

EGW on Divorce and Remarriage

Marriage, Remarriage, and the Truth of God as Expressed by Moses, by Jesus, by Paul, and by Ellen

Introduction

The work of Satan has always been to undermine the authority of the Word of God. This is often done by pitting one truth against another in such a way that one must appear wrong. Man finds the most motivation for reasoning this way when he is in danger of being reproved by the Word. It is the purpose of this paper only to show that God has ever been clear and unchanging in the requirements of the moral law regarding the married state of man.

The Civil and Moral Codes of Israel

The books of Moses provided both the Moral Laws that were to govern all men for all ages, as well as a set of civil laws that formed the national constitution of the nation of Israel. The moral laws governed even the thoughts and intents of the heart. The national laws extended only as far as the judicial system of the nation could oversee.

These codes were related to each other in many spheres. For example, the Law of God commanded the faithful Israelite to honor his mother and his father (Exodus 20) while the civil code specified that the son that cursed his mother should be put to death by the congregation (see Exodus 21).

The moral code specified that adultery is evil. The civil code also dealt with the civil rights of a bigamist and his first wife. While it did not *condone* the practice of having two wives, it made provision for the judges of the nation to know how to deal with the case. They were not to regard the first wife as a property to be bought and sold. Her husband would have “no power” over her of

that nature. See Ex. 21:6-10.

The moral code was exceeding broad. It condemned attitudes, pride, selfishness, even impure motives for noble actions. National law could never take cognizance of these things. But God does. In the judgement men will meet the precepts of His Law again.

It is a spiritual law and carnal minds are not subject to it. Ro 7:14; 8:7. Indeed, they can not be. It is for these carnal minds that civil codes have been ordained by heaven.

Those civil codes presupposed no converted heart. The system of them was designed, not to prevent the breaking of the moral code, but to limit the rights of men that would break it. It placed boundaries on the wicked choices of evil men. For this superficial appearance of permissiveness it has been faulted as condoning the evils that it restrained.

The laws of divorce and remarriage given by Moses were part of this civil code. To require an unbeliever to remain with his faithful spouse is more than even the enlightened apostle Paul would do. He wrote "let him depart." I Cor. 7:15. Paul did not mean that the unbeliever is excused for his departing, or that the divorce that may follow is sinless. His counsel was only that the church was not to compel, either by its own authority or by civil action, the unbeliever to remain.

His counsel was in harmony with the civil code of Moses. Erring men were not to be forced by the state to fulfill their marriage vow. Because of the hardness of their hearts and because of their moral freedoms they were given national guidelines to govern even their ill behavior. The law was cognizant of their decisions and placed restrictions against the abuse of society by those that would choose the evil and hate the good.

Those that have misunderstood the sense of Christ's statement about Moses' law could be helped by a statement by Ellen White on Ezekiel 20:25. Adventist have been faulted at times for teaching Jewish fables. Against the Sabbath has been raised the argument that it was part of the law that was "contrary to us" in Colossians 2:14. A text many times cited by authors making this

attack is Ezekiel 20:25, quoted in the following passage.

The Lord said of the children of Israel, "Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols, wherefore I gave them also **statutes that were not good**, and judgments whereby they should not live." Because of continual disobedience, the Lord annexed penalties to the transgression of his law, which were not good for the transgressor, or whereby he should not live in his rebellion. By transgressing the law which God had given in such majesty, and amid glory which was unapproachable, the people showed open contempt of the great Lawgiver, and death was the penalty.—1SP p. 265

God has never given laws that “were not good” in the sense that they were morally defective. His ways are perfect. When Jesus connected the civil divorce code of Moses with the hardness of the people, He was no more faulting Moses’ law than Ezekiel was faulting the Law of God.

Jesus was simply explaining that the civil code made provisions for evils that were never intended to afflict the human race—divorce being notable among them. The nature of these provisions should be of interest to those that are studying this sacred topic.

Here is the text of one of those civil laws.

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

This was God’s civil law and reflected His values.[\[1\]](#) Only He could define an “abomination before the Lord.” While divorce is allowed by God to wicked but civilized men, experimental marriage was not. No one was to think that they would be permitted to say “I am going to try marrying someone else, you can too. If it isn’t as good as our marriage, we can get back together.” God set a limit, the very best possible limit, that could be set for the civil law of the Jews.

