somehow prove that divorce was legitimate. Deuteronomy 24:1–4 and Jeremiah 3:8 received special attention. Voluminous papers were written in an attempt to prove divorce permissible. Hosea 4:14—which actually asks a question—was intensely examined. Surely, they thought, this meant an amplification of the marriage law in Deuteronomy 24, and even adultery itself became included in the matter of nakedness. All their reasoning proved nothing and they knew it! There was no way they were going to get around Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong with such arguments. They knew he was averse to these.

They therefore discussed approaching Mr. Armstrong's trusted legal assistant—Mr. Stanley Rader. "If we can get him to go to Mr. Armstrong and present the case from a legal viewpoint," they reasoned, "we might stand some chance in getting the doctrine changed."

This was the plan to which most agreed until, unexpectedly, the scholarly evangelist unloaded his new theory that God does not bind all marriages. He gave it to them just days before Mr. Herbert Armstrong returned from an overseas trip.

The Committee was jubilant in discussing the new approach. It would work if they were careful. "But we must realize that we won't do it in one session," was their thinking; "it will take time."

The most surprised individuals in Pasadena were the evangelists who went to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's house that fateful evening just prior to the conference in May of 1974. They left with "a sell." They had succeeded in a few hours to convince him of the "legality" of divorce. There was rejoicing beyond belief!

The next morning a hurried meeting was called of all ministers who could be reached by phone, to assemble in the Music Hall of the Loma D. Armstrong complex. Mr. Ted Armstrong told the "good news." They hadn't expected it, but it was a real breakthrough. It came just days before the largest ministerial conference ever to be held by the Church of God.

III Prepared

Hurriedly, they prepared for the "greatest of announcements." The announcement came quickly on May 6, 1974. Apologies were made in later sessions, stating that the Doctrinal Committee was not prepared, that they hadn't expected the change so soon.

A crash program began as they prepared written material to back up the new doctrine based on "new truth"—that is, that God does not bind marriages. A 24-page study paper was quickly prepared and handed to the ministers prior to the conference adjournment. However, the paper was quickly withdrawn because it contained so much Biblical error, it became an embarrassment. The paper was supposed to go out to the brethren in modified form to back up the May announcement. Obviously, it could not be mailed now. A few admitted privately that it was not such a good paper after all. If you can borrow a copy from your minister (he should have one), you can easily prove the paper is in error.

For months, God's people have waited for a new booklet, the "new proof" of divorce and remarriage to back up the announcement and the letter sent out to all members. As of this writing, all are still waiting! However, many of God's people have cheerfully accepted

the "good news" and many in the Church have remarried! Is it any wonder the Scripture says, ". . . after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (II Tim. 4:3)? These are teachers who ". . . promise them liberty . . ." (II Pet 2:19).

A year or so prior to the decision to change the doctrine of divorce and remarriage, a very close friend of a top evangelist wanted to remarry. He was bound to a wife. However, he was advised to go ahead and remarry, that it wouldn't be long until "we'll make it legal. Sit out a short time and wait; then you will be able to come back into the Church." He's back, working in a very plush assignment!

Two ministers who went out as dissidents, claiming Pentecost was on Sunday and that D&R should be changed to allow remarriage, were told to "Hang in there, don't get upset and leave, we are well on the way to having both changed." They were both impatient, stating they had waited long enough! They left, both receiving handsome settlements in order to keep them quiet. Their work has come to virtually nothing. So will any work that departs from the Truth of God; that comes to believe in a Sunday Pentecost and in divorce and remarriage.

To Pave the Way

To pave the way for a change in the doctrine of divorce and remarriage, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong had been advised, over a period of many months, that the Church was losing members because he wouldn't change on the important issues.

