

An Interim Report on
The Permanence of Marriage Movement

By Stephen Wilcox

Hosea and Gomer



The 8th century before Christ came was a dark and foreboding time for the people of Israel, with their nation on the verge of total collapse, the direct result of their apostasy from serving the living God. Turning from God is never just a change of religious opinion. It never comes alone, but is wrapped in murder, deceit, stealing, adultery, and finally, once judgment comes, death and destruction. At the right time God produced an exquisite, divine, romantic play that captured the essence of the spiritual condition of God's chosen people. The story would capture the attention of Israel, and the church of Jesus Christ, ever since. The man of God, Hosea, the prophet of Israel was repeatedly humiliated, and publicly betrayed, by Gomer, his wife. Three times in a row she became pregnant from other men, bearing children that Hosea took as his own. In the end, however, she was gone.

After that, the consequences of her adulteries resulted in every degradation imaginable for Gomer. Selling herself as a prostitute was just a point on the way to the very bottom. As the wages of sin accumulated, Gomer was no longer able to catch the former lovers she chased, or to find her own path. At one point she knew she would be better off returning home, but wasn't able to follow through on her own. Just like Israel, soon to be exiled from its own land, Gomer twisted in agony, until she inevitably hit bottom. Being of no greater worth to anyone, she was finally hauled away in humiliation in chains, to be sold on the public auction block as a slave. That is where Hosea found her, and redeemed her, and brought her home, and loved her, as God would Israel, but that's another story for another time.

Nothing New Under the Sun

In the late 1990s my wife and I were driving home from Sunday evening church, when she told me that she was no longer committed to our 26 year marriage. The sound of her voice was that of a stranger, uttering words that depicted the sum of all my fears. She had been my wife and I her husband for most of our lives, for we were little more than kids when we fell in love and married. My heart broke, and my spirit was crushed within me by such painful force that it remains today beyond my ability to describe. The years still

do not dim the private memory of the agony. I only share enough of it here to put the subsequent events that accompanied it into proper context.

Around midnight, I pulled myself together enough to analyze the problem, deciding to do whatever it took to fix it. (Sound familiar?) I made a list of 40 items, listed by priority, of changes and improvements I could make and acts of love I could do to make my wife happier and, I hoped, stay home. The tough part was when I got stuck trying to define the objective of the plan. What was the main point, the reason? Finally I stopped and put the pen down, knowing it didn't matter and was pointless. Nothing could ever bargain for, earn or buy me her love. It was like being a worm on a fish hook, wiggling, and writhing, in utter agony. My house was left to me desolate.

The total devastation drove me onto my face before God, and He met me right there. There was a certain sense of destiny that made it seem like I was keeping an appointment that had been made long before. It was one of those special times when only those who know about it can relate to what it means. There are doors. Jesus spoke of one that opens into our hearts, and another that opens into His. He knocks at ours, and we can knock on His. It is more than just a metaphor, for He is Immanuel, God with us. I don't which door opened, or who was pounding the hardest, but the door opened wide.

As long as I live I can never thank Him enough for what He did for me that night. To others, it would perhaps not have been necessary, or spectacular. God knew there was a long, tough road ahead for me, and since I was required to walk it the whole way with Him, there needed to be a good start. Without any doubt, until my dying breath, these two things I know: Jesus is the Living God, and marriage is lifelong. The rest comes from walking in faith, not by sight. The living God of the Bible insists that He has the desire to not only save, but also to walk with, talk to and reason with all those who knock on His door, who seek Him with all their heart, all their soul, and with all their mind.

It's About His Betrothed

God enabled me to understand what was at stake in keeping my marriage covenant, because it really wasn't about my bride, but about His bride, the church. It wasn't all about my relationship with my wife being restored, but about His relationship with His. That means that I was to first love and forgive my wife, even though I suffered in agony, just as Jesus first loved and forgave me, as He suffered unto death. This was not newly revealed revelation, or even special knowledge, but the illumination of truth through the Holy Spirit of doctrines and standards that are solidly recorded, and commanded in Scripture. When Jesus said not to fear, that He would not leave us alone, but would come in and fellowship together, He meant every word of it.

This was exciting, and new to me, but opposite from that of the common church divorce and remarriage culture I had come to accept. Learning it first from Him, as He pointed it out to me in the Scriptures, prevented me from falling victim to the present church, like so many millions of others. Otherwise, but for the grace of God, I too might have been prepped for the well greased divorce and remarriage production line running down the

center aisle of my church. The spotlight He switched on the absolute permanence of marriage commands showed me the vivid difference between what God's marriage laws are, and how far away the church has fallen from being good stewards of His Kingdom.

