

INTRODUCTION

I thank brother John Robo OBOROH (Snr) termed JRO for his review of my article ‘On Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage’ (MDR). He released his rejoinder on March 4, 2018. He is the only one who eventually attempted a critique out of several who have promised a rebuttal over the years. (One brother Edward Malomo-Young once purported to have written a rebuttal but I ignored it because he did not attempt to address the specific points, passages and questions in my article, rather he merely assembled some classic materials to re-harsh the traditional view). JRO’s material is different; his language is fairly decent and he made some effort to focus on my very lesson. So I sincerely appreciate his scholarship and the time he devoted to the issue. Having prayerfully gone through JRO’s rejoinder, I found that **his work falls short flatly**, as an attempt to refute my original essay. I will show *how and why* that is so, by analyzing his response. My in-line comments will be in << tags >> when necessary, for easy identification within his quoted paragraphs. I will first peruse his answers to my 81 review questions (since that was where my paper ended) before undertaking a close examination of his essay. Thereafter I will conclude, address his posers and provide some drawings and inferred observations. Please take ample time to scrutinize objectively with the light of the scriptures.

SECTION A

I did forewarn whoever will attempt my Review Questions to “*Look over your answers again in clear conscience for consistency and scripturality.*” JRO tried but occasionally lacked both in my opinion.

1. Is any scripture of private interpretation?

JRO: *No (If you are alluding to 2 Peter 1.20, then you should know that it was not talking about interpretation of scripture, but origination of scripture)*

<< **I concur. Note that while Peter primarily concerns origination of scripture, the interpretation is not altogether excluded especially given passages like 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17.** >>

2. Can the scripture be broken?

JRO: No

<< **I concur** >>

3. Is the word of God necessary and sufficient for life, godliness and righteousness?

JRO: Yes

<< **I concur** >>

4. Should one study and rightly divide the word of truth in order to show himself approved unto God?

JRO: Yes

<< **I concur** >>

5. Scripturally, is marriage for life or for a season?

JRO: For life (that is God’s intention)

<< **I concur** >>

6. Ethically, is it “*for better, for worse*” or “*for better for stay, for worse for go*”?

JRO: For better, for worse is vague and subjective unless defined by scriptures (ethics deals with right and wrong, moral values. It is sometimes better to cut off a cancerous breast than to live and die with it.)

<< **You seem to posit one may put away the marriage partner if s/he deems the spouse as cancerous rather than die as a married couple. If that is your allusion then you do not subscribe to God’s intention which you touted in 5.** >>

7. Contemporarily, is it “*till death do us part*” or “*till sin do us part*”?

JRO: Contemporary people say one thing and do the other; Scripturally, it is “according to the will of God.”

<< You temporarily parried the question above but later answered it in the 2nd paragraph of Pg 14 of your article where you wrote ‘The covenant must then be verbalized by a promise or oath...a vow of faithfulness “until death do us part.”’ >>

8. Is marriage predicated on public proclamation by a couple or is it by default a secret status?

JRO: Marriage is a cultural mandate given by God. A guy and a lady who survived a shipwreck on an island doesn’t need any public proclamation. What matters is that it is honourable among the people and within scriptural parameters (Heb.13.4).

<< I thought you repeatedly say exceptions are made to a rule. So why parry the question to consider a shipwrecked pair rather than the norm in society? Even your shipwrecked pair needs to proclaim to each other clearly if they want to be married. It can NOT be secret inner status or ‘non-communicated,’ the grasses/trees/birds/air/etc. must be their public witness aside God just as was the case for Adam & Eve. Otherwise the shipwrecked duo are merely cohabiting together and either could deny making any marriage commitments later especially if they are rescued. >>

9. Is marriage to be consensual or is it to be imposed?

JRO: Marriage is a cultural mandate which God intends people do rightly for the good of the couple and the larger society. Where was consent when Jehoiada gave wives to King Joash (2Chron.24.3)? What about cultures where children were betrothed at adolescence?

<< Usually, there is expressed consent in one form or another. Even for those cases you cited it is implied, otherwise a party would run away or commit suicide/murder to escape such union. You later seem to agree that a marrying couple will acquiesce or tacitly consent since you wrote on your Pg 14 paragraph 1 & 2 that marriage is a covenant which “...also called for an oath, a vow or a promise to fulfill the terms of the contract... The marriage contract, for example, demands, as God designed it, **an agreement** by a male and a female to be husband and wife to one another.” . >>

10. Does copulation between a woman and any man automatically equate to marriage?

JRO: No

<< I concur >>

11. Does the act of fornication or rape or adultery automatically constitute a marriage?

JRO: No (except in the Old Testament where God spoke on the rape of a virgin. This lend credence to the cultural mandate of marriage.)

<< No suffices, else you contradict yourself in 10. There was no exception in the Old Testament. Though a rapist could be penalized to be constrained to be married for life unto a maiden he violated, it wasn’t automatic. Her father’s consent was required. Such rapist would only be fined and **could not marry the victim** if the father objects to having him as a son in law -Exo 22:16-17, Deut 22:28-29. >>

12. Is divorce a conscious act or not?

JRO: A conscious act

<< I concur >>

13. Does the act of adultery by itself automatically terminate a marriage?

JRO: No (it only violates the marriage covenant)

<< I concur >>

14. Do some ‘churches of Christ’ hold it as compulsory or optional for the innocent party to divorce a spouse guilty of adultery in a marriage?

JRO: It is not a requirement but a permission

<< I differ with the understanding of some as well as with yours. >>

15. Does God love divorce or putting away one’s spouse?

JRO: God allow divorce; but he hates sending away one’s wife (Malachi may not be referring to divorce since the word it uses simply means “to send away, cast away”).

<< One can NOT divorce **without** sending or casting away. Thus if God hates ‘to cast away, cast away’ of a lawful spouse (as you aver on Malachi) then logically He ought to hate divorce! >>

16. Does God love consideration, repentance and forgiveness?

JRO: Yes (with such He is well pleased)

- << **I concur** >>
17. Is God's grace a license for a Christian to abound in sin?
JRO: No
 << **I concur** >>
18. Was divorce the norm from the beginning?
JRO: No
 << **I concur** >>
19. Is man allowed to put asunder what God has joined together?
JRO: Not at all (only God has such a say and when he speaks on it that becomes final). He is the only one "to put asunder"
 << **I concur. God however puts such couple asunder via death only -Rm 7:2-3** >>
20. Is one's original spouse who was eligible and free to marry the lawful spouse?
JRO: Yes
 << **I concur** >>
21. In Christianity, will it be adultery for one to marry another if the lawful spouse is still alive?
JRO: Yes, if divorce was not lawful. No, if divorce was due to sexual immorality
 << **I disavow your second statement** >>
22. From the beginning, which is scriptural marriage: Monogamy, Polygamy, Polyandry or Gay-Marriage?
JRO: Monogamy
 << **I concur** >>
23. Would a marriage be unlawful if one party is not free and eligible in the first instance?
JRO: Yes (eligibility however must be 'in God's eyes') / Matter of culture. Under Levirate marriage, wives are inherited by nearest of kin; nothing is said about the woman's right to refuse.
 << **Yes suffices. The widow was required to marry a kinsman to raise a child unto the deceased. It did not always happen that way (Num 27:8-11) for she may disobey the command in Deut 25:5 and marry a stranger or simply be barren.** >>
24. By whose authority are unlawful marriages contracted, "*it it from heaven or from men*"?
JRO: By men's authority
 << **I concur** >>
25. Are those who are involved in unlawful marriages joined together by God?
JRO: Never
 << **I concur** >>
26. Does repentance involve godly sorrow for one's sin and a change in conduct unto righteousness?
JRO: Yes
 << **I concur** >>
27. May man put asunder an unlawful marriage?
JRO: Yes, unlawful marriages have no right to exist, they exist contrary to God's law of marriage
 << **I concur** >>
28. Was the marriage of Herod to Herodias -his brother's wife, a lawful one?
JRO: No (not lawful because it was not authorized by God
 << **I concur** >>
29. Did God approve or disapprove the action of the Israelites to put away their foreign wives in the book of Ezra?
JRO: He was pleased with it because it showed repentance on their side. He need not approve such because it was not lawful in the first case
 << **How do you know that He was pleased with it? His word already approves repentance from one's sin so putting away those foreign, illegal wives was implicitly approved by God.** >>
30. Was their action based upon an explicit "thus saith the LORD" or implicitly necessary since repentance required that they should henceforth obey the commandment prohibiting such

marriages?

