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Teaching of the church for 1500 years about - Divorce and Remarriage.

I am just repeating This information, it was not my own study. If you can show me information that what I am sharing about any of these historical men is incorrect, I want to know. Thanks for your comments.

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Complete Agreement Of all the early recognized Church Fathers who ever wrote, all who were written about, concerning every discussion and every debate, in thousands of surviving documents, over hundreds of years, there is not a single dissenting authoritative voice on the essential core doctrines of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Each taught the same doctrine, each held the same opinion and each enforced the same morals standards you read here:

12. Hermes A.D. 90

Hermes was sold into slavery and sent to Rome as a boy. He was later set free by his owner, a woman called Rhoda. He became known as one of the authoritative Fathers of the Church and an influential Christian writer, noted for his detailed description of early Christianity. His surviving book, "The Shepherd", was considered to be an inspired book of the Holy Bible until the fourth century A.D. To quote the translators: "The Shepherd of Hermas is in form, an apocalypse. It consists of a series of revelation made to Hermas by the church, who appears in the form of a woman, by the shepherd, the angel of repentance, and by the great

angel who is in charge of Christians. Each revelation is accompanied by an explanation, and from these it can be seen though the form of the book is apocalyptic and visionary, its object is practical and ethical."

Hermas wrote: *"I charge you," said he, "to guard your chastity, and let no thought enter your heart of another man's wife, or of fornication, or of similar iniquities; for by doing this you commit a great sin. But if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin. For if this thought enter your heart, then you will sin; and if, in like manner, you think other wicked thoughts, you commit sin. For this thought is great sin in a servant of God. But if any one commit this wicked deed, he works death for himself. Attend, therefore, and refrain from this thought; for where purity dwells, there iniquity ought not to enter the heart of a righteous man."* I said to him, "Sir, permit me to ask you a few questions." "Say on," said he. And I said to him, "Sir, if any one has a wife who trusts in the Lord, and if he detect her in adultery, does the man sin if he continue to live with her?" And he said to me, "As long as he remains ignorant of her sin, the husband commits no transgression in living with her. But if the husband know that his wife has gone astray, and if the woman does not repent, but persists in her fornication, and yet the husband continues to live with her, he also is guilty of her crime, and a sharer in her adultery."

And I said to him, "What then, sir, is the husband to do, if his wife continue in her vicious practices?"

And he said, "The husband should put her away, and remain by himself. But if he put his wife away and marry another, he also commits adultery."

And I said to him, "What if the woman put away should repent,

and wish to return to her husband: shall she not be taken back by he husband?"

And he said to me, "Assuredly. If the husband do not take her back, he sins, and brings a great sin upon himself; for he ought to take back the sinner who has repented...In this matter man and woman are to be treated exactly in the same way. -**The Shepherd 4:1-10 (a)**

Hermas taught:

1. If a wife persists in adulterous behavior the “innocent party” may, and should, divorce in order to separate away from the sins of the offender
2. If a husband divorces his wife for such a reason he must remain single and not remarry.
3. If a wife repents of her offence the husband must forgive her and receive her back as wife.
4. If the husband does not forgive his repentant wife he brings a great sin upon himself.
5. Men and woman are to act and be regarded exactly the same in this matter.

13. Justin Martyr A.D. 151

Justin Martyr was one of the great, early theologians and apologists for the Church. He had the distinction of presenting a defining explanation and defense of Christianity to Caesar and the Imperial Roman Senate. His “Apology for the Christians”, written to refute charges of sedition to the Roman state, is a magnificent legal testimony of the power of early Christians to live Holy and pleasing lives in an evil and corrupted society. Justin was beheaded for refusing to sacrifice to pagan Gods.

Justin Martyr wrote: “*In regards to chastity, Jesus has this to say: ‘If anyone look at lust at a woman, he has already before God committed adultery in his heart.’ And, ‘Whoever marries a woman who has been divorced from another husband, commits adultery.’*”

“*According to our teacher, just as they are sinners who contract a second marriage, even though it is in accord with human law, so also are they sinners who look with lustful desires at a woman. He repudiates not only one who actually commits adultery, but even one who wishes to do so; for not only our actions are manifest to God, but even our thoughts.*” (**First Apology 15) (a)**

Justin Martyr taught:

1. To indulge in lust is to be guilty of adultery of the heart.
2. Whoever marries a divorced person commits adultery.
3. Whoever contracts a second marriage is sinning against God. (while a former spouse lives)
4. God does not, and the Church must not, take into account human law when it is in violation of God’s law.
5. God judges motives and intentions, private thought life and actions. All is known and exposed to the God with which we have to do.