Time Never Changes Truth

All this theology is old—ancient enough to be the original, deeply buried root of the church. The application of first loving and forgiving my wife under these circumstances was nothing new, either. Hosea had been commanded to both love and forgive Gomer nearly 3,000 years ahead of me. Since then, countless generations of men and women have been expected to do the same as commanded by Scripture, the early church, and in person by the Holy Spirit. Having a personal encounter with Jesus Christ is nothing new either, as millions of Christians can attest. After all, Jesus is the same as He always was and will be. But long before any Christians were around, Hosea also received his orders from God in person. Here's how he put it:

"And the Lord said; "Love your wife, even though she is an adulteress and beloved by another man, and love her in the same way God loves Israel, even though they chase after other Gods..." Hosea 3:1

Nothing New, Nothing Old, Just Constant

Hosea was called to love his bride, even though she was unfaithful to him, in the same way that God loved His bride Israel, even though they were unfaithful to God. As this calling is nothing new, it is not just of old either. We are commanded not just to suffer for righteousness sake, but to joyfully do so, as we confidently look forward to being with Him.

God calls upon all those that are hurt by all manner of enemies, especially their covenant spouses, to love them and not hold their sins against them. Christians are commanded to stand in the gap for their loved ones, even though they are grievously injured, just as Jesus loves His church and gave His life to heal their injuries.

God is not a respecter of persons, and does not have double-minded, flexible standards that bend to expediency, or to accommodate our alternative preferences. He has not granted this generation of adulterous Christians a general amnesty for breaking His marriage laws. He has also not given anyone a personal indulgence to divorce and remarry, notwithstanding wishful thinking to the contrary. If God executed Ananias and Sapphira in front of the whole church for lying to Him, what is the chance of getting away with breaking faith with the wife or husband of your youth?

The Privilege of Standing Beside God

As God is and Hosea was, so I became, like so many others, a stander for the restoration of my covenant marriage. How could anyone not do so after looking through God's eyes

as recorded in His Word? Jesus proved His love for us that while we were yet sinners He died in order to offer us redemption and reconciliation. He is the first born, and the role model to be followed. We too demonstrate our love by offering our own eye and our own tooth to those who hurt us, to replace those they lost, even if they don't deserve it. That is the meaning of the cross, and the purpose, the power, and proof, of our love for God.

Today, the church is as unfaithful to God, and every bit as beset by sin, as Israel was at that time. As Hosea obediently modeled the truth in his day, so must we obediently model the truth in ours. The millions of adulterous marriages performed by wicked and wayward pastors can not equal the influence and power of a single man or woman who obeys God as Hosea did.

All those who have been honored to suffer for Christ in such a way must buy enough oil, stand on the hill they are placed on, trim their lamps and hold them high. Brothers and sisters, let your light so shine that those who see your light will see your good deeds and humble themselves, and God will hear from Heaven, and heal our lands.

Hosea loved Gomer, even though she sinned against him. Obeying God's calling and plan, he lived his life in the Lord, and no doubt bore his share of humiliation, pain, and sorrow. When God opened the door by sending an opportunity, complete with instructions, Hosea purchased, and redeemed his wife. Hosea delivered God's mercy, repentance and salvation message to his generation. Without it they may have all been destroyed and, perhaps, our chance for eternal life as well. How do we not know that through our obedience to God, we too could save generations to come, when those who see our lamps, repent, and God withholds His judgments, as promised?

Timing is Everything, and God's Timing is Perfect

At the tail end of the last century, access to the records and writings of Christians in the first centuries came online. For the first time, we could browse through the ancient libraries of the most prestigious seminaries and monasteries of the world, and trace Christian history without church censure. The floodgates of knowledge opened up as anyone with internet access was no longer bound by what was known within our previous circles and our limited resources. In contrast the modern church seemed very disoriented from itself and disconnected from Scripture. Prudence required drinking from purer sources.

Christian Conduct

The direct connection between what the Scriptures taught and described about the permanence of marriage, and what the early Christians believed and lived is clearly seen and documented. It was breathtaking in its scope. As for me, my closest associates became Ignatius and Jerome as well as Paul and Barnabas, as there seemed to be less distinction between them. All these men were notable men of God who, along with their contemporaries, fashioned and modeled early Christianity on our behalf. The difference

in how they lived out their faith, their courage, purity of their common Christian standards, and personal holiness compared to our own generation is profound.



Authentic Christianity

One difference is instantly noticeable. There is not a single word supporting today's so called "exception clauses" as escape exits, but instead, a solid wall was built protecting families for the first 400 years of Christianity. You could say that the early church was more opposed to allowing any form of divorce and remarriage than the present church is opposed to disallowing it now.

