

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK



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SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

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SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We've prepared this handbook for your convenience in understanding how the Simi Hills Ecclesia is organized and operates.

We all understand that these rules are made by mortal men and are subject to our weakness. We look to our Heavenly Father and his word for guidance in all that we do and strive to serve him by living in loving unity with our Brothers and Sisters. It is to this purpose that we all attempt to subject our wills to the will of the group, and thus provide our reasonable service. The guidelines provided in this handbook are established to help us all achieve the goal of walking together until our Lord returns.

"Let all things be done decently and in order." – 1st Corinthians 14:40

In the Hope of the Gospel,

Brother Gordon Hensley

Recording Brother

January 22, 2017

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

SIMI HILLS ECCLESIAL CONSTITUTION - PREAMBLE

We, the Members of the Simi Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia, as a body of true believers, sharing the hope of the resurrection through our head, Christ Jesus, and the Hope of Israel, embodied in the Kingdom of God soon to be established, do covenant this constitution for the ordering of our affairs. We believe the salvation sought by each of us is better pursued by a cooperative free-will effort and that each Member can and should make a meaningful contribution to our collective endeavor.

The principles of our God are set forth in His Holy Word which shall be our guide. The annexed Statement of Faith, Doctrines to be Rejected and Commandments of Christ epitomize the hopes and principles we hold true.

The Ecclesia has the two-fold purpose of being the pillar and ground of the Truth as well as a hospital for the spiritually ill within the Great Physicians can minister. The goals of the Ecclesia therefore are to:

1. Provide a place to worship in spirit and truth.
2. Provide a vehicle for service unto our God.
3. Provide an orderly but equitable fellowship.
4. Provide the benefits of the extended family of Christ.

In addition, we find a need to provide a structure within which we can accomplish these goals and administer our lampstand. The by-laws contained herein are to provide that structure. The Brothers and Sisters that form the membership, being all equal in Christ, shall, as a corporate body, perform the legislative and judicial functions. Authority to execute business is given to serving Members who shall do so at the direction and consent of the membership.

Finally, we recognize that it is only by the grace of God that we are called, by his will that we shall conduct our affairs, and by his mercy that we shall be like His Son. All shall know that we are His if we manifest love one for another.

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SIMI HILLS ECCLESIAL CONSTITUTION – BY-LAWS AND CLAUSES

MEMBERSHIP

1. Conditions of Membership:

Membership of the Simi Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia is open to all those who accept the doctrines and precepts of Christ, as amplified in the apostolic writing, and as defined in the annexed "Statement of Faith," "Doctrines to be Rejected," and epitome of the "Commandments of Christ," and who have been baptized (by whomsoever) after their acceptance of those doctrines and precepts.

2. Requests for baptism:

All requests for baptism shall be made to the Recording Brother, who shall expeditiously arrange for two dates: (1) an interview to determine the applicant's understanding of God's word and (2) an anticipated baptism. The Recording Brother shall then announce the two dates. Upon agreement by the appointed brethren that the applicant understands the Gospel, the baptism date/time shall be confirmed, after which, in the absence of objection, the baptism shall take place. (See Ecclesia Guideline # 1 - Procedure For Baptism).

3. Transfer of Membership:

Upon receiving a request for transfer of membership by a Brother or Sister currently a Member of an Ecclesia in fellowship accompanied by a letter or phone call of recommendation from the prior Ecclesia, the Arranging Brethren shall meet to appoint representatives of this Ecclesia who will meet with the individual(s) requesting transfer for the purpose of informing them about this Ecclesia and answering any questions that may arise. All things satisfactory, the transfer will be announced at the first Sunday morning meeting following. In the absence of objection, the transfer is then effective. Members transferring to another Ecclesia shall notify the Recording Brother who shall announce the transfer at the next Sunday morning meeting. In the absence of objection, a letter or telephone call of commendation shall accompany the transfer.

4. Application for Membership:

Applications outside the purview of Clauses 2 and 3 shall be made through written request to the Recording Brother, who shall:

1. Petition the Arranging Board for a committee, in accordance with Clause 26, to discuss the circumstances and the spirit of Clause 1 with the applicant.
2. Take such other investigative actions as deemed necessary.
3. And make recommendations to the Ecclesia.

5. Fellowship:

Members of the Ecclesia (including associates) are in fellowship with one another and with all who satisfy the conditions of Clause 1. Fellowship is defined for this purpose as those who are welcome at the table of the Lord.

6. Cessation of Fellowship:

If any Brother or Sister depart from any element of Clause 1, or is presently absent without cause from the assembly for the breaking of bread, the Ecclesia may, at a Business Meeting or a special meeting, on the recommendation of a committee previously appointed in accordance with Clause 26, and after full consideration, resolve that the Brother or Sister has terminated the fellowship bond with this Ecclesia and the brethren in Christ.

7. Inter-Ecclesial Relations:

No Brother or Sister, whose fellowship with an Ecclesia in fellowship has ceased, shall be received until the matter has been investigated, in accordance with Clauses 4 and 26, and opportunity given to that Ecclesia to join in the investigation.

8. Acceptance:

If an Ecclesia offers fellowship to a Brother or Sister after performance of Clause 6 by this Ecclesia, a joint investigation shall be arranged and the findings presented to the Ecclesia for acceptance. The two Ecclesias may agree to disagree. However, if the other Ecclesia refuses such an arrangement, it may be grounds for estrangement from that Ecclesia.

9. Accusation:

No accusations or evil report shall be listened to in public or private unless the Brother or Sister making it shall first have taken all possible steps to fulfill both the spirit and the letter of the principle enunciated in Matthew 18:15-18. Failure to do so shall itself be considered behavior unworthy of a disciple of Christ.

MEETINGS

10. Frequency:

Meetings of the Ecclesia shall be held as follows:

1. On Sunday for memorial worship and exhortation.
2. On one evening in the week for Bible study.
3. On a minimum of two Sundays during the year for business.
4. Especially called for urgent business.
5. Special programs and lectures.
6. Especially called for the needful prayer of many.
7. Socially for fellowship as befits the family of Christ.

11. Order of Sunday Service:

Unless otherwise determined by the Ecclesia, the Presider shall order the Sunday meeting as follows:

1. Announcements
2. Hymn
3. Prayer
4. Readings
5. Hymn (optional)
6. Exhortation
7. Hymn
8. Prayer for the breaking of bread
9. Prayer for the wine
10. Hymn
11. Closing prayer

12. Contributions:

Collection of funds shall be voluntary and unobtrusive. A collection box shall be made available to the membership. All contributions shall be deposited in the general fund unless otherwise specified for use in special funds approved by the Ecclesia.

The Ecclesia may designate special funds collection for specific projects. A separate account shall be initiated for each special fund and terminated when no longer required. (See Ecclesial Guideline # 6 – Donation Instructions).

13. Order of the other meetings:

All other meetings of the Ecclesia shall be programmed by the Presiding Brother of the week. A non-Presiding Brother may be appointed to preside at a meeting other than memorial service. Special programs and lectures shall have a presider appointed by the Ecclesia. Arranging Brethren can appoint a Presiding brother for the business meeting if desired.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

14. Scheduled Meetings:

The three business meeting dates shall be the third Sunday in January, May, and September, unless valid circumstances require deviation of no more than two weeks. The meeting dates shall be included on the Ecclesial appointment calendar and announced the previous Sunday. If the meeting is changed from the third Sunday, it should be announced to the ecclesia at least two weeks in advance.

15. Order of Business:

The Presiding Brother shall chair the meeting. The Recording Brother shall order the agenda, provide copies to each Member, and arrange for the minutes to be taken. Meetings require verbal reports and a written financial report on all Ecclesial activities since the previous meeting.

The January meeting shall include:

1. Financial statement
2. Auditor Report
3. Confirmation of appointments presented by the Arranging Brothers.
4. Discussion of appointments presented by the Arranging Brothers.

16. Special Meetings:

A special meeting of the Ecclesia shall be convened by the Recording Brother whenever he deems it necessary or at the request of three brethren. The meeting shall be announced (including the reason for such a meeting) at the next Sunday meeting and conducted as soon as possible thereafter. The minutes of the meeting, including circumstances and decisions made, are subject to review and confirmation at the next scheduled business meeting.

17. Quorum:

Those present shall constitute a quorum provided that the announcement procedure in Clauses 14 and 16 have been followed.

18. Meeting conduct and voting:

The Presiding Brother shall maintain order and recognize speakers. No Member shall be discouraged from speaking, but all discussion should be relevant and succinct. When the presiding Brother determines that the Members have reached an obvious consensus, he may so state, request a solution, and ask for dissent. All dissent shall be heard. Lacking objection, the resolution shall be declared valid. Any Member may call a vote. All voting shall be open unless a request is made for a secret ballot on a specific issue. A majority vote of Active Members present shall decide all business.

SERVING MEMBERS

19. Principle:

All Brothers and Sisters are considered serving their Lord in whatever capacity the Ecclesia calls them. In the appointment of all serving Members, the principles of service put forth by our Lord shall be paramount. The criteria of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 shall be observed when appointing Arranging Brothers and Ecclesia representatives; the good of the Ecclesia and the harmony of the Brotherhood shall always be before us. All appointments to serve shall be confirmed by the Ecclesia at the next scheduled business meeting.

20. Arranging Brothers:

The Arranging Brothers, subject to the direction and will of the Ecclesia, shall order the business of the Ecclesia and are encouraged to coordinate with each other for the continuity of Ecclesial operation. Eligibility shall be in accordance with Clause 19 plus seven years of continuous membership in an Ecclesia, the most recent two of which shall be in this Ecclesia. The time criteria may be halved in specific cases by Ecclesial resolution as covered in Clause 22.

21. Selection of Arranging Brothers:

The Ecclesia shall select, prior to November 15th, a minimum of seven (7) Arranging Brothers. Other offices may be added by Ecclesial resolution as the need becomes apparent. The method of selection shall be by secret ballots. Each Active Member of the Ecclesia is eligible to vote and should make their selection for each office based upon the voluntary initiative, recognized talent and experience of the Brother. All offices are for two-year durations commencing January 1 of each year following selection. No Brother shall hold more than one office simultaneously.

22. Other Serving Members:

All Brothers are eligible to pray and exhort during memorial service 6 months after being baptized. Brothers will be asked for all other service at the discretion of the brother responsible for organizing or facilitating the function at which that service will be performed. Presiding and public lecturing brethren shall be selected in accordance with the same criteria for Arranging Brothers (clause 19). Visiting speakers should be on their home ecclesias speaking list and in good standing.

23. Appointments:

All other serving Brethren shall be appointed by the Arranging Brethren whose duty it is to oversee that function. Appointments shall be for two years. Selection shall be made with the consideration of a balance of voluntary initiative, recognized talent, and experience, keeping the spiritual growth and involvement of the Members and the good of the Ecclesia foremost.

24. Committee Representatives:

The Ecclesia shall appoint by resolution Members to various committees established by the Brotherhood. Discussion of selection in harmony with Clauses 19 and 23 shall precede the resolution. The representative shall be under the guidance of the Arranging Board but shall report directly to the Ecclesia.

25. Removal of Serving Brethren:

Any Brother or Sister may be requested to stand aside from Ecclesial appointments for due cause upon establishment of the facts to the Arranging Brothers. The decision shall be announced as soon as is practical and is subject to confirmation by the Ecclesia at the next business meeting.

26. Special Committees:

From time-to-time the need will arise to appoint special committees to investigate and make recommendations to the Ecclesia. The Recording Brother shall petition the Arranging Board when such a committee is needed. The Arranging Board shall appoint three members as follows: two from the Arranging Brothers, and one other Member. They shall select a chairman from among themselves who will coordinate all activities with the Recording Brother and present the results to the Ecclesia. The various views within the Ecclesia should be considered when appointing a committee and the views of each committee Member shall be heard by the Ecclesia.

27. Property Brother:

The Arranging Brethren shall appoint a Property Brother who shall be accountable to purchase, store, maintain and disburse all Ecclesial property. This position will be confirmed at the January business meeting.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

28. Sunday School Committee:

The committee shall consist of the Sunday School Superintendent and the teachers and is subject to the direction of the Ecclesia. The Sunday School Superintendent shall be appointed at the January Business Meeting by the Ecclesia as per clause 19, and his selection of teachers for the following year shall be confirmed at the scheduled business meeting in May. The Sunday School year is from September to June, overlapping as much as possible with the completion of the school year. The committee shall meet as required to:

1. Determine class divisions based upon class balance, student age and capacity.
2. Agree upon a curriculum to insure continuity, total Bible teaching, and spiritual achievement.
3. Provide social activity, e.g., outings, gatherings, and programs.
4. Discuss and harmonize on teaching methods.
5. Arrange special classes as needed for first principles, new and extraordinary students and young teens.

ALTERATIONS

29. Alterations and Amendments:

Modification of this Constitution or Ecclesial Guidelines by addition, deletion or amendment shall be made only as follows:

1. A written proposal presented to the Recording Brother, including purpose, justification, and exact modification.
2. Copies disbursed to each Member one week prior to the next scheduled business meeting.
3. Discussion and resolution in accordance with Clause 18.

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ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 1 – PROCEDURE FOR BAPTISM

Procedure regarding candidates for baptism:

I. Interview for Baptism

- A. Opportunity will be given for a confession of Faith in the presence of three or more Members.
 - 1. Candidate has the option of oral or written examination.
 - 2. Candidate also has the option of requesting a closed session with only the examining brethren present.
 - 3. The examining brethren should select questions covering the necessary points regarding First Principles, Fellowship, and Walk, as appropriate, giving the candidate ample opportunity to ask questions as well as give a confession of his or her Faith.
 - 4. The examining brethren should realize that this confession of faith is not a "pass/fail" judgment, but a seeking of the candidate's heartfelt approach to the first steps on the road to the kingdom.
 - 5. Should there be serious doubt about the candidate's ability to enter baptism, the examining brethren should call an emergency meeting of the Arranging Brethren for discussion.

