THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

ON

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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(CONTINUOUSLY REVISED FROM MAY, 2007)
11 AUGUST, 2014
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PREFACE

There are two things that characterise the Lord Jesus and should characterise all who have His spirit. They are love and forgiveness. As His life was being taken away He prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” As Stephen was being stoned to death, he prayed, “Lord, do not lay to them this sin.” The sin in both cases was murder. Both were prepared to forgive their murderers. Is the sin of adultery greater than murder? Jesus commanded Peter to forgive seventy times seven. The truly born-again Christian will forgive their murderer, love their enemy, and pray for their salvation. The unborn ‘Christian’ will behave like a man of the world and seek justice through the courts of this world.

This work has been written as a guide for all of Christ’s true followers who have been hurt by some unseemly and distressing behaviour by their partner. Jesus’ immediate response was, and is, to forgive the wrong and love the wrong-doer. He says to all who show remorse, “Go, and sin no more. Neither do I condemn you.” That is a hard example to follow, and many Christians turn their back on the idea of forgiveness and seek out counsellors who will offer a more attractive solution, one that will punish the offender. If you cannot forgive, then you do not have the Spirit of Christ, and if you do not have the Spirit of Christ, you are not a Christian. If this is your position, then it is time to have a deeper look at what you thought a Christian was.

Included are the following sins that must be forgiven, (1) adultery, (2) desertion, (3) abuse, (4) hard-heartedness, and (5) neglect. A well known rabbi in Jesus’ day taught (according to some) that each of these five categories (plus others) qualified for a divorce. He spoke the language of common-sense. Along came Jesus and taught the people to forgive these and all wrongs, and be reconciled to the wrong-doer. This was not common-sense. But that is the difference between rabbi Hillel and rabbi Jesus. The Pharisees’ advice was this-worldly (intuitive, naturalistic); Jesus’ advice was other-worldly (counter-intuitive, spiritual). The Pharisee preached, “Love your neighbour, and hate your enemy.” Jesus preached, “Love your enemy.” In every department of their theology, Jesus had an opposite point of view to that of the Pharisee. Where the Pharisee kept the letter of the Law, Jesus kept the spirit of the Law. “Whoso looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart.” And so it was in their appreciation of marriage and their attitude toward its break-up. The Pharisee could see dozens of reasons for breaking up a marriage. Jesus saw none. The rabbis used Scripture to grant divorce certificates. Jesus used Scripture to invalidate such certificates. The majority of Christian counsellors think Jesus got it wrong, and the rabbis got it right. The proof is in the number of divorce certificates held by many of His followers and prominent church leaders.

The core reason why Jesus could not accept the break-up of any marriage is that God makes the bond and only God can undo the marriage bond. To undo the bond is to usurp God’s prerogative.

The second reason why Jesus could not accept the break-up of any marriage is that it is incompatible with forgiveness. In the Lord’s Prayer He taught that we should ask God for the forgiveness of our sins on the grounds that we had forgiven others their sins against us. It would be a denial of the principle of forgiveness to make an exception for the sin of fornication or adultery. It is inevitable that where hate abounds, divorce abounds.

Jesus’ teaching on the nature of the ‘born-again’ experience, and the fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prophecy of imparting a new heart and a new spirit to all His followers (Ezek 36:26-27) means that the low life of the Mosaic period is a thing of the past, and that included Moses’s endorsement of the common Near Eastern practice of divorce. Divorce is now incompatible with having the Spirit of Christ.

The third reason why Jesus could not accept the break-up of any marriage is that marriage is the supreme analogy of selfless love between a man and a woman, and between Christ and His Bride Church. God is love and He showed that in the sacrifice of His Son for an ungrateful world. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).
It is with regret that I hear of Christians becoming followers of pre-Christian, Jewish rabbis, and even of Moses, and taking advantage of the divorce courts of the ‘god of this world’ (Satan) to end their God-bonded unions. The god of this world is delighted to see Christians enter his divorce courts to end their marriages. He knows that divorce plays into his hands, because the Christian who divorces for adultery will soon end up being an adulterer himself through a second marriage. Satan will get two adulterers for the price of one certificate.

What does a divorce certificate reveal about you?

First, the act of divorce is the act of an unforgiving person. Its possessor says, ‘I could not bring myself to forgive you, so I had to divorce you.’ This can never be spoken by a person who has the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them. The divorce certificate, therefore, certifies that you have an unforgiving spirit. With such a spirit you ensure that God cannot forgive you your sins.

Secondly, the divorce certificate certifies that you do not care for the salvation of the person you were married to. The Spirit teaches that the Christian should remain in their marriage in order to win their adulterous or unbelieving partner over to Christ (1 Corinthians 7:16). Separation may be forced upon the Christian, but the marriage bond can only be broken by death (Romans 7:1-2; 1 Corinthians 7:39). A wife is for life.

Thirdly, and sadly, the divorce certificate certifies that you do not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within you. Without Him living within you, you will not be with Him in heaven. He and Stephen forgave their murderers. You do not have this same spirit.

Fourthly, I view the possession of a Divorce Certificate as the possession of a spiritual Death Certificate. It certifies that you hate your enemy, that is, you hate your marriage partner, and hate is of the Devil. By agreeing to a divorce you are giving your partner the go-ahead to sleep with another partner. You will be held responsible for this permission (Matthew 5:32). The sin of his (or her) second marriage will be laid at your door.

Finally, you got your Divorce Certificate from Satan, not from God, and not from Christ. Satan has a vested interest in breaking up every single marriage that takes place in the world, because in doing so, he is usurping the place of God, who alone can separate what He has bonded. God uses death, not divorce, to end all marriages.

What does a divorce certificate reveal about you to other Christians and your local church?

The possession of a divorce certificate will tell the truly spiritual churches of Christ, and their spiritual leaders, a lot about you, and about your relationship with the Lord Jesus. It reveals that you do not have the Spirit of Christ within you (so why are you taking Communion?).

It reveals that you are not prepared to forgive certain kinds of sins; that there are exceptive clauses in your idea of forgiveness (so why do you think Jesus has forgiven you?).

It reveals that your mind-set is no different from that in the unbeliever; that you behave as someone who has more in common with the world than you have with Christ (so why do you think you are a Christian?).

Finally, it reveals ignorance of what your Saviour has revealed about the sanctity of marriage (so why are you so ignorant? Have you left off reading God’s Word?).

Christians, who are in an obedience relationship with the Lord Jesus, know that obedience is the test whether they truly love Him. “If you love Me, you will obey My commands” (John 14:15, 21; 15:10). If you are ignorant of Jesus’ commands, and claim to be a Christian, and are taking Communion, and yet are actively seeking to divorce your partner, you bring shame on your local church. Whoever takes Communion “in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body blood of the Lord” (1 Cor 11:27). You compound your sin of seeking a divorce by taking the Lord’s Supper in an
unworthy and unspiritual state. Those who do this bring judgment on themselves, “not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor 11:29).

A divorce certificate does not just divorce you from your partner, it also divorces you from your God. The two things go together. Your divorce certificate is also your spiritual death certificate. If you would choose life with Christ, then the sooner you tear it up and return to your forgiven, adulterous partner, the sooner you will have Life within you once again. No adulterer will enter or inherit heaven, and no one in a second marriage, whose first spouse is still alive, will enter or inherit heaven. Be rid of your second marriage, terminate it, if you would see Jesus again, and if you truly desire to enter the Kingdom of God as a born-again believer.

Many claim to be Christian and write books on Christian marriage who would drag down the Elect to the level of rabbinic exegesis, claiming that Jesus taught that divorce was not a sin against God. These do not have the Spirit of Christ speaking through them. To live out Christ’s theology without effort requires nothing short of Christ Himself indwelling the believer. If it requires effort, then something is wrong. It should come naturally. If the teaching does not come naturally and easily, then the person should examine themselves to see if they are in the faith, or only claim to be. The one who has experienced Christ will know the doctrine whether it be from God or whether it be from man (John 7:17).

Possibly the most frequently asked question is: Is the act itself of getting a divorce a sinful act? I have, therefore, devoted Letter 9 (section 9.9. below) to a detailed answer to this question. Remarriage can only occur after a death, not after a divorce. There is life after death, and there is a wife after death.

A divorced wife is a spiritually dangerous and a polluting force. Jesus endorsed this view when he stated that any one who marries a divorced woman is committing adultery. It is the fact that she has had sex with two living men that constitutes her an abomination, not the rightness or wrongness of the grounds of her divorce. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ grounds for divorce. Divorce itself is wrong in principle. God is consistently adamant, under both Covenants, that a woman cannot sleep with two, contemporary men. God’s abhorrence has not changed. Practising homosexual men and women, and remarried divorced men and women, are in the same category of abominable persons in His sight.

We have become so used to seeing an exception of some kind in Matthew 19:9 that one Christian writer who has written books and articles on divorce asked me, Can you think of any way of understanding the verse without an exception clause? In all his writings he assumed that Erasmus got it right and that even if we discard Erasmus’s addition of εἰ somehow he believed Jesus made an exception to permit divorce for fornication, and consequently he followed the KJV translation ‘except for fornication’ in all his writings. This is typical of modern day exegesis. Many cannot think outside the box that Erasmus has shut them into.

To the question, Can you think of any way of understanding the verse without an exception clause? the answer is Yes. And here is the translation, “who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.” Every Jew knew that if a wife committed a sexual offence she was stoned to death (Jn 8:1-11; Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). Every Jew knew that a wife could only be divorced for a non-sexual offence (cf. Deut 24:1-3). The former is a ‘for fornication’ offence; the latter is a ‘not over fornication’ offence. The Jews were well aware of the two categories, so when Jesus pointed to those husbands who got a divorce for a ‘not over fornication’ offence, the Jews knew this covered every possible offence that a wife could commit apart from fornication, which was punished by death not divorce. In this way Jesus comprehensively excluded divorce ‘for fornication’ and He excluded divorce, ‘not over fornication.’ He made no exception for fornication because that offence was covered.

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1 We would not have known anything about the practice of divorce in Moses’s day except that God described what was going on among His people, and He described it in order to show His disapproval of it, when He banned every divorcer from returning to his first wife (Dt 24:4).
by the death penalty. It was as if Jesus had said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife for a non-death penalty offence and marries another commits adultery.’

The key to understanding any verse of Scripture is to place oneself in the era and culture in which it was written. If we place Jesus in our era and culture then divorce is automatically expected and granted for adultery. If we place Jesus in His own era and culture then the death penalty is automatically expected and granted for adultery. There was no option to divorce her for adultery in Jesus’ era and culture. It is difficult for Western writers to adjust to Jesus’ era and culture and plant their feet firmly in His era, and view things from Jesus’ perspective, and this accounts for their inability to ‘read’ Jesus, and where He was coming from.

But the Pharisees who asked the question knew exactly what Jesus meant and were astounded that He dismissed Moses’s divorce certificate as null and void. His disciples knew exactly what Jesus meant and concluded, ‘If the case is so [that divorce cannot dissolve a marriage] it is not advantageous to marry,’ because they instantly recognised that a husband is burdened with a wife for life with no prospect of getting free from her should she turn out not to be the helpmeet he thought she would be. And even if she turned out to be the perfect wife, his interests are divided between pleasing his wife and pleasing the Lord (1 Cor 7:32-35).

Marriage belongs to this world, not to the next. “The time is short,” noted Paul, “so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none” (1 Cor 7:29). Paul, as ever, sought to fix the mind of bachelors and married men on serving Jesus exclusively, and encouraged them to be locked on to Christ’s will for the good of the Church.

Marriage, it has been observed, is not all that it is cracked up to be. Better, thought Jesus and Paul, to be free of it, if you can. ‘Are you a single, unmarried man, do not seek a wife,’ has behind it the motive of giving all your time, money, and talents to serving the Lord Jesus to the exclusion of any other hobby or interest, because He bought you with the price of His blood. This thought is not far away in the two pastoral sections of this work, especially in cases where the Christian has been deserted by their partner, who might even be a professing Christian. Enforced singleness can be used to the advantage of the Lord Jesus, and that thought should be paramount in the lives of all, single, ‘divorced,’ or married.

The wife pleases God when she does her husband’s will. The husband pleases God when he does Christ’s will. Christ pleases God when He does God’s will. This hierarchy of headships brings all things under God’s control. Every married couple must be made aware of this headship arrangement otherwise there will be clashes of wills and disorder will follow to the displeasure of God, who is Head over all things.

It is the prayer of the author, that this work will open the door to the knowledge of God’s will about your marriage, and the evil of getting a divorce through the divorce courts of the ‘god of this world’ (Satan), and that as a result of coming into the light of the true knowledge, you will be able to guide others away from divorce and toward the Lord Jesus in this adulterous and evil generation.
INTRODUCTION

One of the strongest arguments against divorce is the unanimous practice of the Church from the Apostolic age to the Protestant Reformation. As soon as the Lord Jesus’ followers heard of Jesus’ absolute ban on divorce they acted on it. Divorce was the opposite that God intended for all marriages. That, for most Bible-believing Christians, determines the issue. This work takes that practice seriously. It also examines the thinking of Jesus—the theology—that gave rise to that practice.

The Church of God received the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ directly from Him in oral form, and the Apostles and Jesus’ followers had time, during His earthly ministry, to be absolutely certain what He meant by each of His statements, and to work out the practical implications of His teaching on divorce and remarriage before the Gospels were written down. The earliest Gospel to be written down was probably Matthew, which, by tradition, is reputed to have been written down fifteen years after the ascension.

Out of their personal interaction with the Lord Jesus came a clear, unambiguous application that was never seriously challenged for the first 400 years by any authoritative Christian teacher/leader. As a result, a definite pattern of behaviour (called ‘traditions’ by Paul) characterised the whole Christian Church, throughout the Roman Empire, whereby divorce was not permitted for any reason, not even for adultery or fornication. The break with Judaism was complete and final. The Torah was just a shadow of the good things to come to God’s people, but it could neither take away sins, nor change the heart of those sacrificing live animals. This first covenant God took away in order that He could establish the second covenant—the one Jesus made with ‘many’ in its place (cf. Hebrews 10:1, 9). The old, Mosaic covenant, became obsolete the moment Jesus said, “It is finished.”

The so-called ‘Pauline Privilege’ (1 Corinthians 7:15-16) was always understood to mean that if an unbelieving partner took the initiative to separate (or get a civil divorce) from a Christian partner, then the Christian partner must stay single in the hope that the unbelieving partner would come back again, even if the unbeliever remarried in the meantime.

After the coming of Jesus Christ and the institution of a new priesthood of which He is its undying, great High Priest, offering a better Covenant between God and Man, and replacing the external Mosaic Law (Hebrews 7:12, 18, 22; 8:6; 10:9) with an internal law written in the minds and upon the hearts of all those born-again of the Spirit of God, divorce was abolished by God completely when the Old Covenant was replaced with the New Covenant (Hebrews 10:9), there being now no grounds whatsoever for divorce, for either Christian or non-Christian, because of the one-flesh nature of the union. This was firmly understood by the Church up until the Protestant Reformation, which then branched off and introduced divorce for adultery and desertion for the first time as a teaching of the Lord Jesus (which is reflected in the Westminster Confession of Faith [1648]).

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2 Gordon Wenham and William Heth have argued the case for a return to the doctrine and practice of the Early Church. According to them, in the centuries following the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world, the Church’s unanimous view was ‘no remarriage following divorce,’ and ‘divorce’ was interpreted as separation and not a dissolution of the marriage. See Gordon J. Wenham & William E. Heth, Jesus and Divorce: Updated edition (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997). The first dissenting voice appears to be Ambrosiaster (366-383).

3 About 600 years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, God promised that He would replace the Mosaic Law with a New Law (Jer 31:31). Hebrews 8:13 points out the logic of God promising to bring in a ‘New Covenant.’ A New Covenant automatically makes the first one obsolete as regards saving those from the wrath of God who are in it (Hebrews 10:9; 7:12).
This work is in nine parts with ten appendices. Part 1 sets out the way in which the Reformed Churches were misled by Erasmus into branching off from the unambiguous teaching and universal practice of the Church up until the Reformation. Part 2 sets out the theological foundation of love-headships that govern all relations between men and women, between men and Jesus, and between Jesus and God, who is head over all things. Part 3 develops Part 2 to show how authority structures are used by God to establish unity and order between Christ and His betrothed Church. Part 4 gives an overview of history to show that God hates divorce. Part 5 covers Moses on divorce and remarriage. Part 6 covers Jesus on divorce and remarriage. Part 7 covers Paul on divorce and remarriage. The next two parts deal with pastoral issues. Part 8 sets out guidelines for Christian counsellors on how to handle divorce situations given that divorce cannot dissolve any lawful one-flesh union. Part 9 presents the author’s replies to questions put to him. The work ends with some concluding remarks.