JRO: It was based on “thus saith the Lord” because they had no right to embark on such marriage in the first case

<< It was **both** because God’s word already taught repentance generally AND Ezra was not only a priest but was also a prophet who gave them encouragement to show the needed fruit of repentance. >>

31. Would a marriage that is an unlawful union constitute sexual immorality before God irrespective of human opinion? [E.g. between a bachelor (Mr. B) and a woman (Mrs. A) who departed from her original husband in this gospel age]

JRO: Yes it is sinful; it is never a marriage in the sight of God. It is unfortunately called such by men

<< Yes suffices. Even God acknowledges that a marriage purportedly exists when those who are ineligible wed each other. **Inspiration declares** that ‘Herod *married* Herodias’ (Mk 6:17), one may wrongly put away his wife and ‘*marry* another’ (Mt 19:9), many Israelites **had married** certain foreign women (Ezra 9-10) in contravention of the law (Deut 7:1-4). Yet those women were termed ‘*their wives*.’ You need not be holier than God or pretend to be smarter than Him. He may not approve such unions but He knows a marriage exists for practical purposes in such situations; **an unlawful or illicit marriage** that He did not join together. Such unions are neither true nor scriptural marriages. >>

32. Should an unlawfully married couple divorce upon repentance and acknowledgment of the truth?

JRO: The God ordained divorce is for only the lawfully married partners for whom God has joined together but have violated the marriage covenant through extra marital affairs –matt19:9, 5:32. God’s word never spoke of divorce for illicit marriage. However, these cohabiters can be counseled to marry / formalize the relationship.

<< Your refusal to admit that God sees an ‘illicit marriage’ makes you deny such could divorce. One can only walk away from cohabitation where a wedding did not take place. For instance Bathsheba did so after David committed adultery with her -2 Sam 11:1-4. The king had not married her so that was a cohabitation and she returned back to her house. When a man ‘**put** away’ a wife, he personally discards whereas to ‘send away’ is to merely request a wife to leave. The society needs to know her real status: whether she is divorced or in separation. Putting away is done **in writing** and is repudiation. It is the **evidence** that a woman sent away from the home is actually divorced. In Ezra, the Israelites did all that was ceremoniously required to marry but with the wrong persons hence contracted illicit marriages. Ezra did not need to counsel the men to ‘formalize the relationship’ rather he instructed them to ‘put away’ their wives. He did not ask them to simply ‘walk away’ or to merely tell their wives to go. The men had to properly disannul the contractual unions. Page 4 of my original article stated that ‘put away was a synonym for *the entire divorce process*... just as *believe* was used to represent the steps to salvation in Jn 3:16.’ In last paragraph of his Pg. 14 JRO wrote “*It means divorce is to put away.*” **Indeed, ‘put away’ also implies ‘divorce’ which is the opposite of ‘marry.’** >>

33. Would doing such demonstrate the “exception clause” given by Christ in Mt 19:9 and be an approved divorce?

JRO: No (Vs. 8 identified the wives they were asking of)

<< The question was a follow up to what was asked in 31 and 32 and not about the Pharisees as you assume. Since Mrs. A abandoned her matrimonial home to marry and become Mrs. B, that was an illicit marriage. Upon repentance Mrs. B would have to formally terminate her marriage to Mr. B since they wedded. In this case she would seek an annulment to void the union. This requires that both notify their in-laws and/or approach a court to reverse the traditional and/or civil (Registry) proclamation which had ignorantly pronounced them as husband and wife. Note if someone in Gay-marriage in USA repents today, walking away does not change the official records or inform the society/church that s/he is no longer married to the sin partner. Such would seek divorce to end the union. Without formal dissolution, such may not be able to drop the illicit marital name and revert to an original name. >>

34. Should they put asunder their unlawful marriage irrespective of whether both parties deliberately sinfully went into it or one was innocently tricked into it?

JRO: There is never a right way to do a wrong thing. Man is to put asunder because it has no room to exist scripturally.

<< **I concur.** >>

35. Is the one who was hitherto unmarried before their unlawful union now free and eligible to marry after going through the approved divorce?

JRO: That that one has right to marry because hitherto he or she was not married in the sight of God but was simply cohabiting

<< **Such is now free to marry; s/he was not (truly) married before, in the sight of God.** >>

36. Is such free because God has never previously joined him together with another in a marriage?

JRO: Yes

<< **I concur** >>

37. If such is not free after the approved divorce, could it mean that God perpetually uphold the unlawful marriage?

JRO: Who joined him/her before that was ‘approved’ a ‘divorced’. They were mere sinners who needed repentance and God never recognized them

<< **I concur that they needed repentance because they were joined together by man, not by God** >>

38. Would the other partner who was originally ineligible before the unlawful marriage, automatically become free to marry another after undergoing the approved divorce?

JRO: If she/he were hitherto ineligible how did it get divorced?

<< **You were expected to answer the question. It was stated that they married although contrary to God’s word. After the dissolution, such would not automatically become free to marry another.** >>

39. Could such who may not remarry possibly reconcile with her lawful partner?

JRO: If the opportunity is there fine, but not when he/she was put away for committing fornication in her earlier marriage matt19:9

<< **‘If the opportunity was there’ suffices.** >>

40. Is it an act of adultery for anyone to put away the lawful spouse and marry another?

JRO: It is adultery if not for fornication

<< **I disagree. A lawful spouse cannot be put away.** >>

41. Is God the author of confusion?

JRO: No (neither can his law constitute confusion)

<< **I concur** >>

42. Should our righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees?

JRO: Yes of course

<< **I concur** >>

43. In answering the Pharisees question in Mt 19, was Christ’s response valid for only the Patriarchal age or for only the Mosaic age or for only the Christian age or for all ages “*from the beginning of creation till the end of the world*”?

JRO: For all ages in God’s intention but circumstantial evidences accommodated the contrary hence the mosaic so-called permission

<< **I concur it is for all ages.** >>

44. Did Moses permit divorce due to divine will and eternal purpose or because of men’s “hardness of heart”?

JRO: Men’s hardness of heart.

<< **I concur** >>

45. Was Jesus justifying and pleased with divorce which Moses permitted for “hardness of heart”?

JRO: The Jews misapplied the law as such Jesus corrected them (see my exposition in Deut.24 and Matt 19:11-12)

<< **In other words, Jesus was NOT justifying their reckless, rampant divorce.** >>

46. Today, will it be “hardness of heart” for one guilty of adultery, not to repent after exposure?

JRO: Yes of course (it could be one of the reasons)

<< I concur >>

47. Today, will it be “hardness of heart” for one sinned against through adultery, not to forgive after entreatment?

JRO: Sure

<< I concur >>

48. Is Christ’s statement “*what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*” absolute and immutable or did He negate/cancel/contradict it afterwards?