Two major reasons were added to help convince him that eventually something must be done. First, he was told sizable groups within the Church were withholding tithes and offerings and more would continue to do so unless the desired changes were made. Secondly, the third tithe account was dangerously low. Millions of dollars had been drained from the third tithe account for emergency use which included the jets and other personal needs. There was also a mountain retreat, as well as a Lake Tahoe home—both supported by third tithe—along with other similarly questionable expenditures. Incidentally, many at Pasadena remember the many public pronouncements by Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong that, "The Falcon will go before we ever think about closing Imperial Schools, I promise you that!"

The evangelist in charge of disbursing the third tithe at that time estimated that only 40% of the third tithe was going to the widow, the stranger, and the fatherless. The remaining 60% was going to the "Levite" at the top level. This involved multiple millions of dollars!

The income, which was down drastically, was also a means of persuasion. Bills were coming due that could not be met unless drastic action was taken. The men fighting for change suggested, from time to time, if there were some way the hundreds upon hundreds of "spiritual widows" could be freed to remarry, millions of dollars would be saved for use within the Work.

What We Were Told at the Dedication

As briefly as possible, here are some of the explanations given as reasons for the change in the doctrine of divorce and remarriage. All quotes will be from the May 6, 1974, auditorium dedication. Both Messrs. Herbert W. and Garner Ted Armstrong explained the changes in detail at that session.

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong began by stating that, "One day—and very recently—I think not over a week or ten days ago, my son Garner Ted came up to me with this: he said, 'In the First Century, when the Apostle Paul wrote, divorce and remarriage problems were bad, possibly more rampant than now, in the Greek and the Roman countries. Therefore, we know that he was running up against these problems just as God's ministers are today. And yet we can find nothing in his writings showing any of these sticky problems, these borderline cases, or the things which are plaguing our ministry today. Why?'" (Pages 26-27, reel 1.)

The above explanation was one reason given to legalize divorce, assuming that God's silence on the details was tantamount to approval.

God's Word is silent on many details!

There is little information given concerning the details of drunkenness, which was also rampant at that time. Does God's silence on the subject mean we are all now free to get drunk?

Also, the entire truth of a doctrine is not given in one chapter or one book alone. God records His Truth ". . . here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Isa. 28:13). Actually, all of the epistles of Paul are written in such a way that those who trust in their own intellect will "wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16).

One of Mr. Ted Armstrong's strongest contentions for God's not binding marriages is that people in the Old Testament had many wives and concubines. He noted ". . . that David was married to two women at once" (page 36, reel 1), also, that David by ". . . conservative estimate had at least 20 or more concubines, [and] he was still a man after God's own heart"

(page 38, reel 1), "David never had to repent of the sin of adultery where Haggith or Eglah, or any of these others we have read are concerned. It isn't in the Bible" (page 42, reel 2). The contention here is that David had to repent of the sin of murder and adultery in only the one case of Uriah and Bathsheba. Does he mean we all may now have 20 or more concubines—that this is now approved of God?

Another reason given by Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong as to why God does not bind marriages consummated outside the Worldwide Church of God, was that there have been marriages of "... grunting savages ... people up at Point Barrow, Alaska who knew nothing but hair seals and whale blubber"; there are people "... plastered with whatever strange paintings or body decorations ...," and they go through the "strangest rituals" (page 32, reel 1).

What do these customs have to do with God's Law? Does the fact that such customs exist now permit, excuse, or allow God's people to commit whoredom like the rest of the Gentiles?

Mr. Ted Armstrong further states, "It was an assumption [by the Church] that there is one and one act only, in which God the Father directly involves Himself; and that is at the instant in time these two people [any two people] outside the church decide to be married" (page 32, reel 1). Meaning, because God is not intervening in the lives of the uncalled at this time, why would we think He is binding their marriages?

But what we need to realize is, the Church never assumed binding marriages was the only work the Father involved Himself with. He does work (John 5:17). The Father is the one who calls each one to the Truth. "No man can come to me [Christ], except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). That's work!