Appendix A sets out a selection of Bible translations which still support Erasmus’s false teaching on divorce and remarriage. Appendix B explains the author’s method for translating the aorist subjunctive in Matthew 19:9. Appendix C presents a critique of a view advocating the use of Old Testament laws to obtain a divorce between Christians, and between Christians and non-Christian spouses. Appendix D presents textual notes on Matthew 5:32 & 19:9. Appendix E gives Erasmus’s Latin translations of the divorce texts. Appendix F sets out the case for the superiority of the Majority Greek Text. Appendix G is a study of the corrections in Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69, or 5505 in von Soden’s apparatus). This codex reproduces Erasmus’s ‘exception clause’ in the margin at Matthew 19:9. Appendix H deals with the witness of Clement of Alexandria. Appendix I is a paper entitled, “How to Critique works on Divorce.” Appendix J is a study of the verb ‘to fornicate’ as used in classical Greek writings. The work ends with a bibliography of the works consulted for this work.

Sometimes it is possible to get lost in the fog of debate, so here is a kind of literary compass that you should read over a number of times to get a good grasp of where this work is taking you.

TRUTH No. 1: No civil, legal, religious, cultural, or State divorce is valid in the eyes of God. This includes all human divorces that have taken place on planet Earth since Adam and Eve sinned. Not a single one of them severed the one-flesh union of a lawful marriage. They all took place without God’s permission. They were all unilateral decisions, as they are to this day, and will be to the end of time.

TRUTH No. 2: Only God can end a lawful marriage. His only instrument is death, never divorce. The very act of getting a divorce is itself a sin if the person getting it believes it dissolves their first marriage, and it is a sin even if they never remarry after divorcing their partner.

TRUTH No. 3: All remarriages are adulterous relationships while both spouses are alive. Consequently a divorced person is still married to their first, lawful, one-flesh partner, irrespective if either or both spouses remarry. God only recognises the first marriage as a legitimate relationship.

TRUTH No. 4: Reconciliation was deliberately made impossible by God as a punishment for divorce under the Law of Moses, but it is highly desirable under Grace. Second marriages, following a divorce, must be undone (retracing the legal steps if necessary). Divorced-and-remarried persons will not enter the Kingdom of God if they do not obey Jesus’ command, “Go and sin no more,” and get out of their second marriages.

GENERAL TRUTH: Remember that all human divorces (including Moses’s) are play-acting, that is, nothing happens as far as God is concerned, so the first wife, or husband, will have to go
through the charade of ‘playing the system’ to undo their bogus divorces in order to get free, and
return to their first partners (if possible, otherwise they must remain unmarried to another person).

The divorce certificate has no greater value than a piece of toilet paper. God hates divorce. We
underestimate the gravity of this sin to our eternal regret. Flee divorce as you would flee a
remarriage. Flee the divorce court as you would flee the brothel, for both bring spiritual death to all
who enter them to satisfy their passion and hard-heartedness.

Everything that follows in this work, from obscure textual discussions to fine-tuning the
Christian marriage to reflect the will of God in all its glory through the doctrine of love-headships, is
intended to uphold these compass truths.

The whole of the debate on divorce and remarriage boils down to these two statements, and
we must choose between them. One or other of them is false.

(A) If there is no exception in Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness, then there
is no exception in His teaching on divorce. (McFall’s choice)

(B) If there is an exception in Jesus’ teaching on divorce, then there is an
exception in His teaching on forgiveness. (Erasmus’s choice)

Every scholar and reader of this work comes under one or other of these two statements.

A thumbnail sketch of the path taken by pro-divorce proponents is as follows:
• Matthew permits divorce for fornication (including adultery).
• Mark, Luke and Paul must give way to Matthew.
• Paul permits divorce for desertion.
• The Synoptic Gospels must give way to Paul.
• The Synoptic Gospels and Paul can be presumed to permit remarriage following a divorce.
  The result is that desertion and fornication are biblical grounds for divorce.
• Others add that the Old Testament permits the causes of divorce to be widened on the basis of
  Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Exodus 21:10, thus taking the Church back into rabbinic Judaism.

A thumbnail sketch of the path taken by anti-divorce proponents is as follows:
• Matthew rules out divorce for all causes, because fornication was a death penalty issue.
• Mark and Luke agree with Matthew and rule out divorce for any cause among Romans, Greeks,
  and Jews.
• Paul permits only separation, not divorce, for desertion.
• The Synoptic Gospels and Paul agree, and do not permit divorce for fornication or desertion.
• The Synoptic Gospels and Paul agree that remarriages can only follow the death of a spouse.
• The admissibility of Mosaic and Rabbinic divorce discussions to modify Jesus’ absolute rejection of
divorce is rejected on the grounds that He is the Messiah, and the new teacher of Israel.
  The result is that Jesus, the Son of God, rules out divorce on any grounds, including fornication,
desertion, or any other ground found in the fulfilled, and so obsolete, Torah, or in the irrelevant
rabbinic developments. His teaching is unique, and stands apart from all other religions
(including rabbinic Judaism) and philosophies, and is vastly superior to all of them.
• Only the complete transformation of the human spirit can enable the natural man to rise to the
  level of spirituality that will equip him to embrace the teaching of Jesus on love and forgiveness,
  otherwise he falls back into Mosaic religion or humanism.

All remarriages after the death of a spouse are lawful.
All remarriages after the divorce of a spouse are unlawful.

On these two statements hang the entirety of Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage.
PART I. ERASMUS’S INFLUENCE ON THE DIVORCE TEXTS

1.1. WHAT GREEK TEXT DID THE REFORMERS USE TO REDISCOVER THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL?

This is a crucial question, because if the early Protestant Reformers followed a Greek text that was not the Universal (Byzantine) Text used by the Early Church, and which had been transmitted faithfully from their day up to the time of the Reformation, then the application of their core doctrine of sola scriptura (‘Scripture alone’) would become a trap, because they would latch on to a faulty copy of God’s Word and attribute to it the inspiration and infallibility that only belongs to the original text and its faithful copies, of which the Byzantine (majority) text is the purest.

It is a fact of history that the only widely available printed Greek New Testament available to the Reformers were Erasmus’s five editions of the Greek New Testament (continuously modified very slightly by subsequent editors). Erasmus flooded the European market with his five cheaper editions, all of which had his faulty, variant reading at Matthew 19:9. The fault was that he added an extra Greek word in Matthew 19:9 which completely altered Jesus’ teaching on divorce.

The original Greek text read: “not over fornication [which was punished by death],” so that Jesus condemned every known excuse to divorce a marriage that the rabbis could think of, besides fornication, because that particular sin had a death penalty punishment attached to it (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). The rabbis could not give ‘fornication’ as a grounds for divorce, because, they and Jesus, knew that God had decreed the death penalty for adultery and other sexual misdemeanours.

If Jesus had in mind that some reputable rabbis were granting divorces on the grounds of adultery, which was illegal, then Jesus ruled out anything below fornication, which, for these rabbis, would have been unchallengeable grounds for the death penalty for the woman if they could have exercised it under Roman occupation in Jesus’ day (cf. John 7:53–8:11). Jesus excluded the teaching of two influential rabbis, Hillel and Shammai, both of whom (we are told) agreed that divorce could be obtained for sexual misdemeanours, such as fornication, even though this was explicitly ruled out by God. Jesus came to keep the Law, not to rewrite it, revise it, or modify it. He lived under the Law.

Theoretically, it was harder to obtain a divorce through rabbi Shammai, who insisted (we are told) that the ‘ervat dābār (דָּבָר הָרֹאשׁ) in Deuteronomy 24:1–3 referred only to sins of a sexual nature, and that a man could not divorce his wife for every trivial reason. Rabbi Hillel, on the other hand, handed out divorces for all sexual misdemeanours, but also for ‘any other cause’ (cf. Matthew 19:3) that a husband might nominate, even something as trivial as his wife burning her husband’s

4 The Roman Catholic church published the Complutensian Polyglot in 1522 in a limited and very expensive edition. Being a product of the R.C. church it was unlikely to be trusted by the Reformers.

5 Deuteronomy 24:1 has “the nakedness of a matter.” Shammai reversed the words and read it as “a matter of nakedness.” This allowed him to believe that the term ‘ervat referred to adultery/fornication, and so in this way he defined, and so restricted, the meaning of ‘ervat to cover just sexual sins. It was in this way that Deuteronomy 24:1 became a Trojan horse in rabbinical literature, because an unscrupulous rabbi could smuggle into 24:1 a restricted meaning that suited his scruples or doctrinal position by playing around with word order, or by exploiting the various facets of meaning that most words have.

6 Shammai transposed the Hebrew words ‘ervat dābār to dābār ‘ervat and so changed ‘exposure of a matter,’ to ‘a matter of exposure.’ And not a few Christian leaders and writers have been duped by him, misunderstanding Yahweh’s metaphorical use of the term ‘ervat ‘nakedness,’ in Deut 24:1, which they have taken literally.
because the tribe of Judah formed the core of the Elect after the Return. In 586 BC as 'Hebrews,' and to refer to the Elect after the Return from exile in 536 BC as 'Jews,' he based on a literal reading of Deut 24:1, "if she does not find favour in his eyes." This gives us an insight into the heart of every divorce, a heart that is dissolved with the presence of the Spirit of Christ in each of His followers.

Now Hillel and Shammai had no authority to alter God's law. God decreed the death penalty for adultery, and for women who were not virgins on their wedding day, and for other sexual misdemeanours, which all came under the general term 'fornication.' These rabbis were usurpers. If Jesus agreed with these rabbis to alter God’s law, and introduce divorce for fornication, then He is as guilty as they are in departing from God’s law. If Jesus is a law-breaker then He is a sinner, like Hillel and Shammai. If He is a sinner, then He cannot die for the sins of others; He can only die for His own sins.

It is imperative that conservative-evangelical scholars defend the sinlessness of Jesus in fulfilling the Law of God, because only by a perfect keeping of the Law of God could Jesus obtain the righteousness demanded by God, and it is this perfect righteousness that becomes the possession of all who become the disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Erasmus turned Jesus’ teaching on its head, because his new Greek text read: “except for fornication.” This alteration had Jesus agreeing with Hillel and Shammai that fornication was a legitimate grounds for divorce in His Church. This was a humanist response to a social evil in Erasmus's day. In his opinion, the death penalty was too harsh a punishment to inflict on the poorer classes, and since he believed that God sanctioned divorce as a divine institution in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, he assumed that a compassionate Jesus would allow divorce in the case of fornication, adultery, physical abuse, and intolerable desertion.

Sadly, many Christians today prefer to follow the common-sense opinion of Erasmus and believe that a compassionate Jesus would allow divorce in the case of fornication, adultery, cruelty, and desertion. These Christians will latch on to any text or pretext that will support their private instinct of what is 'sensible' and appropriate in the eyes of the man of the world.

Like Shammai and Hillel, and like Erasmus, God's standard is judged to be too high, by these Christians. They let all Christians off the hook by teaching that Jesus is being unrealistic, and an idealist, in expecting every marriage to be for life. We are told that His feet are not on the ground, that He does not understand human nature. We are told He never married, so what would He know about the stresses and strains that wives have to endure? In this way, these Christians lay aside

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7 The Jewish historian, Josephus (born about AD 37), in his biography (Life) tells us, without any regret, “About this time I put away [OutOfRange] my wife, who had borne me three children, not being pleased [OutOfRange] with her manners.” The grounds for his divorce constituted an ‘ervat dâbîr, so no change there since the time of Moses. He also tells us that divorce was the prerogative of the husband only; the law had no authority to divorce her husband (Antiq. Bk 15, §259; cf. Mishnah, Gittin ix. 1-3). It was a male-dominated, one-way system that went right back to Deuteronomy 24:1-3, so no change there since the time of Moses. Rabbi Akiba (born about 150 years after the death of Jesus) said that a man could divorce his wife if he found a younger woman, which he based on a literal reading of Deut 24:1, “if she does not find favour in his eyes.” This gives us an insight into the frightening plight and vulnerability that Jewish wives were exposed to by a thorough-going religious establishment bereft of the teaching of Jesus. This hard-core, hard-heartedness, lies at the heart of every divorce, a heart that is dissolved with the presence of the Spirit of Christ in each of His followers.

8 It is a convention among biblical writers to refer to the Elect people before the Babylonian exile in 586 BC as ‘Hebrews,’ and to refer to the Elect after the Return from exile in 536 BC as ‘Jews,’ because the tribe of Judah formed the core of the Elect after the Return.
Jesus’ teaching as impracticable, and fall back on the rabbis, and their common-sense approach to marital problems and the irretrievable breakdown of some marriages.

In comparison to Erasmus, Jesus is a hard man; Erasmus is a gentle man. Jesus is unbending; Erasmus is flexible. Jesus is intolerant; Erasmus is tolerant. Jesus is dogmatic; Erasmus is open-minded. Jesus is indifferent; but Erasmus is very compassionate. Erasmus appeals strongly to the instincts of the unregenerate Christian; Jesus appeals strongly to the renewed mind of the regenerate Christian. Erasmus takes his standards from man; Jesus takes His from His Father. Erasmus speaks as a man; Jesus speaks as God. Given this reality, Jesus must lose every time, because all men are born as men, not as sons of God. Man must become a son of God before he can change sides and become a fervent disciple of the Son of God. Erasmus pleases man; Jesus pleases God. All in all Erasmus comes across as a warm, attractive person, reflecting common-sense values; whereas Jesus comes across as a cold, unattractive person, who demands total subservience to His teaching and standards. It is no wonder that the majority of Christians prefer to follow Erasmus and turn their backs on the Lord Jesus. There will be a price to pay for this disloyalty.

Divorce for adultery was never God’s will from the beginning. Jesus claimed that He came to fulfill every jot and tittle of the Law, and not to do away with it, or alter it, until He had fulfilled it. Only after He had kept the law fully and obtained the righteousness that comes from keeping it perfectly was it done away with, as a means of obtaining the righteousness that God demanded of every Jew.

When Jesus, therefore, ruled out sexual misdemeanours as grounds for divorce among His followers, He thereby condemned Hillel and Shammai’s interference and alteration of His Father’s law, if this is the backdrop to the Pharisees’ question in Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:3. Jesus’ condemnation of divorce for non-fornication issues (and we can envisage Him wagging His finger at them) set His divine teaching apart from their human, common-sense compromises. In Jesus’ Kingdom, forgiveness is the rule, even the forgiveness of the sin of adultery and fornication. There is no exception clause in Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness. Jesus said, if you forgive men their trespasses then His Father would forgive them their trespasses. There is no exceptive clause in this statement.

1.2. WHERE DID ERASMUS GET HIS FAULTY TEXT FROM?

There is a very late Greek manuscript, Codex Leicestrensis (a Caesarean text-type manuscript, belonging to Family 13 [f13]), dated to the 15th century, which has in its margin a correction to its own faulty main text at Matthew 19:9. The faulty main text consisted of the exemption clause in Matthew 5:32 being imported into Matthew 19:9 where it replaced the so-called exception clause in that verse. However, in trying to restore the original clause of Matthew 19:9 in the margin, a later owner or collator of the Codex added the small Greek word ei (εἰ, ‘if’) before the negative mh (μὴ, ‘not’) to change the text to read ‘except’ (in Greek ei before mh becomes ‘if not,’ or ‘except’). It has been generally assumed that Erasmus consulted this Codex during his stay in Cambridge, England, between 1511 and 1514. The question is, Did Erasmus see this marginal reading and incorporate it into his first edition, or, did someone else use Erasmus’s printed text (or a later edition of it) to insert it into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis (referred to as MS 69)? The latter is the case, as I shall show below.

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9 Jesus’ statement, ‘not over fornication’ is a content-identity phrase, and means the same as ‘for all non-capital offences.’ This blanket ban ruled out divorce for any cause, because, according to the Law, the sin of fornication was covered by the death penalty. The Pharisees asked a legal question, and Jesus gave them a legal reply, which they hadn’t bargained for! We could re-word Jesus’ legal argument as, “whoever divorces his wife for a non-capital offence and marries another commits adultery.”
Who was the first to add *ei* (‘if’) to the inspired Word of God? The answer is clearly Erasmus himself. To date there is not a single, extant Greek manuscript of Matthew’s Gospel that contains the word *ei* in its main text at Matthew 19:9. Its only appearance to date is in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis. It has always been assumed by textual scholars that Erasmus saw the marginal reading in Codex Leicestrensis and that he copied it from there into his main text. This assumption was based on the belief that the marginal reading pre-dated Erasmus’s 1516 edition.