JRO: Christ answered them and provided an exception to His answers / God joins a couple who meets his requirement; He allows divorce when one violates his requirements.

<< The Lord’s statement in Mt 19:6b is **absolute**. It says ‘...*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*’ If Jesus wanted to limit it He would have given an exception right within the sentence but He did not. You should have given a categorical answer on whether Christ later negated Himself rather than summersault from Mt 19:6b into YOUR interpretation of verse 9. What you seem to see in Mt 19:6b is ‘*what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder except man desire to put asunder for adultery.*’ The Lord never said or implied such. >>

49. Since Jesus and the Pharisees lived under the Law of Moses, would it be right to say that “He there and then changed the penalty for adultery from ‘stoning unto death’ to divorce”?

JRO: No he gave a legislature that would come in to effect after His death. He only faulted their hypocrisy and their wrong application of the law (For whom did he change it? For the Jews when, less than three years that law will pass away?)

<< No suffices (though you really imply otherwise with your position). The Pharisees would never have contemplated that He was teaching about a futuristic era since they questioned Him about their operational law. Thus His answer was valid for even their age and they were obligated to obey Him - Deut 18:17-18. Recall while responding to Question 43, you stated that Christ’s answer is valid for **all** dispensations. In Mt 5 when Jesus repeatedly remarked: ‘*Ye have heard... but I say unto you...*,’ to His immediate audience, He was expounding the true meaning of Mosaic Law contrasted with the tradition and doctrines of men, I previously noted that on last paragraph of Pg 5 of my original article. When Jesus taught a concept (‘required of man’) that is exclusive to the imminent gospel age in application, he contextually relates such to ‘*the kingdom (of God/heaven),*’ as in Jn 3::3-5 >>

50. If in a lawful union, by reason of adultery, Jesus permitted divorce/remarriage in Mt 19 as alleged, would He not be contradicting Himself later in 1 Cor 7 where He permits only separation (irrespective of the cause) and forbids leaving to remarry?

JRO: No sir, 1 Cor 7 is in the context of ‘present distress’ it was not the context of marriage, divorce for fornication. The two passage (Matt 19 & 1 Cor 7) though related were in different context (The punishment for fornication in the Christian era is excommunication, not separation).

<< If Jesus permitted divorce of lawful marriages in Mt 19 as alleged, then while addressing **saints** in 1 Cor 7, He would have contradicted it with the command ‘*let not the husband put away his wife.*’ That instruction to those in godly or valid marriages prohibits ‘abandoning or leaving,’ thus it **absolutely** discourages and forecloses divorce. The command in 1 Cor 7:10-11 preceded the allusion by Paul to a ‘present distress’ or mixed-faith marriages (which was just an illustration of what could precipitate a separation with possible reconciliation since departing does not amount to divorce). >>

51. A divorced woman may remarry under the Law of Moses, did Jesus forbid such in His response to the Pharisees?

JRO: Yes, but such marriage was a defilement for her (Jesus made it difficult for men to divorce their wives “for any reason”).

<< You are considering only one of two plausibilities. I will explain more later. >>

52. Can one person be loosed from a lawful marriage bond while the other is still tied to it ‘in the eyes of God’?

JRO: Yes

<< Your answer is not well informed sir, for it violates definitions and logical reasoning. It is a mere assertion of the traditional position on MDR as I will demonstrate later. >>

53. Did Christ prohibit remarriage because divorce of a lawful union is not recognized by God?

JRO: Christ prohibited remarriage in lawful marriage where divorce was not caused due to fornication

<< I will explain later how you have mixed things up here. >>

54. Did Jesus permit divorce and remarriage only in a union that was itself initially a sexual immorality?

JRO: Where did you read that from? False assertion prove it from the passage (matt 19:1-12)

<< That was a **question** NOT an assertion! For me the answer is 'Yes.' >>

55. Is it Christ-like for a couple in a lawful marriage to jump into divorce if a partner should become guilty of adultery?

JRO: No, but the offended has a God given right to do so if he wishes (Matt 5:32; 19:9)

<< No suffices, your additional statement amounts to... prevarication. >>

56. Was Paul an inspired apostle who kept the faith till he finished his course?

JRO: Yes

<< I concur >>

57. In 1 Cor 7, does God allow separation of a couple without them being divorced?

JRO: Yes (because there was no fornication/sexual sin involved)

<< I concur >>

58. Is God tolerating separation or happily commanding it?

JRO: It was being tolerated

<< I concur >>

59. Could one's spouse possibly depart or separate based on religious differences, adultery, etc.?

JRO: Possible

<< I concur >>

60. If separation occurs, did God specify a duration that it must last?

JRO: No

<< I concur >>

61. In marital separation, are the individuals permitted by the Lord to marry someone else?

JRO: No

<< I concur >>

62. Does He entreat them to reconcile and reunite in their marriage?

JRO: Yes sir, for so long there was no divorce

<< Yes suffices >>

63. Does the Lord expect them to live as singles for the rest of their lives if they fail to reconcile?

JRO: Yes (because separation was not caused by divorce occasioned by the sins of sexual immorality)

<< I concur >>

64. Would living apart as singles require that they make themselves "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"?

JRO: Yes, if they want to be pleasing to God

<< I concur >>

65. Could they end such unnatural celibacy by reconciling and rendering unto themselves 'due benevolence'?

JRO: Yes sir

<< I concur >>

66. Does the phrase translated "[A brother or sister is not 'enslaved/under bondage']" mean the believer was not, is not and has never been in marriage?

JRO: No

- << I concur >>
67. Does ‘bondage/slavery’ in that context refer to “marriage” or “obligation to the unbeliever’s preference that one should renounce the Christian faith”?
JRO: It refers to renouncing one’s faith (Christ)
 << I concur >>
68. Is Paul’s advice for a Christian (‘to maintain peace and allow an insistent unbelieving spouse to depart’) in 1 Cor 7:15 negating the Lord’s command earlier stated in vs 10-11?
JRO: Not at all
 << I concur >>
69. Did Paul state or counsel that the believer should go ahead to remarry if the unbelieving depart?
JRO: No
 << I concur >>
70. Can marital separation be viewed a temptation for which God will provide a way of escape so that one may bear it?
JRO: Depending on what brought about the separation
 << I disagree with you; separation is a temptation... irrespective of its cause. >>
71. Which of these could be legitimate ways of escape in that situation? (a) Remaining celibate until one’s death (b) Reconciling with one’s spouse (c) Natural death of one’s spouse (d) Marrying another person while one’s lawful partner is alive (e) Murdering or masterminding the assassination of one’s spouse
JRO: B
 << Valid answers include a, b & c, your answers to Questions 60 to 65 indicate as much. >>
72. Does “*the Lord know how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*”?
JRO: Yes
 << I concur >>
73. Today, is everyone ultimately subject to Christ’s gospel whether or not they obey it?
JRO: Yes
 << I concur >>
74. In this age, are marriages between free and eligible persons recognized by God irrespective of their religion?
JRO: Yes
 << I concur >>
75. Is it stated in the texts that the mixed-faith marriages described by Paul and Peter took place before one converted?
JRO: No
 << I concur >>
76. Does God have a different marriage law for Christians and another marriage law for unbelievers?
JRO: No
 << I concur >>
77. Is it lawful but not expedient for a Christian to deliberately marry an unbeliever?
JRO: Yes
 << I concur >>
78. If being married to an unbeliever is sin, how will a Christian repent and forsake such sin?
JRO: Not a sin
 << I concur >>
79. Does God require a repentant unbeliever to depart from an unbelieving lawful spouse before s/he obeys the gospel?
JRO: No
 << I concur >>

80. How many scriptural grounds exist for divorce and remarriage in a lawful marriage?

JRO: Only one

<< I disagree >>

81. Could it be NONE? [Since upon realizing that the only one who could ‘put away’ a spouse is he whose marriage is illicit, the disciples said of it; “*If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry*”]

JRO: Pure assumption, where is such link in the passage that you derive such link?

