

See NOTE 1 on the next page.

LESSON 2

WEDDINGS.

MARRIAGE is both a civil and a religious institution. It has its legal relations, and is subject to and provided for by the enactments of civil law. But as divinely instituted, its moral and religious bearings are manifest. Its higher relations to the law of God are set forth in the Scriptures, and its nature, benefits and obligations are there explained and enforced.

1. Marriage as a civil contract consists in the parties making a declaration before competent witnesses that they take each other as husband and wife, pledging themselves to a faithful and life-long discharge of the duties reciprocally involved in that relation.

2. The persons designated by law to take the acknowledgment of the contract and make certificate of the same—to solemnize the bans—are regularly ordained and recognized clergymen of all denominations, justices of the peace, judges of courts, mayors of cities, and governors of states.

3. Marriage, solemnized by any person, if the parties properly make their declaration in the presence of competent witnesses, is valid in law; but the person who solemnizes the bans is subject to fine if he be not legally authorized to do it.

4. Divinity students, licentiates, and lay preachers

Note 1:

In brother Hiscox' day marriage, and the ceremony to secure it and the legalities of it, was quite different than it is today in America.

In the United States, the legalities of marriage concerning who is party to the contract has drifted far from what it was historically in this country. Brother Hiscox states that (in his day) the contract is between a man and a woman. However, today any wedding performed with governmental sanction makes it a three way contract, with the government being the senior party. The man and woman can break their contract but the contract with the government is indissoluble.

Thus today (the year 2010) a regular marriage by marriage license issued from the State gives the state lifetime control over the parties and also control over the issue of the marriage. This includes the physical property acquired in the marriage and also includes the children that issue from the marriage, and this control by the government continues even after the marriage is dissolved.

The man and woman have no control over the other in any way once the marriage is dissolved; but the governmental control continues for the rest of their lives. That is why the judges can decide who gets what property should the marriage be dissolved and that includes the children.

Today, many people in the United States prefer a Covenant Marriage which does not include the government as a third party. Thus the marriage becomes solely an agreement between the two to become one, which is a biblical precept, and does not include secular government nor does it seek approval from the government for their union in the state of matrimony. Marriage was instituted by God and given from Him to mankind. Governmental intrusion into Marriage is an unbiblical act that is resisted on religious grounds by those preferring a biblical Covenant of Marriage before God; and they do not seek, nor should they seek, any approval but His.

Many State governments want Covenant marriages to be registered. This is not recommended because doing so, once again, invites government involvement in the marriage.

are not by law regarded as ordained clergymen, and cannot lawfully perform the marriage service.

5. As a social festival, the bearing and influence of the clergyman will go far towards giving it character. He is to remember that it should not be sad, solemn and oppressive, like a funeral, nor yet a scene of thoughtless and extravagant levity.

The one is as foreign to the true purposes of a wedding as the other. It should be cheerful, joyous, and inspiring, without losing the dignity and serenity of a social festivity sanctioned by religion. Its religious aspect is recognized in the fact that clergymen are usually sought for to solemnize the bans.

6. When the marriage takes place at the minister's own house, or in church, the occasion will be under his own control; when it is at the bride's home, he will not feel at liberty to interfere directly with the arrangements, and can only indirectly influence the occasion beyond his own official performance. His known wishes will, however, generally be respected.

7. The ceremony itself should not be so very brief as to seem trifling and unimpressive, nor yet so protracted as to be tedious and annoying. Extended counsel, however important, will be little considered during the excitement of such a service.

8. As to the form of the ceremony, the wishes of those to be united should be regarded, if they have any choice. If they have not, the clergyman will naturally proceed in his accustomed way.

9. One thing he should always do, strictly and conscientiously, viz., proceed without deviation *according to law*. No persuasion of friends, nor fear of losing a

fee, should induce him to violate legal enactments. Ministers of the gospel should be the last men to break the laws.

10. Nor, even where the law permits, should he unite in marriage persons whom he believes should not be so united. Run-away matches, and parties under suspicious circumstances, it is wiser to decline; prudence in this respect may save himself and others much trouble.

11. The minister should strictly question strangers, so as to satisfy himself that all is right. But those who would evade the law will be likely to evade the truth in such a case. In the state of New York the clergyman is now allowed to put the parties under oath, and to preserve their sworn and certified statement.

12. The law should be also strictly followed as to the registration of marriages, whether in city or country. Such laws are wise and salutary, and involve important interests.