Scholars should have left open the possibility that the marginal correction in Codex Leicestrensis was copied from Erasmus’s printed text (or a later edition of it) into Codex Leicestrensis, and not the other way round. However, to prove this either way, it would have been necessary for them to examine every marginal correction to see how many are found only in Erasmus’s printed text and in the margin of the Codex. This work was never carried out until the present author did so.

There are 154 corrections by the second corrector in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis, and the writing of the Codex can be dated to around 1468. Now if Erasmus saw this Codex about 1515 this leaves just about 50 years in which someone could have inserted these 154 corrections. Unfortunately, we do not have a full list of the owners of the Codex during this period. It is likely that it was in the possession of the monks of Greyfriars Abbey just outside Cambridge (England) when Erasmus saw it.

What apparently Erasmus did find as he travelled around Europe were manuscripts, such as those reflecting the text of Family 1 and Family 13, which imported the exemption clause of Matthew 5:32 into 19:9. Now 5:32 is a context-specific exemption clause. The mischief was caused by importing it into 19:9, where it did not belong, and was out of context. This particular variant reading may have led Erasmus astray, plus Jerome’s ambiguous Vulgate translation.

Those who defend Erasmus’s exception clause in Matthew 19:9 do so by (1) defending Erasmus’s text (as the ‘Received Text’ from Apostolic times); (2) by pointing to the marginal correction in Codex Leicestrensis; (3) drawing on the witness of all the Latin versions for the translation *nisi ob fornicationem* (Old Latin and Jerome); and (4) compiling quotations from early Church Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–225), Origen (c. 185–253), and Basil the Great (c. 329–379).

### 1.3. HOW DID THE FAULTY READING GET INTO THE REFORMERS’ BIBLES?

This we do know. It was through Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the Dutch humanist. He was not a Reformed Christian by any means. He was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church and was...
even offered a cardinal’s hat in the last years of his life. But, like the Reformers, he became disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on a number of issues, one of which was their insistence that Jesus did not permit divorce or remarriage. The Roman Catholic Church taught that:

The bond of marriage cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of either party; and that neither, not even the innocent, who has not given cause for the separation, can, while the other party lives, contract another marriage; and that adultery is committed by the husband who divorces his wife and marries another, and by the wife who divorces her husband and marries another.\footnote{On the Council of Trent, see Hector Davies Morgan, \emph{The Doctrine and Law of Marriage} (2 vols; Oxford: W. Baxter, 1826), Vol. II. 207-08. The Reformers held that marriage was dissolved by adultery and by wilful desertion, and Erasmus was in full agreement with these causes.}

Erasmus was extremely angry at this insensitive, dogmatic stance of his church over this teaching. He believed that divorce was justified in the case of adultery,\footnote{See Erika Rummel, \emph{Paraphrase on Mark}. Volume 48 of the \emph{Collected Works of Erasmus} (Robert D. Sider, Gen. ed.; Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 122-23; Dean Simpson, \emph{Paraphrase on Matthew}. Volume 45 of the \emph{Collected Works of Erasmus} (Robert D. Sider, Gen. ed.; Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 104-105; 269.} so when he came to produce the first published edition of the Greek New Testament, he deliberately chose the small Greek word \textit{ei} (\textit{ei}) and inserted it before \textit{mh} (\textit{mh}) in Matthew 19:9 to allow divorce for adultery, despite the fact that the three Gospel manuscripts which he used did not contain the Greek word \textit{ei}.

It is impossible to do any theology in the New Testament without encountering textual variants, and this invariably leads to a consideration of the four main textual families. The four main families are the Byzantine, Caesarean, Egyptian and Western. The Caesarean is an off-shoot of the Byzantine (Majority) Text, and the Western is an eclectic text made up of the Egyptian (Minority) Text and the Caesarean Text. So, basically, there are two main texts, the majority Byzantine text, and the minority Egyptian Text. (See Appendix F for the case for the superiority of the Majority Text.)

We can illustrate the discrepancies between the Majority and the Minority texts by examining the English translations of Matthew 19:9.

\subsection{1.3.1. The English translation of the two main Greek texts of Matthew 19:9}

There is a debate going on between supporters of the Nestle-Aland Greek text of the New Testament, which represents the minority Egyptian text, and the Majority Greek Text which lies behind the \emph{Textus Receptus} of the Authorized Version. When Westcott & Hort drew up their minority text they relied mainly on one Egyptian manuscript, Codex Vaticanus. Later, this was given some support when Codex Sinaiticus was discovered. Nevertheless, the Westcott-Hort/Nestle-Aland text is based on just two manuscripts and fragments of papyri which survived in the dry condition of Egypt. Vaticanus and Sinaiticus differ from each other in thousands of places (see Appx. F), and both were ‘dead’ manuscripts, having never been copied. The Majority (Byzantine) Text, on the other hand, has been the text in continuous ‘live’ use in the Church universal. There are over 5,500 manuscripts supporting its text in the Gospels. Some idea of the gulf between these two competing texts can be seen in their translation of Matthew 19:9.

Majority Greek Text (Byzantine) Matthew 19:9: Now I say to you that whoever shall dismiss his wife—not over fornication—and shall marry another, he commits adultery. And the one who marries one divorced commits adultery.

Minority Greek Text (Vaticanus, Bezae, Leicestrensis) Matthew 19:9: Now I say to you, whoever shall dismiss his wife—apart from the matter of fornication, he makes her to commit adultery. And whoever shall marry one dismissed, he commits adultery.

Vaticanus and Bezae agree to make Matthew 19:9 conform to Matthew 5:32, and by doing so they removed any suggestion that a man could get a divorce on the grounds of fornication. Note that the underlined words: “apart from the matter of fornication, he makes her to commit adultery” is a translation of the text of Matthew 5:32, which was carelessly (or deliberately, due to a misunderstanding) imported into Matthew 19:9, where it replaced the original text, which read as the Majority Text does: “not over fornication.” This mistake is found in the Caesarean Text, Codex Leicestrensis, and in Vaticanus (but not in Sinaiticus, which supports the Majority Text at this point).

However, the Nestle-Aland Greek text agrees with the Majority Text translation as far as the first occurrence of the words ‘commits adultery.’ Thus the Nestle-Aland reads: “Now I say to you that whoever shall dismiss his wife—not over fornication—and shall marry another, he commits adultery.” However, following Sinaiticus, it omits the next sentence, “And whoever shall marry one dismissed, he commits adultery” due to a copying error known as *homoiooteleuthon* (meaning, ‘same ending’), or, more likely, because the sentence was redundant, and the elimination of redundancies is a feature of the Egyptian text-type. However, the omitted sentence is present in Codex Vaticanus, which supports the Majority Text at this point.

In Codex Leicestrensis, a later owner of the Codex (post-1675, see below), realising there was a mistake in the main Greek text of Matthew 19:9, attempted to put the correct Greek reading for Matthew 19:9 in the margin, opposite the place where the blunder occurred in the main text (see the scans below). He used a printed text that had accepted Erasmus’s addition, as all editions did right up until Albert Bengel in 1734. The only editions in the Textus Receptus tradition to reject Erasmus’s addition were J. J. Griesbach (1777) and C. F. Matthaei (1788).

Of course, the Roman Catholic Complutensian Polyglot (CP) did not have Erasmus’s addition at Matthew 19:9, and two editors, Arias Montanus (1583) and Joseph Scaliger (1620),

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17 In effect, Jesus was saying, “for every cause which is not covered by the death penalty.” The sin of fornication/adultery was deliberately chosen by God to be punished by death, and only by death. Divorce was never an option, and it is not included in Deuteronomy 24:4, which describes (not prescribes) how the Hebrews obtained divorces only for non-capital causes. Hence Jesus used the phrase ‘not over fornication’ to encompass all causes not involving the death penalty, whereby men divorced their wives. The Jews understood the will of God, that all adulterers were to be killed. It was an act of disobedience not to carry out this law. It was even worse if they permitted adulterers to remarry, because then they would multiply the sin of adultery.

18 Up to this point, Codex Sinaiticus supports the Majority Text. It has omitted the last part of this verse as does Bezae and Leicestrensis, but Vaticanus and the Caesarean Text agree with the Majority Text at this point.

19 This can be paraphrased as: “Now I say to you that who, for example, divorced his wife—not on the grounds of any infidelity on her part, which would have been punished by death—and married another woman, he is an adulterer.” (See Appendix B.)

20 The Complutensian Polyglot had been completed in 1514, two years before Erasmus issued his first, much cheaper edition. However, the pope delayed the release of the Greek New Testament until 1520 (actual release was in 1522), which was unfortunate, because it allowed Erasmus to flood the market with his faulty Greek editions of his own New Testament. In any case, it is unlikely that the RC church would have reissued a cheaper version.
preferred to follow the CP text. C. Lachmann in 1842 (followed by S. P. Tregelles in 1854) using his evidence-based Greek text, was the first, modern textual scholar to reject the Erasmian addition; and every subsequent, academic edition, followed his lead. But by 1842 the damage to the institution of marriage had been done, and Protestant churches were committed in the sixteenth century to the institution of divorce as a way to end broken marriages. We would expect divorce to be institutionalised in the world, where Satan rules, but not in Christ’s Church, where His teaching should prevail.

1.3.2. Erasmus altered Jerome’s Latin text to suit his teaching on divorce

Not content with changing the Greek text, Erasmus also changed the Latin Vulgate, which was the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church from the time of Jerome (c. AD 420).


By changing ‘fornicationem’ to ‘stuprum,’ Erasmus widened his exceptive clause from the sexual sin of fornication, to the general, catch-all phrase of anything that gives ground for ‘dishonour, disgrace, defilement, unchastity, debauchery, lewdness, and violation,’22 all of which are the meanings given to stuprum in the Oxford Latin Dictionary.23 Suddenly, Erasmus offered divorce not just on sexual grounds (i.e., for fornication), but for any cause that gave rise to dishonour or disgrace, which may not necessarily be sexual, such as abuse, neglect, desertion, or anything that a partner feels angry about. This brought Erasmus’s teaching into perfect alignment with the teaching of the post-A.D. 70 school of Hillel (which, apparently, used Deut 24:1-3 and Exod 21:1-10 as their base texts).24

The Reformers did not spot the addition made by Erasmus, because handwritten copies of the Greek New Testament were very rare in those days, or not accessible. Everyone took for granted

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21 The Latin could have used excepta ‘except’ here in place of nisi, but it didn’t. The Jerusalem Bible (1968) reads: “Now I say this to you: the man who divorces his wife—I am not speaking of fornication—and marries another, is guilty of adultery.” This is a loose paraphrase. If the intention of the translation was to isolate fornication as not being a grounds for divorce, then this would fit Jesus’ teaching. But others could interpret the paraphrase to mean that fornication was a ground for divorce, which appears to be the way Erasmus preferred to read his Vulgate text, and so he brought the Greek into line with the Latin text by the addition of ei.

22 This new latitude was probably an attempt to draw on the latitude given by Moses, (but not by God) as described by God in Deut 24:1-3, showing that husbands divorced their wives ‘for every cause,’ not just fornication (see Matthew 19:3). Deut. 24:1-4 became obsolete after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Divorce is incompatible with the ‘new heart and the new spirit,’ consequently ‘hardness of heart’ belongs only to the unregenerate man, who will follow its urges to rid himself (or herself) of their married partner.

23 Erasmus changed his view on the causes of divorce between 1516 (fornicationem) and 1519 (stuprum). Stuprum covers non-sexual misdemeanours in addition to sexual ones. From 1519 onwards he used stuprum.

24 According to J. Neusner, From Politics to Piety (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall 1973, p. 114) he has no reference that either Shammai or Hillel (or their respective schools) ever used Exod 21 to argue for divorce for neglect. It would seem that they found enough reasons in the two grounds of (A) indecency, and (B) hate, to get all the excuses they needed to obtain a divorce.
that Erasmus had been faithful to the handwritten Greek copies that he had used to produce the first published edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516. He produced five editions of his text (in 1516, 1519, 1522, 1527, the last being in 1535, the year before he died). In none of them did he correct his addition at Matthew 19:9, even though by 1535 he had become aware of, and had consulted, many more manuscripts, including the Complutensian Polyglot, which was published by Erasmus’s own church in 1520 (although printed in 1514). Erasmus used the CP to make about one hundred corrections in his third edition.

Erasmus could not have failed to note that the Complutensian edition did not have his addition of *ei*, but he chose to ignore it, because Jerome’s Vulgate seemed to support his view. Unfortunately, only 600 expensive, but beautifully bound copies of the Complutensian were published in Spain, and a consignment of these went down with the ship carrying them to Italy. By the time the Complutensian was sold out in 1522, Erasmus says that he had sold 3,300 copies of his first two editions by 1522, and there was a demand for a third edition.25

### 1.3.3. The Reformers were a victim of their own doctrine of Scripture

What ensured that Erasmus’s faulty addition would not be removed was the aura of sanctity that was given to the Greek original. The sanctity with which the Reformers endowed Erasmus’s Greek New Testament is understandable, and with his text (and fresh Latin translation) they compared every doctrine of the Roman Catholic church to see if it agreed with Scripture. What did not agree with the teachings of their Greek text they threw out as not obligatory on any Christian.

The work of examining the truth of Scripture, as practised by the Roman Catholic church, could only be done against the Greek text that Erasmus had bequeathed to the anti-Catholic movement in Europe, and it was out of Erasmus’s Greek text that the great Reformation Confessions of Faith were drawn up, resulting in the fatal error of departing from the universal teaching of the Apostolic Church on the question of divorce and remarriage.

The mistake of the Reformers was not discovered, so that once their new, and unbiblical, doctrine of divorce had been set in stone in their Confessions of Faith, it would have resulted in a loss of face for the Reformation Churches to have to acknowledge that they had been duped by the humanist Erasmus into departing from this particular doctrine of the Early Church. It would have been too humiliating for the Reformers to have to apologise to the Roman Catholic church for having departed from the Truth, so the issue was silently swept under the carpet. It appears to be a case of Disraeli’s advice, ‘Never retract, never explain, never apologise.’

The Council of Trent declared, ‘The bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved ... and even the innocent one ... cannot contract another marriage during the lifetime of the other’ (Can. VII, quoted from Hastings, 1935:275).26 The reason is that Christ returned marriage to its original status that existed before the fall of Adam and Eve (see Matthew 19:8 and Genesis 2:24). Since the “two become one flesh,” divorce is not like tearing two people apart, but it is like dissecting one person into two parts.

Joshua was duped by the Gibeonites, and the inspired author put the blame for this on Joshua and his elders because “they asked not counsel at the mouth of God” (Josh 9:14). The Bereans are commended for not taking on trust the teaching of the apostle Paul. They took the precaution of comparing his teaching with the inspired word of God (Acts 17:11). The lesson God would teach any church leader is that he should make doubly sure that any movement away from what the Apostles taught and practised is not the result of being duped or misled.

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Because the new Reformation doctrine on divorce and remarriage had been settled on the basis of Erasmus’s faulty Greek text, no future editor or reviser could, or would, remove Erasmus’s addition. To this day, the Reformation Churches have covered their eyes and have refused to believe that they were duped by Erasmus’s deliberate alteration of the Greek text. See Appendix A below for a list of versions still supporting Erasmus’s false doctrine, despite the fact that these same English versions have rejected his underlying Greek text.

It was not the work of pioneering, conservative evangelicals, desiring to get back to the purest form of the original autograph texts, that finally got rid of Erasmus’s deliberate addition to Matthew 19:9. Rather, it was left to the thorough-going scrutiny of the evidence of the manuscripts by liberals and radicals to get rid of it.

Now while it was left to liberals, radicals, and humanists to discover and uncover Erasmus’s understandable mistake, and while all shades of non-evangelical textual scholars are now in agreement in not including the Erasmian addition in any modern critical edition of the Greek New Testament since 1842 (Lachmann), a strange thing has occurred in English translations, namely, not a single, major English translation has departed from Tyndale’s translation of Matthew 19:9, which accurately reflected Erasmus’s opinion of what he thought Scripture taught. Every modern English translation retains Erasmus’s doctrine while at the same time rejecting his Greek text. What a strange, schizophrenic situation!

While there has been a slight shift among conservative evangelical scholars engaged in textual criticism to recognise the damage that Erasmus did, and to remove his addition, there has been no movement at all to remove the new teaching that his addition brought into existence in any major English translation. The English Standard Version (2001) is claimed to be an ‘evangelical translation’ but it translates Matthew 19:9 as: “And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” The term ‘except’ is taken directly from Erasmus’s εἰ μὴ (et mihi) and is not a translation of the two critical editions, namely the United Bible Societies Greek text and the Nestle–Aland 28th edition (2012). Both of these Greek New Testaments reject Erasmus’s addition, as does the Majority (Universal) Text.