By direct quotes, we know early Christians derived their divorce and remarriage theological position statements from the same biblical sources we use today. They may also have had additional direct understanding and clarifications passed on to them by the original apostles and their immediate successors. One of these teachings even predates the writing of the book of Revelation. They give an authentic portrayal of what Jesus taught, early Christians believed, and the church commanded and enforced without exception.

The wisdom of their decisions on these matters have proved to be of enduring value, and should be weighed most carefully in the formation of our own modern Christian beliefs and practices. Although these elders' teachings should never be considered equally authoritative as inspired scripture, their experience and explanations are far superior in value when compared to those today who so adamantly disagree with them.

Awesome Responsibility and Unanimous Concurrence

These men of God had the initial task to define and defend what the Biblical redemption Gospel of Jesus Christ was all about, not only for the millions of lost in their world, but also for the billions to come in ours. All the recognized church fathers who wrote on the subjects of marriage, divorce and remarriage and whose words survived the perils of time agreed with each other.

After all this time, there is not a single known and identified authoritative voice that disagreed on the essential core doctrines of the permanence of marriage, the evils of divorce, and the absolute forbiddance of remarriage while both husband and wife lived.

Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up

If you look behind the false facade of the modern church, you will see what the Bible really teaches, and what the historic church really believed on the permanence of marriage. The difference between what was then and what is now is so vast that you cannot have a foot in both camps.

Either the whole early Christian church was right, and the present leaders wrong, or the whole early Christian church was wrong, and the present leaders right, not both. You can't have both! There is no safe point in between and you cannot have it both ways. The subject is too central to the heart of Christianity for it not to be a heaven and hell issue. The Scriptures and the early church were absolutely adamant about that, too.

Ignatius

Ignatius was a disciple of the apostle John the beloved, and a leader of the church at the turn of the first century. When he wrote, there were people who were still living that had sat at Jesus' feet. Let his words guide you as to how important a subject this is to him and to those he learned it from:

Ignatius wrote (c. 100 A.D.):

”Do not be in error, my brethren. Those that corrupt families shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If, then, those who do this as respects the flesh have suffered death, how much more shall this be the case with any one who corrupts by wicked doctrine the faith of God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified! Such a one becoming defiled in this way shall go away into everlasting fire, and so shall every one that hearkens unto him.”

Integrity

The first Christians took their directions from elders in the church, the Holy Spirit and the written teachings of the apostles as circulated and exchanged between regions. The accumulated teachings have yielded a number of primary principles which can be collectively and succinctly expressed in simple statements. The combined witness of Scripture and the early church leaders are overwhelmingly compelling on each of these statements. Standing behind these leaders are a wealth of endorsements within many of the over 30,000 early Christians' surviving codices, manuscripts and letters:

1. Marriage is an institution designed and administered by God for a lifelong union in Holy Matrimony of one man and one woman.

Matthew 19:4-6

"And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Augustine wrote (c. 419 A.D.):

"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 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 is living; nor is it allowed one put away by his wife to marry another, unless she who have separated from him be dead."

2. God hates divorce and never sanctions it for invalidation of a covenant marriage. A covenant marriage is a union where God has joined a man who does not have another living pre-existent wife, to a woman that does not have another living pre-existent husband into what the Bible calls a one-flesh relationship.

Malachi 2:15b-16

...and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Mark 10:7-9

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Clement of Alexandria wrote (c. 208 A.D.):

"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 fornication." And it regards as adultery the marriage of a spouse, while the one from whom a separation was made is still living."

Ambrose of Milan wrote (c. 387 A.D.):

"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."

Augustine wrote (c. 419 A.D.):

"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 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 is alive; nor is it allowed one put away by his wife to marry another, unless she who have separated from him be dead."

3. A husband or wife are not to separate from, or divorce their spouse, but if they are, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, they must remain single and celibate as long as they both are alive, or else be reconciled.

Matthew 5:31-32

"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except fornication, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife."

Hermas wrote (c. 90 A.D.):

"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 her 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.'"

Jerome wrote (c. 396 A.D.):

"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 is alive, she may not marry another."

Augustine wrote (c. 419 A.D.):

"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 cannot see how the man can have permission to marry another, in the case where he left an adulteress, when a woman cannot be married to another when she left an adulterer.”

4. A marriage may be violated, but not invalidated, by adultery committed by either the husband or the wife, or both. Any marriage entered into by any man or woman who already has a living husband or wife is not a one-flesh covenant marriage that is recognized by God, but instead is considered to be the sin of adultery, and must be repented of and forsaken.