14. Clement of Alexandria A.D.208

Titus Flavius Clemens, known as Clement of Alexandria, was a Greek theologian who served as head of the famous Catechetical School in Alexandria. His writings were designed to guide mature Christians to a more perfect knowledge of God and a pure moral character. His defense

of the faith exhorted morals, kindness and patience. He taught that the thoughts and will of God in the Scriptures exhorts, educates and perfects the true Christian. Many scholars believe he founded the great Alexandrian School of Theology. He is listed as a martyr for his faith.

Clement of Alexandria wrote:

That scripture counsels marriage, however, and never allows any release from the union, is expressly contained in the law: "You shall not divorce a wife, except for reason of adultery." And it regards as adultery the marriage of a spouse, while the one from whom a separation was made is still alive. "Whoever takes a divorced woman as wife commits adultery," it says; for "if anyone divorce his wife, he debauches her;" that is, he compels her to commit adultery. And not only does he that divorces her become the cause of this, but also he that takes the woman and gives her the opportunity of sinning; for if he did not take her, she would return to her husband. **(Miscellanies 2:23:145:3) (a)**

Clement of Alexandria taught:

- 1. The Scriptures encourage Christians to enter a marriage relationship.**
- 2. The marriage union covenant is permanent and does not allow anyone to be released from the union.**
- 3. The only legitimate reason for divorce is adultery, otherwise separation is prohibited. A remarriage while a former spouse lives is living in the state of adultery, therefore expressly forbidden in Scripture.**
- 4. A man who divorces his wife violates and corrupts her, for if she remarries, for any reason except for the death of her**

husband, she becomes an adulteress. 5. The one who marries a divorced spouse sins not only by committing adultery with another's spouse but also sins against God by acting as an impediment to reconciliation of the original marriage.
6. If the divorced spouse had remained single she would have, if possible returned the first union.

15. Origen A.D. 248

Origen is known as the most accomplished and significant theologian of the early Church. As a student and exegete of the Old and New Testaments, he influenced the critical thinking of the Church in his day to such an extent that his works still have major impact on doctrine and practice. He was the first teacher known to use the “allegorical” method of Scriptural interpretation. It is estimated that he wrote some 5,000 thesis, tracts, epistles and books in his lifetime of service. Much of his work concentrated on refuting dangerous error and heresy. Origen was imprisoned during the reign of Emperor Decius. He was tortured to such an extent that he died from his ordeal after being released.

Origen wrote: *For confessedly he who puts away his wife when she is not a fornicator, makes her an adulteress, so far as it lies with him, for if, "when the husband is living she shall be called an adulteress if she be joined to another man;" and when by putting her away, he gives to her the excuse of a second marriage, very plainly in this way he makes her an adulteress... Just as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seems to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry who has been divorced does not marry*

her, but, according to the declaration of our Savior, he commits adultery with her. (Commentaries on Matthew 14) (a)

Origen taught:

1. A man that divorces his wife who is not guilty of fornication causes her to become an adulteress if she remarries, and the man that marries her is an adulterer.
2. The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is permanent, as long as both husband and wife are alive.
3. No matter what the legal circumstances may appear to be to the contrary, a remarriage relationship when either or both parties are divorced, while a former partner lives, is adultery.
4. The intimate relations between the man and the woman remarried while former spouses still live are adulterous, and considered sin.
5. A remarriage is not an actual marriage whatsoever, but disguised adultery.

16. Basil the Great A.D. 375

Basil was born in Caesarea and educated in Athens. He is considered one of the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church. His writings include “On the Holy Spirit” and “Moralia.” He was asked by the Church to help defend against the Arian heretical doctrines and subsequently became Bishop of Caesarea in 370.

Basil became Basil the Great because of his outstanding personal integrity and holiness as well as his brilliance as a theologian and defender of the faith.

Basil the Great wrote: *The man who has deserted his wife and goes to another is himself an adulterer because he makes her commit adultery; and the woman who live with him is an adulteress, because she has caused another woman's husband to come over to her... The woman who lives with an adulterer is an adulteress the whole time.*

The woman who has been abandoned by her husband, ought, in my judgment, to remain as she is. The Lord said, "If any one leave his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, he causes her to commit adultery;" thus, by calling her adulteress, He excludes her from intercourse with another man. For how can the man being guilty, as having caused adultery, and the woman, go without blame, when she is called an adulteress by the Lord for having intercourse with another man? A man who marries another man's wife who has been taken away from him will be charged with adultery... - Amphilochius 199 (a)

Basil Taught:

- 1. A man that deserts his wife and she remarries another makes his wife commit adultery.**
- 2. The woman who a divorced man marries is guilty of adultery.**
- 3. The second woman is guilty of taking another woman's husband.**
- 4. An adulterous relationship is continuous adultery, not a onetime sin.**
- 5. An abandoned wife is to remain as she is and not remarry.**
- 6. an abandoned woman that takes another man and has sexual intercourse with him is committing adultery.**
- 7. If a man is guilty of adultery, so is a woman.**
- 8. It is a serious offence for a woman to take another**

woman's husband and will be charged with adultery.