The ESV translation would have been a financial disaster for the publisher if it had removed Erasmus’s exceptive clause and replaced it with the content-identity phrase that Jesus used. No modern translation dare translate Matthew 19:9 according to the Greek text of the two critical editions and the two published Majority Texts by Hodges & Farstad, and Robinson & Pierpont. To do so would upset thousands of Christians who have remarried while their spouses were still alive, not to mention translators who are hardly likely to put their remarriage in the context of adultery. Such translators will be shielded by other members of the same translation committee who have not remarried, so as not to offend them. And so the compromise is perpetuated in every modern language translation to date. It is time for evangelicals to take their stand and not offend their Lord by persistently mistranslating His teaching as understood by the Apostles and the Early Church.

The reason for this refusal to depart from Erasmus’s humanist doctrine is that due to the confessional stand of the Reformation Churches, divorce and remarriage was introduced for the first time in the sixteenth century and it became so popular among the masses, that no major denominational church today can repeal it, and go back to the original teaching of the church as retained by the Roman Catholic church to the present day.

29 Unfortunately, some well known Christian leaders are in this category such as Derek Prince, John Hage, Robert Schuler jr, Richard Roberts (Oral Roberts’ son), Hal Lindsay, and Joyce Meyer.
Indeed, individual, independent churches today, even though many of them recognise that none of our present English translations is an accurate translation of any of the latest scholarly Greek editions of the New Testament (I include here the Majority and the Minority\textsuperscript{30} Greek texts, which are united on this textual issue) in respect of Matthew 19:9, they dare not preach against the Reformed/Erasmian teaching on divorce and remarriage. It is convenient to compromise the Truth and go along with the secular, ‘common-sense’ majority, because there may be financial implications and repercussions if they depart from the herd.

It is time for conservative evangelicals to acknowledge that the Reformers were deceived by Erasmus and to return to Jesus’ teaching on the subject. This is one clear instance where the Roman Catholic church retained continuity with the Early Church and where the majority of all Reformed Churches have branched off into error.

The implications of a return to the Early Church teaching on divorce and remarriage will have serious social implications throughout every nation. In England, for instance, it will result in the true Church of God having to acknowledge that the heir to the throne, Prince Charles, is living in an adulterous relationship with his second ‘wife,’ whose husband was still alive when he married her. The true Church would never have got involved in his marriage by giving it legitimacy through its Service of Blessing, with the Monarch present. If the Church had recognised that he was not in a God-pleasing relationship with a divorced woman, and had refused to give him its blessing, its correct action would have been denounced by the entire nation virtually, so it was expedient to bow the knee and buckle under the perceived political and social uproar that would have followed such a stand. As a result, the Church of England has taken a further, downward lurch into its own grave.

\textbf{1.4. WHAT EVIDENCE HAD ERASMUS TO MAKE HIS ADDITION TO THE TEXT?}

The answer is, none. We have over 5000 manuscripts of the New Testament today and over 2000 lectionary texts (viz., texts divided up for weekly and festival readings). Erasmus had a total of only seven manuscripts, and not one of them contained the whole of the New Testament. Three of them contained the Gospels, but in none of them does the small Greek word $e_\mathbb{i}$ appear in the text at Matthew 19:9. It would appear that Erasmus deliberately inserted the addition on his own authority, or else he was influenced by Jerome’s Latin translation and decided to give it a Greek rendering.

I give here some background to the emergence of Erasmus’s editions, because printing the Greek text of the New Testament was not high on the list of most wanted books when he was around.

Before the first Greek New Testament was printed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, more than one hundred editions of the Latin Bible were published, at least three editions of the Hebrew Old Testament, several of the Greek Psalter, and many editions of the entire Bible in German, French, Italian, and other languages. The Church, in this pre-Reformation era, was satisfied with translations.

The honour of printing the first Greek New Testament goes to Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (1437-1517), the Roman Catholic Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, Spain. The New Testament was completed on 10 January 1514, and the final volume on 15 July, 1517, but Pope Leo X did not authorise its release until 28 March 1520, when the manuscripts lent by the Vatican had been returned, and it does not appear to have entered the public domain until 1522. It did not use Codex Vaticanus.

\textsuperscript{30} For example, the United Bible Society’s Greek New Testament, or the Nestle-Aland editions. These represent the minority Egyptian Text.
Erasmus (1466-1536), a well-known humanist, but still loyal to the Roman Catholic church, was responsible for editing the Greek text that lies behind the Textus Receptus. He based his edition on seven (possibly eight) manuscripts. We have to distinguish at least three classes of MSS according to the use Erasmus made of them: (1) manuscripts used as the Greek base text for the first edition in 1516, as well as for those used for minor corrections of it; (2) manuscripts used to correct the Greek text in later editions; (3) manuscripts used for text-critical discussion in his Annotations.

In what follows, the manuscript numbers in parentheses are according to the Gregory-Aland numbering system. Erasmus used the following manuscripts:

Manuscript 69 (eapr) XV cent., Codex Leicestrensis. It had been assumed by scholars that Erasmus had consulted this MS during his stay in Cambridge University (England) between 1511 and 1514, and that he had got the text of his ‘exceptional clause’ of Matthew 19:9 from the margin of this manuscript. He very likely did consult this manuscript, which he mentions in his Annotations, but he did not see this marginal correction at that time, because it was inserted later. See section 1.5. Marginal Corrections in Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69).

Manuscript 1 (eap) XII cent., Basle, Univ. Bibl., shelf mark A. N. IV. 2: little used.
Manuscript 1 (r) (2814), XII cent., Codex Reuchlini – Augsburg, Univ. Bibl., Cod. I.1.4.1: the only MS Erasmus had for the Book of Revelation; this MS served as the printer’s copy.
Manuscript 2 (e) (2), XI/XII cent., Basle, Univ. Bibl., A. N. IV. 1: this MS served as the printer’s copy.
Manuscript 2 (ap) (2815), XII cent., Codex Amerbachiorum, Basel, Univ. Bibl., A.N.IV.4: this MS served as the printer’s copy.

Besides these seven MSS, Henk de Jonge lists an eighth used by Erasmus, namely MS 817, Basle, Univ. Bibl., A. III. 15: a 15th century copy of the Gospels. This MS was consulted for corrections (it is in fact a Gospel text with commentary by Theophylactus—Erasmus’s ‘Vulgarius’). All but one of Erasmus’s Greek MSS are now found in the Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität, Basel, Switzerland. The exception is MS 1 (r) (2814) of Revelation, which is in Augsburg, Germany.

33 The standard sigla for the contents of a MS is as follows: e = Gospels; a = Acts; c = Catholic or General Epistles (i.e., the epistles of Peter, James, Jude and John); p = Paul’s writings (including Hebrews); and r = Book of Revelation.
34 This MS was deposited in the Dominican monastery near Basel a century before Erasmus used it. Very little else is known about its origin. This MS belongs to Family 1 of the Caesarean Text. Seventeen mss of this Family have been collated by Alison Welsby, *A Textual Study of Family 1 in the Gospel of John* Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).
The standard introductions (e.g., Metzger, Aland) mention the MSS used by Erasmus, but only one of these has been described and identified, namely, MS 2 in the University Library, Basle (e.g., Metzger, p. 99; Plate XV; Aland, p. 4-5).  

Other MSS used by Erasmus later on were:

MS 3 (eap) Vienna, National Bibliothek, Suppl. gr. 52. This MS was consulted for the 2nd ed. 1519.

MS 61 (eapr) (Britannicus or Montfortianus) (Dublin, Trinity College, A 4.21). This MS was said to be produced to put pressure on Erasmus to include the Comma Johanneum (1 John 5:7) in his Greek New Testament, which he from the 3rd ed. 1522 onwards.

MS 02 (B) (Codex Vaticanus). Readings (received from Bombasio and Sepulveda) are cited in the Annotations Editions - Aldine edition (1518), and consulted for the 3rd ed.

The Complutensian Polyglot. This was used in later editions (for the 4th and 5th eds) esp. for the Book of Revelation 22:16-21.

Reuben Swanson lists only the TR itself in support of Erasmus’s addition of εἰ in Matthew 19:9. This is no surprise. Erasmus appears to have used just seven manuscripts to compile the New Testament Greek text, only three of which contained the Gospels. They are MS 1 (12th cent.), MS 2 (12th cent.), MS 69 or Codex Leicestrensis (15th cent.), and possibly MS 817 (15th cent.). Swanson has collated the first three MSS, but he does not give any of them in support of the TR text. Rather, they support the omission of εἰ before μη in Matthew 19:9. However, Tischendorf notes that MS 69* (the asterisk indicates the first hand of the MS) read parektos logou pornei, and a corrector (2nd hand) has added εἰ μη επι πορνεια in the margin. What has happened here is that the scribe of MS 69 (or in an

37 Erasmus borrowed this MS from Reuchlin. It was then lost until it was found in 1861 by Franz Delitzsch in the library of the princely house of Oettingen-Wallerstein. See his Handschriftliche Funde (2 vols.; Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1861-1862). When Erasmus used it, it had no final leaf (containing the last six verses) so he translated the Latin back into Greek.

38 See also C. C. Tarelli, “Erasmus’ Manuscripts of the Gospels,” JThS 44 (1943), pp. 155-162; a brief supplement appeared in the same journal, 48 (1947), pp. 207-208. Tarelli specifies 5 MSS., all VIII cent. and later. They are MSS 1 (eap; XI), 2 (e), 2 (ap; XII), and E (07; ep; VIII for e & IX-X for p); he suggested that “Delta” (Codex Sangallensis [037]; IX cent.) might also have been consulted. MS 4 (ap; XV cent.) is also listed as one used by Erasmus. R. Swanson made a full collation of this manuscript in his series. See in particular, Reuben Swanson, New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Matthew (Pasadena CA: William Carey International University Press, 1995).


earlier copy) has transferred parektos logou pornei from Matthew 5:32 into 19:9 by mistake, and the corrector has rightly tried to change it back to the original reading, but in so doing, he was copying the text of John Fell (1675) into the margin. It will be shown below that the marginal correction is post-Erasmus, and so Erasmus did not get his text from the margin of Codex Leicestrensis.

1.4.1. Tischendorf’s meagre evidence in support of Erasmus’s Greek text

Constantin von Tischendorf (1815-1874) gives the following evidence in support of ei mh.

As printed:

item c (= Gb Sz) praemisso ei cum minisc pauc Basṭh (Clem — liber, et quae Rurorum spectet — ⁵³²χωρις λογου πορν. et⁵³⁶ πλην ei μη ετι λογω πορν.).

Here is a translation and explanation of the evidence for the non-specialist.

item = similarly

c = Erasmus’s editions, and all printed editions up to the Elzevir’s edition of 1624 (which would include the 1550 edition by Robert Stephens).⁴⁵

praemisso ei = prefix ei cum minusc pauc = with a few minuscules⁴⁶

Basṭh is a reference to Basil the Great (Basilius Magnus), bishop of Caesarea (AD 329-379), and “eth” (ethica) is a reference to Moralia in volume 2, pp. 230-323, Operum eius editionem Benedictinam curavit Iulianus Garnerius (3 vols; Paris, 1721-1730).

Clem⁵³² is a reference to Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens Alexandrinus, fl. AD 189-215) and possibly to the edition of his work by Iohannis Potterus (Oxonii, 1715).⁴⁷

⁵³²χωρις λογου πορν. = “without (the) matter of fornication.” Clement has this text in Potter’s edition, page 532.⁴⁸ This Greek text is a modified form of Matthew 5:32.

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⁴¹ The same mistake was made by BΠD f₁³ (f₁³ includes MS 69) and part of f₁.


⁴³ Tyndale followed the second (1519) and third (1522) editions of Erasmus’s Greek text. It should be noted that the Complutensian Greek NT, which pre-dated Erasmus’ edition but published later than his, does not have ei, which was noted by Albert Bengel (Io. Alberti Bengeli, Apparatus Criticus ad Novum Testamentum, 2nd ed., prepared by Philippo Davide Burkio [Tubingae, 1763], p. 127).

⁴⁴ This was published by F. H. A. Scrivener, Ἡ ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΦΗΚΗ Novum Testamentum Textūs Stephani A.D. 1550 (Cantabrigiae: Deighton, Bell et filii, 1877).

⁴⁵ F. H. A. Scrivener, The New Testament in the Original Greek according to the Text followed in The Authorised Version together with the Variations adopted in The Revised Version (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1881). Scrivener believed that Beza’s fifth edition of 1598 was the Greek Text followed most closely (but not faithfully) by the Authorised Version Committee (Preface, vii). It follows Erasmus’s text.

⁴⁶ Albert Bengel has “cum pauculis mss” = with a few mss (Io. Alberti Bengeli, Apparatus Criticus ad Novum Testamentum, 2nd ed., prepared by Philippo Davide Burkio [Tubingae, 1763], p. 127).

⁴⁷ Joannes Potterus (Bishop of Oxford), ΚΑΛΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΩΣ ΤΑ ΕΤΡΙΣΚΟΜΕΝΑ. CLEMENSIS ALEXANDRINI OPERA QUÆ EXTANT (2 vols.; Oxonii, 1715).
et plērēi eī μη eī πορνεία λογω, πονηθ, = “besides except on account of (the) matter of fornication.”
Clement’s text can be found in Potter’s edition, page 506. This creative combination (or paraphrase) of 19:9 and 5:32 is unique to Clement.

1.4.2. Tregelles’s meagre evidence in support of Erasmus’s Greek text

S. P. Tregelles almost agrees with Tischendorf’s printed evidence. Note that 69 is the number given to Codex Leicestrensis. His evidence reads as printed:49

praem. eī c. 69. mg. (eī μη eī πορνεία πονηθ. Clem. 506.)

Explanation of the evidence:

praem. eī = prefix eī (before μη eī πορνεία)
c = the common Greek Text (presumably all printed editions up to the Elzevir’s edition of 1624) has eī before μη eī πορνεία.
69. mg. = MS 69 [Codex Leicestrensis] and a second hand (2nd corrector. 1st corrector is the original scribe) added: eī μη eī πορνεία in the margin. 69* (* = original text) read the text of Matthew 5:32, which MS B also has here, but not Sinaiticus, which agrees with the Byzantine Text here.
eī μη eī πορνεία πονηθ. Clem. 506 = “except on account of (the) matter of fornication.” Tregelles has miss quoted what Clement actually wrote. Clement wrote πληρη eī μη eī λογω πορνεια, as printed by Iohannis Potterus (Oxford, 1715). Both Tischendorf and Tregelles failed to notice that Clement altered πορνεια (dat.) to πορνειας (gen.). See Appendix H for a fuller treatment of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215) on the so-called exception clauses.

Now, given that Erasmus was a humanist, and he believed that the Matthean exceptive clause in 19:9 permitted divorce (dissolution of the bond and freedom to remarry) in cases of adultery, one wonders if his text was affected by his personal view on divorce and remarriage. He published his view on divorce in his Annotationes in the same year that he published the second edition of his Greek New Testament (1519). As noted above, his teaching on divorce was followed by all the Reformers and incorporated into the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1648.

It may be that the extremely abbreviated reference to what looked like an exemption of some sort in the three Greek words μη eī πορνεια, literally, ‘not upon [over] fornication,’ plus Erasmus’s instinct to give the innocent party the right to remarry, plus a misunderstanding of the context-specific exception clause in Matthew 5:32, plus Jerome’s Vulgate translation, could have clouded his text-critical approach to the evidence at his disposal.

1.4.3. Tischendorf’s evidence against the replacement text of Vaticanus

Constantin von Tischendorf indicated that in Matthew 19:9 μη eī πορνεια was replaced with the text from 5:32, i.e., πορεκτος λογω πορνειος, in the following MSS:
BD 1.33. al eī πορεκτος λογω πορνειος; c d ff1 m excepta causa adulterii; e praeter causam fornicationis; a b f ff2 g1 h q nisi ob caussam fomiric. Item Aug excepta causa fornicat., nisi ex causa forn., nisi ob caussam forn.; Terθλερ

48 The actual page is 533 in Joannes Potterus (Bishop of Oxford), ΚΑΛΗΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΩΣ ΤΑ ΕΓΡΙΣΚΟΜΕΝΑ. CLEMENSIS ALEXANDRINI OPERA QUAE EXTANT (2 vols.; Oxoni, 1715), vol. 1. 532-533.
om μη ἐπὶ πορν., item Athenag(2) syr*c. sah cop Or*647/cop (Clem*533 χωρίς λογού πορν.) Bas*th. Chr (ετ.380).

