

# Chapter

## Ordinance of Marriage

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The sixth day of Creation week drew to its close. The new planet with its inhabitants testified eloquently to the wisdom and ingenuity of its Maker. For the sixth time “God saw that it was good” (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Beauty, harmony, completeness, and satisfaction filled the air.

Then there was Adam, the closest reflection of his Creator. “His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with the light of life and joy.”<sup>1</sup> Yet God did not finish this work with Adam. “It is not good,” He said (Gen 2:18). It is not good enough to have beauty, wealth, health, and power as Adam possessed them.

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 to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. (Gen 2:21-25)

After this first wedding ceremony, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good”(Gen 1:31).

This narrative of Scripture is both the point of departure and the paradigm for the Christian theology of marriage. In this chapter we will briefly consider marriage first as an order of Creation—its origin, nature, and purpose. In the second half of the chapter we will examine marriage as an ordinance of the Christian church.

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA, 1890), 45.

## Marriage: An Order of Creation

Scripture teaches that human marriage has its origin in the order of events of Creation week. This means first of all that its root is not to be found in some evolutionary process nor in the chance development of human social life, but rather in a purposefully planned action by the Creator. The narrative of Genesis 2 places marriage in the context of the first encounter of the first couple.

By locating the institution of marriage within the order of Creation, the Bible declares invalid any attempt at equating it with sin or its consequences. God Himself acted as a matchmaker (the only infallible one!) and when the first marriage blessing was over, He pronounced all that he had done as very good. Marriage is not an evil, but rather a positively good institution.

### Nature of Marriage

**Private social union.** One plus one makes two. This is an obvious mathematical truth. Not so with marriage. Genesis 2:24 states a curious fact that a man plus a woman makes two, except when the two become husband and wife. The marriage union then makes two people one. The distinction between individual and social, between private and public does not exist in the usual manner. Not only do they leave their native homes and share the same premises, economic resources, and often the same name, but more than that, they become one unit. They belong to each other exclusively (without owning each other in the possessive sense of the word) because they are “custom-made” for each other.

Within the confines of this union the most intimate dimension of one’s gender becomes unrestricted to both. The Bible expresses this by saying “And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). This privilege of self-giving is an important principle and the secret of a successful marriage union. Both sexes are equally indispensable and equally unique for mutual completeness.

**Monogamy.** The need for ontological completeness and total and intimate sharing which results in the deepest human relationship is strengthened and sealed by a monogamous exclusivity. The Bible clearly and uniquely endorses such marriages. The creation of one Eve, the repeated use of the words “two shall become one flesh” (cf. Gen 2:24; Matt 19:3-5; Eph 5:31) as well as numerous other statements throughout the Bible<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jer 3:1; Hosea 2; Mark 10:1-12; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7.

stresses the legitimacy of the union of one husband to one wife<sup>3</sup> only.

This exclusive, monogamous, intimate relationship of marriage is often used as a parable of the relationship between God and His people, and even of the Incarnation.<sup>4</sup> Polygamy is never portrayed as an example to follow; only monogamous marriage fits the monotheistic concept of God.<sup>5</sup>

Alongside monogamy, the permanence of the marital union stands as equally essential. Loose relationships, frivolous attitudes, adulterous behavior go squarely against the seventh commandment of the Decalogue (Exod 20:14). Divorce and unfaithfulness in marriage are equivalent to idolatry and apostasy in religious life. Hosea vividly compares the tragic experience of the husband of an unfaithful wife to the God of an unfaithful nation (Hosea 2).

**Sacredness of marriage.** Christian theology rightfully stresses the sacredness of a Christian marriage. The basis for such a claim is found first and foremost in the fact that "God blessed them [Adam and Eve], and . . . said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it'" (Gen 1:28). Now the first couple not only has God's approval but a positive blessing for being and acting together.