9. It is a serious offence for a man to take another man's wife and will be charged with adultery.

17. Ambrose of Milan A.D. 387

Ambrose is known as one of the four original Doctors of the Church. Born in Germany and educated in Rome, he was asked to be Bishop of Milan because of his extraordinary kindness and wisdom, earning him the love and esteem of his people. History records that he publicly confronted rebuked and led to repentance Caesar Theodosius over the slaughtering of thousands of Thessalonians.

He wrote major treatises on Christian morality and personal Holiness, warning against adopting the world's standards. He was by all accounts a most extraordinary man, equal to his times. He was influential in bringing Augustine into a saving personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and receiving him into the Body of Christ.

Ambrose of Milan wrote: *But what shall I say about chastity, when only one and no second union is allowed? As regards marriage, the law is, not to marry again, nor to seek union with another wife. It seems strange to many why impediment should be caused by a second marriage entered on before baptism, so as to prevent election to the clerical office, and to the reception of the gift of ordination; seeing that even crimes are not wont to stand in the way, if they have been put away in the sacrament of baptism. But we must learn, that in baptism sin can be forgiven, but law cannot be abolished. In the case of marriage there is no sin, but there is a law. Whatever sin there is can be put away,*

whatever law there is cannot be laid aside in marriage. - On the duties of Clergy:1:257 (a) *And what else did John have in mind but what is virtuous, so that he could not endure a wicked union even in the king's case, saying: "It is not lawful for thee to have her to wife."* 118 He could have been silent, had he not thought it unseemly for himself not to speak the truth for fear of death, or to make the prophetic office yield to the king, or to indulge in flattery. He knew well that he would die as he was against the king, but he preferred virtue to safety. Yet what is more expedient than the suffering which brought glory to the saint. - On the duties of Clergy, 3:89 (a) *No one is permitted to know a woman other than his wife. The marital right is given you for this reason: lest you fall in a snare and sin with a strange woman. "If you are bound to a wife do not seek a divorce," for you are not permitted, while your wife lives to marry another.*" - Abraham 1:57:59 (a) *You dismiss your wife, therefore, as if by right and without being charged with wrongdoing; and you suppose it is proper for you to do so because no human law forbids it; but divine law forbids it. Anyone who obeys men should stand in awe of God. Hear the Word of the Lord, which even they who propose our laws must obey: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."* - Commentary on Luke, Sec. 8:5 (a)

Ambrose of Milan taught:

1. **Sex is a marital right that is limited to one's own husband or wife. Legitimate sexual relations with one's spouse protects from sexual sin.**
2. **Extramarital sex is sin and a snare that will catch and kill.**
3. **It is forbidden by God for a spouse to divorce and to**

remarry another.

4. Ambrose interprets Paul's writings in Corinthians to mean that it is forbidden for a man or woman to remarry another while a former or earlier spouse lives.
5. It is a wrong understanding to believe that it is simply one's right to divorce a spouse. Even though human law may permit such a thing, God strictly forbids it.
6. Anyone who follows human customs and laws regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, instead of Divine laws should stand in fearful awe of God.
7. All lawmakers, in and out of the Church are warned, to their peril, to hear and obey the Word of the Lord.
8. Jesus' command is reaffirmed: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."
9. Conversion to Christianity forgives past sin but does not nullify or set aside God's laws.

18. Jerome A.D. 396

Jerome was another great Father and Doctor of the early Church whose most important work was the translation of the Bible into Latin (The Vulgate). He wrote works defending the Church from Jovinian, Vigilantius and Pelagianism heretics that were threatening the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jerome wrote: *In explaining the testimony of the apostle, "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise, also, the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife," we have subjoined the following: "The entire question relates to those who are living in wedlock, whether it is lawful*

for them to put away their wives, a thing which the Lord also has forbidden in the Gospel. Following the decision of the Lord the apostle teaches that a wife must not be put away saving for fornication, and that, if she has been put away, she cannot during the lifetime of her husband marry another man, or, at any rate, that she ought, if possible, to be reconciled to her husband. In another verse he speaks to the same effect: 'The wife is bound ...as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband; she is at liberty to be married to, whom she will; only in the Lord. I find joined to your letter of inquiries a short paper containing the following words: "ask him, (that is me,) whether a woman who has left her husband on the ground that he is an adulterer and sodomite and has found herself compelled to take another may in the lifetime of him whom she first left be in communion with the church without doing penance for her fault." As I read the case put I recall the verse "they make excuses for their sins." We are all indulgent to our own faults; and what our own will leads us to do we attribute to a necessity of nature. It is as though a young man were to say, "I am over-borne by my body, the glow of nature kindles my passions, the structure of my frame and its reproductive organs call for sexual intercourse." Or again a murderer might say, "I was in want, I stood in need of food, I had nothing to cover me. If i shed the blood of another, it was to save myself from dying of cold and hunger." Tell the sister, therefore, who thus enquires of me concerning her condition, not my sentence but that of the apostle. "Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is

loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress." And in another place: "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." The apostle has thus cut away every plea and has clearly declared that, if a woman marries again while her husband is living, she is an adulteress. You must not speak to me of the violence of a ravisher, a mother's pleading, a father's bidding, the influence of relatives, the insolence and the intrigues of servants, household losses. A husband may be an adulterer or a sodomite, he may be stained with every crime and may have been left by his wife because of his sins; yet he is still her husband and, so long as he lives, she may not marry another. The apostle does not promulgate this decree on his own authority but on that of Christ who speaks in him. For he has followed the words of Christ in the gospel: "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." Mark what he says: "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Whether she has put away her husband or her husband her, the man who marries her is still an adulterer. I have not been able quite to determine what it is that she means by the words "has found herself compelled" to marry again. What is this compulsion of which she speaks? Was she overborne by a crowd and ravished against her will? If so, why has she not, thus victimized, subsequently put away her ravisher? Let her read the books of Moses and she will find that if violence is offered to a betrothed virgin in a city and she does not cry out, she is punished as an adulteress: but if she is forced in the field, she is innocent of sin

and her ravisher alone is amenable to the laws. Therefore if your sister, who, as she says, has been forced into a second union, wishes to receive the body of Christ and not to be accounted an adulteress, let her do penance; so far at least as from the time she begins to repent to have no farther intercourse with that second husband who ought to be called not a husband but an adulterer. If this seems hard to her and if she cannot leave one whom she has once loved and will not prefer the Lord to sensual pleasure, let her hear the declaration of the apostle: "ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils," and in another place: "what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" -Letters 55, 58 (a)

Jerome taught:

- 1. The Lord has forbidden divorce and remarriage in the gospel.**
- 2. Christians must stop making excuses for and trying to find justification for divorce and remarriage. None of it stands before God, and must not be considered at all when applying the Word of God in the Church or to our individual lives.**
- 3. A marriage is for life, and no matter what a spouse turns out to be, or how they may act, or the sins they commit, the covenant remains fully in effect. God does not divide the one flesh relationship.**
- 4. A spouse that is separated or divorced for any reason, no matter how provoked, or how circumstances came to be as they are, is still bound to the marriage covenant, and cannot be remarried to another, as long as both live.**

19. Augustine A.D. 419

Augustine is widely regarded to be the single greatest Church leader and theologian between the time of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and the reformation period, and perhaps beyond. His personal testimony of seeking and finding God after an early life of sin is as fresh and new today, and as transparently Spirit filled as it was then. His place in the Church, among his peers, can be compared to what Paul's was among the Apostles. He rigorously and effectively defended the faith from enemies on all sides. His writings are credited with influencing to an enormous extent the thinking of the great leaders of the reformation.

Augustine wrote: *This we now say, that, according to this condition of being born and dying, which we know, and in which we have been created, the marriage of male and female is some good, the compact whereof divine Scripture so commends, as that neither is it allowed one put away by her husband to marry, so long as her husband lives; nor is it allowed one put away by his wife to marry another, unless she who have separated from him be dead. Our Lord, therefore, in order to confirm that principle, that a wife should not lightly be put away, made the single exception of fornication; but enjoins that all other annoyances, if any such should happen to spring up, be borne with fortitude for the sake of conjugal fidelity and for the sake of chastity; and he also calls that man an adulterer who should marry her that has been divorced by her husband. And the Apostle Paul shows the limit of this state of affairs, for he says it is to be observed as long as her husband liveth; but on the husband's death he gives permission to marry. For he himself*

also held by this rule, and therein brings forward not his own advice, as in the case of some of his admonitions, but a command by the Lord when he says: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." I believe that, according to a similar rule, if he shall put her away, he is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to his wife. -Commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels (a) *For whosoever putteth away his wife except for the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery. To such a degree is that marriage compact entered upon be a holy Sacrament, that it is not made void even by separation itself, since so long as her husband lives, even by whom she hath been left, she commits adultery in the case where she marries another, and he who hath left her is the cause of this evil. But I marvel, if, if it be allowed to put away a wife who is an adulteress, so it be allowed, having put her away, to marry another. For holy Scripture makes a hard knot in this matter in that the apostle says, that, by commandment of the Lord, the wife ought not to depart from her husband, but, in case she shall have departed to remain unmarried, or to be reconciled to her husband...I can not see how the man can have permission to marry another, in the case where he left an adulteress, when a woman can not be married to another when she left an adulterer. Seeing that the compact of marriage is not done away with by an intervening divorce, so that they continue as wedded persons one to another, even after separation, and commit adultery with those with whom they be joined, even after their own divorce, either the woman with the man, or the man with a woman. Neither can it rightly be held*

that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives because of fornication, marry others... No one is so unreasonable to say that a man who marries a woman whose husband has dismissed her because of fornication is not an adulterer, while maintaining that a man who marries a woman dismissed without the ground of fornication is an adulterer. Both of these men are guilty of adultery. -Adulterous Marriages 1:9:9