1.4.4. Tregelles's evidence against the replacement text of Vaticanus

Matthew 19:9 μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείας was replaced with the text from Matthew 5:32, i.e., παρεκτος λογον πορνειας, in the following MSS:


Both the Nestle-Aland edition and the Majority Text omit τι before μη so that the addition can be confidently ignored as not part of the autograph text. 50

1.5. MARGINAL CORRECTIONS IN CODEX LEICESTRENSIS (MS 69)

Manuscript 69 (dated XV century), known as Codex Leicestrensis (not to be confused with Codex Leicester, which was Leonardo Da Vinci’s notebook) is held in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland (Long Street, Wigston Magna, Leicester, LE18 2AH).

MS 69 is a member of Family 13 (and this particular manuscript has been fully collated by Reuben Swanson. 51 Family 13 and Family 1 belong to the Caesarean text-type.

The following image is a sample of the scribe’s writing, showing the marginal correction on the extreme right, which was intended to replace the underlined words. The underlining appears to be the work of someone other than the corrector. The correction is very neat and done with a steady hand. There are other instances of underlined text without any marginal correction in this Codex, which suggests that whoever did the corrections did not do the underlining.

The original writing was done with a reed. The correction was probably written with a very fine metal nib.

1.5.1. Codex Leicestrensis Matthew 19:8-10

Note the small writing on the extreme right, in the margin of the MS. It should have read: μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείας but the correction (with the word εἰ) was added by a corrector who lived well after the time that Erasmus saw this manuscript. Below the scan is a Greek transcription.

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50 See Appendix D for textual notes on the Matthean exemption clauses.

Below is a greatly enlarged negative view of folio 1 verso, showing the marginal correction at Matthew 19:9.

Below is a scan of Codex Sinaiticus which is the oldest Greek manuscript to contain the original text of Matthew 19:9.

The following is a scan of John Fell’s Greek New Testament for Matthew 19:9. Note the use of two styles of writing epsilon: ε and ε in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis and in Fell’s printed text. A comparison of ten printed editions of the Greek New Testament between 1516 and 1751 of the text: εἰ μὴ ἐξὶν πορνείᾳ (showing the two styles of epsilon) reveals that these two styles of epsilon are found together only in Stephanus Curcellaeus (1658) and in John Fell’s Oxford edition of
1675.\textsuperscript{52} It appears to be usual for each new, printed edition to be based on the latest printed edition. In this case John Fell would have had a copy of Curcellus’s printed text and he would have handwritten his corrections in Curcellus’s text, and it would have been this text that he handed to his printer with the instruction to follow Curcellus’s text except where he differed from it, hence the carbon copy print style linking the two editions.

There are printed texts which switch between using the two styles of epsilon in the same edition but not in Matthew 19:9 itself. These are Froschouiana (a Bulgarian text, 1547), Simon Colin[aeus] (1534), Henry Stephens (1587), and Arias Montanus (1583). The rest, including John Mill (1710) and J. J. Wetstein (1751), use only one style of epsilon throughout, namely, ε, when not written as a ligature.

John Fell’s Greek New Testament (1675)

In this instance the tail of Fell’s Rho in πορνεία is a straight line, but there are many instances where Fell’s printer used the curled tail as in Matthew 19:15 on the right.

This peculiar tail to Rho is found occasionally in Colinaeus (1534), Froschouiana (1547),\textsuperscript{53} Elzevir (1633), and Schmidi (1658), but it is not found in R. Stephens (1551), Montanus (1583), H. Stephens (1587), Bezae (1598), Scaliger (1620), Mill (1710), or Wetstein (1751).

Scan of Matthew 19:9 in Stephanus Curcellus’s Greek New Testament (1658)

*ei” μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία, \[\text{Scan of Matthew 19:9 in Stephanus Curcellus’s Greek New Testament (1658)}\]

Compare this with John Fell’s edition of 1675 (the four words have been brought together here for comparative purposes).

*εἰ” μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία,”

When did the corrector of Codex Leicestrensis do his work?

Verse numbers did not exist in Erasmus’s day. They first appeared in Robert Stephens royal edition of 1550. So, whoever did the corrections lived after 1550, and, as Erasmus died in 1536, he could not have known about verse numbers. The clue to the date of the corrector is given at Acts 10:45 where the corrector has put a note in the left-hand margin in the following scan.

\textsuperscript{52} The printer of Fell’s edition used the text of Curcellus as his base text, as a comparison of the printed forms, particularly the use of Greek ligatures, reveals. Rarely, does Fell disagree with the text of Curcellus.

\textsuperscript{53} Cambridge University Library, shelf no. Hhh584. It appears to be a Greek Orthodox edition. The publisher is: Tigvri in Officina Froschouiana, 1547. It has no verse numbers or divisions.
A close-up view of the marginal note reads:

The corrector’s abbreviated note in the left-hand margin reads: Λείπει. Ἐκ τοῦ κεφ. ἑξ. στRubicon. αι. Ι." This translates as: ‘Missing. Out of chapter 14, verse 17.’ The corrector has inserted a marker (Λ) after πιστοὶ to note the exact place where four chapters of Acts are missing. The missing section runs from Acts 10:46b to 14:17a, which totals 11,778 letters in the Majority Text.

Folio 174 (which is the next complete page of Codex Leicestrens is following this gap) contains an average of 38.9 letters per line and there are 38 lines to a page. If we divide the total of missing letters, 11,778, by the average letters per line, 38.9 letters, this gives 302.8 lines, and divided by 38 lines per page, gives 7.98 pages missing between 10:46b-14:17a. Now, eight pages made up a single quire, which means that a whole quire of text was lost from the exemplar behind Codex Leicestrensis. This means that the present Codex Leicestrensis was made from a copy that was identical to it in page layout, and with the same number of lines and words per page. But the mistake also means that Acts 10:45a must have been the last line in the exemplar for the error to occur. It would appear that whoever copied out MS 69 from this faulty exemplar was unaware that eight pages of text had dropped out of the exemplar.

What is significant for dating the marginal correction at Matthew 19:9 is that the person who made all the marginal corrections in Codex Leicestrensis has also written the marginal note at Acts 10:45 and at Matthew 19:9. Both were written by the corrector who lived after verse numbers were introduced into printed editions of the Greek New Testament.

This means that all 154 marginal corrections were not seen by Erasmus, and crucially, it means that the marginal correction at Matthew 19:9 is not the work of Erasmus, neither did he see it. Rather, someone inserted Erasmus’s printed text into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis. Now, since no Greek New Testament manuscript exists with Erasmus’s addition of ei it is certain that Erasmus is responsible for adding ei at Matthew 19:9.54

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54 The addition of two letters to the text of Matthew 19:9 is on a par with the addition of one letter by the Arians to the text of the Synod of Nicea. In the latter case they added the letter i- to the Latin term homoousion ‘of one substance,’ to read homoiousion ‘of like substance.’ The difference meant that Jesus did not exist before the creation of the world, and that He was the creation of the Father, and ‘of like substance’ with Him.
Fell’s 1675 edition was used as the collating text to record differences with Codex Leicestrensis: the internal evidence

From a detailed study of the 154 marginal corrections in Codex Leicestrensis, and because of the note at Acts 10:45, it is certain that all the marginal corrections were made after verse numbers had been introduced into the New Testament. The 154 marginal corrections were made using a metal nib and are easily distinguished from the forty marginal corrections made by the reed pen of the original scribe. So one corrector, using a metal nib, brought the text of Codex Leicestrensis into line with the text of John Fell (1675).

Building on the evidence given above for the use of Fell’s edition as the collating text there is one tantalising clue that suggests Fell’s text was the one used to correct Codex Leicestrensis. At Philemon 16 a line is placed under *emoi* in Codex Leicestrensis, but there is no known variant for *emoi*. However, there is a misprint in Fell who reads *ejmon*. It would appear that this is the reason for the underlining of *ejmon* in MS 69. If so, then this would identify Fell’s printed text as the one being used to correct MS 69.

However, the collator did not do this work in a systematic way, but was selective in what he chose to correct. The corrector is only interested in ‘significant’ differences (with a few exceptions) between his printed Fell text and what is written in Codex Leicestrensis. This accounts for the small number of corrections that he has introduced into the margin of the Codex.

There are two pieces of information that point to the marginal corrections in Codex Leicestrensis being in existence before 1751 which is the date of Wetstein’s edition. On two occasions Wetstein gives the first hand reading under ‘a prima manu,’ and it so happens that the alternative reading is the correction in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis, which proves that the corrections (which are all by the same hand) were done before 1751.

The proof that the marginal corrections were made before 1751 lies in Wetstein’s lack of reference to ‘a prima manu,’ the ‘first hand’ of MS 69, to distinguish it from the marginal corrections. There are only two oblique hints to the presence of the second corrector’s corrections in the margin of MS 69 in Wetstein’s apparatus (List B in Appx. G). The two cases are:

Mark 10:19. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: [μη ἀποστρεψημ] — (= missing) 69. a prima manu.

Luke 6:1. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: [δευτεροπρώτω] — (= missing) 69. a prima manu. By recording ‘a prima manu’ this implies that another hand had inserted the missing text, which could only have been what was added by Rev. John Jackson or one of his co-collators. This means that all the marginal corrections were in place by 1751 when Wetstein records their existence.

However, the fact that only two of the 154 corrections are mentioned, and that indirectly, by Wetstein, who used John Jackson’s collated lists of deviations from John Fell’s text (lent to Wetstein in 1748 by Cesar de Missey [Misey]), suggests that the 154 corrections were known to be late. Wetstein’s apparatus contains evidence of Jackson’s fuller collation of Codex Leicestrensis with John Fell’s text, which goes well beyond the 154 selected corrections in Codex Leicestrensis.

If the 154 corrections in List B pre-dated Jackson’s collation, then Jackson would have included the 154 corrections in the collation that he made available to Wetstein. Why are there only two indirect references to these 154 corrections to MS 69 in Wetstein’s apparatus? The solution must be that they were the work of Jackson himself or a later collator. Unfortunately, the actual collation that Jackson sent to Wetstein has not survived.

The question arises, How long before 1751 were the 154 corrections inserted?

Fell’s 1675 edition was used as the collating text to record differences with Codex Leicestrensis: the external evidence
That John Fell’s text was used as the collating manuscript is borne out by a letter written by John Jackson and printed in A Catalogue of the Books in the Town Library, Leicester (Leicester: Thomas Combe, Junior, [1835], 48pp.). See page 45 for a transcription of Jackson’s letter and the catalogue entry describing John Fell’s 1675 volume, Novi Testamenti Libri Omnes, Gr. 8vo. Oxon. 1675. Jackson’s letter reads:

The N.T. herewith sent contains all the Readings of the Leic. MS. the many Transpositions are marked with numeral Letters set over the words, as 1, 2, 3, &c. The readings were taken out of the MS. itself, by the Gentlemen who assisted me in collating it. I desire you to take care of the Book, and to return it at your convenient opportunity, as I directed in my letter to you.” (Signed) “J. Jackson.

The collation in the margins of Fell’s 1675 edition appears to have been abstracted from it because in the catalogue of the library of Cesar de Missy, whose library was sold in 1776, there was the following article for sale:


It is not known what happened to this first collation, which was made by John Jackson (1686–1763) and William Tiffin (1695/6–1754).

For a fuller account of Jackson’s 1728 collation of Codex Leicestrensis, see Appendix G.

**Conclusion**

It would appear that some time after John Fell published his edition in 1675 someone did a collation of his text against the text of Codex Leicestrensis, and he noted in the margin of MS 69 any differences (154) that caught his attention. It is likely that the persons responsible for the marginal corrections in Codex Leicestrensis were Rev. John Jackson and his helpers.

1.5.2. **Codex Leicestrensis Acts 9:5b–6a**

(Note that the style of writing below is the same as the marginal addition in Matthew 19:9, so that they were added by the same scribe.)

The purpose of the next scan is to show that the words in the AV (Acts 9:5b-6a) are found in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis and in Erasmus’s main text in all his editions.

“[it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks. * And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord [said] unto him,”

This suggests that the corrector has written Erasmus’s text into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis just as we saw in the case of εἰ in Matthew 19:9. This is another case where Erasmus’s text has been transferred to the margin of Codex Leicestrensis via John Fell’s 1675 Oxford edition.

The scan below shows the marginal correction in Codex Leicestrensis to Acts 9:5. This correction also appears in the text of Erasmus’s first edition of his Greek New Testament, where it remained through all five editions. Indeed, it was never removed from any of the Greek editions leading up to the Authorized Version (KJV) in 1611. It is present in Beza’s 1598 edition, which is

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thought to have been the edition behind the King James Bible. It is certain that Erasmus’s text entered the margin of Codex Leicestrensis via John Fell’s 1675 Oxford edition.

THE TEXT OF ACTS 9:6 SHOWING THE ADDITION IN THE MARGIN

CLOSE-UP OF THE ADDITION TO ACTS 9:5 IN THE MARGIN  
(Note the use of two styles of writing \textit{epsilon}: \textit{e} and \textit{e}.)

The text of Acts 9 reads as follows:

Acts 9:4 καὶ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἤκουσεν φωνὴν λέγουσαν αὐτῷ: Σαῦλ, Σαῦλ, τί με διώκεις?

Acts 9:5 εἶπεν δὲ τίς εἶ, κύριε; ὦ δὲ ἐγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις.

At this point MS 69 adds in the margin the following words:

σκληρὸν σοι πρὸς κεντρα λακτίζειν. τρέμων τε καὶ θουβῶν εἶπε, κύριε, τί με θέλεις ποιῆσα καὶ ὁ κύριος πρὸς αὐτὸν.

These twenty Greek words replace \textit{alla} at the start of verse 6. Von Soden gives some manuscript and versional support for the addition, but it is unlikely that Erasmus had access to these sources. The words σκληρὸν σοι πρὸς κεντρα λακτίζειν may have been borrowed from Acts 26:14.


The King James Bible reads: Act 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

The underlined text is found only in Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69), and only as a marginal correction. We have noted above that all the marginal corrections in MS 69 were added much later than Erasmus’s final edition, and in fact were taken from later, printed editions of his text, notably from John Mill’s 1675 edition.
There is a grammatical error in the Greek in that the verb ἔλεγεν has been omitted after ‘Lord.’ Even though Erasmus discovered no other manuscript between 1514 and 1535 that had this addition of twenty words, he doggedly retained it in all five editions. He knew of the Complutensian Polyglot, which does not have this addition. It is likely that Erasmus took vv. 5b-6a from the Latin Vulgate and used Acts 26:14 for his Greek translation of it.

1.5.3. Codex Leicestrensis  Acts 10:6 showing the addition in the left-hand margin

The following scan is a third example of borrowing Erasmus’s text and inserting it into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis.

CLOSE-UP OF THE ADDITION TO ACTS 10:6 IN THE MARGIN
(Note the use of two styles of writing epsilon: ε and τ.)

The text reads: οὗτος λαλήσει τί σε δεῖ ποιεῖν “this one will say what you ought to do.”

The note reads, οὗτος λαλήσει τί σε δεῖ ποιεῖν. When Erasmus translated the Vulgate back into Greek he, naturally, added σοι after λαλήσει (cf. Acts 9:6). But the corrector has not included σοι after λαλήσει.

Acts 10:6 reads: “He lodges with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea: this one will tell you what you ought to do.” The underlined text is found only in Erasmus’s text, from where it was written into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis, and it has remained in the Textus Receptus to this day.

It has been suggested by others that Erasmus created this Greek text by translating the Latin Vulgate back into Greek, and this is very likely since there is no extant Greek manuscript that has this addition. After Fell (1675) had published his text, one of the owners or collators of MS 69 adjusted the text of the Codex to accord with the current TR text (i.e., Fell’s text). This would account for all the marginal corrections in Codex Leicestrensis agreeing with Erasmus’s text.

Von Soden does not record the marginal note at Acts 10:6 in MS 69, presumably because he could not find another manuscript to support it.

For his first edition Erasmus used four Greek manuscripts containing the Book of Acts. These were MS 1 (XII cent.), MS 2 (XII cent.), MS 4 (XV cent.), and MS 69 (Codex Leicestrensis)(XV cent.). Only in MS 69 do the two unique readings in Acts 9:5b-6 and 10:6 occur, but they occur only in the margin. Today, no critical edition of the Greek New Testament includes these marginal readings, and this includes the two, independent reconstructions of the Majority (Byzantine) Text.

In place of this note, von Soden has recorded four manuscripts (200, 382, 502, 466) that have transferred a copy of Acts 11:14 to here. The additional text reads, ὁς λαλήσει ῥήματα προς σε εν οἷς σωθήσῃ συ καὶ [πας] οἶκος σου, which is, as you would expect, identical to 11:14.