Matthew 19:9

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

Mark 10:11-12

So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Luke 16:18

“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

1 Corinthians 7:39

A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

Romans 7:1-3

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Origen wrote (c. 248 A.D.):

"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."

Justin Martyr wrote (c. 151 A.D.):

"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."

Clement of Alexandria wrote (c. 208 A.D.):

"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 fornication." 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."

Basil the Great wrote (c. 375 A.D.):

"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.A man who marries another man's wife who has been taken away from him will be charged with adultery..."

Ambrose of Milan wrote (c. 387 A.D.):

"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."

Note: One of the false accusations of those who want to discredit the writings of the early church leaders on the subjects of marriage, divorce and remarriage, is a claim that the quotes are taken out of their context. Here is what Jerome wrote in Letters 55, 58, in their context. He is answering a letter about a certain woman who divorced and remarried.

Jerome wrote (c. 396 A.D.):

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 overborne 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, causes 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 further 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?"

Augustine wrote (c. 419 A.D.):

"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. Therefore to serve two or more (men), so to pass over from a living husband into marriage with another, was neither lawful then, 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."

Summary of the Early Christian Faith on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage from the Late First to Fifth Centuries A.D.

This is a detailed summary of the early church doctrine on marriage, divorce and remarriage beginning before the turn of the first century when the Book of Revelation was not even written yet. These teachings are not derived from an extension of Christianity, but are the very root of Christianity itself. As Augustine said, "To believe otherwise is to adopt the adulterous superstitions of a different, evil god."



1. If a spouse persists in adulterous behavior and there is no alternative, the relationship can be terminated by the innocent party. But even after divorce the marriage remains intact, and neither party may lawfully have sexual relations or marry another. Upon repentance, forgiveness and restoration of the marriage is required. A man and woman are to be treated the same way in these matters.

(Hermes, Clement, Jerome, Augustine)

2. Spouses that are divorced for any reason must remain celibate and single as long as both spouses live. Sexual relations or remarriage to others as long as both live is prohibited. Any such remarriage is invalid and is ongoing sinful adultery. (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. There is no room within Christianity for lust. God judges secret motives and intentions.

(Hermas, Justin Martyr, Jerome)

4. Everyone who marries a divorced person who has their husband or wife still living commits adultery, without exception. There are no reasons acceptable to God. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)

5. It is a serious offence against God to take another person's spouse. All persons who are in possession of another living person's former husband or wife will be charged with adultery.

(Basil)

6. Sexual relations are a marital right that is limited to one's own husband or wife. Sexual relations with anyone else or to remarry another while a former spouse lives is the sin of adultery.

(Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)

7. 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 will not honor it.

(Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)

8. God does not, and Christians must not take into account human law when it is in violation of God's marriage law. 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.

(Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Ambrose)

9. 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)

10. 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, evil god.

(Augustine)

In other words, it is exactly as Hosea was told, Jesus said, the apostles repeated, the church was instructed, and we are commanded:

"And the Lord said; "Love your wife, even though she is an adulteress and beloved by another man, and love her in the same way God loves Israel, even though they follow after other Gods..."

Hosea 3:1



God Demands That We Respect His Marriage Law

The eternal law of God is more than an ideal. It is an imperative, a commandment for the entire race. A marriage is permanent until death. Even though sin may violate the covenant, it neither breaks nor invalidates it. A wife or husband are not to divorce, but if they do, they are to remain pure and chaste and live like a Christian single should, unless or until there is a restoration of the marriage.

The marriage covenant remains unbreakable and neither spouse may marry another as long as they both live. Remember, Jesus said that unless our righteousness exceeds those that love others when they themselves are loved, but do not equally love those who do not love them, we will not be saved. As Jesus warned, whatever measure anyone of us metes out to even our worse enemy, let alone our husband, wife, or other family members, we will have measured back to us, multiplied.

The Origins of the Whole Church are Represented Here

In whole or in part, the Church leaders quoted here are considered the early authoritative leaders of all of the modern major historical branches of the church descending from New Testament Christianity.

The first author quoted is Ignatius, who was said to have been a personal disciple of the apostle John and a leader of the church at the turn of the first century. The last author quoted is Augustine, who was one of the greatest theologians the church has ever produced up until the reformation, and perhaps even to this day. The 300 years that separated them saw untold millions of our ancestors in Christ live, and die, holding fast these standards of Holy Matrimony through which we ourselves live.

Please understand that the early church prohibitions against divorce and remarriage are the same practice the church maintained up until relatively recently. If their words seem strange or unfamiliar to you, it is only because you have not been told the truth before. Now that you have, God will hold you accountable with what you do about it.