(a) A spouse, therefore, is lawfully dismissed for cause of adultery, but the laws of chastity remains. That is why a man is guilty of adultery if he marries a woman who has been dismissed even for this very reason of adultery. -ibid., 2:4:4 *(a) A woman begins to be the wife of no later husband unless she has ceased to be the wife of a former one. She will cease to be the wife of a former one, however, if that husband should die, not if he commit adultery.* -ibid, 2:4:3 *(a) Therefore to serve two or more (men), so to pass over from a living husband into marriage with another, was neither lawful then (in the Old Testament), nor is it lawful now, nor will it ever be lawful. To apostatize from the One God, and to go into adulteress superstitions of another, is ever an evil.* -On the Holy Spirit; Doctrinal Treatises; Moral Treatises. (a)

Augustine taught:

- 1. It cannot be rightly held by those wishing to believe so that anyone who divorces their spouse for adultery and then marries another is in the will of God and avoids the sin of adultery.**
- 2. It is adultery to marry another if someone is divorced and then chooses a new husband or wife.**

3. Whether or not a spouse commits adultery or fornication does not matter insofar as remarriage is concerned. Whoever remarries while a divorced spouse lives is in the state and sin of adultery.

4. When a spouse remarries according to the law of the land, after a divorce, they are still married to the former spouse as long as that spouse lives. Therefore the sexual and intimate relationship they have with a new spouse is simply engaging in a forbidden relationship by sinning with a person they are not married to in the eyes of God and the Church. Chastity refers to sexual abstinence. To have sexual relations with a remarried spouse is to be living in sin, in direct disobedience to God's Word.

5. A spouse can if they must, divorce their husband or wife who is guilty of adultery, but must not have a relationship with another as long as the original partner lives, for they are still in a binding life long covenant with them.

6. It is forbidden for a man or woman, even if they themselves were never previously married, to marry or have sexual relations with a divorced person whose spouse is still alive. They would be guilty of having sexual relations with another person's spouse, which is the very definition of the sin of adultery.

7. It never has been lawful, it is not now lawful, and it never will be lawful to divorce and remarry. To say and do otherwise is to adopt the adulterous superstitions of a different God than the one to which we have to do.

20. Summary of Early Church Doctrine on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage 90 A.D. – 419 A.D.

- 1. If a spouse persists in adulterous behavior and there is no other alternative, the marriage relationship can be terminated by the innocent party. (Hermes, Clement, Jerome, Augustine)**
- 2. Spouses that are divorced for any reason must remain celibate and single as long as both spouses live. Remarriage is expressly prohibited. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)**
- 3. To indulge in lust with the mind is to be guilty of adultery of the heart. (Justin Martyr)**
- 4. Whoever marries a divorced person commits adultery. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)**
- 5. Whoever contracts a second marriage, whether a Christian or not, while a former spouse lives is sinning against God. (Justin Martyr, Ambrose)**
- 6. God does not, and the Church must not, take into account human law when it is in violation of God's law. (Justin Martyr, Origen, Ambrose)**
- 7. God judges motives and intentions, private thought life and actions. (Justin Martyr)**
- 8. The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is permanent, as long as both husband and wife are alive. (Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)**
- 9. It is a serious offence against God to take another person's spouse. (Basil)**
- 10. The Church must charge all persons who are in possession of another living person's former husband or wife with adultery. (Basil)**
- 11. Sexual relations are a marital right that is limited to one's own husband or wife. (Hermes, Justin Martyr,**

Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)

12. Sexual relations with one's legitimate spouse protects from sexual sin. (Ambrose)

13. Marriage and sexual relations with a remarried spouse while a former spouse lives is the sin of adultery. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)

14. It is a serious mistake to believe that it is simply one's right to divorce a spouse and take another. Even though human law may permit such a thing, God strictly forbids it, and cannot, and will not honor it. (Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)

15. Anyone who follows human customs and laws regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, instead of God's Divine instructions should stand in fearful awe of God Himself. (Clement, Ambrose)

16. All lawmakers, in and out of the Church are warned, to their peril, to hear and obey the Word of the Lord in regard to His commands on marriage and divorce. (Ambrose)

17. Christians are to stop making excuses and trying to find justification for divorce and remarriage. There are no valid reasons acceptable to God. (Jerome, Augustine)

18. A marriage is for life. No matter what a spouse turns out to be, or how they may act, what they do or don't do, or the sins they commit, the covenant remains fully in effect. A remarriage while a former spouse lives is not marriage at all, but sinful adultery. God does not divide the one flesh relationship except by physical death. (Hermes, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)

19. Marriage is a lifelong covenant that will never be invalidated by God while both parties live. (Hermes, Justin

Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine)

20. It never has been lawful, it is not now lawful, and it never will be lawful to divorce and remarry. To say and do otherwise is to worship and adopt the adulterous superstitions of a different God than the one to which we have to do. **(Augustine)**

CHURCH HISTORY ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

350

Augustine believed and taught that marriage was indissolvable until death and this was the earthly picture given of the heavenly reality of Christ's relationship to the church, therefore no remarriage was allowed if one did suffer a divorce.