Actually, if the only work performed by the Father was binding marriages, under the "new truth about divorce and remarriage," He hasn't been working at all! In reality, according to "the Church" now, the Father has been on a 6,000-year-long vacation, with perhaps a day or two of work mingled in between.

According to the new doctrine of D&R, God, the Father, would have had only around 35,000 marriages to bind during the early 1970s in His Church (that is, if He bound all of our marriages). If it is true you have to receive the Spirit of God and understand that you are to become God before God binds your marriage—there could have been little work for the Father to do prior to Pentecost in 31 A.D. In other words, God was on a religious holiday for the first 4,000 years; then, perhaps, He bound a few marriages during the apostles' time! Afterward, during the 18½ centuries of darkness, He again went on vacation—until our time!

It really doesn't make much sense, does it? To accept such a doctrine one has to disregard most of the Bible!

The May 15, 1974, Study Paper on Marriage and Divorce

There is so much written and stated about the new doctrine of D&R that it is impossible to comment on more than a sampling of the reasoning leading God's people away from the Truth. One or two additional points will suffice for this paper. Other articles are available that deal, in depth, with the Scriptural proof that God's laws and the sanctity of marriage have not changed. Write for our article, "The Faith Once Delivered about Marriage and Divorce."

It has been said—and is recorded in the May 15, 1974, study paper on marriage and divorce—that the expression ". . . has been sanctified,' coupled with the fact that otherwise the children are unclean, shows that God HAS NOT ENTERED THE MARRIAGE UNTIL CONVERSION. . . . Unconverted persons, outside the Church, are just exactly that—outside, not sanctified, 'unclean'" (page 20).

"Marriages in this world are recognized by God to be bound . . . bound by man. Marriages are also 'recognized' by God to be 'unbound' when legally processed by state courts" (page 13). "The Church therefore recognizes the legality of divorces of those who are not members of the Church of God" (page 9).

If this be true (and it isn't), then John the Baptist erred in his instruction to Herod. John told Herod, who was not in the Church, that his state-bound, legal marriage to his brother Philip's wife (involving a divorcee) was illegal—it was adultery! "For John said unto him [Herod], It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matt. 14:4).

Now, if God had been allowing those outside His Church to marry and divorce as "the Church" now claims, why would John say just the opposite? Further, why would God record this event in His Bible if it were not true? And why would John the Baptist risk his neck over a marriage and divorce problem that was supposedly legal because Herod was unconverted? John did lose his head, for Herod's wife hated THE TRUTH! Herod and his wife hated John because he told Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." Regardless of argumentation, in the final analysis it was adultery.

Here are some additional quotes from the May 15 study paper: "But God has given his Church authority to bind and loose in matters such as marriage in which men have stumbled and erred and been in confusion and in which God has not been a party. The Church therefore recognizes the legality of divorces of those who are not members of the Church of God" (page 9). **SUCH THINKING IS SETTING ONESELF ABOVE GOD, AND THE BIBLE CONDEMNS SUCH ACTION!!**

Some have brought up the question, "If God the Father binds only the marriages of those who are converted in His Church, then what happened when Christ performed the first marriage of Adam and Eve?" The answer: "Adam and Eve were neither 'converted' nor 'unconverted.' . . . therefore that unique ceremony was a special case, and it could not become the norm for this sinful world" (page 15).

UNBELIEVABLE!!

"God's Church is not responsible for the original breakdown of such a marriage [one outside the Church], but we can be responsible for, or participate in, healing this tragic breach by 1) recognizing the second happy marriage . . ." (page 15).

Throughout the entire paper, the emphasis is on the second happy marriage; the first one is always a horrible marriage! But we know this is not always true. Many second marriages are not happy marriages. Further, what does the Church do when there have been multiple marriages, four or five marriages with children born of each marriage? Which one do they heal? Which one is the happy marriage? What happens to the children of the four or five unhappy marriages?

Such explanations found in the marriage and divorce study paper are not befitting of God.