Blaise Pascal wrote, "There is sufficient light for those who wish to see, and sufficient darkness for those who do not. Enough clarity to illuminate the elect, and enough darkness to keep them humble. Sufficient darkness to blind the reprobate, and sufficient clarity to condemn them and make them inexcusable."

It would be contrary to the great commission for these truths not to be presented forcefully within the church, and its people, in person, in print, electronic media, or by any other means available. Since when should God's Word not be welcomed with open arms? Why would any sincere Christian not want to open their eyes, and look at the naked truth, and open their heart to God in order to understand what they see?

How do you not know that you, yourself, are not a Christian because some faithful man of those times loved his wife, even though, and overcame through Christ, and the seed of the seed of their love for you was born in you, for such a time as this? Undeniably, whether natural born or adopted, if you rightfully call yourself a Christian, you are descended from Godly men and women that passed down to you both life, and the covenants to live it by.

As He spoke to His people through Jeremiah, "So now the Lord says, 'STOP RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE! Look for the old, Godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls...ö (Jeremiah 6:16 NLT, adapted)

Permanence of Marriage Has Become a Movement

In the last few years the Permanence of Marriage movement has blossomed, even if it is still a small minority, like a sea change, when the wind is unsettled as if trying to decide which direction to blow in. God's age-old moral standards are once again being proclaimed with power, by the Holy Spirit, as lamps are lit and held by activists from nearly every variety, and version of Christianity, within full view of the visible church, through websites, on social media, in books, videos, articles, and in the front pews. We may not be commonplace, but we are not uncommon either.

As an integral part of the Body of Christ, we have persevered through being lone voices in the wilderness, pressed through the lunatic fringe, and are now, finally, breaking out into the radicals for Jesus territory. Even still, it is frustrating not to find a mainline or regular evangelical church or pastor that dares to openly support the truth on the permanence of marriage. Now that we are beginning to see indications of a turning back to God, we must redouble our efforts. There is so much more to do, and the time to do it is being shortened every day.

Over 7,000,000,000 People, and Counting

Please consider, when God calls anyone to Him, and woos them by the Holy Spirit, through conviction of sin, grants them regeneration, and leads them into living as a child of God, it is, in every single case, because someone, somewhere, somehow shared the gospel with them. You know how you, yourself, came to Christ, and you know who was the last link in the long chain who, besides Jesus, you owe a huge debt to. Without that one person, you may never have had another chance to be born again. So it is with winning others to Christ. Each one of us can list many, who we know if we do not reach for Christ, likely no one else will either.

God works through His agents, and his agents are the Christians who are willing, able and equipped to do so. The only thing separating several billion people alive today, from a hopeless eternity, is the church of Jesus Christ. According to Scripture, only those who obey God's commands will be saved. Even a cursory glance at the Biblical warnings shows that God will judge adulterers and fornicators.

Whom Shall I Send and Who Will Go For Us?

This carnal and sinful church can not even save itself, let alone the lost world. Unless we, in the permanence of marriage movement, reach the church with the truth in time, before it is too late, and preach for it to repent, and it actually does, those millions, or billions who might otherwise have turned to Christ, are doomed.

Romans 10: 13 to 15 (in red) plus extra verses I added, to prove the point (in orange)

'For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how can a preacher be sent when they preach a compromised adulterous Christianity, that not only contaminates themselves, but also those that hearken unto them? And how can those preachers call upon the name of the Lord and repent, and turn from their evil ways, unless someone sent from God teaches them, and instructs them to do so? Then who can be sent from God to preach to those preachers about their sinful adulterous practices, so that when they repent, and are cleansed, they can go to the lost billions? And how shall they preach, unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!

Dark Secrets

Nearly every single Christian leader, regardless of denominational persuasion, if not divorced and remarried themselves, have close friends, colleagues, church members, and loved ones, who are. Few do not bear the heavy burden of unrepentant sin from officiating at God-condemned, adulterous weddings. It is a fearful thing for pastors to ponder their own words, the proud pronouncements echoing in their ears, that adulterers, by some sleight of their own hand, magically, became husband and wife, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The possibility that they are dead wrong is terrible for them to contemplate. But more and more of them are ending up doing just that. They are becoming increasingly uncomfortable of their record, as they see the church disintegrate, right before their eyes. There is a dark secret the clergy and elders hide from each other, with few exceptions. Almost every single one of them has privately, behind closed eyes, counted the cost of turning to Jesus on the divorce and remarriage dilemma they are caught in, just in case they are wrong, and there is hell to pay. After all, politically correct protests aside, they have Bibles of their own, and feel vaguely unsettled in their insecure conviction.