1250

Thomas Aquinas taught that the mystery of marriage was one of seven sacraments, a means by which God transmitted grace into a believer's life. Luther and Erasmus both reacted to this teaching because of Luther's strong understanding of justification by faith. They wanted to rid the church of the sacramental system. In so doing, they over-reacted to changing the existing marriage laws and teachings.

1516

Erasmus publishes the first Greek New Testament.

1519

Erasmus writes a new interpretation on marriage, divorce and remarriage in his Annotations on I Corinthians 7. It was a theological, homiletical interpretation, not exegetical (inviting human reasoning instead of letting the text speak for itself)! It contained humanistic overtones (putting man's need for happiness in front of obedience to God). Erasmus taught that love should come before any law on marriage and held that it was not loving of the church to insist that couples be made to continue in unhappy relationships. The church should deliver those who suffer in bad marriages.

The two new revolutionary propositions were:

- 1. It should be permissible to dissolve certain marriages.**
- 2. The 'innocent party' should be allowed to remarry.**

These two views were considered heretical by the theologians of the day.

1532

King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife Catherine and marry Ann Boleyn. He popularized Erasmus's new views on divorce and remarriage and eventually broke away from the Catholic Church due to his desire to divorce and remarry. He started the Church of England, now known as the Episcopal Church.

1550

Council of Trent. Catholic Church meets to renounce the exegetical results of Erasmus's studies and of the reformers as well. The Catholic Church held to two types of divorce:

- 1. Separation of bed and board (still one flesh till death).**
- 2. Annulment - insisting that the marriage had been unlawfully contracted to begin with.**

1648

Westminister Confession: official Protestant Reformation statement of new doctrines.

The Protestant Reformers latched onto Erasmus's interpretation of the marriage and divorce tests. Luther added the thinking that since in the Old Testament adulterers were stoned, he reasoned that the modern adulterer could be considered as "dead" which would free the other party to remarry.

From this point on, we have our modern-day teaching that adultery (and now "desertion" and even "irreconcilable differences") can break one-flesh and all parties are free to remarry. This teaching has destroyed the family as God designed and planned it to be. For 1650 years, there was no remarriage, now look at the state of marriage in modern times after only 350 years of a false teaching! The church is responsible for this lie in the earth. May God remove the blindness and bring a deep repentance.

SUMMARY:

350 Augustine

An early church father, taught that marriage was indissolvable till death, therefore remarriage, in the event of a divorce, was out of the question.

For the first 500 years, this was the early church position and essentially was an undisputed teaching.

1250 Thomas Aquinas

Incorporated marriage as one of the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church. Catholics believe that sacraments are a means by which God transmits His grace into a believer's life.

Protestants believe that God transmits His grace to us primarily through faith, therefore during the Reformation, Luther and Erasmus reacted to marriage as a sacrament as they taught justification by faith, not by sacraments.

However, in their zeal to dismantle the sacramental system, Luther and Erasmus went too far in dismantling what had been essentially taught in the church for 1500 years: that marriage was for life and remarriage, apart from the death of a spouse, was considered as adultery.

1516 Erasmus publishes first Greek New Testament

Raised in the monasteries and the universities, he was an early friend of the Reformation and of Martin Luther, whom later was denounced as a heretic because he mixed humanistic philosophies in his New Testament teachings. He was respected because he published the first Greek New Testament which the Reformers all used in their study of scripture. Because they respected his ability to translate Greek, they bought into some of his expositions on scripture as well, one of which was his new teaching on marriage and divorce.

1519 Erasmus introduces teachings on divorce and remarriage

Three years later, Erasmus introduces his understanding of the divorce and remarriage texts in his writings called, "Annotation on I Corinthians 7". He taught that love should come before any law on marriage and that it was not loving for the church to insist that people stay in bad marriages. In fact, he believed it was the Church's responsibility to deliver people from unhappy marriages.

He promoted two revolutionary propositions:

- 1. Certain marriages should be given permission to be dissolved.**
- 2. Those involved should be able to remarry.**

Both of these ideas were considered heretical to the theologians of that day.

1500's Luther's teachings.

Luther introduced the idea that since O.T. adulterers were stoned, then adulterers under the NT were to be considered as good as dead. All the reformers were influenced by Erasmus (The Father of Humanism). They respected him for his work on the Greek text and in coming against the Catholic Church.