Other views of the passage (Matthew 19:18) place us in great difficulty. If it is true that a prophet of God may give faulty counsel because of the hardness of God's people, then the Bible is a faulty book and the *Testimonies* must be judged by a higher standard of righteousness than themselves. If inspired books may be faulty in their moral content, then our standard for judging has been removed, unless it becomes the opinions of our learned leaders.^[2] Be careful reader before you judge a text of scripture.

There is another principle of interpretation that we should consider before approaching the issue of what the Bible teaches regarding Christians and Divorce and Remarriage. We can illustrate the principle by a statement Jesus made on this very topic.

Jesus and Marriage

And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Luke 20:34-35.

If this were our only passage by Jesus on the subject, there would be some ground for Christian celibacy. The contrast is between the "children of this world" and "they which shall be accounted worthy" to enter heaven. Members of the first class "marry and are given in marriage." Those of the second do neither.

Luke left out some important information. Do we dare say it was by mistake? The Holy Spirit's Breath ought not to be subject to criticism. What Luke left out, a basis for determining when the second class would not "marry" is found in most simple terms in two collateral passages.

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." *"For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."* Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25.

What Jesus had to say about adultery and divorce is similarly stated various ways in the different gospels. Luke again presents the succinct version. The story around it he omits.

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. Luke 16:18

If this were our only passage by Jesus on the subject, there would be some ground for believing in indissoluble marriage. The crime mentioned in both the case of the man seeking divorce and the victim of a divorce is the crime of remarriage. That remarriage is adultery.

Luke left out some important information. Matthew and Mark give more, and what they say throws light on Luke's quotation of our Savior. This is in harmony with God's chosen method of teaching. See Isaiah 28:9-10.

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?* And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, [Mark, "What did Moses command you?"] that he which made [them] at 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? Matthew 19:3-5. See Mark 10:2-8.

The question being answered was "Is it lawful to divorce a woman for a whim?" When Ellen White quotes these passages, this is precisely the issue that she deals with. Jesus answered the question first by enforcing the commands of Moses.

The apostles asked why Moses had given a "command" to give a "writing of divorcement," (Matt. 19:7) but Jesus softened the word and replied that Moses "*suffered* [allowed] you to put away your wives." Moses never justified a divorce over trivia. See Matthew 19:6-8; Mark 10:9-10. This is important. He that justifieth the wicked is an abomination in the sight of God.

On the other hand, the civil code that God gave through Moses permitted divorce. Most governments do today. We do not fault our nation for allowing legal divorce. Legal divorce is better than illegal divorce or a cruel and neglectful polygamy.

But the civil law of Moses can not be rightly taken as a guide for Christian living. Moses allowed it for who? The regenerate? No. Jesus said it was for the hard-hearted. If a man stays with his wife out of principle, it is a very good thing. But if stays married because it is legally impossible to do otherwise, that legal impossibility is an unkindness, even a danger, to the unloved spouse.

Then Jesus came to the subject matter of Luke's quotation.

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a

woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.” Matthew 19: 9. Mark 10:11-12.

The exception clause, “except it be for fornication,” is addressed by Ellen White a number of times, and was addressed earlier by Jesus, near the opening of His ministry.^[3] When Jesus says “Whoever will divorce his wife, unless it be for fornication, and will marry another, commits adultery,” His words beg the question “and what if the cause is fornication?”

If the fornication of the guilty spouse is "adultery" while she is married to her husband, plain reading leads to the conclusion that it is adultery still when she marries her fornicating partner. This is the ground of the second clause in Matthew 19:9.

The woman that marries a divorced man risks adultery. If he has no grounds for his divorce, he has no right to remarry. And if he was the guilty partner in his divorce case, he has no grounds to remarry.

Jesus goes on with his point and does not restate the exception so apparent in the previous verse. The man has put away his wife for trivial reasons. The divorce is not moral. Then “whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”

He had already answered in the first clause the case of the woman whose husband had committed adultery against her. By exempting her from an accusation of "adultery" in her remarriage Jesus gave her grounds for another holy matrimony.

Mark’s quotation presupposes a trifling divorce, whether by the man or woman, and explains the last phrase of Luke’s quotation. In the Ethiopic version, the two verses are nearly identical in this way. ^[4]

Neither Luke nor Mark mention the exception of fornication, and there is more than one good reason. It really is no exception at all. Adultery nullifies the marriage covenant by breaking it. When

commenting on the ability of the covenant to be broken, Ellen White uses that familiar phrase that should warn us against being wise above what is written. "I saw," she wrote to Brother Day,

"that the church [at Monterey] has not taken the right view of scripture. A woman may be legally divorced from her husband by the laws of the land and yet not divorced in the sight of God and according to the higher law. There is only one sin, which is adultery, which can place the husband or wife in a position where they can be free from the marriage vow in the sight of God. Although the laws of the land may grant a divorce, yet they are husband and wife still in the Bible light, according to the laws of God." 17MR 156

And she saw what that freedom entailed.