To Think or Not To Think, That is the Unthinkable

Having calculated a rough estimate of the cost of their own repentance—just in case, mind you—it stacks up to be so high as to be beyond thinkable, let alone doable. However, it is already too late for that by then. The more they try not to think about God's marriage standard, the more they can't think about anything else. In fact, when having the issue come up again, by anyone, in any way, an involuntary image of the fearful consequences to everything they hold dear dominates their mind.

They display symptoms of confusion, and feel alarm. Depending upon the severity of the threat, the fear turns on the automatic flight-or-fight built-in survival mechanism, forcing them into doing one, or the other. Being almost impossible for them to feign disinterest, most will have something like doors slam shut and locked, that can be seen in their eyes and countenance.

Hiding in Plain Sight



What happens next depends upon their level of self control. Those who have been dreading the subject will shift into either the pastoral mode of denial, or the crusader mode of protest, or both. Everyone who stands up for this cause, who has stood up to church authority, has seen this all before, as many times as they have done so. If the pastoral mode wins, in a professionally friendly tone, out will come the buckets of grace, like holy water poured on the fire of conviction, to drown out the rising heat within and without. However, if caught off guard, and in the presence of others, or if feeling vulnerable, the crusader will emerge, seeking an opportunity to sidestep the issues by either refusing immediate discussion, or

changing the subject, or, if those fail, attacking the character, integrity, motives and salvation of the challenger. The more the leader knows about the permanence of marriage movement, and has decided against it, or feels insecure, or has a measure of internal double-mindedness, the stronger the negative response will be.

The pastor or elder that explodes in protest is only too aware of the consequences and will quote them back in detail, in an accusing tone of righteous indignation, accentuating every negative imaginable. If the pastor has little knowledge, and is unaware of the implications, but intrigued or curious, or if honestly open, and seeking clarification and understanding, it will become obvious, and God will lead.

For those who are kicking against the pricks, these methods of defense are almost always used, because they almost always work, as the sound of their own pastoral voice gains authority over the emotions of all present, including themselves. His flock, if present, will outwardly defer to the pastor, for they are trained to do so or they wouldn't be there. The one who brought the subject up will usually back down, or soften the stance, whether because of intimidation, being unsure of themselves, or if only to exhibit good manners.

What You See is Not What You Get

All of this may appear very different than described, for everyone is playing a part on the stage, and wearing their character's mask. The leader looks calm and collected, the challenger nervous, and the crowd, if any, is largely passive. If there are only the two of them, both the challenger and the leader will usually stay within the roles just described. Don't let any of this deceive you. Be wise to what is going on behind the eyes. If the one you are reaching reaches back, you have saved a part of the world, and made a friend for eternity, and pleased God.

Looks are intentionally deceiving, and anything we see with our eyes and evaluate by what we hear, will likely cause discouragement, for all resistance is visible, while active consideration is not. What you see is not usually what you get. It is critical that each encounter be handled with love. Never return anger for anger or evil for evil.

Opportunity Comes Knocking

The real action on the subject won't begin until he is alone with God, so any material you can leave with him, or for him, that he can take without others noticing, may be very effective. Make absolutely sure that you leave your telephone number with a note to call anytime, even in the middle of the night, so that, Lord willing, he has someone to talk to when God moves. Remember, man judges from the outside, but God sees the inside and works the results accordingly.

It is our job, which we must not shirk, to present the truth, as well as we can at every opportunity provided. However, if opportunity is not actively sought, it won't be willingly recognized either, so don't be fooled into passive compliance with evil. Don't go along to get along. You are not mixing with other Christians that are living in sin for fellowship. You are there for leadership purposes.

Therefore, have courage, and remember, His strength is made perfect in your weakness, so if you are like the rest of us, it is an excellent fit. "My Word shall not return unto Me void" is not a cliché but a holy algorithm that is more accurate than $E = mc^2$. It is impossible for all these church leaders and elders to avoid being forced to make a dreadful decision, either way, as the truth persistently leaks through from a small, but growing minority.

Night Sweats

Preachers are trained to argue against opposing theology, doctrine, and inconvenient history, but it's much more difficult to fervently pray against, and to enthusiastically argue and fight faithful obedience, chastity, longsuffering and forgiveness. There is no running away or hiding from God at 3 o'clock in the morning, laying awake, staring at the ceiling, troubled by the Holy Spirit. That is when your card with your private phone number means 911.