1532 King Henry VII

Supported and popularized Erasmus's teaching because he wanted to divorce his wife Catherine and marry Ann Bolyn.

1550 Council of Trent

Catholic church officially rejects the reformers new views on marriage and divorce.

1648 Westminister Confession

Protestant church officially adopts new teaching that adultery and desertion dissolves one flesh (not death) and that the innocent parties can remarry.

CONCLUSION:

1650 years of no remarriage.

Last 350 years, new teaching as a result of Erasmus and Luther. Now 60% of marriages end in divorce and second and third marriages are common in society. The breakdown of the family is greater than ever and the shocking truth is this: the evangelical church of the reformation that made an interpretation mistake and is responsible for the erroneous teaching we now have in the church on marriage and divorce. Marriage and family has become a disaster in modern-day society. The world no longer has any standard to measure it's behavior by. We are truly salt that has lost its flavor.....God must and will judge this!

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The Clear New Testament Passages On Divorce And Remarriage

Daniel R. Jennings, M.A.

Everywhere we turn it seems that marriages are falling apart. There was a time when those in the church were the least likely to divorce but today, with the law allowing one spouse to divorce the other for no reason at all, both Christian and non-Christian alike have become susceptible to the heartbreak of divorce. With the increase in the American divorce rate has also come an increase in the remarriage rate. Does it matter if one remarries after a divorce? Most will tell you that it doesn't and even encourage people who have experienced a failed marriage to seek another one in order to fill the void that came with the first break-up. With so many people choosing to remarry and so many encouraging remarriage it could not hurt at all to see what the New Testament says about this subject.

There are many passages in the New Testament which discuss divorce and remarriage and these fall into either one of two categories—Clear-cut, straight to the point passages and unclear, ambiguous passages. Strangely, when individuals are seeking to discover what the Bible teaches about remarriage after a divorce, the clear passages are usually ignored in favor of discussions upon the unclear passages in an attempt to see if they allow remarriage after divorce or not and if so under what conditions. This heavy emphasis upon the unclear passages as opposed to the clear teachings of the New Testament should lead us to ask two fundamental questions—1.) What is the purpose of the clear passages? and 2.) Is it safe to base a moral decision upon an unclear passage when you have a clear passage which tells you the heart of God on a particular issue?

We will now look at the clear New Testament passages on divorce and remarriage.

In the Gospel of Mark we read that:

And he said unto them, ‘Whoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, commits adultery against her.’ Mk 10:11 According to Jesus’ teaching in Mark, if a man divorces his wife and enters into a

marriage with another woman he commits the sin of adultery against his first wife.

And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she commits adultery. Mk 10:12

He continues by indicating that if a woman divorces her husband and enters into a marriage with another man she also commits the sin of adultery against her first husband.

In the Gospel of Luke we read that:

Whoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery... Lk 16:18a

According to Jesus’ teachings in Luke if a man divorces his wife and marries another he commits the sin of adultery against his first wife.

...and whoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery.

Lk 16:18b

Jesus continues his teaching upon divorce and remarriage by reminding his listeners that if a man decides to marry a woman who has been divorced by her husband then he commits the sin of adultery by doing so.

Reading these passages we are faced with an interesting question. Jesus says that in each of these instances if a person enters into one of the above unions that he or she “commits adultery”. The question is do they “commit” adultery once (at the time when they first enter into the new marriage) or do they “commit” adultery continuously so long as they are in the new marriage? Looking at the Greek in these passages gives us the answer to this question. In each of these passages the Greek verb for “commits adultery” is in the present

tense. The present tense in Greek generally indicates that something happens continuously in an on-going manner. When a Greek verb is written in the present tense it implies that it has continued from the moment that it began up until the present and is still continuing. This understanding of how the Greek present tense normally operates is well attested to by Greek scholars:

"The present tense refers to what is usually described as continuous action, sometimes called linear or ongoing action. It is action that began at some point in the undefined past and has not ended. It is "present" in the sense that it continues into the present. The picture that the present tense provides is of something occurring now. It designates action that is right now continuing as it began." (Joseph Webb, Robert Kysar, *Greek For Preachers*, Chalice Press: 2002, p.46)

"The present tense is basically linear or durative, ongoing in its kind of action. The durative notion may be expressed graphically by an unbroken line (—), since the action is simply continuous." (James Hewitt, *New Testament Greek*, Hendrickson Publishers: 1986, p.13)

"The present tense always has imperfective aspect and is interpreted as describing either a continuous-progressive action or state, or a repetitive-habitual one..." (David Holton, Peter Mackridge, Irene Philippaki-Warburton, *Greek*, Routledge: 1997, p.223)

"The Greek Present corresponds more closely in meaning to the English Present Continuous than to the Present Simple." (John William Wenham, Henry Preston Vaughan Nunn, *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, Cambridge Univ. Press: 1991, p.27)

