

PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

TO THE MINISTRY OF THE
WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD



VOL. 2, NO. 21

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

MAY 23, 1980

DOCTRINE OF WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ON "PORNEIA"

by Herbert W. Armstrong

A minister at Pasadena writes, "The ministry from 1976 to 1979 used this statement (quoted below) as the doctrine of the Church. In August of 1978 you took the first step in setting the Church back on the track in the area of divorce and remarriage. Since then many in the ministry have asked for additional information to counter--with the Scriptures--this 1976 statement."

The statement foisted on the ministry by liberals now banished from the Church, is as follows: "At the Ministerial Conference in May, 1976," (when I was overseas, and after solemn promises by the Executive Vice-President that doctrinal matters would not be touched on in the Conference), "the ministers were given an 'official' statement on divorce and remarriage. There were 14 pages on the meaning of porneia."

"The Summary Statement reads as follows: 'The term (porneia) includes all illicit sexual activity (before or after marriage) including fornication, adultery, harlotry, homosexuality, etc.'

"One enclosed paper stated, 'There is not the least indication here that Jesus is limiting porneia to some premarital act only.'"

Notice, this "liberal" argument states "there is not the least indication here..."

Arguing to water down and liberalize God's Word reminds me of the Protestant minister in the 1890s, when women adopted the "new" style of hairdo of a topknot on top of the head. He quoted from one text only, without regard to others on the subject, shouting out that "the Bible says, Matthew 24:17, 'top not come down.'" Sure enough it says that, but in context and in line with other Scriptures, it means no such thing.

Now I will settle this question OFFICIALLY. HOW did Christ put HIS doctrine into the Church? ONLY THROUGH THE APOSTLES. They frequently drew on the Old Testament Prophets, but the CHURCH received its doctrine from the APOSTLES.

How did Christ, the living HEAD of the Church, put doctrine into God's Church TODAY? Through His chosen APOSTLE!

Jesus, in His statement in Matthew 19, referred to a liberal ALLOWANCE by Moses, but said, "because of the hardness of your hearts...but from the beginning it was not so" (Verse 8).

Jesus referred to the "beginning"--as God instructed Adam and Eve. Moses had made a LIBERAL deviation to hardhearted, rebellious people who had no salvation. Jesus proceeded to give His future Apostles God's TRUTH as it was "from the beginning." It's time for us to get back TO THE BEGINNING--to understand God's PURPOSE in making humanity male and female--in establishing the MARRIAGE and FAMILY relationship.

The Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle. It is made up of many pieces. They FIT TOGETHER to make a CLEAR PICTURE of God's revelation of TRUTH to man. Take one piece of a jigsaw puzzle by itself and you have no picture. Put it improperly together with other wrong pieces and you have confusion.

The Bible is like a TREE. A tree has roots, a trunk, major branches, smaller branches and, off of still smaller branches, twigs. These liberals, led by SATAN, took one twig, went to great lengths about that twig to water down God's truth, and came up with "official doctrine." But it was not GOD'S official doctrine. And they had no AUTHORITY over doctrine.

Jesus was talking about how God made it "at the beginning"--before Moses--from the first man and woman.

The earth had been populated by ANGELS who had SINNED. God then proposed to make MAN in HIS OWN IMAGE! God was reproducing Himself. God was starting, through man, the ultimate GOD FAMILY. God Himself shall become a FAMILY. Satan hates the FAMILY structure.

God used Old Testament Israel as a type of that FAMILY. Christ was married to Israel. Israel committed adultery. THAT DID NOT LEAD CHRIST to be free to MARRY ANOTHER NATION. Christ had married a NATION. He never married another. He said, 'Return to me, O Israel. Only confess and repent of your sins.' But Old Testament Israel did not repent or return.

So Christ came to earth in person and died for Israel's sins that they could be forgiven. The CHURCH is ISRAEL having repented and received the Holy Spirit, begotten as SONS OF GOD. "He is a Jew who is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:29). Christ has not yet married the CHURCH--which is spiritual ISRAEL.