State the rule of grammar that warrant such

<< I disagree and will show why when I treat your essay. >>

SECTION B

On Pg. 4 of SOA (my first article), I stated as follows: “*To divorce a spouse is to legally renounce a marriage; go apart and break the oneness union, repudiate and forsake the vows and to be relieved of marital obligations.*” I also noted that ‘*a man after voluntarily issuing the Bill of divorce sends the woman away from his house and she departs from his home.*’

JRO on Pg. 2 of his article wrote: *The above definition is too broad and over encompassing of what God sees divorce to be in the Bible. ...However, I disavows that this is the strict meaning and dictates of a scriptural concept of divorce. I recommend that you read my exposition on what constitutes “divorce.”*

I read his exposition given on his Pg. 16, where he gave the root words -3 terms in Hebrews and 2 in Greek which respectively mean to ‘*cast out, cut off, to dismiss or set free, to repudiate, to send away or depart.*’ I can NOT see any difference between his description of divorce and mine. It appears he only wanted to appeal to Lexicons to create an impression as if he is more exact!

JRO’s first point on his Pg 2, (repeated in Pg 8, 22-24) as regards the Ezra issue was partly addressed in Section A. Let me elaborate on my remarks. Those Israelite men were not cohabiting; they married or had weddings so inspiration recorded that the women were ‘**their wives.**’ Their marriages were unlawful and also immoral since such contravened the law; these were NOT cases of adultery.

Deuteronomy 7:1 *When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; 2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: 3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.*

The matter in Ezra involved a lot of people; the leaders, priests and Levites or a great company. It was a widespread thing of national scope not just a rare and random individual happenstance. They linked this national sin in Ezra 9 to Deut 7 and saw it as part of the causes of their calamity or perilous state.

Ezra 9:1 *Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. ...10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, 11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it*

from one end to another with their uncleanness. 12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. 13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?

What did they do upon realization that the law was transgressed?

Ezra 10:1 *Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. 3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law... 11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. 12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. 13 But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing. 14 Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us. 15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. 16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. 17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month. 18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.*

The phrase “**let it be according to the law**” refers to “*make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them.*” We note that the law contextually refers primarily to the Mosaic testament and secondarily includes the Patriarchal records. What did they do based on the law? They

1. Made a trespass offering as per Lev 5:14-19
2. Put away the wives as per Deut 24:1-2
3. Put away the children as per Gen 21:10-14

Verse 19 of Ezra 10 shows how they sacrificed rams for the sin offering and made individual pledges that they would put away their wives. Thus the sacrifices were made before the wives were actually put away! (The trespass offering in Lev 5:14-19 is applicable; it is for sin ignorantly committed against the Lord. The one in Lev 6 which you cited is for an offense primarily committed against one’s neighbor) Thus it was not in vs 11-12 that the women were put away, those verses record an acknowledgment of the need to be secluded and stop inter-marrying with the people of the land as well as the need to end their current marriages. Since the time of Moses, the only prescribed way for a man to put away a wife was as specified in Deut 24. Inasmuch as each of those women was a WIFE, such would have been so dismissed, irrespective of whether the marriage itself was divinely approved or not. **(More on this later!)** When Abraham cast out Hagar, he sent Ishmael away too because God was particular about the

genealogy, the identity, and proper identification of the Messiah. Similarly, the Israelite men in Ezra sent away the children to stop the *'mingling of the holy seed'* (Ezra 9:2) with pagans (which would corrupt their lineage) and to prevent any unsanctified offspring from serving as a priest –Neh 13:23-30. Lest JRO exclaims Hagar was not given a Bill of divorcement, he should note that her marriage to Abraham was permissible under that dispensation aside the fact that as at then, the precept of issuing a Bill for putting away a wife wasn't yet promulgated or operational. My previous point c iii on Pg 8 of SOA shows that till today, a formal dissolution or annulment of void and unscriptural marriages is a necessity. I will show that the illegal marriages in Ezra amounted to "fornication" when I examine the word 'fornication' based on Lexicons and scriptures. JRO made much ado of the fact that initially it was Ezra who saw something wrong with the marriages not the men themselves. Does that matter? Not at all! It was in order; so long each man could also see what he pointed out and voluntarily act on it to personally dissolve the marriage. After all, it was John the Baptist who saw something wrong in Herod's marriage with Herodias, proclaiming *'It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife'* -Mk 6:17-18. Any God-fearing person would expect Herod to repent and put away the woman in order to end the illicit union after that admonition. It is *'over-sabi'* (pontification) that would make someone to rationalize that Herod didn't have to act since he saw nothing wrong ab initio.

The premises of my MDR study is the foundation that:

- a. Jesus never sinned and could not have violated the Law of Moses in His teaching and His deeds.
- b. God hates divorce of a lawful spouse who is the wife of one's youth.

Jesus taught the people on the proper understanding and use of Mosaic Law aside teaching them about how things would be in the expected kingdom. For example, regarding "*an eye for an eye*," Jesus was addressing indoctrination by religious leaders who took the letter of the law too far. That Mosaic precept was not promoting individual vengeance as they had earlier heard. Jesus taught on not resorting to self-help in Mt 5:38-41. It was impulsive individual retribution which was never intended that Christ repealed then, not Exo 21:14-24. He upheld state administration of justice in cases as seen in Mk 7:10-13 and as also revealed in Rm 13:1-4. Jesus also taught on divorce to clarify their misconceptions. The general rule He gave could not really be different from the intent of the law.

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

Mark 10:11 *And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.*

The 'exception clause' on divorce (recorded by Matthew only) should equally be inherent in the law.

Interestingly and contrariwise, JRO premised his study on the assumptions that:

- a. Jesus was modifying the Law of Moses, making new promulgations for all His listeners though they were supposedly not aware they should not obey until after His death.
- b. "God allows divorce" of a lawful spouse so Jesus must have given an exception for it.

JRO alluded to two schools of thought about the UNCLEANNESS in Deut 24:1-4, he reported that the Hilliel's interpret it in the widest and most lax manner or *'for every cause'* whereas the Shammai's deem it to be *'adultery.'* Although the commentaries JRO cited showed that 'uncleanness' could not have been 'adultery', my brother alleges Jesus was promulgating 'adultery' as future basis for divorce in Mt 19 (to modify the Mosaic precept). JRO invariably has Jesus aligning with prevailing Shammai Pharisees interpretation! Would the apostles have been shocked at Jesus' teaching on MDR if the Lord merely adopted one of the existing schools of thought? No, Jesus expressed a new/different thought. JRO asks why I link the uncleanness of Deut 24 to fornication as per 1 Cor 12:21, Eph 5:3, Col 3:5 etc. The reason is simple. As he himself granted in the last line of Pg 18, *'fornication is uncleanness'* though it is not the only thing that constitutes uncleanness. The NT often listed the two side by side.