13. Each clergyman will of course keep a private register of all marriages performed by him, with all essential particulars, for future reference and personal security, and at the same time give certificates of marriage to all parties desiring them.

14. As to the use of intoxicating drinks at weddings, those providing the refreshments will doubtless exercise their prerogatives in furnishing or omitting them. But the minister of Christ should never give any countenance or sanction whatever to their use at such a time. It would be worse than a blunder for him to allow himself to be per-

Note 1:

Each minister must make up his own mind concerning performing marriage ceremonies where alcohol is to be consumed. He must follow the dictates of his conscience in this matter. His convictions need to be formed beforehand and then adhered to unwaiveringly.

However, one must consider the fact that God prohibits alcohol consumption (Hab 2:15-17) and declares there is a curse upon those that give it to their neighbor to make them drunken. So why would a minister ask God to bless a gathering that is breaking His prohibition against drunkenness.

God also gives an explanation in His Word of the sin and sickness that follows those who drink. (Prov 23:29-35) So why would a minister ask God to bless a gathering that promotes the sickness and sin that He plainly teaches overtakes those who drink?

Would God want a man and a woman to join in a union that began in alcohol and debauchery? Would He bless such a union? If the root is rotten then so is the vine. And if the vine of marriage be rooted in the rottenness of drunkenness then the marriage will be one of rotten drunkenness.

Therefore, it would seem prudent, and biblical, for the minister to stipulate beforehand that he will only perform a marriage ceremony at the wedding if there is no alcohol allowed at the ceremony. He must form his conviction beforehand and not let any thought of fee or possible persuasion by friends or family or any thought of possibly gaining members for his church from the group at the wedding, nor any other persuasion or temptation, sway him against that conviction.

If he makes up his mind and forms his conviction and does not allow himself to be swayed for any reason, then the parties to be married will be able to decide ahead of time whether they want him to perform the ceremony or not according to his requirement of no alcohol at the wedding ceremony. And he should state this requirement at the very outset. They are the ones that sought out a man of God to perform a religious ceremony. Therefore, they should understand and respect the religious convictions of the man of God when he explains his biblical convictions to them. And lastly, they should remember that they asked him to perform the ceremony. He did not ask them. Therefore, they should bow to his requirement which is stated at the very outset of the negotiations.

If they cannot go along with this requirement then they are free to seek out someone else to perform the ceremony and no hardship is placed on them because the stipulation was presented at the very outset of their planning for a minister to perform the wedding.

suaded to taste, or take, or in any way encourage so pernicious a practice.

15. It will be very proper for the clergyman to see the parties privately for a few minutes, previous to the ceremony, to obtain names, ages, &c., and to fill blanks, if the law requires such to be done. But especially that they may understand each other as to the ceremony, and thus avoid the likelihood of any blunder in its performance.

16. If through excitement, or inadvertence, any little mistake or blunder should occur, when the parties are on the floor, the clergyman should pass it off easily and pleasantly so as to relieve, as far as possible, the embarrassment that others might feel.

17. Especially should the minister himself avoid all mistakes, by being thoroughly self-possessed, and thoroughly familiar with the ceremony he uses, whether he reads it from a book or repeats it from memory.

18. When the marriage is in church, the ceremony may well be somewhat more formal and protracted than when in a private house, inasmuch as it takes on something more of the character of a public official, than of a private social service.

19. The minister should guard himself equally against unsocial reticence and flippant levity. The latter is the more to be shunned, since the tendencies are the stronger in that direction. And while he should be cheerful and easy, he should not sacrifice the dignity of his office to the festivity of the occasion.

20. Attendance at weddings often opens to the pas-

tor new opportunities of usefulness, which he should not fail to improve. By subsequently calling, not only on the newly married pair, but on their relatives, he may often spiritually benefit individuals, and perhaps win new families to his congregation.

21. The question has frequently been raised, whether ministers may properly unite in marriage persons who have been divorced for other causes than adultery. There are many and good men on both sides of this question; and whichever side one may take, he will find himself in good company. There can be no doubt that the rule given by our Saviour, in Matt. v., is the rule of Christian morality. But whatever views the minister may have as to extreme cases, he should always hold inviolate the sanctity of the marriage relation. He should never allow himself, by word or deed, to favor or further the loose notions respecting it which so frequently prevail, and according to which divorces are often procured by the most unworthy means, and under the most trivial pretenses. Marriage is too sacred an institution, and too vitally connected with the best interests of society, to be sacrificed at the demand of lust, caprice, or self interest.

END LESSON 2