The Church is the affianced BRIDE of Christ. All in the Church do stumble and sin to some degree at times. (See I John 1.) But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us. But Christ does not divorce His Church and become the affianced bridegroom of ANOTHER church--such as the great false church. There is no divorce and remarriage. If we, the Bride, sin, we are either cast away if we REFUSE to confess and repent, or, on repentance, we are forgiven.

Now to Matthew 19. Granted, the Greek porneia has more than one meaning. So does the English word, "saw." It may mean "did see," or it may mean an instrument with jagged teeth for cutting through wood. We determine by its use in the sentence IN THE CONTEXT OF THAT SENTENCE, which meaning of the word applies.

So it is in the case in which Jesus used the Greek word porneia. The translators of the King James Bible in 1611 knew that Jesus intended the definition "fornication" as an act prior to marriage.

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

Consider that! If in this case porneia should have been translated "adultery" instead of premarital fornication, then, in English look how absurd would be Jesus' statement. He would have said, whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of adultery, causeth her to commit adultery. In other words, he divorced her for the sin of adultery, and causes her to commit again the same act for which he divorced her. THAT WOULD NOT MAKE SENSE!

Further, same sentence (verse 32): "whosoever shall marry her" (that is put away for adultery) "committeth adultery." He who would marry this particular divorced woman would be committing adultery ONLY BECAUSE SHE IS STILL THE WIFE of the man who divorced her!

To say that Jesus gave ADULTERY as grounds for divorce introduces CONFUSION, and misrepresents what Jesus said to be RIDICULOUS!

The only way that a man marrying a divorced woman commits adultery is if the woman is STILL the bound wife of the man who divorced her. But when Jesus gave the ONLY grounds as premarital FORNICATION, that can mean ONLY that the marriage WAS NOT BINDING--God had never BOUND that marriage in the first place. The woman had committed fornication prior to marriage, had not told the man, and therefore HE WAS DEFRAUDED--the marriage was never binding! WHY? Because GOD KNEW, but the man did not. God NEVER BOUND that marriage. The man was unknowingly defrauded. If she had told him, and he forgave and married her anyway, then the marriage would have been BOUND by GOD. In that case if he divorced her he did not do so legally in God's sight, and he CAUSED HER, by marrying another, to commit adultery.

In both Matthew 5 and Matthew 19, both the translated English words "fornication" and "adultery" are mentioned. In the original Greek the word translated "fornication" was porneia, and a different Greek word was used for adultery, moicheia. If Jesus had meant "adultery" to be the only grounds for divorce and remarriage, he would have used the word moicheia instead of porneia. The very fact He did use the Greek porneia in the same sentence with moicheia shows definitely he did not intend porneia to mean adultery--unfaithfulness after marriage.

In other passages on the subject, such as Mark 10:5-9, we find Mark's version of the same conversation recorded in Matthew 19. There Jesus gave NO grounds for divorce, once bound in marriage--"What therefore God hath joined (bound) together, let not man put asunder."

Here Jesus spoke of a marriage BOUND BY GOD. He gave NO grounds whatsoever for divorce or remarriage. In Matthew 19 He was speaking of a case where God had NOT BOUND.

In Luke 16:18 Jesus gives NO grounds for divorce and remarriage in the case of a marriage bound by God.

It is therefore plain that the passages in Matthew 5 and 19 are speaking of marriage NOT bound by God.

The passage in I Corinthians 7:12-16 is speaking of a converted person whose mate is hostile to the converted person's religion--a special and different circumstance.

The passage in Deuteronomy 24 apparently is speaking of the same case cited by the Pharisees in Matthew 19--where a man divorced his wife "for every cause." But even then the man apparently divorced his wife immediately after the wedding night--not five or ten years later.

In Deuteronomy 22, if a man on the wedding night found the woman NOT A VIRGIN, and his accusation was true, the woman was stoned to death. But this was under Israel's national statutes as a national government. From the beginning, until Israel became a nation with its national statutory laws, there was no stoning to death, nor was there in Jesus' teaching for the Church.

BUT, even in this case the man acted on the discovery of premarital fornication IMMEDIATELY, not months or years afterward.