Upon my scrutiny of Mt 19:9, JRO agreed with my submission that fornication therein cannot refer to pre-marital sex. He however, disavows my analysis that it doesn't refer to adultery. I made a remark (SOA Pg. 7) about the woman in Jn 8, that Jesus forgave her to show a foretaste of grace and divine judgment for adulterers under the forthcoming New Covenant. JRO reacted at that and asked a plethora of questions. Sir, be informed the people who brought her were recorded to have come to tempt the Master. I stated they did not present the man who was her sin-partner and were plausibly not obeying the law as given by Moses on that subject. If there were two or three witnesses who felt they had not sinned in even her matter, such should have initiated the stoning. The Lord who forgave David's sin of adultery is the same Lord that set her free after He wrote on the ground and made a statement to her accusers. We both know that Christ as God had authority on earth to forgive sins.

When I paraphrased the traditional view of MDR thus:

“Any one in a marriage may only divorce and marry another provided the partner committed adultery/sexual immorality after their wedding, otherwise such commits adultery. The guilty party who is put away is considered married in the eyes of God, so whoever marries such again commits adultery,”

JRO says: ‘I believe wholeheartedly that this view is scriptural and the whole truth presented by Jesus.’ When I listed some implications of what it connotes if Jesus declared to the Pharisees that a man could not divorce his wife *except for the cause of adultery*, JRO objected. To my point that it would make Christ contradict the then prevailing death penalty for adulterers, JRO wrote “*Jesus would have contradicted Moses if He was not a Higher authority to Moses. Secondly, the Law was only for so long as God permitted it. Thirdly, what Jesus said would only be in effect after his death (Heb 9:17). Fourthly, Jesus never told them that it was sinful to stone to death anyone caught in adultery.*”

To that I will simply respond that one does not have to be a lower, equal or higher authority before he contradicts a prophet's statement, such only need to be a false teacher that despise authority (2 Pet 2:1-10). Also, Christ was questioned about the law which was in effect so it is reasonable to suppose they would deem His answer to be applicable unto them as He did not say ‘my answer is for a future era.’

JRO also wrote: “*Jesus simply allowed fornication as a ground for the dissolution of what God had hitherto joined on the condition that both parties will abide by His laws which, unfortunately, a party has betrayed. Did Jesus not also allow eating every food which God earlier prohibit?*”

JRO misjudges the issue of clean and unclean meats. Jesus did not teach or condone the eating of prohibited food while the Mosaic Law lasted. An examination of Mt 15 and Mk 7 shows that He was talking about what defiles a man after His disciples were accused of violating the tradition (of the elders) **for not washing their hands before eating**. The people did not understand His parable.

Matthew 15:*15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

Christ did not teach the people to start eating prohibited foods during His earthly ministry. Such instruction expressly came after the law had passed away. Even Peter refused to kill and eat when commanded to do so in his trance -Acts 10. (It seems Christ's cleansing of all meat was inferred when the disciples wrote the gospels after they received the Holy Spirit or around the time of Cornelius conversion) So Jesus did not permit putting asunder what God joined together as you claim.

There isn't much to disagree with as per JRO's allusion on what “except” means when he cited Jn 3:3. The issue is not whether there exists an exception in such text or Mt 19:9. Our investigation is to

ascertain what the exception really is, what it is for and on what grounds it applies. JRO at least concurs with my exposition of 1 Cor 7:15 that desertion or departing from the home based on religious incompatibility does not equate to divorce but is merely a separation which could be reconciled.

In describing what marriage is on his Pg 14-15, JRO wrote:

1. "God made marriage with three parallel actions: leave, cleave, be one flesh.
2. On what basis do we make two of these inherent and part of the marriage and deny the third?
3. After stating the three Jesus said "so that they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder" (Matt 19:6). The two are not united by God until they leave, cleave and become one flesh"

I concur with JRO that those three actions are present in a typical marriage. I disagree however that God joins a couple after sex. Why? Simply because at the point of cleaving, the man leaves his parents to be with a woman who is ALREADY HIS WIFE! You do not have sex with a woman to make her your wife; you do because she is already your wife. If both husband and wife in a new marriage are say, a relatively aging widower & a widow who just married for companionship then they may totally forgo sex, it is their prerogative. Any lawfully wedded couple are joined together by God when they honestly, voluntarily exchanged marital vows without deceit so long each was eligible in God's sight. That most couples join themselves physically via penetrative sex to exchange bodily fluids (so as to seal the covenant and be one flesh) does not mean others may not via passionate 'French' kiss, etc. Eve became Adam's wife when she was given unto him and received by proclamation. She did NOT become his wife much later after he had sex with her. A couple may be constrained by medial or other emergencies from consummating their union immediately after their wedding. (Please obtain my lesson - '[Scripturally When Does Marriage Take Place](#)' from my website for more elaboration) Thus agreement/vows and God's approval are the requisites to a scriptural marriage. We do note that consummation via sexual intercourse to be one flesh is expected and prevalent in most marital unions.

JRO also cited Lexicons which show that **the original meaning of FORNICATION** (Greek - Porneia) is '*illicit sexual intercourse in general ... every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse; it covers a wide range of sexual immoral acts or sins such as harlotry, pre-marital sex, adultery, sodomy, bestiality, incest, etc.*' That basic definition is true. The essence of our looking up the word "fornication" or "porneia" is to ascertain how it relates to divorce or putting away a wife in Mt 19:9. How do we determine which specific interpretation(s) of "porneia" fits Mt 19:9? We could try elimination by substituting each plausible meaning into the exemption clause, to see whether such harmonizes with the context of the discussion and is within the framework of the then operational law. Christ's phrase '*except it be for fornication*' should mean something to his immediate audience. To the questioning Pharisees, the listening disciples and the multitude, '**fornication**' could not validly refer to

- i. Harlotry because a prostitute was not the subject in Mt 19 but a woman described as 'wife.'
- ii. Pre-marital sex because the prevailing law then specified death for such woman –Deut 22:13-20. [The New Covenant does not make virginity one of the requirements for marriage. The Mosaic Law during the time of Christ required that of a maiden. A woman was not to deceive her suitor that she was a virgin, the obvious exceptions for virginity were widows, repentant harlots like Rahab or rape victims who were not subsequently given out in marriage unto the offender, by a father. The New Covenant encourages marrying as a virgin (1 Cor 7:25-26,28, 36-38) but neither demand it nor stipulate penalties for anyone who isn't.]
- iii. Adultery or extra-marital sex because the prevailing law then specified death for such woman or man –Deut 22:22, Lev 20:10
- iv. Homosexual sex or sodomy because the prevailing law then specified death for it –Exo 22:19, Deut 27:21, Lev 20:13
- v. Bestiality or sex with an animal because the prevailing law then specified death for such man or woman –Lev 20:15, Exo 22:19, Deut 27:21, Lev 18:23; 20:16

The above considerations are useful since these were precepts of the law irrespective of whether such were being observed fully or breached by the nation.

[Some have posited that the Jews were not carrying out executions under Roman rule; that divorce was the response to adultery and that other sins deserving the death penalty often had the verdict commuted to a lesser punishment. Such assertion is faulty for several reasons. It makes it seem that:

- i. Jesus conformed to whatever the people were practicing rather than uphold what the law of God then stated.
- ii. The Israelite leaders were right when they mischievously said unto Pilate that *"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."* in Jn 18:31.