Referring to I Corinthians 7:17–18, the paper continues: "Paul has stated a basic principle of judgment concerning marriage. Then he gives an illustration: were you circumcised when God called you? If so, STAY THAT WAY! And the reader, applying the same [principle], can logically supply the following: are you living with a second wife? Stay that way!" (Page 21.)

Logically, we could follow the same process as above and say: "Are you effeminate, a drunkard, a pervert? Stay that way!" Again, the logic and reasonings of men do not make sense!

How far will men go to legalize divorce? Listen and read on: "On conversion, a spouse becomes 'a new creation' (Greek: *ktisis*, II Cor. 5:17). In at least a figurative sense his or her marriage ended with his old life; it is dissolved in baptism and 'old things are passed away.' The marriage can be reconstituted. . . . But the unbelieving partner can refuse (if he or she so chooses) to reconstitute the marriage. The Christian [member of the Worldwide Church of God] is then free" (page 22).

Incredible! Unthinkable! Unimaginable!! That this type of reasoning could happen in God's Church is truly unbelievable! What mockery has been made of God's great laws and the sanctity of marriage!

One more example from the study paper prior to closing this article. The question: "What About Romans 7:2?" Answer: "Romans 7:1–2 has been misunderstood in the past, as if it were the overall marriage principle which not only stood alone, but also overruled all others. The fact is, however . . . the reference to marriage in this chapter is only 'an illustration,' an 'example,' a 'for instance,' a 'general principle,' an 'analogy.' And analogies don't prove anything!" (Page 22.)

Can you believe it? This has to be one of the most outstanding errors of the century regarding an explanation (or the lack of one)! So God now uses analogies, and wrong analogies at that, for examples. He uses analogies that really are not true—to make a point that really isn't a point, after all, because analogies don't prove anything! Does that make sense?

In Summary

The Worldwide Church of God has turned to the unclear, the vague scriptures, ignoring the clear, easy-to-understand scriptures that plainly state the truth on marriage and divorce. They have seized on I Corinthians 7, an epistle of Paul "hard to be understood" by those who are "unlearned" (spiritually), who are "unstable" (changing), who ". . . wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16). If they would look, they would find the answer in I Corinthians 7—the "marriage chapter," as they phrase it. To make sure that no one is confused, God summarizes the conclusion at the close of the chapter: "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).

What has happened is a sad commentary which should make us all ashamed before God.

Yet, it had to be! God's people had to be tested (I Cor 11:19 and I Pet. 4:17), for Him to prove whether they would follow men or follow God!

The end is near! GOD IS PROVING YOU! Which way will you go? Will your answer, your action, be that of the Apostle Peter and the other apostles—" . . . We ought to OBEY GOD rather than men" (Acts 5:29)? It's up to you. It's your life or your death! You have the choice between blessings, salvation and eternal life OR cursings, coming tribulation and death!

Which will it be?

APPENDIX

It is virtually impossible to keep pace with the never-ending doctrinal changes within the Worldwide Church of God. The change that gave birth to the "New Doctrine of Divorce and Remarriage" has now been changed! No wonder God admonishes us in Proverbs 24:21, that we are not to meddle with those who are given to change. Men in high places have rejected God's true knowledge—and God may soon reject them (Hos. 4:6).

Since this article was written, the Worldwide Church of God has liberalized divorce to include ALL BAPTIZED CHURCH MEMBERS! Therefore, many of the original reasonings given for divorce are now antiquated by "new truth." It is as God says, they are "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). God foresaw and prophesied what is now occurring—a departure from the Truth (II Thess. 2:3, 10–12).

The former director of the Worldwide Church of God Church Administration Department, addressed a letter dated September 2, 1975, to a minister explaining the latest "new changes." The minister had written to Headquarters, asking a series of questions concerning this original "new truth" on divorce and remarriage. He questioned the validity of a divorce sanction for the unconverted, as opposed to a no-divorce decree for converted and baptized Church members—suggesting that "the Church" may have shown preferential treatment. He had refused to perform marriages as outlined by the "new doctrine" as a matter of conscience. He wished first to see direct BIBLICAL PROOF.