Jesus did not intend that a man who knew his wife had been guilty of fornication could ACCEPT HER, live with her, and then much later when he became displeased with her, divorce her on what had happened prior to marriage.

Divorce for fornication is not really divorce, but ANNULMENT, and must be acted upon immediately--not after he has accepted her and lived with her.

To sum up. Marriage and the family relationship is the physical type picturing the GOD Family relationship, and the marriage of Spirit-born and immortal former humans to Christ.

In the Bible a marital engagement carries the same status morally as the marriage.

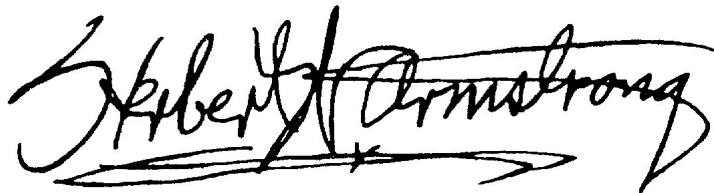
Those of us who have and are led by the Holy Spirit of God are BEGOTTEN children of God. We are already, now, children of God (I John 3:1-2). We are "engaged," not yet married, to Christ. To us sin is spiritual fornication--prior to the marriage. But Christ, the affianced Bridegroom, knows our hearts--He does know of our spiritual fornication. But if we (I John 1) confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

In other words, an innocent human bridegroom may marry a woman not a virgin NOT KNOWING her sin--but God does know. In the spiritual case of which human marriage is the type, Christ the Bridegroom DOES KNOW, and WILL NOT marry unless we confess and repent, and by His shed blood and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are CLEANSED of that sin BEFORE THE MARRIAGE.

But, once married, CHRIST WILL NEVER MARRY ANOTHER CHURCH. He will cleanse us on confession and repentance PRIOR to the divine marriage, but He will NEVER divorce or put us away after that marriage.

Marriage is a spiritual as well as a physical union. That is why Paul, in I Corinthians 7, allows a believer in the Church to divorce an irate nonbeliever who opposes our belief in Christ to the point of hostile confrontation and absence of peace, and marry within the Church. In the marriage to Christ there will be none in the Bride causing hostile confrontation against the TRUTH. That marriage will be PEACE, HARMONY, LOVE. We shall not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. That is why Paul makes the allowance "to the rest" in I Corinthians 7 during this physical life in God's Church.

The Church must be HOLY, as Christ's Bride shall be in the resurrection. Some who are not holy and in PEACE do creep into the HUMAN Church, now. And the Bible makes provision in various cases for putting such out of the Church and AVOIDING them. In the Kingdom of God there will be no hostile dissenters. We must clean them out of the Spirit-begotten HUMAN Church today.



FROM MINISTERIAL SERVICES

Report on Trip to Africa and Mediterranean

Peter Nathan (business manager for East, Central and West Africa) left London on March 23rd bound for Ghana, taking with him a film of a sermon given by Mr. Herbert Armstrong at the 1979 Feast in Tucson, Arizona. The primary reason for the trip was to bring much of the latest news of developments in the Work to the churches in the area.

One problem which faces the ministers in Africa is a lack of effective communications which we in the Western world take for granted. In many areas of Africa phone calls can take up to three days to arrange, and the delivery of parcels from overseas (eg. computer listings and labels) can often take between three and seven months. Mr. Nathan's just being able to talk personally with Mr. Harold Jackson and Mr. Melvin Rhodes was an important accomplishment.

One very important side benefit was that Mr. Nathan was able to take with him and distribute 400 lbs. of good secondhand clothing donated by the British churches. A man's shirt in Ghana can cost an entire week's wages, and a lady's dress up to a month's salary! Not having to buy clothes at these inflated prices enables the brethren there to spend their money on more critical items such as food. (This should meet local needs for a while but is an area we have to be careful in, lest the Church start to draw attention from others as being a good organization to be a part of-- especially if you can get plenty of good clothes. Ministers have to be careful in handling assistance coming in to ensure this doesn't happen.)