II. Baptism, by immersion, may follow immediately after a satisfactory interview, if suitable arrangements can be made.

- A. Baptism may be performed by the candidate's choice.
- B. Otherwise, by a Member appointed by the Arranging Brethren.

"But still, be it said again, 'We know it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God (Hebrews 10: 31) and are very aware of the need for constant care and prayer in our weakness.'"

- "The Things We Stand For" by A. D. Norris

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ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 2 – PRE-BAPTISM CLASSES

While it is understood to be desirable for applicants for baptism to study with a Brother or Sister of their choice, it is also agreed that these classes often form the foundation of a future Brother / Sister's life in the Truth, and for that reason, these guidelines are provided for any and all Brethren who are preparing others for baptism. Particular attention should be given to those coming to a knowledge of God's salvation from outside of our Ecclesial Sunday School program, as they will tend to be least familiar with the operations and traditions of Ecclesial life. It is readily acknowledged that a familiarity with the written word is only the first step in a walk towards the Kingdom. While this is the easiest part of the preparation to address (using readily available materials like The Christadelphian Instructor, or Preparing for Baptism, for example), attention to the more "spiritual" matters should not be left undone. It is in the "bonding" and relationship-forming time of pre-baptismal classes that time should be spent exhorting and admonishing the candidate to seek for the fullest and broadest participation in Ecclesial life as possible. It should be made clear to the candidate that this pursuit will not only help the Ecclesia, and fulfill the commandments of our Lord, but will also greatly benefit them personally. To that end, we recommend that the following items be covered frequently, sufficiently, and in conjunction with the other gospel truths that will arise in your studies:

- 1) The role of the Ecclesia
 - Why God put us in groups.
 - The benefits of a "three strand cord".
 - Why it is not good to be alone.
 - What to expect from your Ecclesia.
 - What your Ecclesia will expect from you.
 - The value of being accountable to someone.
 - How to transfer to another Ecclesia.
 - The value of visiting other Ecclesias.
 - How change comes about in an Ecclesia.
 - Why you should attend Business Meetings.

- 2) The role of a Brother / Sister
 - What it means to share fellowship with those around you.
 - Why it matters who you break bread with.
 - How to correct a relationship if you have offended someone.
 - How to handle a situation if a person has offended you.
 - The importance of open, honest communication.
 - Praying for others.
 - Asking for prayers for yourself.
 - Your responsibilities to your immediate family.

- 3) Withdrawal of Fellowship
 - Why we withdraw fellowship.
 - What reasons we might have for withdrawing from you.
 - What to do if it happens.
 - How to properly react to Ecclesia censorship.
 - What to do if you feel others should be corrected.

- 4) Attendance
 - The commandment to remember the Lord's Sacrifice.
 - What will happen if you are absent.
 - What you should do if you notice that others are absent.
 - The importance of attendance at other functions.
 - The value of supporting functions at other Ecclesias.
 - The value of attending Bible Schools.
 - Your commitment to teaching and leading others in classes.

- 5) Giving
 - The commandment to give of our increase.
 - The benefits that God showers on those that are generous.
 - How our Ecclesia goes about collecting funds.
 - What things we spend money on.
 - Financial items that are your responsibility.
 - Financial items that the Ecclesia pays for.

These are simply a few of the topics that should be addressed. In-depth discussions on what "Ecclesial Life" entails, and what is expected of the candidate is the goal. The "First Principles" are adequately covered by the teaching materials readily available, but these items are the responsibility of the teacher. In addition to the basic instruction regarding God's promises and our role in them, it is beneficial to both the candidate, and to the Ecclesia, if all Members play a positive and active role in our Ecclesia.

It would also be beneficial for the Brother/Sister who are providing these classes to conduct a preliminary interview with the candidate so he or she may know what to expect as far as the interview process goes.

How will they learn, unless you teach them?

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ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 3 – NEWLY BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of the newly baptized membership program is threefold:

- 1) To reinforce and foster a strong base in God's Principles
- 2) To educate on the purpose and function of the Ecclesia, and their role in it
- 3) To establish a communication link with the new Member and a present Member, which will be assigned by the Arranging Brethren and upon mutual consent by both parties.

A suggested course to achieve these goals is to hold weekly Bible classes for ninety days as follows:

- I) Assess their understanding of the First Principles of God's Truth
 - A) Sit in on Baptismal Interview if possible
 - B) Discuss Interview with Examining Brethren if unable to attend
 - C) Review individual's study program with pre-baptismal instructor

Having just finished pre-baptismal classes, the individual may not be disposed to reviewing First Principles again. Further study and growth may cause the individual to feel that they want to learn more about the basics later.

- II) First Principles
 - A) Bible Marking Course to give them a tangible underscoring of prior teaching
 - B) "Christadelphians - What they Believe and Teach" - Harry Tenant
 - C) Christadelphian State of Faith
- III) Lifestyle
 - A) "New Creation" - George Booker
 - B) "The New Life" - John Marshall
 - C) "Guidebook for New Christadelphians" - Harry Tennant
 - D) "Reformation" - Harry Whittaker
 - E) "What is Right?" - Christadelphian Pamphlet

Lifestyle and Ecclesial Service classes should make up the bulk of the Post-Baptismal Classes. There are several books, in addition to the ones mentioned,

that are an excellent basis for this type of study. Be sure to reinforce this with Scripture references, and feel free to digress into subjects of interest to the individual.

IV) Ecclesial Service

- A) Review the Constitution of the Simi Hills Ecclesia
- B) Review all Ecclesial Guidelines
- C) Review the Ecclesial Position on Marriage and Divorce
- D) Review "The Lord Hateth Putting Away"
- E) Review the "Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias" - Robert Roberts
- F) Review "Ye Servants of the Lord" - Harry Tenant

V) Individual Study and Service

- A) Promote:
 - 1) Bible Reading
 - 2) Prayer
 - 3) Fellowship with Brothers and Sisters
 - 4) Memorial Service Attendance
- B) Introduce to personal study aids:
 - 1) Concordance and Lexicon
 - 2) "Index Rerum" and "Wrested Scriptures"
 - 3) "Exploring the Bible" - Harry Whittaker
 - 4) Reference Books; "Studies in the Gospels", "Acts and Epistles"
- C) Establish long-term bond with new Brother/Sister
 - 1) Become the "Key Contact" for any problems
 - 2) Continue discussion and fellowship
 - 3) Encourage continued study and attendance

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ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 4 – HELPING HAND FUND

The Helping Hand Fund exists in order to assist with the urgent financial needs of Ecclesial Members, and their dependents where help is not available from public sources. The following information is intended as a guide for use in deciding whether or not the fund should be used, and how to go about it.

Ecclesial Responsibility

While the Ecclesia's primary responsibility is for the spiritual welfare of its Members, it is also responsible to provide help where it can in meeting practical needs. "If a Brother or Sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace and be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" (James 2:15-16). The Ecclesia will seek to provide necessary assistance where the resources of the individual and his family are not available. Where help is available through insurance and public welfare agencies such as Medi-Cal, the Ecclesia will provide assistance until such help becomes available.

Financial problems

A written request should be made to the Recording Brother or any Member of the Arranging Board. The request should state the circumstances surrounding the request, and the purpose for which funds are needed. Any additional information that would be helpful to the board in reviewing the request should be included. Any Member of the Arranging Board may assist in preparing the written request. The Board will review the request and determine how best to meet the need. Funds may come from the Helping Hand Fund or from other Christadelphian sources available to the Board, including the Joy Fund.

1. Needs of \$500 or less. Any Arranging Brother is authorized to provide funds on an emergency basis on his own judgment without seeking approval from the Arranging Board.
2. Needs over \$500. The request will be considered as quickly as possibly by the Arranging Board.
3. Needs of more than \$1,500 (one-time) or any on-going need. The Arranging Board will appoint 2 board Members to meet with the requestor and report back to the Arranging Board.

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ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 5 – CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

Counseling is available for marriage and family problems, individual problems for adults, teens or children, including drug and alcohol abuse. The Ecclesia has two several options for members:

1. We have retained the services of an experienced Christian family counselor located in Pasadena. Members and their families are free to make an appointment for counseling without consulting the Ecclesia. The counselor bills the Ecclesia for his services without revealing the names of those counseled. This service is restricted to Members of the Ecclesia. The counselor is Dr. Duane Alleman. He has a doctorate degree in Clinical and Health Psychology and has been counseling Christadelphians for over 10 years. He is State licensed. For an appointment Members should call:

Pacific Psychological Services
200 East Del Mar Blvd., Suite 120
Pasadena CA 91105
(626) 792-8922

Advise that you are a Member of the Simi Hills Ecclesia. They will check your name against the Ecclesial membership list they have on file. Agreed upon fee schedule is:

First 5 sessions (45 minutes each) Member pays \$40.00 each visit.

All Additional sessions over 5, the Member pays \$80.00.

If these rates are not within the means of the Member, additional funding can be obtained from the Ecclesial Helping Hand Fund.

2. We have interviewed several Christian Counselors located in Simi. We haven't retained their services, but would recommend them to you as qualified Counselors. Members are encouraged to utilize any one of these Counselors:

- Deborah Tucker, Marriage and Family Therapist
1633 Erringer Rd, #204 Simi Valley, CA (805) 583-3976
- Shanon Strull, Marriage and Family Therapist
1633 Erringer Rd, #204 Simi Valley, CA (805) 583-3976
- Kristy Schadt, Marriage and Family Therapist
1633 Erringer Rd # 207, Simi Valley, CA (805) 371-1866
- Debbie Reed, Marriage and Family Therapist
28494 Westinghouse Pl, Valencia, CA (661) 287-4243

If you need the Ecclesia to help fund sessions with one of these Counselors, just let any member of the Arranging Board know of your need and submit receipts for counseling sessions to the current Ecclesial Treasurer.

Fee assistance is available for Members who need assistance:

First 5 sessions, Member pays the Counselor for the agreed upon rate. Member may submit a receipt to the Ecclesial Treasurer who will reimburse the Member

for the cost of the session minus \$40.00 for each visit. All additional sessions over 5, the Ecclesia will reimburse members for all but \$80.00 for each session. If these rates are not within the means of the Member, additional funding can be obtained from the Helping Hand Fund.

If members would like to get advice on selecting a Counselor, or there is a barrier with the above procedures, Members are encouraged to contact an Arranging Brother, or Members can consult with Bro. Erik Sternad for confidential assistance.

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ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 6 – DONATION INSTRUCTIONS

DONATION DEPOSIT OPTIONS

I. DEPOSIT BY MAIL

- A. Make out check payable to “Simi Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia”
- B. Endorse the back of the check as follows:
Simi Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia
For deposit only in Account 179-091144-0
(Note: Instead of endorsing by hand, you may use an endorsement stamp. See the Ecclesial treasurer if you would like to order one)
- C. Fill out deposit slip.
- D. Mail to: Chase Bank
Deposit Servicing
5105 E Los Angeles Ave
Simi Valley, CA 93063

Receipts will be mailed to the Ecclesial treasurer.

II. DEPOSIT IN PERSON

- A. Make out check and deposit slip as above
- B. Deposit at a Chase Branch

III. DEPOSIT IN COLLECTION BOX IN HALL

- A. Make out check payable to “Simi Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia”
- B. **DO NOT** endorse the back. The Ecclesial treasurer will endorse the check.
- C. Deposit check in the collection box, in the side labeled “General Fund”.

IV. PAYROLL DEDUCTION

- A. Complete paperwork with your Human Resources or Payroll Department.
- B. Provide a copy of the Ecclesial deposit slip.

V. AUTOMATIC DEBIT FROM BANK ACCOUNT

- A. Complete paperwork with your bank.
- B. Provide a copy of the Ecclesial deposit slip.

VI. WIRE TRANSFER (\$10.00 Fee Charged to Ecclesia)

- A. Transfer from your bank to Chase Bank:
 - 1. ABA Routing Number - 321180748
 - 2. Account number - 179-091144-0

VII. Stock Donations

- A. Such donations can be arranged. Contact the Recording Brother or another Arranging Board member for more information.

VIII. Credit Card Donations

- A. Can be set up online at <http://www.simihills.org>

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ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 7 – WEDDING POLICY

Introduction

The use of the Simi Hill's Christadelphian Hall for weddings implies Ecclesial endorsement of what occurs at the wedding and in conjunction with the wedding. In light of the spiritual importance and symbolic significance of marriage set forth in the Word of God and the Ecclesia's need to uphold these Biblical standards, the arranging board proposes the following guidelines.

For weddings in the Simi Hills Hall, or weddings that are announced in the Simi Hills Newsletter, these are the guidelines in order to uphold the highest spiritual ideals:

1. Parties must be Members in good standing in their respective Ecclesias.
2. The Ecclesia should not be seen as viewing premarital sexual relations lightly. (See Paul's condemnation of fornication in Gal. 5:19-21) The wedding service is referred to as a type of the Ecclesia's union with His Son. (Eph. 5:26-32) Therefore it is not appropriate for the Ecclesial hall to be used if the bride is pregnant.
3. If a 2nd marriage for one or both parties, approval must be made by the arranging board, based on its unique circumstances.
4. The marrying Brother needs to be approved by the arranging board.
5. A series of premarital counseling sessions are required. A minimum of 7 premarital counseling sessions are recommended, to be done preferably by an approved couple in the meeting or other counselors, if requested, that are approved by the arranging board.
6. A liaison for the Ecclesia will be appointed for each wedding to be made aware of the special needs and to review the decorations, music, and attire planned by the wedding party. The idea is to think through anything that might cause to offend and to avoid damage to the facility.
7. Weddings and receptions that include alcohol or dancing are not allowed in our hall. Wedding receptions that will include alcohol or dancing will not be announced from the platform or Ecclesial newsletter. Private invitations should be sent.

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 8 – SPEAKER’S BUDDY SYSTEM

The Program: All new speakers (less than 8 exhortations) will be asked to take part and any more experienced speakers who would like to participate can too. A staff of “buddy’s” approved by the arranging board will work with a speaker according to a schedule:

4 weeks prior to exhortation: Meet with exhorter and explore what ideas, subjects etc. they may want to pursue.