1.5.4. Codex Leicestrensis  Acts 8:37
Erasmus inserted the whole verse of Acts 8:37 into his text. It reads, “And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’” This verse is familiar to the English reader through the Authorized Version, but it should be deleted from God’s Word because, according to Scrivener, Erasmus acknowledged “that he found it not in his Greek copies, save in the margin of a single one.”

The New King James Version (1994) retains the 1611 King James reading, which is not done from sound principles of textual criticism, but out of fear and anxiety. We still await an English version based solely on the Universal (Byzantine) Text, which will be fearless and honest in its translation policy to translate from scratch what is before it. There are enough qualified conservative-evangelical scholars and resources around today to begin the task of producing a New Authorized Version (NAV) and scrapping the old Authorized Version completely. Christ’s Church requires a translation which avoids using inclusive-language designed to appeal to humanists and feminists alike, and it deserves a translation which brings out the essence of the original languages in readable English.

1.6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERASMUS AND THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

Frobenius, a printer in Basle, Switzerland, suggested to Erasmus of Rotterdam, that they get a Greek New Testament printed ahead of the Alcalá (called Complutum in Latin) edition. It was done in a hurry, in six months, in fact, and printed on 1 March 1516, and dedicated to Pope Leo X. It, like the Complutensian, was a diglot with two columns per page, Greek and Latin (Erasmus’s own translation, not the Vulgate).

It is now known how he went about his work. In order to get it finished as quickly as possible, he gave the printers (Froben of Basle) three manuscripts which he had in his possession, namely codex 2ε (Gospels), codex 2ω (Acts and Epistles) and codex 1r (Revelation); and he used a few other manuscripts (1εαπ, 4εαπ, 7εαπ) to make some minor alterations to the text. The only manuscript he had for the Book of Revelation did not contain 22:16-21. He translated the Latin Vulgate of these missing verses back into Greek for the printer!

Erasmus’s printed New Testament had many grammatical mistakes and printer’s errors. But it was this work that was to become the foundation of the ‘Textus Receptus.’ Five editions did not improve it very much despite the fact that he says he made a careful revision of the original work. These ‘improvements’ only corrected the worst of the printer’s errors and his textual corrections introduced as many new errors as it removed older ones, according to some reviewers. The

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56 F. H. Scrivener, *Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament and the Ancient Manuscripts which contain it* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co./London: George Bell and Sons, 1875), p. 73. Von Soden lists six mss which contain Acts 8:37. These are E, 1739, 1891, 945, 323 and 88ε. MS E (6th cent.) is the earliest Greek ms to contain this verse, but Erasmus did not use any of these six, because none of them conforms to Erasmus’s Greek text. He certainly did not know of MS 88 because this contains the Comma Johanneum (1 John 5:7-8) in the margin (added in the 17th cent., according to Metzger [1968:101]), which Erasmus claims he never saw in any manuscript. He inserted the Comma Johanneum in his 3rd edition (1522) after a Franciscan friar in 1520 produced a Greek copy which had it. Because these verses are found in Jerome’s Latin Vulgate it is very likely that this friar inserted the verses into his Greek manuscript in order to trick Erasmus into including them in his next edition; and the plan worked!

corrections were as follows: 2nd edition: 400 changes; 3rd edition: 118 changes; 4th edition: 100 changes (90 in Revelation); 5th edition: 4 changes. Erasmus’s third edition introduced 1 John 5:7-8 on the basis of a sixteenth century manuscript (minuscule 61). Luther used Erasmus’s second edition for his 1521 German translation.

The Textus Receptus (hereafter TR) had its beginnings in Erasmus’s third edition (1522) which Robert Estienne (1503-1559), better known as Robert Stephens, used as the basis for his 1546 edition. His third edition (1550) became famous as the Royal edition. It was the first Greek New Testament to contain a critical apparatus in the side margins. There he gave the variant readings of Ximenes’s (1514) edition (= Complutensian Polyglot), and fifteen other MSS, including the 5th century Codex Bezæ (D/05) and the eight century L (019). In his last edition (1551) he set out his Greek text alongside two Latin translations (Vulgate and Erasmus) with our present-day chapter and verse divisions, made on a journey between Paris and Lyons. His last edition rests for the most part, on the fifth edition of Erasmus (1535) and the Catholic Complutensian Polyglot. All “the corrections made by Stephens to the text of Erasmus are to be found in the historical books of the New Testament, whereas the Epistles and Revelation stand just about in the same form as the edition of the critic of Rotterdam [Erasmus].”

Théodore de Bèza (1519-1605), better known as Beza, was the friend of the reformer, John Calvin. His text is essentially the same as Stephens fourth edition (1551).

The TR came about through the work of Bonaventure Elzevir and his brother’s son, Abraham, in 1624. It simply reproduced the first edition of Beza (1565). In the Preface to the second edition were the words, “Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus.” Hence the name Textus Receptus (TR), which became part of orthodoxy in Europe, while in Britain, Stephens’s edition of 1550 acquired this authority. There are only 287 differences between these two Greek New Testaments.

Between 1633 and 1831 the majority of the editions of the Greek New Testament were very similar to Stephens’ third edition (1550) in England, and to the Elzevir’s second edition (1633) on the Continent. Elzevir’s second edition (1633) boasted that ‘here is a text which is received by all.’ The modern attitude toward the ‘received text’ (i.e., the Majority Text) is that it is ‘a text which has been received but which can be no longer received.’

The 1873 Oxford edition of the Textus Receptus is a reprint of the 1828 edition, which is based on John Mill’s, Novum Testamentum Graecum (Oxon. 1707), which is based on Stephanus’ 1550

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59 Martin Luther (1483-1546) introduced divorce for desertion (1 Cor 7:15), the ‘Pauline Privilege,’ and failure of a wife to perform normal conjugal relations (1 Cor 7:3-5), the ‘Reverse Fornication’ divorce, and other new causes to divorce a wife. Soon moral logic took over and a rash of new grounds for divorce soon appeared especially through men like John Milton (1608-1674), Philip Melanchton (1497-1560), Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531), and Martin Bucer (1491-1551). Deduction took over, and one false conclusion led to another. Source: Joseph A. Webb & Patricia L. Webb, Divorce and Remarriage: The Trojan Horse Within the Church Whom Shall We Then Believe? (Xulon Press, 2008), pp. 47-59.

60 An ET of this codex was made by William Whiston [1667–1752], Mr. Whiston's Primitive New Testament (London and Stamford: printed for the author, 1745).


edition. The 1873 edition is now used to represent the standard text for the *Textus Receptus*, because it has removed all the obvious printing and scribal misspellings, etc.

Today the conservative-evangelical should use the Majority Text for all textual work. Every hand-copy of a manuscript will have accidental errors, but these can be recognised by collating every known copy of the Majority Text ranging from the 6th century to the 15th century. From this collation it is possible to recover the text of the original writings. See Appendix E.

1.7. CONCLUSION: The date of the correction of Codex Leicestrensis

It was shown under §1.5.1. that the corrections in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis could not have been inserted earlier than 1550 when verse numbers were introduced into the Greek New Testament for the first time. Erasmus died in 1536, so he did not see the marginal corrections in the Codex. The quest then became a matter of detective work to find out from an inductive study of the corrections themselves what printed edition was used to correct the Codex.

All of the printed editions of Erasmus’s text, and the printed editions of Elzevir’s text (under different editors), are so close in terms of their fonts and abbreviations (ligatures) that it is extremely difficult to find differences between them that would show up in the margin of the Codex. We noted that the handwritten form of the marginal correction at Matthew 19:9 narrowed down to either Curcellus (1658) or John Fell (1675). To decide between them it was necessary to collate all the corrections in Codex Leicestrensis and compare them with the texts of Curcellus and Fell. Disappointingly, there was not a single correction in Codex Leicestrensis that was found only in Fell and not found in Curcellus, or vice versa. Consequently, it was not possible, on these meagre results, to settle the issue over which printed edition was used to correct the Codex. However, the corrector can be narrowed down to someone who used either Curcellus’s 1658 edition, or Bishop John Fell’s 1675 edition.

We can conclude, however, that Erasmus did not see any of the 154 corrections in the margin of the Codex made by the second corrector (List B, in Appendix G). The only corrections he would have seen were the 40 made by the first hand of the Codex (List A, in Appendix G). Consequently, Erasmus did not get his reading of τι μὴ in Matthew 19:9 from Codex Leicestrensis, which is a significant finding.

All things considered, *Erasmus must make up the Greek text himself* because he wanted to impose his theology on the text, and he succeeded in duping the Reformers to fall for his new doctrine. The Reformers had a weakness, because they were prone to latch on to any difference they could find between Scripture and Roman Catholic doctrines and traditions, and Erasmus handed them one such difference on a plate, and they fell completely for it. The result is that today we are living out the legacy of their error, and most Christians are content to retain Erasmus’s new doctrine because so many relatives and friends have fallen for it, and they are not prepared to give up being a disciple of Erasmus, to follow Christ Jesus, who will not tolerate any remarriages after a divorce.

Jesus did not come to re-educate the fallen mind of man, nor did He come to bring out the best in human nature, nor did He come with a new philosophy. He came to destroy fallen, human nature, to destroy fallen, human knowledge, to destroy fallen, human ethics, and everything else that belongs to fallen human beings, because nothing ‘human’ will enter the Kingdom of God. Unless a person dies to self and crucifies all that is human in their fallen, human nature they cannot move forward to receive the Spirit of Christ, and without the Spirit of Christ, no such person will enter the Kingdom of God. The word ‘death’ must be written over fallen, human nature, and this truth be lived out as a reality, if we are to receive a new nature, a new heart, a new spirit, a new mind, and for all things to become new.

Those who counsel divorce to Christians are still living within their old nature, and operating out of that old nature, while professing to have the new nature of Christ. They have not known a born-again experience, nor known the transforming change that Christ brings. They are
still strangers to these spiritual experiences, yet profess to be mature Christian marriage counsellors. These counsellors are cute enough to know how to avoid being caught out and will indulge in smooth talk, seeming to teach Christ’s doctrine of full forgiveness for all sins, but really pandering to human common-sense, if the wrongdoer does not want forgiveness.

Both Jesus and Stephen unilaterally forgave their murderers. When you strip away the religious language in those books that advocate divorce for Christians, you are left with the same advice that you would get from an unbelieving Marriage Guidance Counsellor. It differs very little from the low-level, sub-standard that Moses’s generation lived at. A Christian who looks more to Moses than to the Lord Jesus for his teaching on divorce, will never live out the Christian life as he should. They are defective, if not deaf, Christians.

The issue is not whether Jesus was for or against divorce. The issue is whether divorce is compatible with being a Christian, and compatible with the Spirit of Christ living in the body of each believer. If His presence within the believer does not make divorce obsolete as a concept, and totally irrelevant, then something is seriously wrong with the claim that Christ is residing in that person. You cannot hold to divorce and hold to forgiveness at the same time. They are opposed one to the other in the new nature.
PART 2. THE FOUNDATION OF LOVE-HEADSHIP AUTHORITY

The Biblical doctrine of Headship

The Holy Spirit taught that the headship of Adam rested on four factors. The order of the Creation; the origin of the woman; the order of the Fall; and the order of the New Creation. There are three crucial texts that must be taken into account in any discussion of the subject. The central texts are:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:7-10

7 ἀνήρ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν, ἵκων καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων ἢ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἄνδρος ἔστιν. (8) οἱ γὰρ ἐστιν ἄνηρ ἐκ γυναικός ὅλα ἡ γυνὴ ἐξ ἄνδρος· (9) καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἐκτίστη ἁνὴ διὰ τὴν γυναῖκα ὅλα διὰ τὸν άνδρα. (10) διὰ τούτο ὀφείλει ἡ γυνὴ ἐξουσίαν ἴχειν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς διὰ τούς αγγέλους.

7 On the one hand, man, indeed, ought not to cover [or: hide] the head, being the image and glory of God, but on the other hand, ›the‹ [woman ought to cover the head because] woman is man’s glory. (8) For man is not of woman, but woman [is] out of man. (9) And also, man was not created on account of the woman, but woman on account of the man. (10) Because of this the woman ought to have authority upon the head on account of the angels.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:33b — 37

33b — 37

66 See Appx A for 36 translations of 14:33b-35.

67 The Majority Greek text has ἡμῶν ‘your’ following ‘women’; other mss (κΒΑ) omit it.

68 The Majority Greek text has ἐπιτέρπεται (perf. ind. pass., from — τρέπω.), meaning, ‘it was [and still is] permitted’; a few older mss (κΒΑ) read: ἐπιτρέπται (3 sg. pres. indic. pass., from — τρέπω.), meaning, ‘it is permitted [now].’

69 The Majority Greek text reads ὑποτάσσεσθαι (pres. infin. mid.), a few older mss (κΒΑ) read: ὑποτασσόμενως (3 pl. pres. imper. mid.). The Middle voice is in meaning much closer to the Active than to the Passive. It is something the women are to do, rather than something done to them by others.

70 The Majority Greek text reads the plural here, γυναικῖς, ‘women’.

71 This is the word order in some older mss (mainly the Egyptian tradition). The Majority Greek text reads: γυναικὶ ἐν ἕκκλησίᾳ λαλεῖν. The transposition of the phrase ‘in [the] church’ brings out a difference of emphasis. In the Majority Greek text the meaning is: ‘for a shame it is to women in [the]
As in all the assemblies of the saints your women in the assemblies—let them be silent. For it has not been permitted to them to speak, but to subject themselves, as also the Law says [teaches]. And if anything they are wishing to learn, in [the] house of their own men let them question; for it is a disgrace to women—in an assembly—to speak.

1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

(11) Let a woman in quietness learn in all subjection. And a woman to teach I do not permit, nor to rule a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, having been thoroughly deceived, into transgression came. And she shall be saved [as she goes] through the cursed child-bearing, if they remain in faith, and love, and sanctification with seriousness.

2.1. THE TEACHING OF HEADSHIP RESTS ON THE ORDER OF CREATION

“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For [here is the theological reason] Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:12). Adam was the first human being formed in the image of God. From him emanated the entire human race including Woman. ‘The first reason is that the order of creation of man and woman (Adam and Eve) is church to speak.’ This suggests that it is not a shame if they speak outside the church. The alternative text reads: ‘it is a shame to woman to speak in church.’ This puts the emphasis on gender; whether young or old, single or married, females are not permitted to speak in church.

72 See Appx B for 36 translations of 2:11-15.

73 The Majority Greek text (with some exceptions) reads: γυναίξι δέ διδάσκειν.

74 See the footnote on this unique word in Appx B.

75 The Majority Greek text plus B reads: ἀπαντήθησα (1st aor. pass. ptc. fem. acc. sg. fr. ἀπαντάω) as against other MSS (κ’Α) which read as the UBS4 text (fr. ἐξαπατήθησα). The MT means, ‘to be self-deceived, mistaken’, whereas the UBS4 form means, ‘to be deceived thoroughly’ (Liddell & Scott).

76 For a further exegesis of this text see 4.3.10. M. F. Stitzinger, “Genesis 1-3 and the Male/Female Role Relationship” (Grace Theological Journal 2 [1981] 23-44). This is the clearest explanation of Paul’s use of Genesis 1-3 that I have consulted. Another helpful work is that by Ann L. Bowman, “Women in Ministry: An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” BibSac 149 (1992) 193-213. She notes (pp. 203-04) that Paul was not simply referring to two verses taken from Gen 2-3. Instead he was using a common rabbinic method of referring to the Old Testament, a method known as summary citation. An example of a single statement recalling an entire story is Luke 17:32, ‘Remember Lot’s wife’ (Gen 18:22—19:26). If Paul were referring to a specific verse he would quote it. For a comprehensive listing of introductory formulas of Old Testament scriptures see Bruce Metzger, “The Formulas Introducing Quotations of Scripture in the New Testament and the Mishnah,” JBL 70 (1951) 297-307; cf. also J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament,” NTS 7 (1960-61) 299-305. For Paul’s rabbinic technique of exegesis see Anthony J. Hanson, Studies in Paul’s Technique and Theology (London: SPCK, 1974), 136-257.
expressive and determinative of God’s order of relationship and authority. The one formed first is in His image and likeness, the one formed after and from him is to remain in a loving and obedient relationship to him.”