To claim that the Israelites did not carry out executions as per the Law of Moses is to have no respect for scriptures. Jesus expected them to since He said (Mt 15:4-6): *'For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6 and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.'* Note that John the Baptist was ostensibly arrested for reviling Herod the king (plus Herodias) and was eventually executed without recourse unto Rome. So they invoke the Law of Moses when it suited them and align with the Roman rulers as smokescreen when it suited them, Acts 4:27 explains Jn 18:31. Even Jn 7:1 & 19:7 shows they would have used their own law to kill Jesus if possible on previous occasions. It is apparent in John 8 that they seemed intent to stone the woman caught in adultery. We have a more sure testimony in that they killed Stephen thinking they were doing God service in Acts 7:57-57; 26:10. In Acts 22:3-5, Paul said: *"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished."* Moreover the Jews sought to invoke their law and kill Paul by themselves, severally after his conversion but were prevented by Roman soldiers, which they protested. See Acts 21:30-33; 23:12-15; 24:5-7. It was not always mob action because the Council / Sahendrin or chief priests and rulers planned and authorized some of those killings. **Thus it was the Israeli state upholding the death penalty aspect of the Law of Moses.**

Whatever they conveniently said to Pilate does not invalidate what they actually did repeatedly when they had opportunity -killing of the saints by invoking their own law. Should the Israelites have obeyed men (Romans) rather than God in carrying out legitimate executions under the Law of Moses?]

Jesus did not overturn the people's understanding of the Law of Moses in Mt 19 concerning the consequence for adultery or other sexual sins. He simply discussed the will of God on the subject of divorce. From analysis above, we have narrowed down the exception clause. One may not divorce and marry another except for 'a sexual immorality' that the Mosaic Law did not specify the death penalty for. Viable options are the incestuous unions for which the penalty was to be childless (Lev 20:20-21) and ineligible spouses since such wives were put away in Ezra 10. Thus the exception refers to **illicit marriages**. It is instructive that Jesus says *"except it be for fornication"* but many like JRO assume He said *"except she committed fornication."* These are two different statements! Many have not considered the prospect that Christ could be addressing the state of the marriage itself because of their propensity to want to blame the wife. Jesus distinguished between fornication and adultery in Mt 19:9.

Christ could simply have remarked:

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for ADULTERY and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

He did not!

The Greek text shows that Christ used the word **porniea** (fornication) NOT **morchiea** (adultery or marital unfaithfulness), and I consider that as **deliberate** on His part! JRO claimed in the first line of his Pg. 20 that he addressed this observation but to be candid, he didn't. He merely cited commentaries which hold his traditional view of MDR and **asserted** without proof that in Mt 19:9, porneia 'stands for or includes adultery.' They selected 'adultery' arbitrarily to advance their view and limit the meaning of porniea in that verse and he agrees. That is circular reasoning which takes JRO nowhere! Recall that in 1 Cor 7:1-2, the inspired apostle says '*to avoid FORNICATION, let every man have his own wife and every woman her own husband.*' He did not say to avoid adultery, why? Because the sexual immorality that is primarily to be avoided with true marriage (*his/her own spouse*) is the sin of having sexual relationship with anyone to whom one is not *scripturally* married! The context is about "a man touching a woman" so marriage is advanced as having one's personal and God-approved spouse. The implication is if you are in fornication, you are not having your own true spouse as far as God is concerned; you are mating with a person who is either unmarried or ineligible or that properly belongs unto another in marriage. Hence if neither you nor your wife is having sex with anyone outside the relationship and could **put away** each other '*for fornication*' then both of you are certainly in an illicit marriage. That is plausibly why Jesus did not say '*except it be for adultery.*'

FURTHER EXPOSITION OF DEUT 24:1-4 & MT 19:6, 9

JRO repeatedly affirms that: "*Law of Deut. 24.1-4 was not speaking about illegitimate marriage... the second marriage defiled the woman... giving bill of divorcement to one's scripturally wedded wife is only permitted where she commits fornication... Jesus also showed that the man who put his wife away for a cause other than adultery and married another committed adultery himself... The God ordained divorce is for only the lawfully married partners for whom God has joined together but have violated the marriage covenant through extra-marital affairs... God's word never spoke of divorce for illicit marriage.*"

In my earlier analysis of JRO's answers to my Review Questions, I noted in 31 that God acknowledges that a (purported) marriage exists in the case of an illicit marital union whenever a wedding occurred between two persons, of whom at least one is scripturally ineligible. That is the import of inspiration using the term 'married' for Herod, the men in Ezra, etc. rather than the term 'cohabitation.' Now I put it to all that it is IMPOSSIBLE to study and rightly divide Deut 24:1-4 and Mt 19:9 without seeing and discussing an 'illicit marriage.' Why? Simply because if the first marriage or husband of the woman in consideration is not illegal the second would surely be and vice-versa. My dear brother Oboroh, in your exposition of Deut 24:1-4 (Pg 21), you affirm the woman is not really permitted to remarry but that it is recognized she may choose to do so, hence the regulation. You state that her second marriage in Deut 24:2 '**amounts to adultery**' (and anticipated or corresponds to the woman's remarriage which Christ describes thus in Mt 5:32). **Did you notice inspiration records that the 'latter husband' could give her 'a bill of divorcement' in Deut 24:3? This scripture acknowledge that those in an illicit marriage may divorce!** So the formal process by which men dissolve marriages is to 'divorce.'

JRO wrote: "Permit me to quote a near word to word internal translation as it is possible: '*if a man takes a wife and marries her, and if it come to pass that she does not find favour in his eyes because of a matter of indecency and he writes for her a writing of divorcement, and give it into her hand, and she goes from his house and becomes to another man, and he hates her and the latter husband write for her a writing of divorcement and gives it into her hand and sends her from his house or if the latter husband who took her to himself for a wife should die, her former husband, who sent her away may not turn around and take her to be to him or a wife after she has been defiled, Because that would be an abomination before the Lord, and thou shall not cause the land to sin which the Lord thy god is giving to thee for inheritance.*'"(The Torah, A modern commentary, '981, 1498 quoted by Bob Waldron)."

The above rendition of Deut 24:1-4 is plausible and not totally strange to me as a Bible student. In the passage there are two inherent possibilities:

- a. A man takes an eligible woman as wife; their marriage is legal or scriptural. Out of arbitrariness on a so-called ‘uncleanness’ he divorces his wife and sends her packing. The woman goes on to marry another man, a union which God tolerated but did not really approve in that dispensation. Hence she was defiled by the second union and may not return to the first husband even if the second one died or also put her away out of hatred.
- b. A man takes a woman who is actually ineligible as wife; their marriage is illicit or unscriptural. Realizing the uncleanness or indecent or sinful situation about his so-called spouse, the man rightfully divorces her and sends her packing. The woman goes on to marry another man (who may be eligible e.g. a non-close relation if the first marriage was incestuous). She has been defiled by her first marriage but the second marital union would be scriptural. If the second husband died or also put her away for any reason, she may not return to the first man since doing so would still constitute an illegal marriage.

I observed that there were two possibilities for Deut 24:1-4. Does that connote ambiguity in God’s word? Not at all, it was duality! Both conditions and scenarios come into play any time you view the passage. Whenever option (a) apply to a first husband, option (b) must necessarily apply to her second husband and vice-versa. In other words, if the first marriage is scriptural then the man ought not to put her away, and the second man in her subsequent (adulterous) remarriage ought to divorce her. Under Mosaic Law, God prohibited her returning to the first man to preserve the moral purity of the nation, and the various genealogies which could be corrupted with inadvertent wife swapping accompanied with undetected or questionable pregnancies, etc. Similarly, if the first marriage was illicit, she should be put away while her second husband which hopefully is scriptural ought not to divorce her.

There would be no need for a divorce law if men kept to God’s intent on marriage for it to be between two eligible persons and to last till death. However, people were reckless; carrying out both legal and illicit marriages, leaving their initial spouses and marrying anew. Thus Moses was allowed to give laws to regulate both marriage and divorce. The truth of the matter is, when Moses wrote his precept on divorce and when Jesus spoke on divorce, each was simply considering a man putting away a woman that is generally acknowledged in society as ‘his wife,’ irrespective of whether such was really the case before God or not. Christ elaborated more than Moses to distinguish both cases hence He specified which remarriage after a divorce amounts to committing adultery and which does not.