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. . . . Sister Johnson is not clear in this matter. She has not been right or felt right. God's Spirit has not guided you or her in this matter. You have prayed over it, Brother Albert, but your desire and wish to follow in a certain course has led you to take for light and evidence that which is no light and evidence, and the enemy has wrought here greatly to your disadvantage but to his own great advantage. — *Part from the Adventist Home* p. 344. Taken from 17 MR 155 where the whole text may be found.

That freedom is a right, and the removal of it belongs to no man. Not only had she seen the freedom in vision, but she saw nothing contrary to it in scripture.

Walter 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 who, knowing his physical defect, shall choose to give him her love. The time has come when a sterile condition is not the worst condition to be in. I see wives who have borne large families of children, and they are unable to give them proper care. These women do not have time to recover from the weakness of bearing one child before they are with child again.—TSB p. 68

Paul on Marriage and Divorce

And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart,

let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife? I Corinthians 7:10-16

Separation, while not condemned as adultery, is made by Paul to be a not-optimal solution to marital problems. Remarriage is forbidden, and reconciliation enjoined as an alternative. Some might object that this is the very abomination that the Lord forbade through Moses, but I Corinthians 7:10 is recommending reconciliation to separated *yet still-married* people.

The departure or threatened departure of an unbelieving spouse should not prevent the conscientious practices of the believer. She should let him depart rather than feeling under bondage to submit to his authority in such cases, in cases of conscience. Paul does not contradict Jesus here in making a new rule that would authorize divorce for a reason other than fornication. We live in a wicked and adulterous generation, and it is doubtful that the unbelieving one will remain chaste, but to suppose he has done wrong it is unwarranted. The time when she would be free to remarry, aside from the dissolution of the vow by adultery, is at the death of her husband. See verse 39.

Your ideas in regard to the marriage relation have been erroneous. Nothing but the violation of the marriage bed can either break or annul the marriage vow. We are living in perilous times, when there is no assurance in anything save in firm, unwavering faith in Jesus Christ. There is no heart that may not be estranged from God through the devices of Satan, if one does not watch unto prayer.—AH p. 341

Among the Jews a man was permitted to put away his wife for the most trivial offenses, and the woman was then at liberty to marry again. This practice led to great wretchedness and sin. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. "Every one," He said, "that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." – AH 340

The illustration in Romans 7, the first man being our old rebellious self and the second man being Jesus in the heart, assumes faithfulness on the part of the men. Nothing else makes sense in the illustration. As long as we are married to self, self does not commit fornication with anyone else. If we want to marry Christ, self must die.

And if this is taken too far as an illustration of Paul's teaching on marriage, then it says that killing your husband is a fair way to be freed from the marriage law. Bible illustrations are truthful and accurate for what they are intended to say, and not for anything else that could be drawn out of the same illustration. Illustrations are picked for their power to express a thought in a most simple way. For that reason details added, assumed, or read into them may not express truth at all. Romans 7 makes no commentary on whether or not fornication is a Biblical grounds for divorce and/or

remarriage.

Singleness Preferred in I Corinthians 7 and Matthew 19

His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*. Matthew 19:10-12.

There are men that are "given" the gift of being able to bear singleness. These should "receive it." The gift itself can not lessen the truth that Paul expressed.

Marriage is honourable *in all*, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Hebrews 13:4

The reason that some, including no doubt a few of the apostles themselves, are given the gift is explained by Paul as well. There were two reasons, neither of which was the one that occurred to the disciples. They thought the vow too galling. The first reason given by Paul is the state of persecution the church would suffer from time to time and from place to place.

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose *therefore that this is good for the present distress*, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. I Corinthians 7:25-26.

To be married today, have a child on the way a few months from now, and to be burned in Rome before the child is born, that was the kind of grief from which Paul wished to save some. But he does not make a moral requirement out of his logic. "If a virgin marry, she hath not sinned." But in time of great persecution, she has exposed herself to "trouble in the flesh." In the midst of the great work that must be done, Paul would rather have some "without carefulness."