The recording of the first marital union and blessing implies also the setting apart of these two persons for each other in a public manner. The marriage ceremony is not only reported in Scripture as a cultural fact, but also is a proper thing to do and to participate in.<sup>6</sup>

Friends, neighbors, strangers, and enemies should all know and respect the will of the two to become and remain only for each other. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder," Jesus said (Matt 19:6).

Finally, the sacredness of the marriage institution comes from the sacredness of two human lives intimately bound and vulnerably exposed to each other. There is such a thing as "no man's land," but nowhere does there exist "no one's man or woman." Every human being belongs to God by creation as well as by redemption.

When "I do" is pronounced, each spouse gives the self they are to the other self. The giving is not exercised by the right of ownership, but rather, as

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3 Some authors would add the words "at any one time" because of the biblical approval of the remarriage of widows or widowers. See J. Macquarie, "Monogamy," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. J. F. Childness and J. Macquarie (Philadelphia, 1981).

4 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 306; Matt 22:1-14; see id., *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC, 1900), 307.

5 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 91-92; id., *Spiritual Gifts 3* (Battle Creek, MI, 1860; facsimile reproduction, Washington, DC, 1945), 63, 99; id., *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, DC, 1947), 75-76.

6 John 2:1-11; Matt 22:1-14; 25:1-13.

stewards, we offer God's property (our own self) to another human being. This is why—should the “I do” become “I don't” or “I act as if I didn't”—the responsibility is to God first. At no time and under no contract or promise can any human own another, not even one's own self. Slavery under the guise of marriage is sin, Marriage is sacred and must not be manipulated or profaned.

### **Purposes of Marriage**

Nothing in creation exists without purpose. Before sin the purposes were all good, because the Creator is good.

**Mutual love and intimacy.** The first purpose for the institution of marriage is described in Genesis 2. While on the surface everything appeared complete and perfect, God knew that Adam was lonely. So God brought all the animals to Adam. As his wondering eyes marveled at these new companions, their obedience to him and their friendliness, deep down in his heart Adam measured their distance from him. Between him and the animals extended a gap which not even billions of years could bridge. Adam stood above the rest of nature and found himself alone. His eyes could look up to his Maker or down to his dominion, but no one creature, no one being stood face to face with him. “For the man there was not found a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:20), no one capable of “answering to him” (Gen 2:18, ASV).

Marriage is not an accident; it is God's answer to the human need for mutual love and intimacy. Adam and Eve were created for each other, so that the deepest human relationship might be realized. Evidently Adam's loneliness weighed heavily on him. He could not have been “single” for more than a few hours, yet when God brought Eve to him he exclaimed, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). Here at last was someone on Adam's level. From then on, all other human relationships would take second place to marriage, because no other relationship is as “fit” for humans as this one.

Throughout Scripture God looks with favor on marital relations and intimate and deep love (Prov 5:15-20; Eph 5:22-33), and watches with care over the sacredness of the marriage vow (Mal 2:15-16).

**Bearing and nurturing children.** The emergence of human beings on this planet stands as a noteworthy event in the context of the Creation narrative. Careful planning; an ample supply of air, food, and light; a home; the direct involvement of God in creating man in His image, all of these factors point to the grave importance of the beginning and nurture of human life. No place or context could be found which would assure the safety and propagation of human life better than a home wherein functioned a godly marriage. To the

first couple, so happy to find and be with each other, God said, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28).

Too often procreation is seen only as a biological function of the marriage union. The fact is that for the successful propagation of human beings, which would tend to reflect the stable and happy ideal intended by God, much more than sexual union is needed. “One of the surest signs of the health or sickness of a civilization is the prevailing attitude toward and treatment of its children.”<sup>7</sup> The unhealthy environment, neglect, and abuse can easily be related to criminal behavior, mental and/or physical sickness of children.

