

Lord” – that we do not read on to the vastly exhilarating truth that follows and, if we do, He are not exhilarated by it. The phrase seems to sum up appallingly all that business of masculine domination from which women feel they have fought free. But it certainly does not mean that. The woman’s duty of obedience is balanced by the man’s duty of love: she is to be obedient, not as a slave to a master, but to one who loves her as himself. The model is the obedience of the Church to Christ, and Christ is not tyrannical; Christ commands, but gives love not fear as the reason for obedience – “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” Further, the Church has clarified the obedience due. In the encyclical *Casri Connubi*, Pope Pius XI writes: “This subjection, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her most noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband’s every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors, to whom it is not customary to allow free exercise of their rights on account of their lack of mature judgment, or of their ignorance of human affairs. But it forbids that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family; it forbids that in this body which is the family, the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the proximate danger of ruin. For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love” (27).

In our present inquiry on marriage and divorce, the issues are *adultery and fornication*. Fornication is defined as sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, and so does not apply to the issue of the indissolvability of marriage.

It is argued that in St. Matthew’s Gospel, Christ allowed divorce and remarriage on the ground of adultery, but that is not the case: “*For your hardness of heart Moses suffered you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning was not so. And I say unto you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastely (fornication), and marries another, commits adultery; and he that marries a divorced woman, commits adultery*” (Matt. 19:8-9). Nowhere in Scripture does Christ allow for divorce.

If a person is involved in an abusive marriage, there may be grounds for separation, but once a couple is married, nothing except death can separate them.

The SDA position that divorce is permitted on grounds of adultery, fornication, abandonment by an unbelieving spouse, or physical violence, and that remarriage is only permitted if one’s spouse committed adultery/fornication, flies against the Scriptural prohibition against divorce.

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## Seventh-Day Adventists and Divorce

“Marriage is permanent and divorce only permitted on grounds of adultery/fornication, abandonment by an unbelieving spouse, or physical violence. Remarriage is only permitted if one’s spouse committed adultery/fornication”  
[http://adventist.org.au/about\\_adventists/perspectives\\_on\\_social\\_issues/marriage\\_and\\_family\\_life](http://adventist.org.au/about_adventists/perspectives_on_social_issues/marriage_and_family_life).

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church allows for divorce and remarriage, which directly contradicts the teaching of our Lord Jesus concerning the marriage bond.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the gospel affirmed His teaching. When asked by the Pharisees about divorce, Jesus replied, “*Have you not read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and declared, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become as one'? Thus, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined*” (Matthew 19:3ff).

“Marriage is the intimate, exclusive, indissoluble communion of life and love entered by man and woman at the design of the Creator for the purpose of their own good and the procreation and education of children; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament” (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 48 and *Code of Canon Law*, Can. 1055).

The law of marriage is the union of one man with one woman till death. Christ tells us that Moses allowed divorce (along with concubine-

age and polygamy) because of the hardness of men's hearts, but He Himself restored the original law. Marriage is an institution whose nature and laws do not depend on man's choice. Marriage is what it is: God made it what it is because thus it is best for the human race. Man cannot alter it: he can only take it or leave it. A man or a woman cannot be forced to marry; either is free to marry or not to marry, but we cannot choose what marriage is. The Catholic Church expresses all this in the statement that marriage is a relationship resulting from a contract or covenant. The contract is made by the man and the woman, the relationship that results is made by God. The man and woman agree to take each other as husband and wife for life: God makes them so, taking them at their word.

Thus the laws relating to marriage fall into two divisions – laws about the contract, laws about the relationship.

Consider the contract: a man and a woman agree to marry. There are two key words here – *agree* and *marry*. Their agreement must not be forced, otherwise it is not an agreement at all: prove that either of them was compelled, and the contract vanishes. Similarly it must be an agreement to marry, that is to enter into a union for life, to the exclusion of all others, a union that is meant by God to produce, and normally will produce, children. If they enter into an agreement to take each other for a term of years, or till one or the other wearies of the arrangement, or to the total exclusion of children – then it is not a contract to marry. Prove any of these things and the contract vanishes. There are other ways in which what looked like a marriage contract turns out not to be one (as for example if either is already married). Before God brings the relationship called marriage into existence, the man and

woman must have made a contract to marry. Where it can be shown that a given couple have not done so, the competent authority will grant a decree of nullity. Where they *have* done so, there is a marriage. God has brought the relationship into being. If marriage were only a contract, it would, like all other contracts, be breakable by the agreement of both parties to it. But it is not. Once they have made their contract, the parties are bound, not by it, but by the relationship that follows. Let us look more closely at this relationship.

God has taken a man and a woman at their word. They are now husband and wife, made so by God. They are not simply a man and a woman who have agreed to live together for certain agreed purposes. If that were all, they would have entered into an arrangement; but marriage is not an arrangement, it is a relationship. It is hard to make this clear, though once one has seen it nothing could be more illuminating. A man adopts a son: that is a relationship. In marriage the man and woman have not simply adopted each other as husband and wife, in the way a man adopts a son. They *have become* husband and wife. God has made them so. They are united, not simply by an arrangement to be so, but by some vital reality. The relationship of husband and wife is not brought into being in the same way as the relationship of parent and child, for the latter arises in a union of bodies, the marriage relationship in a union of wills: but it is all the closer and more real for that. A husband and wife are not less vitally and really related to each other than they are to their own children, but more.

Our Lord makes His own the phrase of Genesis which puts this fact with dazzling clearness: "*They shall be two in one flesh.*" In the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel

we find Him saying to the Pharisees: "*A man, therefore, will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. And so they are no longer two, they are one flesh: what God has joined, let not man put asunder.*" In the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul quotes the same phrase of Genesis, leading up to it by a figure of speech which at once reasserts the new oneness that marriage has brought into being, and lays its foundation deeper than the natural eye of man can pierce: for he compares the union of man and his wife with the union of Christ and His Church. "*Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, He Himself the savior of the body. As the Church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed Himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body. "For this reason a man shall leave (his) father and (his) mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband."*

There is something in the modern temper, of the Western world at least, that is so jarred by the opening phrase – "*Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the*