Waltke noted from his study of the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 that:

The order of creation, which is set forth in these two accounts, stands behind the order of redemption, which is represented in the rest of Scripture. For example, the Fourth Commandment (Exod. 20:8-11) to refrain from work on the Sabbath is based on the first creation account that God ceased his own work on that day (2:2-3). The Seventh commandment (Exod 20:14) to not commit adultery is founded on the institution of marriage in the Garden of Eden according to the second account (Gen 2:18-25). The Sixth Commandment (Exod 20:13) protects innocent life because every life is created in God’s image (Gen 1:26-28; cf. 5:1-3; 9:6). Moreover, our Lord aimed to recapture for his church the Creator’s original intention for marriage (Matt 19:3-9), and the Apostle Paul based on these accounts his arguments concerning the roles of women in the home and in the church (1 Corinthians 11:3-12; 1 Timothy 2:12-15).

In sum, the Bible is a story of Paradise lost in the first Adam and being regained in the Second. The Garden of Eden symbolically represents the ideal culture that was lost and that Moses restores in the Law and that Christ restores more perfectly in his church through the Spirit. These accounts present what is normative for the role of women in “worship.” . . . male authority in the home and in the Church is founded on the order of creation and reinforced in the order of redemption as presented in both the Old and New Testaments.

Is it not plausible to assume . . . that had he [God] intended equality in government he would have formed Eve and Adam at the same time and have said, “It is not good for the man or the women to be alone, I will make them to be helpers suitable to each other”? If he had wanted a matriarchy, would he not have formed Eve first and created the husband to be a suitable helper to his wife?

Waltke rightly recognises the importance of the two Genesis accounts of the creation of mankind for the restoration of God’s original plan for mankind, which both Jesus and Paul point up in their uncovering of the new life lived according to the Spirit. It is worthwhile, therefore, spelling out some crucial, theologically laden facts about these two accounts.

God formed Adam on the sixth day of creation as His master-piece. He was created to rule and control the earth, and this is reflected in his physical and psychological make-up. He was not only created in the image of God but created to reflect that image in his control over the earth. He was born a controller, a governor, a king, a leader. Taking the Genesis story as a whole, we cannot fail to notice a being of singular nobility and endowed with phenomenal powers and attributes; a being who towers high above all other creatures, in fact, their king and their crown. He bowed to

77 G. W. Knight, “The Role Relation of Man and Woman and the Teaching/Ruling Functions in the Church,” JETS 18 (1975) 81-91, esp. p. 85. God never appeared in the image of a woman because that is a subordinate form. The male image is honoured by Him being the only form that He appears in when dealing with humans. It is disrespectful to the Lord Jesus to say that His human body evolved from a monkey. It is an insult to women to tell them that their being is 99% identical to a female chimp, when she knows that she is 100% different from them.


79 Baldwin (op. cit., p. 17), having rejected the literal account of woman’s creation, declares that man and woman were created like the rest of creation, ‘by the word of God’.
none, all were subordinate to him. He showed his dominion over them by giving to each of them a name.

Unlike any other creature God made, Adam was the first “son of God” (Luke 3:38); the first who was made in His image. To him was given dominion over all His world before He created woman (Gen 2:15). Man was created with the primary purpose of governing the creation that God had made. He was given the authority and ability to accomplish what he had been assigned to do.

Woman, on the other hand, was created with a totally different primary function in mind, namely, to fulfill a need in Man’s desire for company. She was designed and formed specifically (in her whole constitution) to be a fit companion for Man. Her role was a supporting one. It was never intended that she do anything but help him to achieve his ends. Their roles were different, fitting, beautiful and complementary because of their love for one another.

The apostle contrasts the two glories that man and woman display.

Of the man he says that he is the “glory of God,” but of woman he says that she is the “glory of man,” (verse 7). As verses 8 and following seem to indicate, this evaluation is based on the more immediate creation of man by God and the creation of woman from and out of man. Thus, the man will reflect the one who directly created him and thus, also, the woman will inevitably reflect and be the glory of the one from whom she was created, namely man.

Stitzinger has noted five signs of Man’s headship in Genesis 2. First, in 2:7 man is created prior to woman. Second, Man is called “adam” (2:20), a term that is used to cover Eve and all their offspring. Third, Adam was invested with the position of leadership, authority and responsibility to keep the Garden before Eve was created (2:15). Fourth, God prepared Adam for his leadership role by having Adam name the living creatures (Gen 2:19-20) before giving him his bride. Fifth, Adam’s

Some have tried to undermine Paul’s foundation by pointing out that in the order of creation there is a climax in Genesis 1 leading up to the creation of mankind on the sixth day, and since Woman was created last she is superior to Man. Stitzinger (op. cit., pp. 28-30) has replied to this notion.

It has been suggested that Adam’s privilege or chronological primacy in creation is linked with the Old Testament concept of primogeniture. In the Old Testament the firstborn son received a number of specific privileges. First, he succeeded his father as head of the family and leader of the family worship (Dt 21:15-17)(See R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 2 vols. [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961], I:42, 53). The rabbis affirmed this in the Mishnah (Baba Bathra 8:4, 5; Bechoroth 8:1, 9, 10). Second, he received a ‘double portion’ of the inheritance. Paul was possibly asserting that Adam’s status as the oldest carried with it the leadership fitting for a firstborn son. Jesus was given the title ‘firstborn among many brothers’ (Romans 8:29); ‘firstborn from the dead’ (Colossians 1:18); ‘firstborn of all creation’ (Colossians 1:15), and so He inherits everything now. It seems to me that inheritance through headship rather than through primogeniture explains the case of Adam and Christ best.

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Woman’s sphere was “to keep home.” “He maketh the barren woman to keep home: and to be a joyful mother of children” (Ps 113:8, Book of Common Prayer [The Great Bible]).

J. A. Motyer, “Name,” in The New Bible Dictionary (ed. J. D. Douglas et al.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 862, observed that to give a name is the prerogative of a superior. Adam also gave Eve her name, and God gives Adam his name. He also gives names to all that He created. Naming is a form of control. The Israelites renamed the conquered Transjordan cities (Num 32:38).
leadership role is emphasized by his need of a helper (2:18-20). Up until this point Adam’s helper/companion had been his superior—God, now God supplied him with a human helper who would not threaten him by being superior or equal in physical strength, but a perfectly formed “weaker vessel” who would respond to his love and his need for companionship.

Waltke having examined the two stories of creation came to the conclusion that:

_the situation represented in these first two chapters of Genesis is regarded as normative for humanity in the rest of Scripture. This ideal is not imposed on men and women but presented to help them understand their natures and the roles for which they were created. Their sexuality lies deeper than their physical characteristics to reproduce, but in their very embodiment as human beings, in the way they view the world and in the way they are perceived._

2.2. **THE TEACHING OF HEADSHIP RESTS ON THE ORIGIN OF WOMAN**

“On the one hand, a man ought not to cover his head, [here is the theological reason] being the image and glory of God; but, on the other hand, the woman [ought to cover her head because] she is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Corinthians 11:7-9).

Pharaoh Necho asserted his control over Eliakim by renaming him Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23:34). After the Lord gives Adam his bride, Adam tactfully uses the passive form of construction to give to her her generic name: “she shall be called Woman . . .” (Gen 2:23b). After the Fall, he names her “Eve” (3:20).

There are 26 cases in the Old Testament where mothers give the child its name; in 14 cases it is the father, and in 5 cases it is given by God.

This terminology would seem to be Peter’s way (1 Pet 3:7) of stating the femininity of the woman in relation to the masculinity of the man in terms of a comparison with no disparagement intended (see G. Statlin, _T.D.N.T._, Vol. I, p. 491). John Knox (1505-1572), in particular, expounded this idea as an argument against female monarchs and matriarchs in his tract, “The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women” (see under 4.1.1.1.).


G. G. Findlay makes the observation that instead of saying woman was the ‘image and likeness’ of man he substitutes for ‘likeness’ the word ‘glory’ which is the word the LXX renders the synonymous Heb. term ‘form’ in Ps 17:15, God’s glory being His likeness; cf. Hebrews 1:3. Woman is the glory of man (ἀρετή), not of the race (ἀρετήματος), but of the stronger sex. Paul does not say she is the ‘likeness of man’ because she is not man’s reflection, but his counterpart—not ‘like to like, but like in difference,’ wedded as ‘perfect music unto noble words.’ She partakes through him, of the image of God (Gen 1:27) (“The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians,” in _The Expositor’s Greek New Testament_ [5 vols. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1897-1910], III. 873). D. J. A. Clines has shown that the ‘image of the deity’ stands for the powers of the deity, in a cuneiform text dated about 675 BC: “It was said to Esarhaddon, ‘A free man is as the shadow of god, the slave is as the shadow of a free man, but the king, he is like the very image of god’” (“The Image of God in Man,” _Tyndale Bulletin_ 19 (1968) 53-103, esp. p.84).

Robin Scroggs (“Paul and the Eschatological Woman,” _Journal of the American Academy of Religion_ 40 [1972] 283-303, esp. p. 301) appears to have found these verses too difficult to understand and retorts: ‘to modern readers the logic is blackly obscure.’ This does not give one much confidence in his handling of the passage or the subject. He appears to find almost everything too difficult for him in the passage. On 11:2-16 he says (p. 297): ‘In its present form this is hardly one of Paul’s happier compositions. The logic is obscure at best and contradictory at worst. The word choice is
Just as God is sometimes glimpsed taking counsel in the heaven, for example, “Let us make man . . . .” and pictured as having communion with a Being of like nature, so He understands Adam’s solitariness and his need to commune with another being of like nature. He therefore resolved to alleviate his loneliness saying:

> It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet [suitable] for him. . . And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:18-23).

Adam’s words of joy on seeing his wife are the only recorded words of a human being before the Fall, when he had all his God-given powers in their full prime. He is able instantly and joyfully to recognise in her someone who was on the same level as himself as regards her humanity. She was not “man” like himself, so in this sense he did not see her as “equal” if by equal we mean identical in form. He saw her as the female counterpart to himself. But his words “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” are a penetrating insight into her equality with him as regards her person and worth. She emerged from him and her life was derived from his own life, and yet she was attractively “different” and “complementary.” In his words the Creator knew He had successfully completed His creation. She was the last of His works.

Eve, together with Adam, is given dominion over all living creatures (1:27-28). Both Adam and Eve are called “adam” in Genesis 5:2, so that it is clear that Woman is not inferior to Man in her moral nature, though of course she was designed at the root level to be subject to him: “Now I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church . . . . Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:23-24). It is not hard for a wife to submit to a husband who loves her like Christ loves the Church; and it is not hard for a husband to love a wife who submits as lovingly and as full-heartedly as the Church submits to Christ.

Woman was designed physically and psychologically to complement man and to be his perfect helper. Any disparagement of Woman, per se, is an attack on her Creator’s wisdom to equip her for a very specific role in Man’s life. Eve was not left in the Garden of Eden to find Adam, or left there for Adam to find her. When the Creator begins a work He completes it. When He finished creating her He brought her to Adam. She was never intended to be independent of him. The theological importance of the Creator bringing the Woman to the Man (and not vice versa) should

peculiar; the tone, peevish. All these difficulties point to some hidden agenda, hidden probably to the Apostle himself as well as his readers . . . .’ This statement is more a reflection on Scroggs’ ignorance of the passage than on Paul’s God-given wisdom. F. F. Bruce, likewise, did not know what Paul was talking about and so ignored his theological arguments, to the detriment of his case (“Women in the Church: a Biblical Survey,” Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship 33 (December, 1982) 7-14, esp. p. 11). For example he treats Paul’s principles based on Genesis as only ‘guide lines’ in one situation (Corinth) and should not be turned into laws binding for all time. He then overrides Paul’s teaching with his own rule-of-thumb, namely ‘whatever in Paul’s teaching promotes true freedom is of universal and permanent validity; whatever seems to impose restrictions on true freedom has regard to local and temporary conditions’ (p. 11). And who, we might ask, is to be the judge of what is ‘true freedom’? This could be seen as a licence to permit gays and lesbians into positions of leadership otherwise we are infringing on their ‘true freedom’. Due to self-confessed ignorance of Paul’s theological foundation he dismisses any bar to women teaching or having authority over men in the church (p. 12).

90Cf. Isa 6:8; Gen 1:26; 3:22.
not be under-estimated theologically. The “bringing” is an affirmation and extension of Man’s love-control. He named her, just as he named everything else in his world. She was now answerable to him as he was answerable to God in how they carried out His will to subdue the earth. In Packer’s words:

God . . . gave woman the role of “help meet” for man, and her fitness for it depends on God having made her a “side” of man which he would otherwise lack. So the way for men and women to be free and fulfilled is that in all their joint activities the psychological dynamics of the “help meet” relationship be maintained, and the woman be felt throughout to be helping men. Anything less would be more or less unnatural, and would issue in something less than contentment for both parties. This relational pattern matters most in marriage, the closest and richest of man-woman relationships, but it has some importance wherever men and women work together.91

Thus in the Genesis story we see that woman—perfect woman—was subject to her husband before she fell. So that even if men and women could be restored to their original states the wife would still be subject to her husband.

The Genesis account (2:21-22) of Woman’s origin establishes another important Scriptural doctrine, namely, the solidarity of the human race. The human species has descended from one man (Romans 5:18ff.). For if the sexes had two separate sources or origins, mutual contempt or envy or contentions over equality might have arisen. But God removed that possibility when He formed Eve from Adam and brought her to him to stay with him and to be subject to his perfect love and guidance. The world has never seen a more perfect marriage, nor indeed can it, for sin has separated man and woman beyond complete recovery of the Edenic state in this life (Gen 2:25b). Only when the Husband (Christ) comes for his Bride (the Church), who will be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, shall the redeemed Adamic family understand how perfect was the first human marriage. Every marriage is a shadow of what God once designed it to be.

We see, then, that in the origin and purpose of Woman in the original and perfect creation loving submission was a suitable and fitting element in her constitution.

2.3. THE TEACHING OF HEADSHIP RESTS ON THE ORDER OF THE FALL

“And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner” (1 Timothy 2:14).92

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

“Unto the woman he [God] said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband,93 and he shall rule over [κυριέυσαι94] you” (Gen 3:16).

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92 See the fuller treatment of this verse under 4.3.10.

93 Some have understood the text to mean that woman would seek to dominate man. How this curse has worked itself out in secular society can be seen in Menander’s advice, “The wife ought always to take second place in speaking (legein), and the husband ought in all things to take the lead. For there is not a home in which a wife takes first place which has not been utterly ruined” (edition by A. Körte [1910], quoted from Quinn & Wacker, 1-2 Timothy, p. 225). Menander, the Attic poet,
Paul uses the word ‘deceived’ to refer to the whole account of the Fall. Adam also sinned, but Eve led the way and caused him to sin. Her initiative in breaking the commandment they both were under is an historical fact. Adam’s sin consisted not in his listening to his wife’s voice, for that was music in his ears (as any lover knows), but in not questioning her about the fruit and where she got it from. We do not know how she managed to persuade Adam to eat the fruit. He must have known what the forbidden fruit looked like. Paul does not develop this reason and we must be content with the brevity of his statement, which looks like a summary reference to something that Timothy was familiar with. One may logically infer that in citing this foundational incident Paul is telling Timothy that when the role established by God in His creative activity and order was reversed by Eve, it led to the break-up of a perfect creation.

It is of note that no cultural reason is given or even alluded to in this passage [1 Timothy 2:8-12], but rather the most basic foundational reasons which are always germane to men and women are given, namely, God’s creation order and the fall. Nothing more basic and binding could be cited. Paul thus follows the example of Jesus Christ in dealing with the basic question of the relation of men and women; he cites the Father’s basic creative action (cf. Matthew. 19:3ff.).

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lived between 343 and 292 BC. It is interesting to note the Jewish attitude toward ‘headship’ in Jesus’ day as seen through the writings of Josephus and Philo. Josephus (Con. Ap. 2.201), ‘The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority (to kratos) has been given by God to man.’ Philo (Op. Mii. 167), ‘In the next place she tasted deprivation of liberty and the authority of the husband at her side, whose command she must perforce obey.’ Others have pointed out as a truism of anthropology that male leadership is normative in every culture and that there is no evidence of matriarchy (see Bruce K. Waltke, “The Role of Women in the Bible,” CRUX 31 [no. 3, 1995] 29-40, esp. p. 36, who has a cross-reference to George Gilder, Wealth and Poverty [New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981], p. 136.).