Matthew 19:3 *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? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 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? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, 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.*

In my original article, I noted that the key to unlock the above passage is to acknowledge the Lord’s emphatic declaration about any couple whom God has joined together. Verse 6b of Mt 19 hinges on what God has done and what man must not do; the verse governs whatever man may do in verse 9. **JRO thoroughly evaded the logical implication of Christ’s statement** which I pointed out on numerous occasions – ‘**therefore man may only put asunder what God hath NOT joined together.**’

Let me give another example of a Biblical construction that amounts to an **absolute** declaration. Let us see Acts 10:15 – ‘*And the voice spake unto him again the second time, **What God hath cleansed, that***

call not thou common.’ That occurred when Peter refused to eat in his vision prior to the Cornelius incident; he called the animals common (unclean) but was admonished not to since God has cleansed them. There is no exception to the proclamation by the voice from heaven. If any man read any subsequent passage to it e.g. Rm 14 and assumes there is an exception to now term some animals as unclean, his interpretation is faulty -Col 2:16. Man may only call common (unclean) what God has NOT cleansed and there is no such animal in the world in this gospel era. Similarly man may only put asunder what God has NOT joined together and there are many such couples in the world in this gospel era. 1 Tim 4::3b-5 is a divine commentary on Acts 10:15 or every creature which God has since declared good/cleansed. Similarly 1 Cor 7:11 is a divine commentary on Mt 19:6 or indissolubility of the marriage of a man and a woman whom God joined together. The Lord’s statement in Lk 16:18 is the rule affirming Mt 19:6b. Christ provided an instant exception to that rule and it was recorded only by Matthew in 19:9. (The other inspired writers focused on the rule because of their primary target audience). The exception based on ‘fornication’ in Mt 19:9 is **logically established** as the converse implied from Mt 19:6b; it necessarily connotes a marriage that God has not joined together. That was what we also narrowed down to when we considered the framework of the then prevailing Mosaic Law. Although that law has now passed away, isn’t the teaching of Christ still valid based on the grammatical implication perspective? Even in the common language of our day, ‘fornication’ broadly refers to the act of having sex by those not married to each other in God’s sight.

Responding to my Review Question 52, JRO endorsed the view that ‘one person can be loosed from a lawful marriage bond while the other is still tied to it ‘in the eyes of God.’ **That view is a grandmaster lie; nothing could be further from the truth!** Below is indisputable proof.

Matthew 19:9 *‘And I say unto you, 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.’*

Matthew 5:31 *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32 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.*

God does not recognize an unscriptural divorce. When either of such couple marries another person after a purported divorce, the new relationship is considered ‘*adulterous.*’ Why? Simply because the original couple are still considered married, their divinely given marital bond remains and any other affair is a violation of their wedding covenant which subsists before God. **That is why the man who puts away NOT for fornication commits adultery and the woman so put away also commits adultery when each marry a new person** -Mt 19:9. It is not possible for only one person to be loosed and the other still tied because **a marital union at any point in time is an intersection of two connected persons.** **Think deeply on the meaning of the word ‘adultery.’** In literal terms, it is a violation of the marriage covenant; it means to ‘*break wedlock vow*’ and is committed when someone *has unlawful relations/intercourse with another’s spouse; sexually corrupt or adulterate an existing marital union.*’ God however recognizes a scriptural divorce or put away. In this situation, both parties are loosed from the marriage bond and are free from each other. Such may possibly marry another person depending on pre-eligibility status. **That is why he who puts away his wife FOR fornication and marries another does NOT commit adultery** -Mt 19:9. Such truly and scripturally divorced man CANNOT commit adultery on marrying a new mate because the previous ‘marriage’ no longer exists before God and humans. In Mt 5:32, Jesus teaches that **the man who puts away his wife, NOT for fornication, makes her (and her new partner) commit adultery.** The implication is that **he who puts her away FOR fornication does NOT make her (and her new marriage partner) to commit adultery – provided she has no other marital history.** [‘FOR fornication’ varies e. g. if he puts her away for incest she becomes free whereas if he did because she was married before as Herodias, she’s still not free]

It thus becomes evident that in Mt 19:9, Jesus really instructs that:

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

- A. Whosoever shall put away his wife for a reason other than fornication and shall marry another (as well as whoso marries a woman SO put away), **commits adultery**. [Aligns with Lk 16:18]
- B. Whosoever shall put away his wife for fornication, and shall marry another, **commits NOT adultery**. Whoso marries her who is SO put away may **NOT necessarily commit adultery**.

CONCLUSION

The rejoinder of brother Oboroh was studied carefully to ascertain whether it truthfully presents the word of God on the subject of MDR. It was found to be a sincere effort which has some merit but a lot of lapses. JRO's few evasions, inconsistencies and several denials of glaring scriptural implications were revealed. Yet he made some valuable contributions and equally stimulated me to take my study to a higher level. The brotherhood is the better for it as both our articles will contribute to the wealth of scholarly research. I thank God for JRO's article which has actually helped me to study more, comprehend the topic better and to reason out more facts.

The exception clause in Mt 19:9 has spawned various views among men. Someone (not JRO) interpreted it as... "*a remarriage is adultery unless one's wife was put away for immorality by stoning her unto death*" -Deut 22:22. However, Jesus spoke on divorce and describes another man who marries the woman (after being 'put away') as committing adultery, so the exception is not about an executed wife. Many like brother Oboroh believe the interpretation or view that the exception clause means one may only remarry if his wife committed adultery and he divorced her. JRO claims divorce is permitted, not mandated in adultery cases today but he inadvertently promotes it via his teaching. His traditional view of MDR is also flawed since it assumes only one party must not remarry (and is guilty) while the other could. (It presumes God remains unforgiving to a repentant adulterer/adulteress just because humans could be vindictive) We should lovingly forbear and forgive in marriage; God is the one to judge unrepentant adulterers. My understanding is that Jesus says one may not divorce a lawful spouse; only a man in an illicit marriage is permitted to put away his wife and thereafter marry another. This latter view aligns with the law and history of Christ's audience and remains valid even in our era.

The word '**illicit**' means "*not permitted by law, rule or social conduct*." Consequently any marital or sexual union that is against God's law is illegal/illicit and therefore an act of bad morals (sexual immorality) or fornication (porneia). We cannot simply describe the Ezra matter as "inter-faith" just as we may not describe the case of the man who had his father's wife in 1 Cor 5 as mere "inter-family." Paul was inspired to call it what it really was just as John the Baptist challenged Herod who had his brother's wife by marrying her. Even the men in Ezra engaged in immorality because they contracted marriages which violated God's Law and were thereby having illicit sex. In such cases it is not only the wife that commit fornication for the husband does too. Thus the two involved are sinning and should repent. Properly terminating the unscriptural marriage is the needed fruit of repentance not merely walking away from it. There must be a Bill of divorcement for God allows those in illicit unions to 'put away.' Each may marry another person after the dissolution if unfettered by previous marital history. I showed that such divorced person CANNOT commit adultery after marrying another unless the divorce is unscriptural since ***adultery*** by definition -will occur **if and only if** the person is still really married to the initial spouse. If one insists that the Lord allows divorce in lawful marriages "*if it be for adultery*" then such connotes that even in this gospel era, God does not intend for marriage to last for our lifetimes and Jesus simply adopted the position of the Shammai Pharisees. That is NOT true for in this gospel age, the Lord gives no ground for divorce or putting asunder any couple whom God has joined together. Such unions are to be terminated by death only. Divorce or annulment is a requirement not an option for those in illicit marriages provided such desire to make heaven.