Who is this counsel for? Jesus said "for those that can receive it." Paul explained that those that are very attached to their loved friend and are behaving in a way that makes that love apparent are among those that can not bear it. And those that might not realize how much of their energies will be absorbed by entering into marriage are invited to consider the cost before deciding.

Getting married, for them, is "well" though not getting married for some would be "better" as he/she could better devote his/her energies to gospel work. See I Corinthians 7:32-38. Neither

Jesus, nor Paul, nor Ellen tried to make this a norm, though, for Christian life. It is the papacy that "forbiddeth to marry." And "a well-disciplined, well-ordered family exerts a more powerful influence in favor of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached." ST 12-11-01.

That some would be marrying during the scenes of the last distress was foretold by Jesus. Matthew 24:38.

The Letter about a Remarriage

Most of the New Testament is written in the form of letters. If we were to limit the authority of these letters to the portions of them that begin with a reference to a divine revelation, we would lose much of God has given us. The same is true for the writings of Ellen White. She wrote to one,

You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision--the precious rays of light shining from the throne. 5T p. 67

An involved letter by Ellen White, perfectly in harmony with the statements quoted earlier in this paper, also shines on the subject under discussion. The situations leading up to the letter are described generally in the letter.

Some have criticized the authority of its counsels based on the personal outcome of affairs in the lives of those mentioned. Let us not fault God for Lucifer's fall, or for Adam's. Let us not place the corpse of Judas at the feet of Jesus as an accusation. Obedience today and cherished sin tomorrow will never reveal the blessings that might have been derived from today's obedience.

In regard to the marriage of your daughter with A_____, I see where you are troubled. But the marriage took place with your consent, and your daughter, knowing all about him, accepted him as her husband, and now I can see no reason why you should carry any burden over this matter. Your daughter loves A_____, and it may be that this marriage is in the order of God in order that both A_____ and your daughter may have a richer Christian experience, and be built up where they are deficient. Your daughter has pledged herself to A_____ in marriage, and to break her marriage

vows would be far from right. She cannot now disannul her obligations to him. . . . I had a personal knowledge of his former relations with his first wife B____. A____ loved B____ far too well; for she was not worthy of his regard. He did all in his power to help her, and sought in every possible way to retain her as his wife. He could not have done more than he did do. I pleaded with her, and tried to show her the inconsistency of her course, and begged her not to obtain a divorce; but she was determined and willful and stubborn, and would have her own way. While she lived with him, she sought to secure all the money possible from him, but she would not treat him kindly as a wife should treat her husband.

A____ 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. . . . I cannot see that this new union should be disturbed. It is a serious matter to part a man and his wife. There is no Scriptural ground upon which to take such a step in this case. He did not leave her, she left him. He did not marry again until she had obtained a divorce. When B____ divorced herself from A____ he suffered most keenly, and it was not until B____ had married another man that A____ married again. The one he has chosen I feel certain will be a help to him, and he can be a help to her. . . . I see nothing in the Word of God that would require her to separate from him. As you have asked my advice, I will freely give it to you. *[The whole letter is also in 17MR, this paragraph following is taken from it. 17MR p. 152, the initial is changed, the subject is the same]*

I am truly sorry that you have taken upon yourself unnecessary burdens. Do you not see that in separating J and your daughter you would create two evils instead of curing one? Your daughter has married J, and there is no reason why she should be separated from him. You have no just excuse for desiring them to cease living and working together as man and wife. You may give publicity to the evil reports that may come to you, and be the means of making yourself, your daughter, and her husband miserable. Let those two, as children of God, unite their interests as their marriage vows require them to do; let them consecrate themselves to God to do His will, to be vessels unto honor, meet for the Master's use. Letter 50, 1895, pp. 1-6; 1MR 162

How Jesus Relates to an Offending Spouse

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. . . . Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: Jeremiah 3:8. See Isaiah 50:1, written about 80 years earlier.

The right of the offended partner to seek for reconciliation, even after divorce, may not be specified in scripture, but it is exemplified.

Summary

The civil codes of Israel allowed wicked men to divorce their wives for trivial reasons. This was not God's intention for His children. He does not permit them to do so. Marriage is a mutual contract for life. That contract includes a promise of purity, a promise to reserve sexual intimacy for one's lawful wedded spouse. When one party commits fornication, the contract is broken. Adultery is the dissolution of that contract by the breaking of the promise that solemnized it.