Marriage which springs from love and which is based on “the responsibility of fidelity” creates the bond of total commitment, a safe haven in which children can grow.<sup>8</sup> “The grace of Christ, and this alone, can make this institution what God designed it to be—an agent for the blessing and uplifting of humanity.”<sup>9</sup>

## Marriage: A Church Ordinance

The word “ordinance” has two main meanings. First, an ordinance is a requirement laid on someone by an authority. Second, an ordinance is an established or prescribed practice or usage, especially in the sense of a religious rite. In many Christian churches certain ordinances are elevated to the status of a sacrament. As such they are the indispensable channels of divine grace, given and distributed to the members by the officiating priest.<sup>10</sup>

Distinct from this view, the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that ordinances serve as object lessons designed by our Lord to keep Him in remembrance,<sup>11</sup> to typify Christ,<sup>12</sup> and to point to Him as the Saviour.<sup>13</sup> Three such ordinances are baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and foot washing. Given by the express order of Jesus, these are considered as gospel requirements for all church members.<sup>14</sup>

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7 T. B. Maston, and W. H. Tillman, *The Bible and Family Relations* (Nashville, 1983), 86ff.

8 E. Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia, 1937), 348.

9 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA, 1896), 65.

10 “The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, mass, penance, extreme unction, marriage, orders [ordination of priests, consecration of nuns]). Marriage became a sacrament only in the twelfth century A.D.

11 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church 2* (Mountain View, CA 1885): 607; id., *Testimonies for the Church 5* (Mountain View, CA, 1889): 666; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25.

12 Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC, 1940), 67; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24.

13 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA, 1898), 29; Rom 6:3-4.

14 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, rev. ed. (General Conference of SDA, 1990), 41-45, 78-82.

Even though marriage is also called a “sacred ordinance,”<sup>15</sup> the requirements for its practice and participation in it are of a different order. Participation in marriage is by no means mandatory or obligatory. On the contrary the apostle Paul points to the fact that while marriage is a good thing, celibacy is also a good thing (1 Cor 7:1-2, 7). While Eden spells out the divine ideal, neither marriage nor celibacy appears anywhere in Scripture as a universal requirement for church members.

However, when Christians do enter into this holy estate of matrimony, then by virtue of God’s commandments and the marriage vows, the spouses have obligations (1 Cor 7:3-5). Marriage is an ordinance of personal choice; conduct within marriage is a matter of obedience to God and accountability to the church.

Marriage as an institution is not simply personal and private in nature. Its influence is felt beyond the confines of the two spouses. As an ordinance, marriage ministers to the church community from whence it comes, and where it belongs.

Finally, marriage is a church ordinance performed both within and by the church. For this reason the church has a significant responsibility for the success and happiness of the marriage unions within its community and is called to minister to them in many and various ways. To these we now turn.

### **Accountability and Ministry to the Church**

**Accountability.** A Christian marriage is a covenant made by two individuals who are already members of the church covenant. The spouses are expected to maintain both covenants intact. Consequently, the marriage partners are accountable to the church body for their conduct. Frivolous, adulterous, or abusive behavior is the concern of the church before it becomes subject to action by legal or social institutions. Because both spouses and children also belong to the church body, the church should have a compassionate concern for what happens to these members (1 Corinthians 5).

**Ministry to the church.** On the other hand marriages provide a unique opportunity for ministering to the church and community at large. In the context of unfaithful and broken marriages, Christian spouses become an invaluable witness to the power of the gospel, and thus strengthen the church’s evangelistic mission.

Good Christian marriages build solid homes and strong churches, but their impact goes beyond the present and into the future. The loving and caring

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<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, 1952), 70.

nurture of children assures the church of good, committed membership and leadership tomorrow.

Finally, “marriage rests upon a primeval order of creation and is at the same time symbolically or parabolically incorporated in the order of salvation”<sup>16</sup> (Eph 5:22ff). More than that, marriage provides church members with support, love, correction, and protection from temptations and all manner of excess better than any church body can do (1 Cor 7:8-9). These are some of the ways in which marriage ministers to the church community. Now we turn to the ministry of the church to the marriage.