3 weeks prior to exhortation: Call or check in with exhorter to see if any progress on narrowing it down to a topic. Ask them to work on coming up with 3 points that they will look into.

2 weeks prior to exhortation: Meet with exhorter to see how the 3 points panned out and see how the topic is progressing. Explore ways of making the 3 points have an impact.

1 week prior to exhortation: Call or check in with exhorter to see if things are coming together. They should have the talk researched and the outline of points roughed out. Encourage them to finish early this week and polish it up. Also validate the talk and the help it will bring to us.

Day of exhortation: Have a prayer with the exhorter before the talk, prayer given by the buddy.

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 9 – JOB DESCRIPTIONS

There are many positions in an active and healthy Ecclesia that require volunteers and appointed positions. In accordance with bylaws 24 and 27, Serving Brethren and special committees are appointed as required for the carrying out of Ecclesial functions. Following is the current list of appointed and elected positions at the Simi Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia:

Recording Brother: Elected annually, the Recording Brother coordinates all communication between our Ecclesia and others, records all decisions and transactions of the Ecclesia and it's Arranging Board, and acts as the focal point of contact for all Members and non-Members alike.

Finance Brother: Elected annually, the Finance Brother acts as the Ecclesial Treasurer, recording all donations and processing payment of all Ecclesial bills as directed by the Ecclesia and the Arranging Board.

Activities Brother: Elected annually, the Activities Brother is responsible for the general Ecclesial activities (other than classes) and Ecclesial outreach.

Adult Education: Appointed annually, the Adult Education Brother organizes and coordinates the Adult Sunday School and Mid-Week Bible Study Classes.

Sunday School Superintendent: Elected annually, the Sunday School Superintendent, in conjunction with the Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, coordinates all education in the youth Sunday School classes. The Sunday School Superintendent chairs all meetings of the Sunday School Committee, and organizes the schedule for the all Sunday School activities.

Sunday School Committee: Appointed annually, the Sunday School Committee consists of the Sunday School Superintendent, Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, the youth class teachers and any others interested in the education of the Sunday School.

Librarian: Appointed annually, the Librarian organizes and orders all books and other materials in both the Lending Library and the Selling Library.

C.Y.C. Head Counselors: Appointed annually, the C.Y.C. Head Counselors lead and direct the youth program with the assistance of the CYC Leadership and the other C.Y.C. Counselors in the Ecclesia.

Preaching Committee: All those interested in outreach are to work together to help the Ecclesia spread the Word of God. Coordinates with the Activities Brother.

Southern California Preaching Committee: Appointed annually, this group maintains contact and coordination with the Southern California Preaching Committee in projects designed to preach God's Word in Southern California.

Speaking Schedule: Appointed annually, this person organizes the Speaking and Appointment Schedule for both the Memorial Service and Sunday School. Coordinates with the Activities Brother for the Sunday Evening Activities.

Doorkeepers: Appointed annually, the Doorkeepers greet all visitors, and attend to the proper service of the Memorial emblems.

Memorial Table Service: Appointed annually, this person organizes the schedule for Memorial Table Service and ensures that it is properly attended to.

Hospitality: Appointed annually, those in charge of Hospitality organize the food service at all Ecclesial events coordinating with those responsible for planning the events.

Flowers: Appointed annually, those responsible provide flowers and cards for the sick and absent.

Auditor: Appointed annually, the Auditor performs an annual check of the Ecclesia's finances to ensure proper handling of all accounts.

Newsletter: Appointed annually, the person responsible for the Newsletter prepares and distributes weekly news items to the entire Ecclesia and any others interested.

Building Maintenance: Appointed annually, the person responsible for the maintenance of the building acts as main contact point for maintenance and improvements of the building.

Property Brother: Appointed by the Arranging Board, the Property Brother is accountable to purchase, store, maintain and disburse all Ecclesial property.

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

ECCLESIAL GUIDELINE # 10 – CHARGES OF INNAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL CONDUCT WITH A MINOR

Through this Guideline we seek to honor God and serve our spiritual family by providing policies, procedures, practices and other resources which promote a safe environment free from accidental and predatory risks. By having a formal Guideline, and faithfully following it, we best insure the safety of all. At the same time, we also protect our legal position and improve our credibility as careful stewards in the face of legal challenges or inquiries by authorities.

The Arranging Board is a standing committee prepared to respond to any complaints of sexual contact in a ecclesial relationship brought against any member of the ecclesia. In dealing with any complaint, the Arranging Board records all proceedings carefully.

Steps to be followed are:

- 1st - Solicit a clear statement of the experience and the complaint from the person(s) making the complaint.
- 2nd - Determine whether this is a single complaint or whether others have experienced sexual abuse by the accused individual.
- 3rd - The Arranging Board should confront the individual with the complaint. As part of this confrontation a statement from the individual who has been accused shall be requested.
- 4th - The Arranging Board shall carefully consider each complaint and the response of the person accused and shall make a determination regarding appropriate action to be taken.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

1) Response to Victims

Since we are deeply concerned for the welfare of the victim(s), the victim(s) shall be offered support, information and counseling as needed to deal with the experience of victimization.

2) Response to Alleged Perpetrator(s)

When it has been determined that an individual has violated the Ecclesial Guideline on sexual misconduct, one or more of the following disciplinary actions may be deemed appropriate by the Arranging Board.

- Notification of the ecclesia that the individual has violated the Ecclesial Guideline by inappropriate sexual conduct;
- Requirement that the individual receive rehabilitation treatment and that the individual be placed under stringent supervision during the rehabilitation process;
- Denial of request for transfer of membership to another ecclesia;
- Requirement that the offending individual provides restitution to the victim(s), e.g. the cost of the victim(s) medical or therapy expenses, etc.

3) Response to the Ecclesia

When individual members of the ecclesia are involved in these violations of ethics, the ecclesia is also a victim of the offense. This is especially true if the offense is widely known.

The ecclesia as a whole may need pastoral care from a counselor.

4) Additional Actions

Upon reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred, the Arranging Board will also determine if any additional actions are required, including, but not limited to the following:

Initiate the required mandatory reporting to the appropriate state/local agency.

Consult with the Ecclesia's counselor about appropriate follow-up actions.

Notify the Ecclesia's liability insurance company to assist in determining coverage applicability and to solicit advice on additional required actions.

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

CHRISTADELPHIAN STATEMENT OF FAITH

A STATEMENT OF OUR FAITH FORMING OUR BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP

The Foundation. That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth. and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be due to errors of transcription or translation.

(2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 14:37, Neh. 9:30; John 10:35)

TRUTH TO BE RECEIVED

1. That the only true God is He who was revealed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by angelic visitation and vision, and to Moses at the flaming bush (unconsumed) and at Sinai, and who manifested Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the supreme self-existent Deity, the ONE FATHER, dwelling in unapproachable light. yet everywhere present by His Spirit, which is a unity with His person in heaven. He hath, out of His own underived energy, created heaven and earth, and all that in them is.

(Isa. 40:13-25; 43:10-12; 44:6-8; 45:5; 46:9-10; Job 38,39,40; Deut. 6:1-4; Mark 2:29-32; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Neh. 9:6; Job 26:13; Psa. 124:8; 146:6; 148:5; Isa. 40:25-27; Jer. 10:12-13; 27:5; 32; 17-25; 51:15; Acts 14:15; 17:24; 1 Chron. 29:11-14; Psa 62:11; 145:3; Isa. 26:4; 40:26; Job 9:4; 36:5; Psa. 92:5; 104:24; 147:4-5; Isa. 28:29; Rom. 16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Chron. 16:9; Job 28:24; 34:21; Psa. 33:13-14; 44:21; 94:9; 139:7-12; Prov. 15:3; Jer. 23:24; 32:19; Amos 9:2-3; Acts 17:27-28; Psa. 123:1; 1 Kings 8:30-39,43,49; Matt 6:9; 1 Tim. 6:15-16; 1:17)

2. That Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of man, and afterwards anointed with the same spirit, without measure, at his baptism.

(Matt. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:16; Acts 2:22-36; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Gal. 4:4; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 3:16-17; Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; John 3:34; 7:16; 8:26-28; 14:10-24)

3. That the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth on the earth was necessitated by the position and state into which the human race had been brought by the circumstances connected with the first man.

(1 Cor. 15:21-22; Rom. 5:12-19; Gen. 3:19; H Cor. 5:19-21)

4. That the first man was Adam, whom God created out of the dust of the ground as a living soul, or natural body of life, "very good" in kind and condition, and placed him under a law through which the continuance of life was contingent on obedience.

(Gen. 2:7; 18:27; Job 4:19; 33:6; I Cor. 15:46-49; Gen. 2:17)

5. That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken - a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity.

(Gen. 3:15-19,22-23; II Cor. 1:9; Rom. 7:24; II Cor. 5:2-4; Rom. 7:18-23; Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 6:12; 7:21; John 3:6; Rom. 5:12; I Cor. 15:22; Psa. 51:5; Job 14:4)

6. That God, in His kindness, conceived a plan of restoration, which, without setting aside His just and necessary law of sin and death, should ultimately rescue the race from destruction, and people the earth with sinless immortals.

(Rev. 21:4; John 3:1:16; II Tim. 1:10; 1 John 2:25; 11 Tim. I: 1; Titus 1:2; Rom. 3:26; John 1:29)

7. That He inaugurated this plan by making promises to Adam, Abraham, and David, and afterwards elaborated it in greater detail through the prophets.

(Gen. 3:15; 22:18; Psa. 89:34-37; 33:5; Hosea 13:14; Isa. 25:7-9; 51:1-8; Jer. 23:5)

8. That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for Himself and all who should believe and obey Him.

(I Cor. 15:45; Heb. 2:14-16; Rom. 1:3; Heb. 5:8-9; 1:9; Rom. 5:19-21; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:3-4; Heb. 2:15; 9:26; Gal 1:4; Heb. 7:27; 5:3-7; 2:17; Rom. 6:10; 6:9; Acts 13:34-37; Rev. 1:18; John 5:21-Psa. 2:6-9; Dan. 7:13-14; Rev. 11:15; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 14:9; Eph. 1:9-10)

9. That it was this mission that necessitated the miraculous begetting of Christ of a human mother, enabling Him to bear our condemnation, and, at the same time, to be a sinless bearer thereof, and, therefore, one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God.

(Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Gal. 4:4; Isa. 7:14; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:3; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:14-17; 4:15)

10. That being so begotten of God, and inhabited and used by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh--yet was, during His natural life, of like nature with mortal man, being made of a woman, of the house and lineage of David; and therefore a sufferer, in the days of His flesh, from all the effects that came by Adam's transgression,

including the death that passed upon all men, which He shared by partaking of their physical nature.

(Matt. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:17)

11. That the message He delivered from God to His kinsmen, the Jews, was a call to repentance from every evil work, the assertion of His divine sonship and Jewish kingship; and the proclamation of the glad tidings that God would restore their kingdom through Him, and accomplish all things written in the prophets.

(Mark 1:5; Matt. 4:17; 5:20-48; John 10:36; 9:35; 11:27; 19:21; 1:49; Matt. 27:11-42; John 10:24-25; Matt. 19:28; 21:42-43; 23:38-39; 25:14-46; Luke 4:43; 13:27-30; 19:11-27; 22:28-30; Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:44)

12. That for delivering this message, He was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God", for the doing of that which He had determined before to be done - the condemnation of sin in the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, as a propitiation to declare the righteousness of God, as a basis for the remission of sins. All who approach God through this crucified, but risen, representative of Adam's disobedient race are forgiven. Therefore, by a figure, His blood cleanseth from sin.

(Luke 19:47; 20:1-26; John 11:45-53; Acts 10:38-39; 13:26-29; 4:27-28; Rom 8:3; Heb. 10:10; Rom 3:25; Acts 13:38; 1 John 1:7; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 3:18; 2:24; Heb 9:14; 7:27; 9:26-28; Gal. 1:4; Rom. 3:25; 15:8; Gal. 3:21-22; 2:21; 4:4-5; Heb. 9:15; Luke 22:20; 24:26, 46-47; Matt. 26:28)

13. That on the third day, God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to the heavens as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the truth.

(1 Cor. 15:4; Acts 10:40:13:30-37; 2:24-27)

14. That He is a priest over His own house only, and does not intercede for the world, or for professors who are abandoned for disobedience. That He makes intercession for His erring brethren, if they confess and forsake their sins.

(Luke 24:51; Eph. 1:20; Acts 5:31; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:1; Acts 15:14; 13:39; Heb. 4:14-15; John 17:9; Heb. 10:26; 1 John 2:1; Prov. 28:13)

15. That He sent forth apostles to proclaim salvation through Him, as the only name given under heaven whereby men may be saved.

(Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 26:16-18; 4:12)

16. That the way to obtain this salvation is to believe the gospel they preached. and to take on the name and service of Christ, by, being thereupon immersed in water, and continuing patiently in the observance of all things He has commanded, none being recognized as His friends except those who do what He has commanded.

(Acts 13:48; 16:31; Mark 16:16; Rom. 1:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 10:47; 8:12; Gal. 3:27-

29; *Rom. 6:3-5; 2:7; Matt. 28:20; John 15:14*)

17. That the gospel consists of the "things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ."

(Acts 8:12; 19:8, 10.20; 28:30-31)

18. That the things of the Kingdom of God are the facts testified concerning the Kingdom of God in the writings of the prophets and apostles, and definable as in the next twelve paragraphs.

19. That God will set up a Kingdom in the earth, which will overthrow all others, and change them into "the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ."