This was recognized by Jesus through Matthew and by Jesus through White. The breaking of the covenant may be rightly followed up with either forgiveness and a renewing of the vows, or by forgiveness and a legal divorce from the offending party. The legal divorce ratifies the dissolution of the should-have-been-life-long vow. That vow abolished, there is no reason, spiritually or legally, that the injured party may not seek again secure and intimate companionship. If a man, "he has a right to the love of a woman." If a woman, to the love of a man.

No other view of the topic can harmonize with all the statements in inspiration. No other can both satisfy the law that forbids breaking the vow and the moral right of man to faithful intimacy.

It will never do to say of a prophet "he (or she) didn't have the light." Perhaps they did not understand what they wrote, but they wrote precisely the truth.

--The end

Addendum

M may hope in God and do the best he can to serve God in all humility of mind, casting his helpless soul upon the great Sin Bearer. I have not written a word to either father or son. I would gladly do something to help poor M to make things right, but this cannot be done as matters are now situated, without someone's being wronged.--Letter 175, 1901.

Statements about marriage not related to the divorce issues above:

I do hope you will not be deceived, Addie, as this poor child is. I hope you will be an earnest, true Christian day by day, seeking God in prayer. Do not be so busy you cannot give time to read the Bible and seek the grace of God in humble prayer. Follow no one's example or custom in dress or in actions. If they lead to indifference and worldliness, do not express vanity in dress, but dress becomingly, neatly; but seek earnestly to be meek and lowly of heart and be obtaining a rich experience in the things of God. Learn to overcome vanity which exists in the heart that is not sanctified through the truth. Do not be forward, but be retiring and modest.{DG 160.1}

You will now be looked to by many and criticized to see how you will come forth from Sister White's teachings. Do not misrepresent me, but seek to give influence by your course of action. Ever be true, open, sincere, and frank. All affectation despise. Keep yourself aloof from young men. Let them know that there is one girl who will not be crazy and bewildered at their first notice and attentions. I want you to be prepared to travel with me and help me, if I want you.{DG 160.2}

I am surprised to hear that a mother forty-six years of age will imperil her happiness, her welfare, and her influence by marrying a young man of twenty. This is a strange matter, and reveals lack of sound judgment. The Lord would have this sister consider carefully the sure result of such a course of action. {TSB 37.3}

In this matter, our sister must be under a strange influence--an influence contrary to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As the mother of three children, she should feel her accountability to God to move discreetly in all respects, that she may hold her influence over her children, and not pursue any course that they and many others would regard as so questionable. She should realize that her duty to her God and to her children demands the most serious consideration. {TSB 37.4}

My sister, the Lord is not in this matter. Such a marriage would bring strange results--results that would destroy the influence that a mother should earnestly seek to maintain over her own children. This influence I entreat of you to guard sacredly. God has solemnly charged you, as the mother of your children, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For you at this time to

take a youth of twenty as your husband would be strangely inconsistent with your responsibilities as a mother of three sons now grown to manhood.

For the Word Doc, click here: [Notes on EGWs views on marriage, divorce, and remarriage](#)

[1] Not His values regarding marriage, but regarding the role of the state in enforcing morality. Regarding divorce itself, the Lord's values are better revealed in His rebuke by Malichi.

"Yet ye say, Wherefore [will you cut us off?]? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. *For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away:* for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. Mal. 2:14-16.

In this passage (see verse 12) God speaks of judgements, not from the state, but from heaven that would "cut off" the adulterer, the teacher and the student together.

[2] Our only safety is to rely on our prophets' plainest teachings. No inspired statement of progressive truth has ever made the inspired writings of an earlier prophet faulty. But man has often fought against the plain statements of prophets. Regarding those that fought the fourth commandment we read:

Such, I saw, have the carnal mind, therefore are not subject to the holy law of God. They are not agreed among themselves, yet labor hard with their inferences to wrest the Scriptures to make a breach in God's law, to change, abolish, or do anything with the fourth commandment rather than to observe it. They wish to silence the flock upon this question; therefore they get up something with the hope that it will quiet them and that many of their followers will search their Bibles so little that their leaders can easily make error appear like truth, and they receive it as such, not looking higher than their leaders. EW 69

[3] “It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” Matthew 5:31-32.

[4] Matthew Gill writes “The Ethiopic version reads this last clause, quite different from all others, thus, “and whosoever puts away her husband, and joins to another, commits adultery”, agreeably to Mr 10:12.”