However, there was no problem concerning the differentiation between the converted and the unconverted. As a matter of fact, the Doctrinal Committee, in further "scholarly" research, had already arrived at a "new truth" clarifying the issue: There is no difference—ALL ARE FREE TO DIVORCE AND REMARRY!

Please note the following quotes from the former director's letter to that minister (parts of this letter were emphasized by its writer; further emphasis has also been added by us):

Thanks for your memo with the questions on Divorce and Remarriage. After some discussion with others on the Doctrinal team the following answers have been prepared for you.

I realize *we still have a number of "loose ends"* to tie up in this area. Nonetheless, I think we are making good progress and hope to have some approved guidelines to the field ministry in the near future. . . .

After perusing your paper a couple of times. . . I am convinced you are mixing up several factors. You are allowing yourself to become confused regarding what God *allowed*, what He *commanded* and what was *ideal*.

In the beginning God created man "very good" (compare Genesis 1:31 and Ecclesiastes 9:7). He was created sinless. There was no *porneia* of any kind. Adam was united with Eve in an *ideal* marriage. There was no need to discuss *reasons* for divorce since divorce was not anticipated. God had intended that all marriages follow the pattern of Adam and Eve and that there be no divorce. From the *beginning* divorce was "not so." (*To our knowledge this is the ONLY marriage in which God was directly involved*). . . .

Christ also allowed for human carnality and sin by restating that exception [Matt. 19:1 is being referred to]. He was not in favor of allowing divorce for "every cause." In fact Christ, the God of the Old Testament, had said through Malachi, "I *hate* putting away (divorce)!" (Malachi 1). *Yet He also realized that within the realm of carnal human beings divorce is still sometimes necessary. Even BAPTIZED CHURCH MEMBERS sin and thus alienate their mates from time to time. If they are so unforgiving and vindictive that they cannot find it in their hearts to forget the sin of the offending party THEY MAY HAVE A DIVORCE IF THEY SO WISH.* But it is usually best if they reconcile—though in *some cases* the *best course is* separation and divorce! Each case must be determined on its own *demerits*. . . .

The Church had no part in the [wedding] ceremonies except to attend as guests, perhaps. In this sense, marriages in the church were no different than marriages outside of it, The only difference was the *knowledge* of the participants about God's *standards* and *ideals*—*His laws*. Even though the principals in a wedding had God's Spirit they were still human and subject to sin. *There is no reason to believe* that God was any more involved—or any *less*—in their marriages than in those in "the world." (Undoubtedly He was involved in their *lives* in a spiritual way). But a "*church marriage*" was *no more or less binding than an outside one*.

Thus, whether church members or unconverted people are involved. . . *God's binding is done through human agencies*—community sanction and recognition of the covenant of the two partners themselves. If that covenant has been broken, sin has been undoubtedly involved, as I said before, but the marriage may have ceased to exist. . . .

Romans 7:2 (an allegory) also supports the idea that "bound" to a mate means married. Therefore "not bound" means not married. . . .

Baptism implies *accountability*—especially as one grows in knowledge. Church members should be less likely to divorce than any other class of people on the earth since they alone have the capacity for true *forgiveness*. But, if a church member insists on a divorce, even though it may be less than ideal, they may have it. It will be *legal*, though not always the right course so far as the church is concerned.

[W]e are *not* suggesting that "only church marriages are bound by God." All legal marriages are *recognized* by God as valid if performed in accordance with law (Romans 13, etc.) Custom varies from culture to culture. God does not necessarily enter into each and every ceremony that takes place to "bind" the couple in a metaphysical way. God has "bound" upon mankind in general the institution of marriage as a permanent, inviolate, relationship between two people (Matt. 19:6). In the sense that God created the *institution* and set the precedent with Adam and Eve he "binds" all marriages. He expects all marriages to be for life—but He recognizes man's inherent weaknesses and *allows* divorce for certain reasons and *forgives* other divorces which took place for illegitimate reasons.