(Dan. 2:44; 7:13; Rev. 11:15; Isa. 32:1, 6; 2:3-4; 11:9-10)

20. That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles.

(Acts 3:20-21; Psa. 102:16,21; 11 Tim. 4:1; Acts 1:9,11; Dan. 7:13)

21. That the Kingdom, which He will establish, will be the Kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant.

(Micah 4:6-8; Amos 9:11-15; Ezek 37:21-22; Jer. 23:3, 8; Gen. 13:14, 17; Heb. 11:8-9; Gal. 3:16; Lev. 26:42; Micah 7:20)

22. That this restoration of the kingdom again to Israel will involve the ingathering of God's chosen but scattered nation, the Jews; their reinstatement in the land of their fathers, when it shall have been reclaimed from "the desolation of many generations"; the building again of Jerusalem to become "the throne of the Lord" and the metropolis of the whole earth.

(Isa. 11:12; Jer. 31:10; Zech. 8:8; Ezek. 36:34, 36; Isa. 51:3; 62:4; Jer. 3:17; Micah 4:7-8; Joel 3:17; Isa. 24:23)

23. That the governing body of the Kingdom so established will be the brethren of Christ, of all generations, developed by resurrection and change. and constituting, with Christ as their head, the collective "seed of Abraham", in whom all nations will be blessed. and comprising "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets", and all in their age of like faithfulness.

(Dan. 12:2; Luke 13:28; Rev. 11 :18; I Thess. 4:15-17; John 5:28-29; 6:39-40; Luke 14:14; Matt. 24:34,46)

24. That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, the responsible (namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called to submit to it), dead and living--obedient and disobedient--will be summoned before His judgment seat to be judged according to their works"; and "receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad".

(II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 4:1; Rom. 2:5-6, 16:14:10-12; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 11:18)

25. That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and the "second death", and the faithful, invested with immortality, and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the Kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God's authority among men in everything.

(Matt. 7:26; 8:12; 25:20; Dan. 12:2; Gal. 6:8; 5:21; II Thess. 1:8; Heb. 10:26-28; II Peter 2:12; Rev. 21:8; Mal. 4:1; Psa 37: 30-38, Prov. 10:25-29; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 11 Cor. 5:1-4; as. 1:12; Rom. 2:7; John 10:28; Matt. 5:5; Psa. 37:9, 22, 29; Rev. 5:9; Dan. 7:27; I Thess. 2:12; II Peter 1:11; Rev. 3:21; II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; Psa. 49:7-9; Luke 22:29-30)

26. That the Kingdom of God, thus constituted, will continue a thousand years, during which sin and death will continue among the earth's subject inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now.

(Rev. 20:4-8; 12:15; Isa. 65:20; Ezek. 64:22, 25; 1 Cor. 15:24, 28)

27. That a law will be established which shall go forth to the nations for their "instruction in righteousness" resulting in the abolition of war to the ends of the earth; and the "filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea".

(Micah 4:2; Isa. 42:4; 11:1-5; 2:4; Hab. 2:14)

28. That the mission of the Kingdom will be to subdue all enemies, and finally death itself, by opening up the way of life to the nations, which they will enter by faith, during the thousand years, and (in reality) at their close.

(I Cor. 15:25-26; Rev. 21:4; 20:12-15; Isa. 25:6-8)

29. That at the close of the thousand years, there will be a general resurrection and judgment, resulting in the final extinction of the wicked, and the immortalization of those who shall have established their title (under the grace of God) to eternal life during the thousand years.

(Rev. 20:11-15; I Cor. 15:24)

30. That the government will then be delivered up by Jesus to the Father, who will manifest Himself as the "All-in-All", sin and death having been taken out of the way, and the race completely restored to the friendship of the Deity.

(1 Cor. 15:28)

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST

1. Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you. (*Matt. 5:44*)
2. Resist not evil: if a man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also. (*Matt. 5:39-40*)
3. Avenge not you yourselves; rather give place unto wrath: and suffer yourselves to be defrauded. (*Rom. 12:18-19; 1 Cor. 6:7*)
4. If a man take away thy goods, ask them not again. (*Luke 6:29-30*)
5. Agree with your adversary quickly, submitting even to wrong for the sake of peace. (*Matt. 5:25; 1 Cor. 6: 7*)
6. Labour not to be rich; be ready to every good work, give to those who ask: relieve the afflicted. (*1 Tim. 6:8; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13: 16; Jas. 1:27*)
7. Do not your alms before men: let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. (*Matt. 6:1-4*)
8. Recompense no man evil for evil: overcome evil with good. (*Rom. 12:17*)
9. Bless them that curse you; let no cursing come out of your mouth. (*Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14*)
10. Render not evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing. (*1 Peter 3: 9*)
11. Pray for them that despitefully use you and afflict you. (*Matt. 5:44*)
12. Grudge not; judge not: complain not; condemn not. (*Jas. 5:9; Matt: 7:1*)
13. Put away anger, wrath, bitterness. and all evil speaking. (*Eph. 4:31; Peter 2:1*)
12. Grudge not; judge not: complain not; condemn not. (*Jas. 5:9; Matt: 7:1*)
13. Put away anger, wrath, bitterness. and all evil speaking. (*Eph. 4:31; Peter 2:1*)
14. Confess your faults one to another. (*James 5:16*)
15. Be not conformed to this world: love not the world. (*Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15*)

16. Deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. (*Titus 2:12; Matt. 5:30*)
17. Servants, be faithful, even to bad masters. (*Eph. 6:5-8*)
18. Mind not high things. but condescend to men of low estate. (*Rom. 12:16*)
19. Owe no man anything. (*Rom. 13: 7-8*)
20. In case of sin (known or heard of) speak not of it to others, but tell the offending Brother of the matter between thee and him alone. with a view to recovery. (*Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1*)
21. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. (*Matt. 22:37*)
22. Pray always; pray with brevity and simplicity; pray secretly. (*Luke 18:1; Matt. 6:7*)
23. In everything give thanks to God and recognize Him in all your ways. (*Eph. 5:20; Prov 3:6*)
24. As ye would that men should do to you. do ye even so to them. (*Matt. 7:12*)
25. Take Christ for an example and follow in his steps. (*1 Peter 2:21*)
26. Let Christ dwell in your heart by faith. (*Eph. 3:17*)
27. Esteem Christ more highly than all earthly things: yea, than your own life. (*Luke 14:26*)
28. Confess Christ freely before men. (*Luke 12:8*)
29. Beware lest the cares of life or the allurements of pleasure weaken his hold on your heart. (*Luke 21:34-36; Matt. 24:44*)
30. Love thy neighbor as thyself. (*Matt. 22:39*)
31. Exercise lordship over no one. (*Matt. 23:10-12*)
32. Seek not your own welfare only, nor bear your own burdens merely, but have regard to those of others. (*Phil. 2: 4; Gal. 6:2*)
33. Let your light shine before men: hold forth the word of life. Do good to all men as ye have opportunity. (*Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:16; Gal. 6:10*)
34. Be blameless and harmless. as the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. (*Phil 2:15*)

35. Be gentle, meek, kind-hearted, compassionate, merciful, forgiving. (*II Tim. 2:24; Tit. 2:2; Eph. 4:32*)
36. Be sober, grave, sincere, temperate. (*Phil. 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8*)
37. Speak the truth every man with his neighbor: put away all lying. (*Eph. 4:25*)
38. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men.
39. Be watchful, vigilant, brave, joyful, courteous and manly. (*1 Cor. 16:13; Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:6-10*)
40. Be clothed with humility: be patient toward all. (*Col. 3:12; Rom. 12:2*)
41. Follow peace with all men. (*Heb. 12:14*)
42. Sympathize in the joys and sorrows of others. (*Rom. 12:15*)
43. Follow after whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseful. (*Phil. 4:8*)
44. Refrain utterly from adultery, fornication, uncleanness, drunkenness, covetousness, wrath, strife, sedition, hatred, emulation, boasting, vainglory, envy, jesting, and foolish talking. (*Eph. 5:3-4*)
45. Whatever you do, consider the effect of your action on the honour of God's name among men. Do all to the glory of God. (*1 Cor. 10:31; 3:17*)
46. Reckon yourselves dead to all manner of sin. Henceforth live not to yourselves, but to him who died for you, and rose again. (*Rom. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:15*)
47. Be zealous of good works, always abounding in the work of the Lord, wearying not in well-doing. (*Titus 2:14; Gal. 6:9*)
48. Speak evil of no man. (*Titus 3:2*)
49. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (*Col. 3:16*)
50. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. (*Col. 3:8; 4:6*)
51. Obey rulers; submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. (*Titus 3:1*)
52. Be holy in all manner of conversation. (*1 Peter 1:15-16*)
53. Give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. (*1 Tim. 5:14*)

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

DOCTRINES TO BE REJECTED

1. That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration - or, if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration has allowed.
2. That God is three persons.
3. That the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father.
4. That Christ was born with a "free life."
5. That Christ's nature was immaculate.
6. That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father.
7. That man has an immortal soul.
8. That man consciously exists in death.
9. That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell.
10. That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.
11. That the devil is a supernatural personal being.
12. That the Kingdom of God is "the church."
13. That the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely.
14. That Christ will not come till the close of the thousand years.
15. That the tribunal of Christ, when He comes, is not for the judgment of saints, but merely divide among them different degrees of reward.
16. That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.
17. That the dead rise in an immortal state.
18. That the subject-nations of the thousand years are immortal.
19. That the law of Moses is binding on believers of the Gospel.

20. That the observance of Sunday is a matter of duty.
21. That baby-sprinkling is a doctrine of Scripture.
22. That "heathens" idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved.
23. That man can be saved by morality or sincerity, without the Gospel.
24. That the Gospel alone will save, without the obedience of Christ's commandments.
25. That a man cannot believe without possession of the Spirit of God.
26. That men are predestined to salvation unconditionally.
27. That there is no sin in the flesh.
28. That Joseph was the actual father of Jesus.
29. That the earth will be destroyed.
30. That baptism is not necessary to salvation
31. That acknowledgement of the truth is not necessary to make baptism valid.
32. That some meats are to be refused on the score of uncleanness.
33. That the English are the ten tribes of Israel.
34. That marriage with an unbeliever is lawful.
35. That we are at liberty to serve in the Army, Navy, Police Force, or any service whatsoever requiring the Oath of Allegiance or use of force.
36. That we are at liberty to take post in politics, or recover debts by legal coercion.

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

ECCLESIAL POSITION REGARDING MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The Bible reveals the principle concerning marriage to be: a man and woman joined in marriage should live together as one flesh for life reflecting the ideal set forth in the figure of Christ and the church (the groom and the bride). The clear doctrine is that divorce by believers should not occur.

The Simi Hills Ecclesia's policy is to uphold the high principles of the marriage covenant by, first seeking God in prayer and allowing Him to work in the lives of His people. We recognize that human weaknesses and failings do occur. The following principles taken almost verbatim from the 1972 Christadelphian Magazine article entitled, "*The Lord Hateth Putting Away*", will guide our Ecclesia in facing the difficult problem (that may arise in our midst) of application for baptism or fellowship in a case of divorce and remarriage.

1. Take steps to ensure that there is complete understanding and wholehearted acceptance by the parties concerned of the divine principles and ideals involved, and that any departure from these ideals is acknowledged.
2. Decisions on requests for fellowship shall be the responsibility of the entire Ecclesia. Our Ecclesia should, with mercy and compassion, try to assess the state of conscience before God of the Brother and Sister involved; realizing, however, that only the individual concerned can be responsible.
3. The Ecclesia will bear in mind the likely effect upon Ecclesial life and worship of such decisions which can only be assessed by its Members.
4. It is always worth remembering that, "In dealing with all offenders... our aim should be not only to admonish and rebuke but also to restore. While endeavoring to maintain to the full the high standards of Christ's teaching, we must beware of slipping unconsciously into an attitude towards offenders which the Lord would condemn. To achieve the right balance in these matters in the spirit of our Lord's teaching calls for prayerful and persistent effort and humility of mind."
5. Regarding Ecclesial offices, the following principle taken from the same article will guide us. When people with compromised lives became Christians, Paul advised against such persons assuming office in the community. It is the duty of the Ecclesia to uphold the Lord's high ideals and to appoint to its offices Members whose lives are in accord with them. (1 Timothy 3:2-12, Titus 1:5-9)

Please see the entire text of "*The Lord Hateth Putting Away*" attached.

SIMI HILLS MEMBER HANDBOOK

THE LORD HATETH PUTTING AWAY

THE LORD HATETH PUTTING AWAY

and

***REFLECTIONS ON
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE***

***A CONSIDERATION
OF THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE***

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FOREWORD

The first of these two articles was issued by the Christadelphian Magazine Committee and appeared in *The Christadelphian* for April 1972 (pp. 152-159).

The second, by the Assistant Editor of the magazine, appeared, with the approval of the Committee, in the issues for February and March 1976 (pp. 45-50; 86-88).

It became evident from many comments received that these observations had been found helpful by a large number of readers. They are issued here in a more convenient form for the benefit of those who may not have seen the original articles or who may wish to study them afresh.

THE LORD HATETH PUTTING AWAY

In view of the rapidly changing climate of opinion in society on the subjects of marriage and divorce, and the foreseeable results of the recent changes in the divorce law in Britain it has become necessary to restate some of the spiritual principles which lie at the basis of personal or Ecclesial relationships. Ecclesias are now being faced with marital problems in their own midst, and an even larger proportion of people seeking baptism have matrimonial difficulties. These are trends, which are likely to increase, and the resulting problems are often of such complexity that Ecclesias find themselves at a loss to know how to temper judgment with mercy or honour one divine principle without doing violence to others.

True Marriage According to the Scriptures

The Scriptures treat marriage on a spiritual rather than on a personal level. Both the choosing of a marriage partner and the pattern of behaviour once the marriage relationship is accepted should be the expression of a believer's devotion to the spiritual ideals. The standards are set in passages such as these:

"The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him... So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves unto his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:18, 21-24).

"Jesus answered, Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6).

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her... Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies... For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church . . ." (Eph. 5:25, 28, 31-32).

(The quotations are from the R.S.V.).