### **Responsibility and Ministry of the Church**

The church bears a responsibility for a marriage to be formed within its community long before the wedding date.

**Premarital period.** As a community of faith under God who upholds high standards of moral and religious conduct, the church provides a safe context for friendship among its young people. The church must consider as its responsibility the task to organize events which will facilitate and teach Christian social graces, mutual respect, and appreciation among its youth. Such occasions cannot be left to the educational institutions alone.

Wise, careful, and discerning guidance on the part of the church could help many in their choices of their marriage partner. Biblical counsel, as well as the counsel of Ellen G. White, states clearly that courtship with those outside of our faith is to be avoided at all cost.<sup>17</sup> But even within the church, finding a fitting companion requires more wisdom than any one human being alone can have. “‘But,’ you say, ‘should I follow the judgment of the brethren independent of my own feelings?’ I answer: The church is God’s delegated authority upon earth. . . . The eyes of the church may be able to discern in its individual members that which the erring may not see.”<sup>18</sup>

Premarital counseling, when implemented as a normal and regular program of the church, serves as a final preparation for this very important step in life. Such ministry of the church to its youth is a responsibility, not simply an option.

**The marriage.** Most Christian marriage ceremonies take place on the local church premises or in the presence of the church members. The body of Christ stands as witness to the mutual promises of the newlyweds and shares in their

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16 J. D. Douglas, “Marriage” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, 1978), 63.

17 See Deut 7:1-4; 1 Cor 7:39; White, *Testimonies for the Church* 5:361-63.

18 White, *Testimonies for the Church* 5:107.

joy as reminiscent of Adam's first happy rendezvous with Eve.

As witness to the vows, the church itself takes on a pledge to provide a safe environment for the new pair. No interference in private affairs, respect, and a proper distance from the now-married and unavailable man and woman provide important help, a secret haven where new marriages can adjust, grow, and mature. Proper church discipline and an effort to keep the church standards high give additional support to marriage within the community. Society in general, seldom if ever, caters to such needs.

As the new marriage matures in the first year of adjustment, older and more seasoned marriages stand as examples and guideposts for the young to follow (Titus 2:2-6). Pastoral and sometimes professional marriage counseling are available within the confines of the larger church family.

Yet, in spite of the best intentions and sincere efforts, Christian marriages may have troublesome experiences, breakdowns of intimacy, love, and faithfulness. The church can not simply stand by, a stoic witness to such tragedies.

### **Ministry of the Church to Troubled Marriages**

The biblical standard of faithfulness, exclusivity, and permanence of marriage stand as a rampart against the contemporary flood of adultery and divorce. The experience of many marriages proves that such a stand is not an impossibility. But the grim reality of unfaithfulness and divorce within the church points to the fact that sin and evil do not ask for permission nor do they respect any person. The church is faced with breaking and broken marriages which call for help.

**Mixed marriages.** When a modern Samson insists "Get her for me; for she pleases me well" (Judg 14:3) no one can stop him. On the basis of a strong stand against such marriages both in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, the church Ministerial Manual counsels ministers not to officiate in such ceremonies, and thus remain consistent with inspired counsel. When such marriages do happen in spite of all efforts, the church will wisely maintain the position of disapproval, while at the same time cherish all opportunities to bring the unbelieving spouse into its fold.

**Adultery.** Adultery is defined as extramarital sexual relations and, according to Exodus 20:14, 17 and Matthew 5:27-30 as desires and thoughts of infidelity with persons other than one's marriage partner. This sin is often equated with murder, because the tender fibers of childlike trust and openness become almost irreparably broken. The "one flesh" reality is no more. The OT theocracy of Israel ordered the execution of both parties involved (Lev 20:10ff.; Deut 22:22ff.). The NT teaches that immoral sexual unions and

union with Christ are naturally incompatible (1 Cor 6:9-20).

The seriousness with which the Bible condemns adultery is justified in many ways. Sexual union is not something that affects participants only superficially and physiologically. This experience affects the qualitative change of one's identity (1 Cor 6:16).