Those of them that have ears to hear, and only God knows how many there are, are increasingly impressed by the integrity of the permanence of marriage theology and by those who carry it. This fight for the heart and soul of the church will be won by such as they that are now, and will be at some point, entering into the valley of decision, that will test, and try their faith.

Some of them, those who God gives the grace, will come over to the right side, willing and able to commit, and when they do, they will bring the good part of a repentant and redeemed church with them. One day, all of us, everyone who toiled in the rocky soil in

this fallen church age will reap the harvest and we will sing forever when He cometh to make up his jewels, all His jewels, precious jewels, His loved and His own. Like the stars of the morning, His bright crown adorning, they shall shine in their beauty, bright gems for His crown.

Note to Pastors

Not being much of a charismatic, I have never had public words of knowledge in a large auditorium for strangers with special needs, but I do know the nudging of the Holy Spirit, by touch, so I will obey Him and write this note. Surely some will frown on this humble work as just more radical rhetoric with little value in the real world of their church life or ministry. If so, then they are right, and this note is for another.

But you, pastor, if you too recognize the Holy Spirit by touch and He has brought you under conviction for your role in the acceptance, endorsement and participation of divorce and remarriage sin in the church, this note is for you. You have likely scoured the internet, books and commentaries looking to find a solid argument, verse, or something with real substance that might cast reasonable doubt on the presented claims.

Although most sources disagree with this defined permanence of marriage doctrine, they present little real evidence except contrary opinions quoted from others, who quote them back. It's a matter of their will overriding matters of fact. They don't make sense to you anymore. God has blinded you to the shadows they see, and reveals what was hidden within plain sight. You have changed! Isn't the Holy Spirit wonderful?

The more you dig, the deeper the hole, the greater the burden of proof this theology carries. It seems overwhelmingly compelling, and so ridiculously obvious that it is irrational to think otherwise. As an insanity check, you ask, "How this is possible, when the church, almost everyone I know, practices the near opposite?" Therein lies the crux of the matter, when complexity obscures the simple truth of the matter.

You can now see that both the biblical and early church teachings are diametrically opposite to the practice of divorce and remarriage as it is now practiced in the church. Moreover, not even a dangerous expansion of the doctrine of grace fills in the gapping canyon enough to bridge the difference. Either our Savior and the entire original church were misinformed on the permanence of marriage, or we were. Both can not be right!

You know that if remarriage of the divorced is prohibited, God, who does the actual marrying, did not do the deed any more than he would any other prohibited union with incest, homosexuality or bestiality. An elaborate church wedding with public pronouncements does not make a forbidden union holy. Jesus did not die to redeem sin, but to redeem repentant sinners from their sin. It's a religious farce, and we all know it.

Perhaps you do not have a way to connect with the person who God sent to rescue you, but if you do, please consider contacting them immediately, share what has happened and ask them to pray for you. If not, I invite you write or talk to me or call, or I'll call you.

Write mail@marriagedivorce.com with 'Pastor to Pastor' in the subject line, and I will respond as soon as I see it. We can do Skype, phone, or email.

I will pray for you, give you counsel as He provides, and become a friend.

Your brother in Christ,

Stephen Wilcox

PS: For those who disagree with the permanence of marriage doctrines, I pray that you one day come to the realization of the truth. Then, like Zacchaeus, repent by making peace with God and man. I prefer neither debate nor argument with those who disagree, or try to otherwise engage to overpower and convince anyone. As the old proverb goes, "A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still." May God bless you.

The Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World

The following letter is reproduced from "**The Restoration of Christian Marriage**" by Stephen Wilcox that can be found at <http://www.marriagedivorce.com> or downloaded from: <http://www.marriagedivorce.com/Restoration-of-Christian-Marriage.pdf>.

The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetius (ca. 130 A.D.)

Mathetes, a second century Christian whose identity has been lost in time, wrote a letter to an unknown man named Diognetius. From the opening salutation, we can assume that Diognetius is interested in Christianity, or perhaps even a new believer. Mathetes wrote him in order to explain the fundamental beliefs of Christianity and what it means to live for Jesus at that time, in their world.

This letter is a testimony from a man we don't know anything about, but we recognize as a Holy Spirit filled brother in Christ whom we can one day expect to meet in person in heaven. His brief but eloquent portrayal of the early Christian community shining a light in their dark world is both heartwarming and sorrowful in that it shows how far the church fell, and how far we have to go.

If we were there once by God's help, we can return again, with the same God's help. Here is his description of the lifestyle of holy living and integrity of our church in those days. It is a picture of what we may yet be able to attain as we yield our lives and loves to Him.

Mathetes wrote:

“For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity.

The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines.

But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life.

They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.

They marry, as do all others; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven.