The whole marriage relationship is to be a reflection of the espousal and marriage of Christ and his Bride. It is especially to be noted that Paul does not discuss the personal relationship and then compare the spiritual with it; *he puts it the other way round*. The spiritual is the standard; the human marriage is to reflect its spirit. This is why we take the attitude we do towards marriage with the unbeliever; such a marriage represents a personal relationship in which the true spiritual aspect has not been honoured.

The divine standard of marriage is a partnership between one man and one woman in a spiritual and physical union, based upon a covenant for life. Therefore any kind of marital irregularity, whether it be known and obvious as in the case of divorce or marriage out of the Faith, or known only to the parties concerned in some other form of unfaithfulness, physical or spiritual, is a lowering of this standard.

Christ and Divorce

From early times men have practiced divorce, and the Law of Moses both suffered it in certain circumstances, and legislated upon it. It did not "permit" in the sense of introducing or approving the custom, but ensured that the responsibilities of each party to it were understood and carried out; and it safeguarded the case of the woman. Thus the effect of "hardness of hearts" was limited. Christ's "But I say unto you..." (Matt. 5:32) and his quotation of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, with the comment, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" in Matthew 19:5-6, is plain enough evidence that for himself and his disciples the Edenic ideal, and not what man had made of it, was the standard.

The high ideals of marriage set out so clearly by the Lord not only in Matthew but also in Mark and Luke - ideals so much higher than those of the Pharisees - and the absence of any reference to an exception in Mark and Luke, have led to much discussion as to the precise meaning of the "exceptive Clause"

in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, "saving for the cause of fornication" and "except for fornication".¹

As to this, there are two main views in the Brotherhood. Some consider that the saying of Jesus, "What God hath joined, let no man put asunder", prohibits divorce after marriage in all circumstances. They interpret "fornication" in the exceptive Clause as referring to unchastity by the woman before marriage. This would permit the man either to repudiate the contract, if the marriage had not yet taken place; or, if the unchastity was only discovered after the marriage, to divorce his "wife" on the ground that the union was no true marriage.

¹ There are no valid grounds for assuming that the Lord did not say these words, or for taking them to mean anything other than an exception.

The second view holds that "except for fornication" means "except for adultery". Since the word rendered "fornication" was a general term for all kinds of sexual irregularity, including adultery, Christ used it in preference to adultery because he wished to convey the wider sense of unfaithfulness before marriage as well as after. Although divorce should never be encouraged, it may be permitted when adultery has occurred, and in that case remarriage is possible.²

In the history of our community Dr. Thomas and previous editors of *The Christadelphian* (Brethren Robert Roberts, C. C. Walker, John Carter and L. G. Sargent) have all accepted the second view; and Brother John Carter wrote a study entitled *Marriage and Divorce* (1950), setting forth his reasons. It is still available. It must however be recognized that strongly held, and sometimes irreconcilable, views exist about the meaning of the passages in Matthew. Even if it were possible to put forward one single point of view which, we might suppose, was supported by decisive evidence, it would be unrealistic to imagine that what has remained unresolved for so long can be settled by a single article, however persuasive. The existing situation has therefore to be accepted and some course of action worked out which permits harmonious Ecclesial life to continue and seeks at the same time to regulate a grave problem to the profit of the Brotherhood and to the glory of God.

*Deuteronomy 24: 1-4; Matthew 5: 31-32; 19 : 3-12; Genesis 1: 27; 2: 24;
Mark 10: 1-12; Luke 16: 18.*

The High Ideal Maintained

It is important therefore to keep firmly in perspective at all times the divine ideals, which Christ is emphasizing. He gives no command to divorce, nor indeed is he concerned with granting *permission* to divorce but with the consequences of divorce when it has occurred. His comment that "because of the hardness of your hearts Moses *suffered you* to put away your wives" only made starkly apparent the extent to which divorce represented a falling away from the ideal.

In the Lord's reference to the commandment in Genesis, the spiritual and physical aspects of marriage and their inter-relationship are clearly defined. Adam's wife was to be, by divine arrangement, "an help meet for him", one "answering to him" (RV margin), a spiritual counterpart who would be a partner in his life before God. The creation of woman "out of man" made her a partner for Adam such as he had previously looked for. The covenant and the physical union were each a part of the process by which the two were to regard themselves as one flesh. So important is the physical aspect that Paul goes so far as to say that a man's sexual relationship with a harlot makes the two one flesh-but this is no true marriage because there is no marriage covenant. Fleshly association with another than one's partner is an act of disloyalty to the covenant.

² See a more detailed discussion of the teaching of Christ and of the Apostle Paul in the second part of this booklet.

Adultery is therefore a breach both of the covenant and of the spiritual and physical union, which underlies it. It is because the Lord's ideal of marriage is so high that adultery is so odious, and so catastrophic in its results, for it means that the lofty ideal has been besmirched, the solemn covenant dishonored, the spiritual and physical principles repudiated. The exceptive Clause recognizes not just the collapse of physical restraint; it is the horrified response to the crude and fleshly blow, which has defiled something spiritual and holy. In no way is it a lowering of the ideal; if anything, it heightens the ideal and clothes it with greater sanctity. Therefore the clear implication of Matthew 19:9 is that a marriage after divorce is adulterous, unless the divorce was for that one reason.

References as in the previous section; 1 Corinthians 6: 16.

The Teaching of Paul

In any consideration of 1 Corinthians 7 it is important to recognize two points: Paul is not writing a treatise on marriage and divorce but answering specific questions put to him in a letter: what is the relationship between husband and wife when both have accepted the faith, or when one partner only is a believer? Should a believer leave an unbelieving partner? The background is not that of the Pharisees and of the twelve, but of the Roman world, where the law regarded marriage as a contract which could be terminated at any time by mutual consent and either partner could divorce the other on the slightest pretext. In answering the first question Paul repeats Christ's commandment, and in dealing with the other queries he gives his own advice as an inspired apostle of the Lord. It is to be expected, therefore, that his teaching would be entirely consistent with the spirit and intention of Christ's words.

So it is, even when a cause of separation other than that of adultery is introduced. There is the same high standard set, the same recognition of human needs and men's differing capacities, by which it is "given" to some to exercise restraints impossible to others; and the same acceptance of a practical situation in which the ideal may be difficult of attainment. So, by the Lord's *command*, partners

in the Faith were not to separate, or if for any reason they did, were to remain unmarried, or better still become reconciled. Paul was reminding them of the ideal of Christian marriage and of the Lord's teaching. This was neither the time nor the place to discuss the effect of adultery or any other sexual irregularity on the marriage of believers.

In the case of marriage contracted before the conversion of the husband or the wife, Paul of necessity gives his own Spirit-guided judgment, since there was no relevant commandment of the Lord. In a "mixed marriage" of this kind it was the responsibility of the new believer to try to preserve the relationship. The baptism of the husband or wife did not render null and void the marriage covenant if the unbelieving partner wished to keep it; the believing partner was under obligation to preserve the union, even though the marriage originally might have been anything but a sanctified one. It was however rendered so by the conversion of the believing partner, which brought new ideals.

On the other hand, if the unbelieving partner took the initiative in breaking the relationship, then the Christian husband or wife, said Paul, was "not under bondage in such cases". In the absence of information about the precise question Paul is answering, difference of opinion about the meaning of the phrase "not under bondage" is unavoidable; but the most natural interpretation of Paul's words in their context is as no longer bound by the marriage tie. (In this context it must be remembered that Western law does not recognize disagreement over religious beliefs as an immediate reason for divorce.) Paul's judgment is a recognition of the practical, physical and spiritual facts, and although his counsel would still have been, as with the widow, that it were better to remain unmarried, he would have understood that each "has his own gift from God, some this way and some that" (v. 7) — subject to the important qualification "only in the Lord".

So Paul adds a spiritual dimension to what had hitherto been regarded by some of the Corinthians as a personal matter, having only physical and legal implications. For them marriage was to be no longer regulated by social custom or by what the law allowed, but by divine standards, involving self-discipline. The same considerations must continue to guide us in modern times when divorce can be obtained by mutual consent, with a minimum of difficulty and expense, and when marriages are often lightly entered into on the assumption that they can be easily terminated if difficulties arise.

1 Corinthians 7: 10-17; Matthew 19:11.

Divorce Not the Divine Choice

However, just as other Scriptures have been brought to bear upon the interpretation of these difficult passages, so must they further illuminate its spirit. "For the Lord, the God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away"; and the highest principles of discipleship in love and forgiveness, and not a legalistic interpretation

or demanding of rights, must determine the course to be followed in the tragic situation of a broken marriage. Sins separate us all from God and the friendship of the world makes us all "adulterers and adulteresses" if we break our covenant to keep ourselves for Him alone. Yet He does not cut us off while there is hope of our return, and again His example is our guide. Though Israel had so grievously departed from God that He said of her, through the parable of Hosea's personal experience: "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband", such was His mercy and His covenant loyalty that He was willing to rebuild the marriage if that were possible. He makes continuous efforts to repair the breach, until it is clear that there is "no remedy". These patient efforts are the pattern for believers.

With every intention of putting these principles of mercy and forgiveness into practice, the disciple may still find reconciliation impossible. Under the new law in Britain divorce can now be obtained after a certain period by the "guilty" party, after which no exercise of forgiveness or desire to continue the marriage on the part of the disciple is of any avail. The breakdown of the marriage thus becomes final and irrevocable.

The question of the remarriage of the disciple after divorce must therefore be related to the Lord's whole teaching about the subject outlined above. This includes a restatement of "what was from the beginning", a severe limitation of the possibility of divorce for one cause, and gives the distinct impression that only after a divorce arising from such a cause could a remarriage be considered not adulterous.

The Lord's comment in reply to the disciples' amazed reaction when they realize the stringency of the ideal ("if the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry") was: "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given". The Editors of *The Christadelphian* who have written on this subject would all have agreed that it was more consistent with Christ's expression of the divine ideal to remain "a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake" even after divorce, but also would have recognized the truth of the Lord's understanding remark: "All men cannot receive that saying." None of these Editors have ever *advised* or *encouraged* divorce, or would go further than saying that if one partner divorced the other for the one cause, remarriage was possible without contravention of divine law. Their statements have invariably been made in a context, which not only recognized but emphasized all the spiritual principles involved. In *Marriage and Divorce* Brother John Carter gave it as his clear opinion that the decision as to the fault of either party in the breakdown of a marriage might rest on other considerations than that of adultery alone, and to avoid any appearance of taking a permissive view of the matter, he concentrated upon the need for recognition of what the divine ideal in marriage really is rather than on defining at length the marital status of the "innocent" party (page 95).

Malachi 2: 15; James 4: 4; Hosea 2: 1-2, 14-20; Matthew 19: 11-12.

Factors to be Taken into Account

The principles and the divine ideal are clearly defined. There remains the question of how to deal with those who through our common human weakness, ignorance of the Truth, shallow spiritual perception, or tragic circumstances have departed from them. Upon what conditions can they be accepted for baptism, or retained in fellowship, or received back? (These questions ought to be asked in cases of marriage out of the Faith as well as of divorce and remarriage, and indeed of any kind of human error at all, since there is no easy rule of thumb, which applies). Is there a sin in this, which cannot be repented of and therefore forgiven? Do "fruits meet for repentance" necessarily involve an attempt to unravel the past, or do they mature in subsequent conduct? In seeking to answer such questions, it is well to remember that some of the Corinthians, to whom Paul wrote about marriage, had in the past been guilty of illicit sexual intercourse. Upon their repentance they had been cleansed from their guilt and had now committed themselves to live according to the spiritual ideal of marriage. There is no evidence that Paul instructed such persons to separate from their present partners, if they had remarried after accepting the Gospel.

Some Ecclesias have attempted to establish rules, which will simplify the handling of these problems. With such attempts, insofar as they are based on a desire to maintain high standards, one can only sympathize; but insofar as their result is to impose a uniform standard of judgment without regard to relevant circumstances, they can lead to inequitable decisions, the effect of which cannot be reconciled with the love of Christ. It is one thing to define the Scriptural principles upon which human conduct ought to be based, and quite another to deal faithfully yet compassionately with the delicate spiritual issues raised, when those who depart from the true Christian standards (as we all do in many things) later seek forgiveness.

Cases may differ from the extremes of divorce after failure of long continued efforts at reconciliation despite infidelity, and divorce with remarriage already in mind. It is therefore impossible to formulate and follow a single hard and fast rule, which both defines the principles and attempts to deal with the practical issues raised. The ideals are clearly defined in Scripture and need emphasizing and re-emphasizing with all the earnestness we can command, making them as vitally important a part of the instruction for baptism (or of an interview for refellowship) as any of the other doctrinal points, which usually form the major part of the preparation of candidates for baptism — indeed the two are inseparable.

All "legalistic" arguments about whether a second alliance during the lifetime of a former partner is a marriage or not, and whether it is more in accordance with divine principles to continue the second alliance or repudiate it, with consequent hardship to a second family—all such questions must give way before the basic consideration of what sins are classified in Scripture as beyond the divine mercy and forgiveness. The answer is to be found in Mark 3: 28, 29:

"Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies where withsoever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (RV) There is often nothing that can be done to unravel the tangle of human relationships created by divorce and remarriage, and little direct Scripture to describe the "exact" status of the parties concerned before God. It was precisely because of the inability of man to do anything himself to take away his sins that Christ died for the ungodly. Forgiveness in any circumstances is dependent upon an acknowledgment of wrong-doing, a sense of utter dependence upon God's mercy, and a determination to live in future with God's help more closely in accordance with the principles of a life in Christ.

If those who seek baptism or refellowship have their eyes genuinely open to the meaning and ideals of marriage, then the shattering realization of their departure from God's standards—and, it should be added, this ought to be true of us all when we are overtaken in a fault, even though it be not of the kind under discussion—will produce such a sincere repentance and contrition that they will need all the spiritual help, love and comfort that they can get from Ecclesial fellowship. Also should be considered with genuine compassion the case of those who, in spite of all their efforts to maintain their marriage, have seen their partner fall away from the Truth and have finally been deserted for another, often with the additional burden of trying to support and train up in the Truth a young family. Nor should it be presupposed that even a decision to remarry in such a case has been lightly entered upon. It may have come at the end of a long and bitter struggle, of fervent prayer and many tears. And those who, having been deserted, have not themselves deserted their Lord, are only too often left to sort out the problems and to endure the censure of their brethren and Sisters.