Paul goes on to say why fornication is such a special sin: "Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). Other sins can be, as it were, "outside me." In relation to them it may be true that "I live; yet not I." The wrong I do as a Christian in that state in which I am characterized by the "Christ in me," is in some sense outside of my Christ-ego so that when I do it I am in a sense not myself. As Luther put it, my sin as a Christian is a remnant of the serpent skin which I have long since sloughed off. . . . Now this is precisely the possibility which no longer exists as long as I am in bondage to fornication. For fornication always means that I am subjected to an alien power. This is one sin which I cannot keep at a distance by saying it takes place "outside" me. On the contrary, when I commit it, I am right there, fully involved.<sup>19</sup>

The church has always considered adultery as grounds for disfellowship and divorce. However, even adultery is not an unforgivable sin (John 8:11, KJV), and severely damaged marital relationships can be mended if not totally restored. As the church contemplates the approach to take in dealing with the offender, close attention should be given to the other spouse and the needs of the family. However, this wider approach is not taken so that discipline can be curtailed or that forgiveness should overlook the need for radical treatment of the offender to effectuate an ultimate cure. But some procedures could make a tragic situation even worse and must be avoided out of love for all involved. Timing, the extent and flow of information, ministry, and support to the innocent party and the guilty one are among the concerns to be kept in mind.

Whatever the church may do, the first and foremost goal in mind must be the salvation of all and the least damage to both families and the church of the present and future.

**Divorce.** The wounds and pain created by adultery may at times be too deep for a marriage to continue. Divorce, that paradoxical phenomenon, may be the only response available. Divorce is a paradox because it means breaking off something unbreakable, terminating a relationship that is deemed to be permanent. In Matthew 19:9 Jesus admits the possibility of divorce for the

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19 H. Thielicke, *Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids, 1979), 90.

reason of "unchastity."<sup>20</sup> On that basis as well as on the basis of counsel from Ellen G. White,<sup>21</sup> the church allows such action and subsequent remarriage.

But this is an exception and never a rule. The Bible is clear on that matter. God hates divorce (Mal 2:16), and "this emphatic statement should always be kept in mind in the midst of discussions on the many tragic circumstances that contribute to the disintegration of marriage relationships. Divorce is always a consequence of sinful human attitudes and behavior and should not be encouraged or promoted by any Christian leader."<sup>22</sup>

Paul is equally emphatic in his first letter to Corinthians (1 Cor 7:10-11). He appeals to the authority of "the Lord" to say that married persons should not seek divorce. "The regulation is absolute; for it comes from the Lord Himself."<sup>23</sup> "For a Christian husband or wife, divorce is excluded by the law of Christ: here Paul has not needed to express a judgment of his own, for the Lord's ruling on the matter was explicit."<sup>24</sup>

But if divorce does occur, Paul foresees only two options: remain single or be reconciled. Even in the case of religious incompatibility the same injunction is repeated (1 Cor 7:13-16). The reason given is that both the unbelieving spouse and their children would have been "set apart" (sanctified) through the witness of and close association with the believing spouse.<sup>25</sup>

In difficult cases where violence, abuse, heavy drinking, and crime, or desertion are present, legal separation of room and/or board might be advisable.<sup>26</sup> The safety of the other spouse and the children is found among the reasons for separation.

**Remarriage.**<sup>27</sup> Can a divorced spouse remarry? This simple question faces the church repeatedly as it attempts to minister to persons involved in broken and shattered marriages. The answer is not simple, because divorces are not all the same.

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20 Some Bible scholars challenge the reading of vs. 9 with the exception clause on the basis that Mark and Luke's parallel passages do not include it. See e.g., R. H. Gundry, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, 1982), 90. However, A. W. Argyle contends that Mark and Luke omit something that was common knowledge (see *The Gospel According to Matthew* [Cambridge, 1963] 52); and Krister Stendahl notes that the inclusion of such a detail stands to reason when we know that Matthew's Gospel served as a church manual (*Peck's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. M. Black, and H. H. Rawley [London, 1962], 777).