They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life.

They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers.

When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

To sum it up all in one phrase—“What the soul is in the body, therefore are Christians in the world”. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world.

The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world...God has assigned them this illustrious position, which it were unlawful for them to forsake.”

Please Help Spread the Message of Faithfulness and Restoration by joining the Permanence of Marriage Movement

Please help us distribute this publication and get it out to the church and the Christians you know. Any active assistance you can provide to the Permanence of Marriage Movement has profound effects both now and in the future. By emailing this report,

posting it in social media, or printing it and distributing inside your church you are standing in the gap for those you love. Please pray for this ministry and others and faithfully come alongside the men and women God puts in your path, encouraging them to stand for Biblical Truth and purity. To reach us, contact mail@marriagedivorce.com and we will try to help you in any way we can. You can listen to Chaplain Stephen Wilcox as he teaches from the Word of God on the fundamentals of serving God and standing for the truth:

Messages on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

1. Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage According to Jesus

What did Jesus actually teach on the subject, and what does history tell us?

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/download.php?file=mdr/About%20Marriage%20Divorce%20and%20Remarriage.mp3>

2. Fornication in the Church - For Adults Only

Shocking statistics point to an implosion of the church from gross immorality.

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/download.php?file=mdr/Fornication%20in%20the%20Church%20-%20Adults%20Only.mp3>

3. Please Help Me! Part 1 of 5, My Marriage is in Trouble

If you see problems in your marriage and you are becoming alarmed, start here.

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/download.php?file=mdr/Please%20Help%20Me%20Part%201%20of%205,%20My%20Marriage%20is%20in%20Trouble.mp3>

4. Please Help Me! Part 2 of 5, Really Serious Trouble

Your marriage is now in serious trouble, and you need help right now.

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/download.php?file=mdr/Please%20Help%20Me%20Part%202%20of%205,%20Really%20Serious%20Trouble.mp3>

5. Please Help Me! Part 3 of 5, Disaster Strikes

Your spouse wants out and you are in shock and pain.

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/download.php?file=mdr/Please%20Help%20Me%20Part%203%20of%205,%20Disaster%20Strikes.mp3>

6. Please Help Me! Part 4 of 5, Standing Firm

When all seems lost, that is where obedience from God counts most, so stand firm.

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/download.php?file=mdr/Please%20Help%20Me%20Part%204%20of%205,%20Standing.mp3>

7. Please Help Me! Part 5 of 5, Restoration or Redemption

The best days of your life are yet to come through restoration or redemption, or both.

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/download.php?file=mdr/Please%20Help%20Me%20Part%205-of-5%20Restoration%20or%20Redemption.mp3>

Theological Foundations Ministries

"For no other foundation can any man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ."



The Spirit of Hosea Fellowship

The Spirit of Hosea Fellowship (SOH) is a division of Theological Foundations Ministries, an online church that ministers on an intimate level to Christian members from around the world. SOH has a fellowship board, periodic regional get-togethers, and an annual retreat you will not want to miss. Each week members take part in an online service where we share praise reports, prayer requests, heartaches and blessings. We bear each other's burdens through Christ, pray together, hear the word of the Lord and share the Lord's Supper.

If you are a born again Christian that believes in the core truths of Christianity and the permanence of marriage, you may want to consider looking into SOH membership by reading and following the instructions found here:

<http://www.marriagedivorce.com/SpiritofHosea.pdf>

To enquire about SOH or to ask for prayer or help, please contact Chaplain Stephen
mail@marriagedivorce.com



www.MarriageDivorce.com

and

www.TheologicalFoundations.com

are outreach resources of Theological Foundations Ministries



Rev. Stephen Wilcox

Chaplain Stephen Wilcox has a burden for the church that is participating in the practice of adultery by its rationalization and facilitation of divorce and remarriage. Ministry efforts are also focused on restoring broken families by supporting those who stand in the gap for loved ones. He is the author of the e-book "The Restoration of Christian Marriage", provided free of charge at our ministry websites.

mail@marriagedivorce.com

Please consider helping to support this ministry through prayer and giving. Theological Foundations is an independent ministry funded entirely by those who agree with our biblical teaching and wish to help further the reintroduction of these truths to the church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. We do not have fund raising programs, user fees or other sources of support except gifts, offerings and tithes from those who wish to partner with us. Your support is most needed and gratefully received. You may donate by credit card with PayPal by going to <http://www.theologicalfoundations.com/howcanhelp> and clicking on the PayPal link. If donating by mail please make checks payable to Theological Foundations Ministries. May God bless you for your faithfulness to Him.



Theological Foundations Ministries

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