The question of acceptance into fellowship of such applicants can therefore only be judged by an Ecclesia in a spirit of love and compassion for two people in need. Only the brethren entrusted with the delicate task of interviewing them can judge their state of mind and the genuineness of their desire for a joint life in the Truth. "Works meet for repentance" can only be seen in their attitude of mind and profession of future conduct. If all the fundamental divine principles of marriage and its meaning are thoroughly understood as well as the implications of marriage in the Lord, then the rest must be left to the judgment of God and the conscience of the people concerned. An Ecclesia which follows this practice can never be justly accused of lowering divine standards or tolerating divorce and remarriage. It will know that a sincere and prayerful attempt to balance judgment and mercy is no soft option to replace a rule of thumb. If it has erred at all, it has erred on the side of compassion rather than of harsh judgment and questioning of motives. It is worth remembering that we all through weakness fall short of God's standards in so many ways, and that it is possible for us to be in such an emotional state that even an awareness of our weakness is not sufficient to prevent us from falling. A great barrier arises, however, if we refuse to admit the weakness, attempt to justify

the error, or do not acknowledge that there is a divine standard which we have failed to reach.

1 Corinthians 6: 9-11; James 3: 2; Galatians 6: 1; Mark 3: 28-29; Romans 5: 6-10.

Guilt and Responsibility

Two further points may prove helpful. There is no difference between the forgiveness God grants to the repentant at baptism and that which he accords the repentant Brother or Sister who in true contrition wrestles in prayer, and we should not in our Ecclesial attitudes attempt to distinguish between them. In each case divine forgiveness of sins for the repentant is absolute, and the *guilt* of previous actions removed. But to remove the guilt of an action does not remove the responsibilities which that action has brought. A baptized person is not free to repudiate obligations entered into before baptism even when he was not strictly free to undertake them nor would it be right, for example, to put any children of a second marriage at risk by breaking up their home. Although the Israelites entered into a covenant with the Gibeonites contrary to the divine commandment, they were unable subsequently to escape the lasting obligation of their oath. Though David's sin was put away—not because Uriah was dead but because God accepted the king's repentance—its consequences lasted a lifetime. Brethren in this position holding Ecclesial office cannot be seen to uphold the high standards set by the Lord for the Ecclesia, and however sincere their own recognition of these standards may be, it is impossible for them to escape the consequences of their personal history. Ecclesias should in general therefore be reluctant to appoint such brethren to official duties, and they on their part should be reluctant to accept them.

*Psalms 32: 1-5, Romans 4: 6-8; Hebrews 4: 14-16 Joshua 9: 3-27;
2 Samuel 12: 13; 1 Timothy 5: 2; Titus 1: 6.*

Ecclesial Action and Unity

Ecclesias in the Central Fellowship have never *automatically*, as though following an "official policy", retained or received back into fellowship those who have divorced and remarried. Nor should it be assumed that when they have judged compassionately they are tolerating or condoning divorce. There can be no "official" policy, only counsel and advice given in specific cases. Individual Ecclesias have followed, or felt unable to follow, that advice in the light of their own prayerful assessment of all the circumstances. The Central Fellowship has never divided itself on this issue, but has respected the decisions of individual Ecclesias where they have judged differently upon the basis of the same evidence. There are cases where Ecclesias have accepted some who have remarried after divorce, and refused fellowship to others, because the merits — or demerits — of the case seemed different.

There remains one further important fact, the question of Ecclesial unity in decisions on this subject. The Ecclesia's decision whether to accept or reject in fellowship those involved in such a situation should be treated with wholehearted loyalty in practice by all its members. Whatever private reservations there may be on the part of some must be subordinated to the interests of Ecclesial good. If scandal mongering or gossiping are allowed to spoil the atmosphere of Ecclesial life and threaten its unity, then the Ecclesia is faced with a problem almost as great as the one it is trying to solve. One of the important principles of Ecclesial fellowship and of life in the Truth, is that many of the things which we regard as our personal and private affairs do have an effect upon community life. The resulting discipline we accept when we seek help and strength from our fellowship with one another is the restriction it places upon our personal liberty of action. If we are to teach and admonish one another, we are also to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God. The acceptance of an Ecclesial decision humbly and prayerfully arrived at, which may seem contrary to our own desires, may well be a test of our own spirituality.

To sum up, an Ecclesia faced with the difficult problem in its own midst of an application for baptism or fellowship in a case of divorce and remarriage should:

- (1) Take steps to ensure that there is complete understanding and wholehearted acceptance by the parties concerned of the divine principles and ideals involved; and that departure from these ideals is acknowledged. There is, after all, a vast difference between those who repudiate the teaching of the Lord as regards the sanctity and permanence of the marriage state, and those who humbly recognize and accept the divine teaching, but plead the weakness of human nature.
- (2) The Ecclesia should with mercy and compassion try to assess the state of conscience before God of the Brother or Sister involved, realizing, however, that only the individual concerned can be responsible for it.
- (3) The Ecclesia should also bear in mind the likely effect upon Ecclesial life and worship of its decision, which can only be assessed by those who know it from the inside.
- (4) It is always worth remembering that "In dealing with all offenders... our aim should be, not only to admonish and rebuke, but also to restore. While endeavoring to maintain to the full the high standards of Christ's teaching, we must beware of slipping unconsciously into an attitude towards offenders which the Lord would condemn. To achieve the right balance in these matters in the spirit of our Lord's teaching calls for prayerful and persistent effort

and humility of mind" (From a Statement by the Birmingham Central Arranging Brethren, quoted in *Marriage and Divorce*, page 104).

Ephesians 5: 18-21; Philipians 2: 1-4; Ephesians 4: 31-32.

A Summary of Scripture Teaching

(1) It was the plan and purpose of the Creator that man and woman should be joined together in one for their joint lifetime.

Genesis 2: 24; Matthew 19: 5-6; Mark 10: 8-9.

(2) The Law of Moses permitted divorce of a wife by her husband in certain circumstances, without, however, encouraging or demanding this.

Leviticus 20: 10; Deuteronomy 24: 1-4; Matthew 5: 31 19: 7-8; Mark 10: 4-5.

(3) The Lord Jesus Christ laid it down that God's initial purpose should take precedence of the permission to divorce in the Law, and that it is adulterous (with one exception) to seek divorce with a view to remarriage.

Matthew 5:28, 32; 19:9; Mark 10:9-11; Luke 16:18.

(4) The one exception is for "fornication", which is generally understood to mean adultery, unfaithfulness after marriage, though some take it to mean pre-marital unchastity; while Paul appears to regard the marriage of pagans as invalidated if, when one partner comes to the faith, the other permanently breaks the union.

1 Corinthians 7:15.

(5) Notwithstanding these high ideals, the early church included men and women who had been fornicators and adulterers, and though it is evident that they were called upon to repent of those practices, there is no evidence that such people were required to dissolve existing unions following a previous irregular life.

1 Corinthians 6: 10-11; Ephesians 2: 3, Colossians 3: 5-7; 1 Peter 1: 14; 4: 1-3.

(6) Nevertheless, when people with compromised lives became Christians, Paul advised against such persons assuming office in the community.

1 Timothy 3:2, 12:5:9.

(7) Faced with a protest that the conditions were too hard for men to bear, the Lord spoke of the high calling of those who refrained from marriage for the kingdom of heaven's sake, but he did not *demand* this as a condition of discipleship, recognizing, like Paul, that it was possible only for those "to whom it is given".

Matthew 19: 10-12; 1 Corinthians 7: 1, 7-9, 25-28, 39-40.

(8) It is the duty of the Ecclesia to uphold the Lord's high ideals and to appoint to its offices Members whose lives are in accord with them. The New Testament does not say that fellowship should only be extended to those who fall short of these ideals on condition that they leave their present partners, nor does it justify speaking of their lives with such partners as "continuing adultery", without considering the motives which now govern those lives. It was the repentance of David, and not the death of Uriah, which converted his association with Bathsheba from an adulterous one to one which God could accept.

Matthew 5: 27-32; 2 Samuel 12: 12-13.

(9) While, therefore, the Ecclesia should visit with necessary discipline any clear breaches of the commandments of the Lord in this matter as in others, there is no New Testament warrant for saying it must seek to undo the past or even be inflexible as to the present, when clear evidence of a new frame of mind and full repentance are offered to it.

1 Corinthians 5: 1-12; 2 Corinthians 2: 5-11; Galatians 6:1.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE CHRISTADELPHIAN

REFLECTIONS ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

In an age when moral standards are fast being abandoned, the marriage relationship is bound to suffer. The growing number of broken marriages and of second and irregular unions in modern society is an evidence of the trend firmly established. The effects are now evident in our Ecclesias, who are being called upon to deal with an increasing number of cases of marriage breakdown and divorce among their own Members, and to decide their attitude to those desiring baptism who have previously been divorced and have remarried, or desire to do so. There is genuine perplexity in many Ecclesias, as they earnestly seek on the one hand to remain faithful to the teaching of the Scriptures, and on the other to act with mercy and understanding towards those who have erred in the past. There is conflict within Ecclesias: some Members hold a pistol, as it were, to the heads of their brethren, threatening extreme action if their counsel is not accepted in a particular case: and a few individual Members who genuinely desire either to remain in fellowship or to return to it, are being excluded without a Scriptural consideration of their case, and so are deprived of the spiritual instruction and fellowship they so sorely need.

The dilemma is a real one. What guidance can we find in the Scriptures? For it is to them we must turn, with a willingness to accept all they have to tell us on the subject, whether that seems acceptable to us personally or not. ¹

1. The Spirit of Marriage

One error must be avoided at the outset: the temptation to regard marriage only as a ceremony, and then a physical union between two people. It is true that in the majority of marriages, especially of young people, physical attraction plays an important part. But followers of Christ must remember that the marriage relationship is a Divine, not a human, institution, and it was established from the beginning to form a means of comfort, help and strength *in the service of God* for both partners. In other words, the relationship of believers was ideally intended to be a *spiritual* one, the husband learning to see in his relationship with his wife the figure of the love of Christ for his saints, and the wife, in her relationship with her husband, the love of the saints for their redeeming Lord. The physical union, a joy and a privilege granted in the wisdom of God, should therefore become not the reason for their life together but the token and the result of the deeper, spiritual bond. If all husbands and wives could preserve a greater awareness of this there would be many fewer breakdowns in marriage, and reconciliation would be easier and more frequent. And if unmarried brethren and Sisters could be made more aware of it at an early age, there would be fewer acts of impurity in youth, fewer hasty and unsuitable marriages with all their grave consequences later in spiritual damage.

¹ This article is intended as a supplement to the preceding one by the Magazine Committee.

2. Human Weakness

Unhappily, owing to the weakness of human nature this sense of spiritual relationship is not always preserved. The union is damaged first in its spiritual aspect, then literally through an act or acts of unfaithfulness. Adultery takes place, and one partner may go away and form another union, rejecting all pleas for repentance and reconciliation. The abandoned partner may in due time feel strongly drawn to another in the Faith and wish to remarry. Or a candidate for baptism may have suffered a broken marriage and have found a new partner.

What are we to do in these cases? Let us make no mistake about it — they present agonizing dilemmas, both for those whose responsibility it is to come to a conclusion about them, and for the sufferers themselves. There is an absolute need to abide by the Word of God as well as to consider the spiritual welfare and ultimate fate of the man or woman whose case is being examined. In our discussions with one another we need to remember that this subject has provoked sincere differences of opinion in the past, and that "strong" views can sometimes be based more on emotion than on the careful reading of Scripture. These reflections should make us less dogmatic about the rightness of our own particular view, and less critical of others who differ from us.

It is an unfortunate fact that exhaustive treatments of this subject, in the praiseworthy attempt to deal with all aspects and every possible Scriptural passage, tend to produce an effect of complication, making them difficult to assess. The observations which follow have a limited aim: that of establishing clear principles in areas of dispute. Once this basis is established further study can well proceed.

3. The Testimony of Jesus

We turn first to the words of Jesus, which are found in four passages in the Gospels. Luke 16:18 consists of only one verse; Matthew 5:31-32 only of two. Mark 10:2-12 is a longer account, but since Matthew 19:3-12 records the same discussion, with important *additional* details, it seems sensible to start with that passage first to seek to understand its teaching, and then to interpret the others in harmony with it. So to the words *of* Jesus in Matthew 19:3-12 we turn.

"Have ye not read that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

The implications of Jesus' last words here should be carefully considered. Clearly what God has joined He can also regard as severed. The Lord is saying,

not that the marriage bond can never be broken in any circumstances, but that *man* should not be responsible for breaking it.

In response to the question, "Why did Moses then command to give a bill of divorcement and put her away?", Jesus declares: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (vv. 4-8).

Here the basic principle is clear: marriage is for life and should not be broken and from the outset should only be undertaken with that understanding. Husbands or wives who *say* or *do* anything liable to destroy the union, or, equally important, *third parties whose actions or attitudes are liable to bring about the same result*, are sinning against a Divine law. Throughout the Brotherhood, whatever difference of view about the action to be taken in the event of sin there is no dispute whatever about the basic principle.

It is what Jesus says next which is the cause of perplexity:

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her which is put away cloth commit adultery."

Here Jesus clearly says that there can be an exception to the Divine law, "What God hath joined, let not man put asunder"; that exception arises from fornication. The exception is also stated in Matthew 5:

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery..." (v. 32).

The records of Mark and Luke do not mention this exception, twice affirmed in Matthew. This fact has given rise to two questions which must be clearly faced.

First, is there any reason to suspect the reliability of the text in Matthew 19:9 or 5:32? The answer which must be unhesitatingly given and accepted is: none whatever. We must take the text as it stands.