If one claims that adultery is the exceptional ground for dissolving a marriage then he implies those in unlawful unions who are not committing adultery **have no scriptural ground** to end their marriages. E.g. a couple which discovers that their union is incestuous, a terrorist who abducted and brainwashed a Chibok school girl, a man who wedded two women at one ceremony, etc. **Must these first cheat on their respective partners, be caught and not forgiven before such illicit marriages are dissolved?**

Let us examine this work and doctrine thoroughly with an open mind. It will eventually be clear that it is true and that the traditional view is false. I am persuaded that some will understand, welcome and be willing to teach it despite the difficulties that lay ahead -due to the potential impact on some families. May the good Lord give us the grace to henceforth proclaim and practice the truth irrespective of what it could cost us to adjust. Once we have the right heart or attitude, God will make a way. To our Father above be glory and honour through Jesus our savior, Amen.

ADDRESSING JRO's POSERS

QUESTIONS/POSERS FOR ALL (provide scripture to support your answers or affirm scriptural silence).

Matthew 19. 3-9

1. Vs. 3 "The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"
Poser: God allowed the Jews to divorce for ANY reason: True/False
Ans: Ostensibly. Moses gave the divorce law; God tolerated their use and abuse of it -Mt 19:8
2. Vs 4-6 "And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."
Poser: Jesus here was referring God joining cohabitators, not married couple: True/False
Ans: False, Jesus here refers to those whom God joined as a married couple. Some join themselves together as a couple without God's involvement, such are in **illicit marriages - Mark 6:17-18**
3. Vs. 7 "They said to Him,"Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"
Poser: The woman to be given bill of divorcement was not a wife, but a fornication partner: True/False
Ans: She was sociologically speaking, addressed as a 'wife' provided that the man married her irrespective of whether the wedding was divinely approved or not –Deut 24:1-3.
4. Vs.8a: "He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives..."
Poser: Moses permitted them to divorce their fornication partner, NOT wife: True/False
Ans: Both -Deut 24:1-4 so long the woman was married by the man; legitimate or illicit as in Ezra. Jesus also implied that if a true husband had **put away his wife and she **married** another man, the new husband would have to **also put her away** to stop his adultery -Lk 16:18.**
5. Vs.8b "...but from the beginning it was not so."
Poser: From the beginning, God allowed fornicating partners to continue in their cohabitation: True/False

Ans: False. The Lord is against fornicators' cohabitation be it as live-in lovers (Jn 4:16-18), illicit couples (Ezra 9-10, Mk 6:17-18) or otherwise (1 Cor 5:1-5; 6:15-18). He wants each person to have a personal, God-approved spouse -1 Cor 7:2. In Mt 19:8, Christ means that originally, God did not contemplate or facilitate divorce since mankind started with scriptural marriages. Divorce later arose due to men's sinful ways and 'hardness of heart' -1 Tim 1:9-10.

6. Vs. 9a: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife..."
Question: "Wife" here means a woman SCRIPTURALLY married to: True/False
Ans: "Wife" simply means the woman he married or has taken as a wife irrespective of whether the union was divinely approved or not -Deut 24:1-3

7. Vs. 9b "...except for sexual immorality..."
Poser: this means divorce is allowed IN SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE on the ground of sexual immorality: True/False
Ans: False. It means divorce is allowed only in an illicit marriage on the ground that IT IS sexual immorality; man is not allowed to put asunder a scriptural marriage -Mt 19:6

Ezr 9:1-2

1. Vs.1: "When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites."
Poser: This marriage is a violation of which of the Mosaic Law? (1) Deut. 24. 1-4 (2) Deut. 7. 1-4 (3) both
Ans: Deut 7:1-4
2. Vs2 "For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands."
Poser: Those Jews sinned by (1) marrying foreign women (2) cohabiting/living in fornication (3) both
Ans: They sinned by marrying prohibited foreign women, their illicit marriages constituted a sexual immorality or fornication to be repented of. It wasn't really cohabitation from human standpoint because the women were married (although against God's will). The couples were not mere live-in lovers or unwedded persons for inspiration designated the women as "wives." The men therefore had to formally put away their wives.

Ezr 10:2-4

3. "And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. 3 Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law."
a. Poser: "put away" is equivalent to issuing bill of divorcement: True/False
Ans: True; a synonym for the Bill -Deut 22:19, Isa 50:1, Jer 3:1, Mt 5:31-32; 19:9
b. Poser: children are to be put away under the bill of divorcement: True/false
Ans: Deut 24:1-4 is silent on that.
c. Poser: "let it be done according to" which Law? (1) Deut. 7. 1-4 (2) Deut 24. 1-4 (3) both (4) none
Ans: All the relevant laws for that scenario -Lev 5:14-19, Deut 24:1-2, Gen 21:10-14

APPENDIX: ASAOLU'S ILLUSTRATIONS ABOUT MDR

<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M W</p> <p>Unmarried \equiv Scriptural divorce (Sd) in Im</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M ————— W</p> <p>Illicit/unscriptural marriage (Im)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M ——— W</p> <p>Scriptural marriage (Sm)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>NW ····· M ····· W</p> <p>Adultery by Man in Sm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M ····· W ····· NM</p> <p>Adultery by Woman in Sm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>NW ····· M ····· W ····· NM</p> <p>Adultery by both in Sm</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M ····· W</p> <p>Separation (Sp) in Sm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M ——— W</p> <p>Putting Asunder (Pa) or divorce is Prohibited in Sm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M ····· W</p> <p>Unscriptural divorce (Ud) in Sm</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M W ——— NM</p> <p>Scriptural remarriage (Sr) by W after Sd</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>NW ——— M W</p> <p>Scriptural remarriage (Sr) by M after Sd</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>NW ——— M W ——— NM</p> <p>Scriptural remarriage (Sr) by both after Sd</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>NW ——— M ····· W</p> <p>Adulterous remarriage (Ar) by M after Ud</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>M ····· W ——— NM</p> <p>Adulterous remarriage (Ar) by W after Ud</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>NW ——— M ····· W ——— NM</p> <p>Adulterous remarriage (Ar) by both after Ud</p>

Legend: G = God, M = Man, W = Woman, NM = New Man, NW = New Woman

OBSERVATIONS

1. In unmarried state, the man and woman are unconnected and have no union or intersection.
2. God is not involved in an illicit marriage; only the man and woman joined themselves together.
3. A scriptural marriage strongly connects the couple to each other and unto God who joined them.
4. Adultery weakens one's link with God as well as with one's spouse.
5. A separated couple are still married but weakly connected to each other.
6. An unscriptural divorce only results from a scriptural marriage; both parties remain linked together by God's unbroken bond but with weak connections.
7. A scriptural divorce of an illicit marriage reverts to unmarried state if each had no other previous marriage.
8. In a scriptural remarriage, the man and his former wife are no longer connected to each other. He is now connected to God and to the new wife only after a scriptural divorce of an illicit marriage.
9. When one's spouse dies, s/he reverts to unmarried state: a new marriage constitute a scriptural marriage.
10. In a scriptural marriage having challenges, it seems better to be (temporarily) separated with hope of reconciliation than for the two partners to be committing adultery or unscripturally divorced.
11. In any unscriptural remarriage, God will not join together with the new spouse taken by a man or by a woman because such person commits adultery.
12. **How do we sketch the remarriages described by traditional MDR after putting asunder a scriptural marriage?** (It asserts the 'divorced' man could be married and connected to a new woman, be connected to God and be unconnected to the former wife he had put away who is still connected to him by God. Yet the former wife commits adultery on marrying another)