"The Present Tense Stem expresses continuous (or durative) action..." (John Thompson, *A Greek Grammar: Accidence and Syntax For Schools and Colleges*, John Murray: 1902, p.314)

"The present tense is used of present time and has a continuous type of action in view." (J. Lyle Story, Cullen I. K. Story, Peter Allen Miller, *Greek To Me*, Xulon Press: 2002, p.14)

"The present expresses repetition, habit, continuance; the aorist, a single irrevocable act of surrender." (William Webster, *The Syntax And Synonyms Of The Greek Testament*, Gilbert and Rivington: 1864, p.89)

"The Present marks continuity; the Aorist, a single act; the Future (very rare in the New Testament), intention or futurity; and the Perfect, a completed act." (Samuel Gosnell Green, *Handbook To The Grammar Of The Greek Testament: Together With A Complete Vocabulary*, Fleming H. Revell: 1886, p.324) "The present tense usually denotes continuous kind of action. It shows 'action in progress'

or 'a state of persistence.' When used in the indicative mood, the present tense denotes action taking place or going on in the present time. (*Greek Verbs (Shorter Definitions*, www.ntgreek.org)

1

The implication of Jesus' words, as attested to by the above Greek scholars, is that if two individuals enter into a marriage as described above they continuously commit adultery every time that they have intercourse.

Looking at the Greek tense in another part of Luke's passage above points out something else very interesting. When Luke wrote of the individual who "marries another" after putting away his first wife and of the man who "marries her" that has been put away he also uses the Greek verb for "to marry" in the present tense. In other words Luke is really saying that:

"Whoever puts away his wife, and enters into a continuous and ongoing state of marriage with another, commits adultery continuously: and whoever enters into a continuous and ongoing state of marriage with her that is put away from her husband commits adultery continuously."

We note above that the action of committing adultery is directly linked to the action of continuing in the new married state. In other words, so long as one continues to be married to the new partner they continue to commit adultery in an ongoing and continuous manner.

There are those who have tried to maintain that the adultery is not continuous for those who enter into the above unions but the Greek will not allow this position. To my knowledge this new teaching of denying a continual state of adultery is a 20th

century

invention that was created in response to the large number of divorces and remarriages. In all of my studies upon this subject all commentators upon this subject before the 20th

century

maintained that those who entered into unscriptural remarriages that the Bible said were adulterous were in a state of continuous and perpetual adultery.

1

http://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm#INDICATIVE Jesus' words above are not the only clear passages of the New Testament upon the issue of divorce and remarriage. The Apostle Paul also discusses this issue in his first letter to the Corinthians.

In 1Corinthians we read that:

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, 'Let not the wife depart from her husband (but if she does depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband)...' 1Co 7:10-11a

Paul here instructs the Corinthian Christians that a wife is not to leave or divorce her husband but if this does happen then she is to either remain single for the rest of her life or be reconciled back to her husband.

...and let not the husband put away his wife. 1Co 7:11b

Paul continues by instructing his male readers that they have been commanded by Jesus to not divorce their wives.

Further on this chapter Paul instructs that:

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. 1Co 7:39

Paul concludes his instructions to the Corinthian Christians by telling them that a wife is "bound" to her first husband until he dies and that it is only after his death that a woman is free to get married for a second time.

So, to sum up the clear New Testament teachings on divorce and remarriage we see that:

- 1.) Men are commanded not to divorce their wives (1Co 7:11b)
- 2.) Women are commanded not to divorce their husbands (1Co 7:10)

- 3.) A man who divorces his wife and marries another becomes an adulterer (Mk 10:11, Lk 16:18a)
- 4.) The man who marries a woman who has been divorced becomes an adulterer (Lk 16:18b)
- 5.) The woman who divorces her husband and marries another man becomes an adulterer (Mk 10:12)
- 6.) A woman who divorces her husband is commanded to either remain single for the rest of her life or be reconciled to her husband (1Co 7:10-11a) 7.) Only the death of the husband gives a woman the right to enter into a second marriage (1Co 7:39)

These are the clear teachings of the New Testament upon the issue of divorce and remarriage. They are very plain and extremely direct. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article there are a few other passages that are unclear yet receive the most attention and are oftentimes given the most priority by persons who are making a decision as to whether to remarry after experiencing a divorce. It was not the purpose of this paper to discuss the unclear passages it was merely to ask two fundamental questions:

- 1.) What is the purpose of the clear passages? In other words, were they put there for a reason? Does God expect us to ignore His clear teachings to us regarding divorce and remarriage in favor of unclear passages? Why did God put these passages here in such a clear-cut and direct way if He intended to reverse them in other passages?
- 2.) Is it safe to base a moral decision upon an unclear passage when you have a clear passage which tells you the heart of God on a particular issue? In other words, is it wise to make a decision that could determine where one will spend all of eternity based upon an unclear verse when one has a clear verse telling us how God wants us to behave in a particular situation?

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