Second, is there any reason to suspect the *translation* of the text? Again the answer must be, No. The English translation is right, as all Bible versions witness, and any understanding of the passage must take it into account.

4. The Meaning of Fornication in the Old Testament

We approach therefore the important question: What did Jesus mean by "fornication"?

This at least is clear: he must have been using a term which his hearers knew and understood. Where would their understanding have come from?

Porneia, fornication, is a Greek term. But at the time Jesus spoke, none of the New Testament writings in Greek were in existence; they came later. The scattered Jewish communities of the Roman world, however, were very familiar indeed with the *Old Testament writings translated into Greek*, known as the Septuagint version, often abbreviated thus: LXX. This version was later widely used in the communities of believers in Christ. The Jews would certainly be influenced in their understanding of the term Jesus used —*porneia* (fornication)— by their knowledge of the way it was used in this Greek version of the law and the prophets.

The Divine Use

So how was *porneia* (fornication) used in the Greek Old Testament?

In the divine judgments pronounced upon her for unfaithfulness to God, Israel is frequently portrayed as "a wife that committeth adultery... that taketh strangers instead of her husband" (Ezek. 16:32). She was to be judged as "women that break wedlock" (LXX, with the vengeance of an adulteress, v. 38). The Sisters Oholah and Oholibah (Samaria and Jerusalem) "have committed adultery... they are adulteresses" (Ezek. 23:37, 45). In many other passages the adultery of Israel in relation to God her Husband is clearly implied, even when the actual word is not used.

The Greek word *porneia* occurs about 40 times in the LXX Old Testament. It is always the translation of some form of the Hebrew root *zanah*, which means

"To commit fornication. Attributed properly and chiefly to a woman, *whether married* (when it may be rendered, to commit adultery) *or unmarried*. Very often used figuratively of idolatry (to go a whoring after strange gods), the prophets shadowing forth the relation in which God stood to the people of Israel by the marriage union... so that the people worshipping strange gods is compared to an adulterous woman" (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*).

In our English AV and RV the translation is almost always "whoredom" or "whoredoms"; the RSV has "harlotry", and the NEB has "fornication".

Here are some examples of passages where *porneia* is used as a Greek translation of the Hebrew originals. In the majority of cases where the Hebrew is plural (whoredoms), the Greek rendering is *porneia* (fornication) in the singular.

Hosea 2:2 — "Plead with your mother . . . let her put away her whoredoms (*porneia*) . . . and her adulteries (*moicheia*)" (both singular).

Jeremiah 2:19, 20 — "Thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God... under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot" (LXX, indulge in *thy fornication*, *porneia*).

Jeremiah 3:2 — "Thou hast polluted the land with thy *whoredoms*" (*porneia*).

Jeremiah 3:9 — "through the lightness of her *whoredom* (*porneia*)... she defiled the land and committed adultery . . ."

Jeremiah 13:27 — "This is thy lot... from me, saith the Lord because thou hast forgotten me... I have seen shine adulteries (*moicheia*)... the lewdness of thy *whoredom* (*porneia*)..."

Ezekiel 16:8-15 — "I (God) sware unto thee (Israel) and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine... But thou ... playedst the harlot... and pouredst out *thy fornications* (*porneia*) on every one that passed by..."

In the same chapter in the LXX Version *porneia* occurs six more times. In every case but one the English has "whoredoms", and the allusion is always to the promiscuity of the unfaithful wife, Israel.

Ezekiel 23 has the extended parable of the two Sisters, Oholah and Oholibah (Samaria and Jerusalem), "the daughters of one mother... they were mine and they bare sons and daughters... Oholah played the harlot when she was mine; she doted on (the Assyrians) and committed her *whoredoms* (*porneia*) with them" (vv. 1-7).

In this chapter *porneia* is used 13 times in the LXX of the "whoredoms" of these two unfaithful women.

There can be no doubt, then, that *porneia*, as well as carrying the general sense of sexual promiscuity, is used in the Greek Old Testament of the unfaithfulness of a *married woman after her marriage*, it is so closely associated with adultery (*moicheia*) that the two words are found in the same verse at Hosea 2:2, Jeremiah 3:9 and 13:27 (see quotations above), *in relation to the same person and the same acts*.

5. And in the New

The next important question needing an answer is this: Is *porneia* used in the Greek New Testament with the same sense that it clearly had in the Greek Old Testament?

There is no doubt that it is. Sometimes, in "lists" of sins the words fornication and adultery (*porneia*, *moicheia*) occur in the same verse, as they do in the passages already cited from the Old Testament, e.g. Matthew 15:19 (Mark 7:21); 1 Corinthians 6:9; and Galatians 5:19 (AV). There are cases, not lists, where the subject is fornication with no mention of adultery. Obviously these cannot be interpreted to mean that Jesus and Paul condemned fornication, but not adultery. Nor is it credible that the sin of adultery was not included in their thought. Adultery was not mentioned because the term fornication was clearly held to include it and to make a separate mention of it unnecessary. For example, the early church ruled that the "Gentiles who believe" should "abstain from fornication" (*porneia*); Paul writes to the Corinthians: "the body is not for fornication (*porneia*) but for the Lord... Flee fornication..." (1 Cor. 6:13, 18); and to the Thessalonians: "Abstain from fornication (*porneia*)..." (1 Thess. 4:13). Referring to the evil example of Israel in the wilderness, he writes: "Neither let us commit fornication (the verb, *porneuo*) as some of them committed" (1 Cor. 10: 8). Clearly the apostle was addressing himself to all believers in these passages, whether married or unmarried. He must have included adultery in his thought, but felt no need to mention it because the established Old Testament use of *porneia* already contained the idea. When he mentioned adultery separately, as in his list of the "works of the flesh"—"adultery, fornication, uncleanness", etc. (Gal. 5:19) it was because he wished to bring home to the married believers the special nature of the sin.

Single Acts

It is evident too that some of the New Testament uses of *porneia* are not of an abandoned way of life, as that of a harlot, but could quite well refer to single acts. If the Jews' remark to Jesus, "We be not born of fornication" was a sneering allusion to the circumstances of his birth, in their view one act would have sufficed; and surely they did not think Mary was a harlot! In 1 Corinthians 5 the erring Member was charged with *one* immoral relationship, not general immorality; and in I Corinthians 6:13-18 Paul evidently regarded *one* act of union with a harlot as fornication. The case of I Thessalonians 4 is remarkable, for Paul, having declared it the will of God that believers should "abstain from fornication", then goes on to urge them not to live "in the passion of lust", and to command that no man "go beyond and defraud his Brother in *the* matter", for God had called them "not for uncleanness, but in sanctification" (vv. 3-7, RV). The straightforward sense of this passage is that Paul is warning the brethren against the seduction of another's wife or virgin daughter. Here again, fornication could well signify one act only.

6. Jesus' Teaching in its Context

With this understanding of the sense of "fornication" we return to a fresh consideration of Jesus' words in Matthew 19. And it is now essential to grasp the circumstances in which Jesus made his pronouncements.

It is important to note carefully the question the Pharisees put to him, for this must influence the way his answer is to be understood.

"Is it lawful", they ask, "for a man to put away his wife for *every cause?*" (for any cause, RSV; on any and every ground, NEB). Can a man, in other words, get rid of his wife any time he likes and *for any reason he pleases?*

The question arose from a dispute among the Jews about the precise intention of Deuteronomy 24:1-5. According to this passage an Israelite was permitted to give his wife "a bill of divorcement" and "send her away", after which she was at liberty to be married to another man, but not to return to her first husband. The stricter Jewish party, who followed the teaching of Rabbi Shammai, insisted that divorce was only allowed for adultery; the laxer, following Rabbi Hillel, allowed it for many causes not connected with unfaithfulness, such as dislike of a wife or even of her cooking. There is evidence that even in Jewish communities, who had assimilated to some extent the way of their Gentile neighbour, the laxer view had taken a great hold. The contemptuous verdict of the Pharisees, "This multitude which knoweth not the law is accursed" (John 7: 49, RV) certainly suggests that.

Jesus replies, as we have seen, that from the beginning the intention of God was that man and wife should remain "one flesh", and not be "put asunder".

"Why, then" say the Pharisees, "did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement and put her away?"

Moses did not *command* any such thing, is Jesus' reply, but "because of the hardness of your hearts" the law which came through him "*suffered you to put away your wives*", and the implication is: "for a number of causes", for that indeed is what Deuteronomy 24 involves, since a wife who had committed adultery would have been put to death anyway. But, from the beginning, this dismissal of a wife for any of a number of reasons was emphatically *not* what God desired.

Jesus' Reply

And now, keeping in mind the question which provoked all this discussion: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for *every cause?*", we may paraphrase Jesus' next words thus:

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall (wrongly) put away his wife, that is, for any other reason than fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is (so, wrongly) put away, committeth adultery."

The reply is thus seen to follow naturally the terms of the original question, and the phrase "except it be for fornication" takes its natural sense of: "except for adultery".

The passage in Matthew 5 follows naturally after Jesus' declaration: "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart". He then adds, evidently mindful of the "lusting" that went on around him, and of the ease with which many, even in Jewish society, were getting rid of their wives "for every cause", no doubt because they wished to take another wife:

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication (that is, wrongly put away his wife, not for fornication but for some trivial reason) causeth her to commit adultery (that is, if she remarries): and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away (RV; that is, when she is thus wrongly put away) committeth adultery."

The implication behind the words: "whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress" should be carefully noted. She was evidently *not* an adulteress when her husband put her away. She had therefore *not* been put away "for fornication" but for some other reason. She would only become an adulteress if she remarried while the first union was still unbroken.

Mark and Luke

The passage Mark 10:1-12, which does not mention the exception of fornication, is evidently another and shorter record of the same discussion as that of Matthew 19. The question put to Jesus by the Pharisees who were "tempting him": "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" must therefore have carried the implication: "for every cause" since Matthew clearly gives it. Similarly Jesus' reply, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her", must have carried the implication, "wrongly put away his wife, for some other reason than for fornication". That Jesus was indeed thinking of the loose morals of a society where divorce was easily obtainable for trivial reasons, is clearly shown by his next words:

"And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery", for under the law of Moses a woman could not "put away her husband" at all. But in the Gentile society of Jesus' day—and it is evident that the same practice had spread among the Jews — husbands and wives could freely divorce one another by mutual consent. It is the manners of such a society, therefore, that Jesus has in mind.

Luke's allusion to the subject (16:18) is confined to one verse and so must therefore be highly compressed. On the principle that passages giving few details must be understood in harmony with those giving many more, Luke 16:18 must be understood in the light of Matthew 19: 3-9, as outlined above.²

The reason why Mark and Luke make no mention of the exception for fornication is probably quite simple: no one in the society of their day, Jew, Roman or Greek, ever doubted for a moment that adultery constituted grounds for divorce, and the evangelists took it for granted. Matthew is more explicit because it is in his record that the more detailed question of the Pharisees is recorded: "Is it lawful... for every cause?" To which Jesus replies, "No; only for one."

7. Two Objections

Two objections are commonly made to the foregoing explanation of Jesus' meaning:

First, why did Christ use the term "fornication" and not "adultery"? As we have already seen from its use, fornication was the term for sexual irregularity of all kinds, and would apply to harlotry, adultery or pre-marital infidelity. (To confine it to the last of these is however impossible). It was therefore the most comprehensive term available. None of his hearers would have doubted that it included adultery.

Second, Why did the disciples appear so surprised as to react by saying, "If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is expedient not to marry" (Matt. 19: 10)? On this the following comment may be found useful:

"Aware doubtless of (Jesus') pronouncement in Galilee (Matt. 5) that the only valid reason for divorce was unfaithfulness, the Pharisees would have him repeat it now, thus not merely contravening the law of the land but incurring popular displeasure. For it is remarkable how highly the facility of divorce was prized among the Jews in those days. It is claimed by several of the Rabbis as a singular privilege divinely accorded to Israel and denied to other nations" (David Smith, *The Disciple's Commentary on the Gospels*, Matthew pp. 316-7).

The disciples evidently shared this common opinion and were dismayed by Christ's strict interpretation, "only for fornication". His further observation, "All men cannot receive this saying... for there are eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake", is not a comment upon

² For a fuller treatment of Luke 16: 18, see John Carter's *Marriage and Divorce*, pp. 45-48.

his own pronouncement that a man can only put away his wife for fornication, but upon the disciples' "In that case it is not expedient to marry". All men cannot receive *that* saying, "save they to whom it is given... He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

8. Adultery and the Marriage Bond

A further perplexing question must now be treated: what effect in the eyes of God does adultery have upon the marriage bond?

Under the Law of Moses, it destroyed it. The woman found in adultery was to be stoned forthwith; if a man was found in such a relation with a married woman, both of them were to be stoned.

God's view of the effect of unfaithfulness upon the marriage relationship is, however, most instructively demonstrated in the writings of the prophets, where He presents Himself as a husband, and Israel as His unfaithful wife. Here are some examples:

Isaiah 50:1 — "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, *wherewith I have put her away?*" The sense is not, "The bill of divorcement does not exist", but rather: "Produce it; let us see the reasons for it". Hence verse 2 follows:

"Behold, for your transgressions *was your mother put away*" (RV).

Jeremiah 3:1 — "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord."

The last phrase is often quoted as evidence that God had not severed His bond with Israel. The whole context, and that of other Old Testament passages, is however against this view. "They say" is actually the infinitive "to say", and merely introduces the quotation from Deuteronomy. The sense of the concluding phrase is rather, "Thinkest thou to return unto me?", "an indignant rebuke of the idea that she could return to Yahweh as a matter of course" (*Century Bible*; see RV mg., and *Speaker's Commentary*). That this is the correct understanding is shown by verse 8:

"I saw when, for this very cause that backsliding Israel had *committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorcement, yet treacherous Judah her Sister feared not; but she also went and played the harlot...*"

Jeremiah 31:31 — "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... and Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my *covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord.*"

In Ezekiel 16 is God's prolonged indictment of Judah as an unfaithful wife: "I spread my skirt over thee... I swear unto thee and entered into a *covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine* (v. 8)... But thou... playedst the

harlot, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by (v. 15) ... Thou hast committed fornication with the Egyptians (v. 26)...