God recognizes the authority of those in government at all levels to make laws concerning marriages and divorces. THEY are "*his ministers*" to regulate society (Romans 13). [Should we obey civil or religious laws or customs when they conflict with God's higher Law? If so, why did Peter instruct otherwise, in Acts 5:29?]

What Will You Do?

You have now read the proof—the unbelievable, irrefutable, undeniable truth—of what men have done with God's sacred Law and the doctrine of marriage—*holy* matrimony. Men have *changed* the Word of God to suit their own selfish purposes—to appease their lust and greed in defiance of the Creator God!

Those who determined to change God's laws used the excuse that God binds only the marriages of converted, baptized Church members. That was their so-called proof—their reason, they said—for change! This they promptly discarded after most of God's people bought the product! Then they changed the law again to mean what they intended in the beginning—that *all are free to divorce and remarry JUST LIKE IN THE DAYS OF NOAH* (Matt. 24:37–39; Gen. 6:2).

Jesus Christ said the doctrines He taught were not His but the Father's who sent Him (John 7:16). God's laws are spiritual, holy (Rom. 7:12–14). They are eternal and not to be tampered with!

WHAT THEN SHOULD *YOU* DO ABOUT IT? Some say nothing ought to be done. But what does God say? "If any man teach otherwise [default from what Christ taught], and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; FROM SUCH WITHDRAW THYSELF" (I Tim. 6:3–5).

It couldn't be more clear what God would have one do when there is a departure from the Truth! Write for our article, "True Christian Fellowship Today!"

God commands that such persons are NOT to be received by those who are earnestly contending for the Truth (II John 6–11).

Christ called His Church "the little flock," despised, persecuted and rejected. Nowhere is there any prophecy the true Church should become great, powerful and accepted in this world. However, there is a scripture that says, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luke 6:26).

Far too many are looking to numbers, to a LARGE FLOCK, to determine who is right and who is doing the work of God. Jesus Christ said just the opposite! Had you looked to NUMBERS—to some great physical organization—when Christ walked this earth, you would not have followed Christ or the Truth! At the close of Christ's three-and-a-half-year ministry, only about 120 remained faithful. Christ's work was and still is—the few, the pitiful few, "the little flock," who in the face of all opposition possess the character to hold fast to the Truth of God.

The "Work of God" is not the glamour of this world. Paul fearlessly preached "the glorious gospel of Christ" (II Cor. 4:4) and said, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord . . ." (II Cor. 4:5). Paul said he was ". . . bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God . . ." (I Thess. 2:2). He made *no substitutes* for the gospel; he preached only the pure Word of God. "For neither at any time used we flattering words . . ." (I Thess. 2:5).

Some have given their version or definition of what the "Work" is. But their definition does not agree with Christ's definition. They asked Christ, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28–29). Brethren, how many are doing that

kind of work today? For a complete explanation, write for our article, "What is the Work of God?"

If you are reading, praying, studying your Bible, you know that you must make a decision. You can't just sit still, or you will lose what you were given spiritually in the beginning.

What will you do? Do you have the perseverance, the character, the faith to obey God? Do you possess the courage and stamina to walk with Christ—to be ridiculed, laughed at, and condemned for the Truth, even as He was (John 15:20)?

You can have that kind of courage and strength, providing you obey, trust, and look to God! Will you accept or deny the facts, the truth? Will you accept your God, fearing Him only—or will you deny Him, fearing what men may say or do? Will you come out of confusion before it is too late—before the tribulation and plagues come?

It's YOUR decision. It's YOUR life or YOUR death. And it is FOR ETERNITY!