21 White, *The Adventist Home*, 391-92; 399-406; id., *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 63.

22 J. J. Davis, *Evangelical Ethics* (Phillipsburg, 1985), 103.

23 H. Couzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia, 1975), 120.

24 F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, 1977), 267.

25 J. C. Laney, "Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7," in *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, September 1982, 283-94.

26 White, *The Adventist Home*, 343-44.

27 The remarriage of widows and widowers is not an issue here since the inspired counsel is definitely in favor as long as the new marriage is "in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39).

Remarriage is permitted after the divorce has taken place on the basis of adultery. "I saw that sister —, as yet, has no right to marry another man; but if she, or any other woman, should obtain a divorce legally on the ground that her husband was guilty of adultery, then she is free to be married to whom she chooses."<sup>28</sup> A legal divorce on grounds other than adultery, however, does not dissolve marriages from a biblical perspective.<sup>29</sup>

Some evangelical theologians argue from 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 that desertion is a Pauline exception for divorce. J. E. Adams interprets verse 15 as saying that if the unbelieving husband deserts his believing wife, the marriage bonds are removed.<sup>30</sup> Laney suggests that the word *dedoulōtai* comes from *douloō*, "to enslave," and not from *deō* "to tie up." What Paul is saying is that if a spouse wants to separate or divorce, do not subject yourself and the family to slavery. Let him or her go.<sup>31</sup> But then, only if that departing person remarries or lives in an adulterous relationship can divorce and remarriage be considered by the other spouse.

In letter 50, 1895, Ellen G. White writes to a mother whose daughter married a divorced man. The mother considered such a marriage as adulterous. However, Ellen G. White approved of the marriage. The husband "could not have done more than he did do." Therefore, she continued, "J did not put his wife away. She left him, and put him away, and married another man. I see nothing in the Scripture that forbids him to marry again in the Lord. He has a right to the affection of a woman."<sup>32</sup>

In many cases the situation is not so clearly defined. Guilt and innocence are often shared by both. The most difficult dilemmas present cases where divorce of both guilty parties has occurred and where remarriage is contemplated. Such a divorce should first be grounds for church discipline, and the church should not be involved in the remarriage proceedings. Should ever either party seek rebaptism after the divorce and remarriage, the church must proceed with great caution.<sup>33</sup>

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28 White, *The Adventist Home*, 344.

29 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 2 (Washington, DC, (1958), 340-41.

30 J. E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 48.  
See also Davis.

31 Laney, 287-88.

32 White, *Selected Messages*, Book 2, 339-40.

33 In one case Ellen G. White stated that a certain man "has placed himself where he cannot be helped by the church. . . . If he repents ever so heartily, the church must let his case alone. If he goes to heaven, it must be alone, without the fellowship of the church. A standing rebuke from God and the church must ever rest upon him, that the standard of morality be not lowered to the very dust" (White, *Testimonies for the Church* 1 [Mountain View, CA, 1885]: 215). "This is the only statement of this kind in the E. G. White writings, published or unpublished," said A. L. White. It is found in the Ellen G. White Estate vault under "church, some must go to heaven without help of," This was a

## Conclusion

“It is not good for man to be alone.” Human needs for love, intimacy, and stable, constant companionship are legitimate needs. The crucial factor is summed up in Genesis 2:18—“I will make him a helper fit for him.” When God does it, it is very good. Then marriage becomes an answer for human needs and an object lesson of His understanding, care, and saving love. Marriage realizes the divine blessing when it follows the original pattern of monogamy, exclusivity, permanency, and sacredness.

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case of incestuous adultery. See also “Remarriage and Church Membership,” *General Conference Annual Council Committee General Actions*, October 13-21, 1976, Washington, DC, 23-43 for procedures on restoration of guilty parties who in later years repent.