Thou hast played the harlot also with the Assyrians (v. 28)... A *wife* that committeth *adultery!* that taketh strangers instead of her husband! (v. 32)... Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord (v. 35)... I will judge thee, as women that *break wedlock* and shed blood are judged (v. 38)... For thus saith the Lord God, I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in *breaking the covenant"* (v. 59).

In these four passages from three different prophets there is a common teaching: the covenant relationship of Israel with God was like the marriage relationship between a wife and her husband. Israel had proved an unfaithful wife; she had committed adultery with the surrounding nations and their gods. So because Israel had "broken her (marriage) covenant" with God, like "women that break wedlock", He had "given her a bill of divorcement" and had "put her away". Israel had by her unfaithfulness ceased to be the wife of the Lord, as He said quite clearly through Hosea: "Plead with your mother, plead; for *she is not my wife, neither am I her husband"* (2:2).

The plain implication of these passages is that in the sight of God adultery without repentance breaks the marriage bond, which no longer exists. And could it be otherwise? For the adulterous partner has already destroyed the spiritual union which should exist with his wife (or her husband); the physical act of unfaithfulness is but the logical conclusion.

It must be remembered, however, that in all these passages from the prophets God shows Himself willing, nay eager, to take the unfaithful nation back again as His wife, if only she will repent of her ways, but Israel's eventual return to her Husband is not because the old bond still exists, but because God is prepared to *betroth her again afresh to Himself* in a new union. When Israel says, "I will go and return to my first husband", then God's response is: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever", in a *new covenant* (Host 2:7, 19; Jer. 31:31). Strictly however, the Israel that returns to God is not the unfaithful nation that God judged; it is the repentant remnant who are to join ultimately the new "holy nation" in Christ, Israel after the spirit, the true seed of Abraham by faith.

These examples are taken from the Old Testament; but they are not cases where God is tolerating a lower standard in others: they are cases where He is expressing His own principle that the marriage bond is broken by unfaithfulness without repentance.

There is an important conclusion to be drawn from this: if, in the eyes of God, adultery without repentance destroys the marriage bond, then the marriage no longer exists. Whatever reasons there may be therefore against the remarriage of one whose union has been broken in this way, the fact that the first partner is

still alive cannot be one of them. If the rupture has been so complete, without repentance, then in no sense are the original partners still husband and wife. To insist upon considering such cases as if they were, is to act contrary to God's own principle in His dealings with Israel.

It seems then, that while Jesus explicitly condemns the remarriage of one who has been improperly put away (that is, not for adultery), he places no ban upon the remarriage of one whose union has been broken on account of the ultimate unfaithfulness. We should beware of laying down a law where the Lord himself has refrained from doing so.

9. The Testimony of the Apostle Paul

Two passages from the Epistles are often quoted as forbidding remarriage.

In Romans 7 Paul writes:

“...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 her 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: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

Here Paul is comparing the relationship of the Israelite under the Law to that of a wife to her husband. As long as the Law was in force, he had to obey it. But now that the Law is "done away", just as a wife is free to marry another when her husband is dead, so the believer can be "married" to Christ. The question of the unfaithfulness of the wife, and therefore of divorce, is never raised or discussed. The passage has no bearing on what may be done when unfaithfulness has occurred. It is not dealing with the regulation of marriage, but with the believer's service to God.

But what of the apostle's comments in I Corinthians? Paul first shows that he accepts the Lord's judgment as recorded in the Gospels: "Unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband." He then comes to treat of a case upon which Christ had not commented. The question had evidently arisen in Corinth as to whether a Sister, who had come to believe the Gospel after her marriage, and so found herself joined to a pagan husband, would not be justified in leaving him, and indeed in divorcing him. In response Paul writes: "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 (and that the husband *leave not* his wife, RV)" (vv. 10-12).

Here the apostle has in mind not the breakdown of a marriage because adultery has occurred, but *a separation*. The ultimate rupture has not occurred, for reconciliation is still regarded as a desirable possibility. His advice, then, "Let her remain unmarried" (and no doubt he would have said the same to the husband) is directed to one whose marriage still exists, though it is for a time suspended, as it were. His words of command, "Let her remain unmarried", were not therefore intended to apply to a Sister (or a Brother correspondingly) whose marriage has been disrupted by the ultimate unfaithfulness of adultery.

The Brother or Sister married to a pagan partner should therefore do nothing to disrupt the marriage, but, adds the apostle, "if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A Brother or Sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace". It is a remarkable fact that Paul has here used the same Greek verb as Jesus used when he said, "What God hath joined, let no man *put asunder*." If the unbeliever "*puts asunder*", says Paul, "let him *put asunder*", words which seem to imply the termination of the marriage an impression which is reinforced by his further comment that a believer is "not under bondage in such cases". What can the bondage be but the marriage bond?

So Paul's words in verse 27 may well have a bearing on this question:

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." Loosed, how? One obvious explanation would be by the death of the wife. But it seems at least possible that the apostle had also in mind the kind of "loosing" implied in verse 15, where the believer is no longer "under bondage" (and is therefore "loosed") because of the departure of the unbelieving partner, who has "put asunder" the relationship, no doubt in order to contract another union. If that be so, then Paul's next words, "But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned", should at least cause us to pause before we become too dogmatic about denying any possibility of remarriage when divorce has taken place.

10. Modern Divorce Laws

In recent times new laws have greatly increased the grounds upon which divorce may be sought. Divorce may now be granted for desertion, for alleged incompatibility, or cruelty, upon the consent of both partners, or even — after a fixed period—upon the demand of only one of them. These new grounds reflect the extent to which the sanctity of the marriage bond has been reduced in modern eyes; they represent the individual's rejection of personal discipline and his demand for freedom of action; and they are likely to be factors in the cases about which Ecclesias will need to come to a decision.

In practice, in the majority of cases where divorce has technically taken place for reasons given above, one or other of the partners has subsequently contracted an alliance with someone else, thus changing the original situation. But

it must be clearly said that the teaching of Jesus allows divorce for adultery, and for no other reason. Married believers are not to embark on their relationship with the easy assumption that if it does not work to their liking, they can soon put an end to it; nor are they to regard any strains and stresses in their marriage as justifying its rupture. Such attitudes betray a failure to understand and accept the high standard of service and sacrifice which marriage "in the Lord" demands, and it is no wonder that those who share them have little sense of its comfort and joy.

11. Practical Problems

The marriage relationship is the most intimate and emotional of all and the problems which arise from its breakdown may differ considerably from case to case — a fact which should warn us against applying rigid rules to all circumstances. It becomes vital to establish not just *what* has occurred, but also the parties' *attitude* to what has occurred: whether there is acknowledgment of personal shortcomings and sin, and a humble acceptance of the principles and spirit of Scripture; and these are matters which only personal and sympathetic contact with the people involved can establish.

For a fuller treatment of principles in such practical problems the reader should consult the Magazine Committee's article published in the first part of this booklet; and Brother John Carter's *Marriage and Divorce*, chapter 9.

12. Repentance and Reconciliation

But there is one aspect of the subject which must not be omitted: the importance of repentance and of efforts to achieve reconciliation between estranged partners. The example of God's attitude to wayward Israel is clear: He made repeated efforts to cause His people to acknowledge their sin and to return to Him. It was only when their repentance as a nation was no longer possible that He took the ultimate action of "casting them away" (Host 9:17).

As Members of spiritual Israel we must accept the same lesson. When offences occur between husband and wife, they should *not* be treated as pretexts for widening an already existing rift with a view to a final break. An isolated act or episode of unfaithfulness need not be the cause of the breakdown of a marriage. The aim should constantly be the repentance of the offender and the reconciliation of the partners to the union. To this end much understanding, forbearance and recognition of one's own weakness is needed, and the greatest obstacle is pride. We are all fallible creatures, in constant need of the forgiveness of God, and of one another. In this spirit alone we shall find peace.

13. The Armour of the Spirit

In these troubled days our greatest defence against the increase of divorce cases in our community is not the imposition of rigid bans by rule of thumb, nor the refusal fully to consider the Scriptural evidence for fear that "the weak will mistake toleration for license, and be encouraged to sin rather than be deterred therefrom" (letter from a correspondent). Rather is it in the vigorous and frequent upholding amongst us of the divine ideals of marriage, by the earnest instruction of the young, by the clear expression of the divine will to those about to be baptized, by the reminding of those about to be married of the obligations they are undertaking, by the recognition that the love of Christ for his saints is the true reality of which marriage is the type; and by the encouragement of that spirit of love, service and faith between husbands and wives as amongst all of us, which alone is the effective armor against the wiles of sin. To that end we should all read again with the utmost care the Magazine Committee's article, already referred to, where the spirit which should prevail in this most intimate of relationships is dealt with at length.

14. Forbearance

Meanwhile, let us all accept that no one who has made a conscientious study of Scripture is "in favor of divorce", not even those who may have come to a different conclusion from ourselves. Divorce signifies that a grave falling away from Divine principles has occurred somewhere; upon that all are agreed. Let us therefore refrain from making charges of apostasy against those who differ from us in our understanding, all the more since this subject has been a matter of debate for a great many years. And when, after careful consideration, some of us come to differing conclusions, let us be forbearing with one another and not insist on making our particular view a test of fellowship, either within the Ecclesia or in the relationship of our Ecclesia with others. For in the end the Lord himself will be the Judge.

FRED PEARCE

APPENDIX

The view outlined in the foregoing paragraphs is not new. It has been consistently expressed in *The Christadelphian* for over 100 years. Many readers will no doubt find the following extracts of interest. The first four are taken from Robert Roberts' Answers to Correspondents:

"Can Christadelphians lawfully disannul the marriage contract, and marry again for any other reason than that given in Matthew 5:32? If husband or wife renounce the Truth, does that free the other from the marriage tie, so that he may marry again?"

ANSWER: "No: 'The Lord God hateth putting away' (Mal. 2:15). 'The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth: but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will: only in the Lord' (I Cor. 7:39). Nothing disannuls the marriage contract but death or adultery. Incompatibility, from unbelief or other cause, may lead to separation, but the separated parties must remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:11)." (1883, Jan., p. 31).

"J.C. — The safest way, in the doubtful position of the case would be to receive the Brother back. Adultery is not to be compromised on any terms, but marriage with a divorced woman cannot be put in this category. It was wrong to marry an unbeliever. If the Brother admits the wrong, receive him, and let the Lord judge." (1890, Nov., cover note).

DIVORCED — "I have been requested to ask your explanation of Matthew 5:32 and Luke 16:18 in view of your statement to J.C... that marriage with a divorced woman cannot be put in the category of adultery — J.E.B."

ANSWER: "Christ's words relate to divorce for insufficient cause (as was at that time common among the Jews). He recognizes no divorce as lawful 'save for the cause of fornication'. This severs the bond..." (1890, Dec., cover note).

"There seems nothing difficult about Matthew 5:31, 32. The words of Christ amount to this, that his law recognizes no cause of separation between husband and wife except conjugal infidelity. Human law in his day recognized many other causes, and even allowed a man to put away his wife if he had lost taste for her. By the law of Christ, a wife put away from any cause, 'saving for the cause of fornication', is the man's wife still, and anyone marrying her is guilty of adultery. He does not mean that if divorced from a proper cause, a woman may not marry again. His words must be taken in their connection" (1892, Nov., p. 422).

During the efforts to effect reunion between the Central and Berean Fellowships in Britain in 1947, the Central Fellowship Reunion Committee issued statements concerning its position on the Divorce issue. The following are extracts:

1. "The Central Fellowship Committee... cannot accept the universal application of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6: 1, in view of Paul's own restriction stated in that chapter: they refuse to place the teaching of Paul in opposition to the teaching of Jesus. They follow the advice given by Dr. Thomas and Brother Roberts in their writings that divorce is permissible on scriptural grounds, i.e. they accept the permissive Clause stated by Christ. *They believe the subject of divorce and related matters is too involved to permit of being solved by a formula imposed in advance upon the Ecclesias under threat of disfellowship.* They consider that cases of divorce need to be dealt with faithfully and on their particular merits by the Ecclesias concerned, as they arise." (1947, Oct., p. 166)

2. (a) "We accept without reserve the teaching of Christ on this, as on all other questions. We believe that he raised the Marriage relationship to its highest plane by his reference to its origin in Eden. It must be our duty to maintain this ideal in doctrine and practice.

(b) "We recognize that Christ permitted 'putting away' for one cause only. We therefore must accept this decision and not seek to place a human restriction on what Christ allowed.

(c) "By 'putting away' we understand that Christ meant divorce and not simply separation.

(d) "We do not think that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 6:1 refers to divorce; he rebukes the Corinthian Church for going to law before the unjust to decide matters which the Church could settle — which could not be the case in divorce. Further it is impossible to believe that the permission granted by Christ could be disannulled by a prohibition of Paul.

(e) "We cannot limit the motives of the innocent party in seeking the freedom which Christ allowed, to a desire for revenge, or to redress a grievance. The claims of children, or the desire to end a situation mutually intolerable, may be the reason. On the other hand a refusal to seek divorce may spring from an unworthy motive — to be revenged on the one who has caused the breach.

(f) "In our view it is better to deal with any case on its merits as it arises rather than legislate in advance on hypothetical instances.

(g) "The difficulty surrounding this question, and the division it has already caused... should be a warning not to press the issue on this occasion.

(h) "The views we have expressed are reflected in the Statement issued by --- Ecclesia, and we endorse their plea for freedom of conscience in this matter, and their solemn warning against the dangers of making this a test of fellowship.

(i) "The views we hold are practically the same as are to be found in the writings of Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts."

(1947, Dec., p. 197)