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94 Luke 22:25, “And he said to them, ‘The kings of the nations do exercise lordship [κυριεύων] over them, and those exercising authority [ἐξουσιάζων] over them are called Benefactors, but you are not so, but he who is greater among you, let him be as the younger; and he who is leading [ὑγούμενος], as he who is serving.” In the parallel passages in Matthew 20:25 and Mark 10:42 the terms are κατακυριεύωνων and κατεξουσιάζων respectively. Luke’s term is found in Romans 6:9 where death has no more lordship over the risen Christ, and in 6:14 sin has no more lordship over those under grace. In Romans 7:1 the marriage law has lordship over a man as long as he lives, and in 14:7 Christ is lord of the living and the dead. Jesus is called Lord of lords in 1 Timothy 6:15. In 2 Corinthians 1:24 Paul denies that he and Timothy acted as lords over the Corinthians but, rather, he saw himself as a fellow-worker with them. These are the seven occurrences of Luke’s term in the NT. Matthew’s term occurs in Acts 19:16 where a demon possessed man leap on the seven sons of Sceva and overpowered them. Peter warns elders not to exercise lordship over church members but be a pattern for them to follow (1 Pet 5:3). Matthew’s term occurs only four times in the NT. Because each man has Christ as his Lord then no man may be lord of another man. This agrees with Christ’s headship. As regards headship all men are equal and no man (bishop or elder) may dominate another man against his conscience toward God. This is not to rule out church discipline. Paul is aware that the authority of an apostle which he had received from Christ was to be used to build up the Church (2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:9) not to ‘cast it down,’ but if necessary he would use his apostolic authority to discipline the disorderly in order to preserve the flock from being led astray.

In the text of Genesis the ultimate responsibility before God rested with Adam who allowed himself to be knowingly led astray by his wife. That Adam was responsible can be seen in Romans 5:12, because it was through him, and not through Eve, that sin entered the world. God recognised his headship by addressing His questions to him first, and not to Eve. God blamed him for listening/obeying the voice of his wife.

Paul’s point is that God’s perfect creation was plunged into its present groaning state of death and decay because Eve reversed roles. The implication is that woman’s reversal of roles must not be repeated in the church or in the home. She must not be permitted to lead men or her husband in obedience to her initiative or to overthrow/reverse what is accepted as the transmitted tradition of doctrine and practices. Eve questioned the original commandment and was deceived by her own initiative. The impulse to take the initiative should never have been followed. It was not her place to initiate a way of getting round the commandment. Adam, it would appear, was prepared to live in obedience to the command but she was not content with her allotted station.

The character of the temptation illustrates Satan’s craftiness. There was nothing said at first to awaken suspicion in Eve, or to shock her moral sense; merely a shy insinuation calculated to excite a natural curiosity. Then there was a direct lie, combined, however, with just enough truth to give it plausibility (Gen 3:4-5). Three steps lead to Eve’s transgression: (1) doubt about God’s Word (cf. Romans 14:23); (2) an addition to God’s Word (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:2-4; Rev 22:18-19); (3) and an outright contradiction of God’s Word (cf. Gen 2:17) (suspicion, addition, contradiction). Adam’s sin was not caused by the deception that brought down his wife (the inference of the story is that the serpent’s method would not have worked on Adam). Eve’s mind was engulfed by the deception, she was “thoroughly deceived” (1 Timothy 2:14). It would appear that she did not set out to disobey God deliberately, but was tricked into doing so through the appeal the forbidden fruit had physically, aesthetically, and intellectually for her.

On the other hand, Adam thought about the possibility of disobeying God’s command and then he made a conscious decision not to obey God. Paul seems to have thought deeply about the manner in which mankind fell. Sin entered into two perfect, sinless human beings in different ways which are gender specific. The sinless woman was tricked into sin, and the sinless man made a conscious decision to sin. For this reason there was a command of Christ given (1 Corinthians 14:37b) that the new Eve in Christ must never teach or exercise authority over the new Adam in Christ (1 Timothy 2:11-14). Paul, drawing on the analogy of the original sinless pair, feared that “by some means, as the serpent deceived Eve in his cunning, so your thoughts might be spoiled from the pureness which is due to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). He is addressing “brothers” here which indicates that the new man in Christ is not in the same advantageous position as the first Adam, who was not deceived. The Christian man in Christ is now as vulnerable to sin through deception as much as the sinless woman was in Eden. Hence his oft repeated warnings to be on their guard. But if Eve, in her state of sinless perfection, could fall for a trick, how much more vulnerable is she in her fallen condition. She can be tricked at will (it would seem) by Satan, at any time he chooses. Paul taught that even in her restored position “in Christ” the vulnerability is still there in her feminine nature, hence his theologically-based disqualification to teach or rule men in the Church is gender specific and is for all time and in all places.

A woman could lead a man into the truth (e.g., Priscilla96 [assisting Aquila] and Apollos) but in this good deed lies the potential for leading him the other way; it is for this reason that leadership per se is taken away from her altogether, so that there is no opportunity given to her to lead her

96 It is sometimes speculated that Priscilla wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. See A. Harnack, Über die beiden Recensionen der Geschichte der Prisca und des Aquila in Act xviii. 1-27 in the Sitzungsberichte des königl. preuss. Akademie zu Berlin, 1900, pp. 2-13. Against this is the masculine participle διηγοµένην in Hebrews 11:32, ‘for the time will fail me recounting about Gideon.’ The fem. form would be διηγοµένη.
husband into sin again, despite all the potential there is to lead him into the truth. By coming under the oversight of her husband and receiving her doctrine from him ("ask your men at home" — 1 Corinthians 14:35) the orthodoxy of her knowledge can be secured. But the impulse to take the initiative to change what has been handed on to her may always be present. If this impulse was present when she was in a sinless condition, then how much more after she is fallen? The regeneration of her soul does not restore her to her sinless state, consequently the impulse to change her allotted place will always remain a potential threat to her salvation and to good order in the Church.

Some see Satan in the form of a serpent who tempted Eve to commit the first trespass, I am not so sure that Satan was present in a world which God pronounced “very good.” Eve may have sinned without involving the necessity for Satan to be present in the Garden of Eden. The serpent who spoke to Eve was an amoral animal who could not sin, who was not capable of sinning. We are told that he had superior guile to any other animal that God had made. He did not acquire this ability: he was created the way he was. Now for an amoral creature to suggest to Eve that she might be equal to her Creator was not a sin, but Eve was a moral creature. So that what the serpent said and what she heard were two different things. In the serpent’s “not-possible-to-sin” world what he suggested had no moral connotation for him, but what Eve heard had moral connotations. This is how the idea was conveyed to Eve in a perfect creation. We have a parallel in the words of Peter to Jesus—words full of concern for Jesus’ safety—but nevertheless what Peter said and what Jesus heard were two different things. What Jesus heard, made him rebuke Peter with the words, “Get thee behind me Satan” (Matthew 16:23) much to Peter’s surprise and consternation, no doubt.

In the biblical account sin entered the world when Adam and Eve reversed the leadership order: she led and he followed (deliberately). In 2 Corinthians 3:11 Paul stresses that Eve was completely deceived. She—a sinless, perfect creature—was, as Stitzinger noted, “led to believe something that was not true. She was doctrinally beguiled into hostility toward God and sensual desire for the unknown.” In 1 Timothy 2:14 Paul again notes that it was the woman who was deceived, not Adam, and he uses this as a supporting argument for the limitations given to women with regard to positions of leadership in the church. Stitzinger notes, “In contrast to Paul’s appeal in 1 Corinthians, the deception described in 1 Timothy could only happen to women.” He goes on to say:

The apostle may have had more than one idea in mind by this mention of the woman’s deception in 1 Timothy 2:14. He may be suggesting that a woman’s emotional faculties are different than man’s in such a way that she is more apt to be led into a course of unintentional error, and/or he may be using this verse as an argument for what her deception precipitated, namely a usurpation of her role as helper.

97 See 4.5.1 below on Peter’s injunction to Christian wives not to preach to their unconverted husbands.
98 I am not convinced of D. J. Moo’s position that ‘Paul cites Eve’s failure as exemplary and perhaps causative of the nature of women in general and that this susceptibility to deception bars them from engaging in public teaching’ (“1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,” Trinity Journal 1 [1980] 78). But the fact that women can never exercise authority over a man ensures to some extent that she will not repeat the Adam and Eve scenario again. It is within this supervised context that she can use her teaching gift to help other women, and contribute enormously in guiding her children into the way of truth, as Lois and Eunice did in the case of Timothy. In the normal situation a woman’s ministry will come under the oversight of her husband or male relatives (father/brothers) who in turn will come under the oversight of the local church.
In either case, Gen 3:1-7 indicates that Eve allowed herself to listen to the serpent. In the course of this, she was deceived and subsequently sinned. She then introduced her husband to sin, who wilfully ignored his headship and partook of the fruit. Eve’s sin was disobedience to God, which expressed itself, in part, by a self-assumed position of leadership above her husband.

Adam freely chose to obey the voice of his wife, maybe because he realised what she had done and that it could not be undone, and in order to stay with her through the consequences he joined her in eating the forbidden fruit. His sin began the moment he failed to maintain control over his own decisions. It is yet another indication of his headship that not until he sinned was the entire human race plunged into decay and death (Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:22). One wonders what would have happened if Adam had not followed Eve into sin. Paul has warned the Church not to permit women to reverse the roles again, hence the prohibition on her speaking in Christ’s Church which would lead to her talents taking up a position of authority once again over man.

Two aspects of Eve’s punishment are worth noting:

First, “and your desire shall be to your husband.”

There is no need to emphasize the aspect of sexual desire, though that is there. It is more likely that the idea is that woman, because she has less physical strength, will desire man for protection after they are banned from the Garden of Eden and placed in a hostile world in which brutality and force would be the order of the day. Then the desire would also have as a result that man would rule over her, which is the second aspect: “and he shall rule over you.”

What is remarkable about the state Eve was in when she was completely deceived by the words of the serpent was that she was sinless. Even while she was in the perfect state, and under Adam’s faultless care—she fell, and was the first to do so. What was to prevent her from falling again into a worse state? Hence God put her more firmly under her now fallen husband’s rule, and how despotist history has shown that to be. She has, since that fateful day, been cruelly treated, exploited, abused, raped and dishonoured. Who can calculate what she has suffered at the hands of what was once a perfect being, whose every movement was once for her well-being?

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101 Banks remarks: “That which is new in 3:15 is not that the husband shall rule but that his rule will be painful” (“Paul and Women’s Liberation,” *Interchange* 18 [1976] 81-105, esp. p. 213). F. F. Bruce ( “Women in the Church: a Biblical Survey,” *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship* 33 [December, 1982] 7-14, esp. p. 8) makes the mistake of saying that it is not in the creation narrative but in the Fall narrative that subordination is first mentioned. Gen 1 is pitted against Gen 2 in a destructive manner. He is also misleading when he says that Phoebe delivered the Romans Epistle to Rome. Romans 16:1 says no such thing. The bearer of the Epistle is unknown (see 4.5.2). Against it we can safely say that it is very unlikely that a woman travelled alone in those times. The same assumption is made by H. Wayne House, “The Ministry of Women in the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Periods,” *BibSac* 145 (1988) 387-99, esp. p. 387.

102 For a useful summary of the post-Fall status of woman see Caroline M. Breyfogle, “The Social Status of Women in the Old Testament,” *The Biblical World* 35 (1910) 106-116, 405-418; esp. p. 110. The woman is the possessed and not the possessor, and legally the wife is the property of her husband. He was her Baal, master, or owner (Exod 21:3, 22; Prov 31:11). Sarah calls Abraham her Master. There can be no doubt that the Fall affected the total person (physical, mental, spiritual, etc.) detrimentally, and both Adam and Eve underwent a diminution of their original image of God, leading to a distortion of that image and resulting in Adam and Eve experiencing an estrangement (i.e., two minds not quite in harmony over the way forward) which did not exist before the Fall; an estrangement that is not allowed to develop because of God placing Eve under the headship of Adam in a manner that would not have developed had they both remained sinless. Fortunately, with the coming of Christ the image of God can be renewed once again and men and women can, to some degree, return to the pre-Fall situation and live out their original callings with the aid of the...
It has been suggested that God is not here ordaining her subjection but predicting it, just as in the case of Adam’s punishment thorns and thistles would spring up. And since no one would consider it impious to rid the ground of them, so neither is woman’s attempt impious to be free from man’s dominance (it is argued). It is simply an attempt to ameliorate the evil caused by sin. The fact is that there is not a single nation or tribe where women or children rule men successfully. And it would appear that there is not a single country that is free from thorns or thistles—even the deserts have them. But there is one nation—the Israel of God—where, by a strange paradox, the more lovingly and willingly the wife fulfills her God-given role the less she experiences the more evil consequences of fallen man’s force-headship. Peace comes to her through obedience, whether her husband is a Christian or not.

The New Testament writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, understood “he shall rule over you” to be both causal and descriptive; in God’s saying it He was ordaining it. He could see the consequences because He ordained them to come into effect should disobedience occur. He is the Cause (sometimes direct, sometimes indirect) behind every effect.

In Paul’s thinking the teaching of headship is reinforced at the time of the Fall. Man can no more turn back the fallen nature of men and women to what they were originally than he can cause thorns and thistles to revert to what they were originally. Both in her perfect state and in her fallen state God ordained that Woman should be accountable to her head. What, then, is her position under the New Covenant, in the new creation in Christ Jesus?

Holy Spirit. See George H. Tavard for the prelapsarian and postlapsarian views of woman as inferior and subordinate to man (*Woman in Christian Tradition* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973]).

This text was a thorn in the side of the early feminists, including Sarah Grimké (1837), and they sought to get rid of it by altering the translation of the Hebrew verb forms from ‘shall’ to ‘will’ ‘rule over you’, thereby turning God’s words into a prediction rather than His timeless rearrangement of the relationship between the sexes. See De Swarte Gifford, “American Women and the Bible: The Nature of Woman as a Hermeneutical Issue,” in A. Yarbo Collins (ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (SBL Centennial Publications; Biblical Scholarship in North America, 10; Chico CA, 1985). Elizabeth Cady Stanton produced her own translation, *The Woman’s Bible* (1889-98) in reaction to the Revised Standard Version’s all-male version made between 1881 and 1885. The English Revised Version was made by an all-male, 27-man Committee between 1870 and 1881, and the Authorised Version was made by 54 reputable bishops and godly divines. Her one-woman project was to counter any suggestion that the Bible taught that women were to be subordinate to their husbands. This work had a wider goal in that it was also a deliberate attempt to de-patriarchalise the Bible. She treated the Bible as just another human production, written by men and reflecting their view of the world (i.e., patriarchy). She repudiated its divine authority commenting, the Scriptures “bear the impress of fallible man, and not of our ideal great first cause, ‘the Spirit of all Good’” (*The Woman’s Bible*, p. 13), and, accepting the Darwinian view of the progress of humanity, regarded the story of the Fall in the Garden of Eden as a myth (here she drew on higher critical studies); she exonerated the snake and praised Eve’s struggle to be emancipated (see her conclusion in the second part of *The Woman’s Bible*, p. 214). The ideals of liberty, justice and equality became her new Gospel when she realised that patriarchy was not just a veneer but fundamental to both Testaments. In the course of her translation she gave up the attempt to accuse male translators of mistranslating the Bible to support male-domination when she became convinced that the Bible was a patriarchal book which did not contain a message of equality for the sexes; that a hierarchy within humanity pervaded the Bible from beginning to end.

A view endorsed by Ann L. Bowman, “Women in Ministry: an exegetical study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (1992) 193-213. Women are to learn, not teach, because male headship was established at creation, and this principle was violated through role reversals in the Fall.

52
2.4. THE TEACHING OF HEADSHIP RESTS ON THE ORDER OF THE NEW CREATION

“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without talk by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past . . . used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right” (1 Pet 3:1-6).

Many interesting points emerge from Peter’s exhortation to the women. First, he is not culturally bound when he tells the wives to be submissive to their husbands, since he goes back to around 2066 BC for his ideal Christian wife— to Sarah. Two thousand years on Sarah still remains the ideal for the daughters of the Church to follow. The use of Sarah does not suggest that the New Testament writers were culturally bound. It does, however, suggest that they combed the Scriptures carefully for their models.

Second, he says, “Wives, in the same way . . . “ and this takes us back to the verses immediately preceding this passage, where we find Peter exhorting the slaves in the following manner: “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh . . . .” He then goes on to set before the slave the example of the Lord enduring the cross without any resistance, showing how far one can take submissiveness to one’s master.

And third, Peter mentions two qualities that every Christian woman should seek to cultivate, since they are said to be of great worth in God’s estimation, namely, a gentle and quiet spirit. A “gentle” spirit, denoting the absence of self-assertion, or speaking in public with an authoritative voice. A “quiet” spirit, denoting a calm tranquil disposition that pervades all she does, and which communicates itself to others producing a similar state in them.\textsuperscript{105}

“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18). “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church . . . . Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:22-24).

These are very instructive passages since it is highly unlikely that the Church would ever have the audacity to tell Christ what to do, therefore wives should not put themselves in a position of telling their husbands what to do.

\textsuperscript{105} Based on her own participation in the women’s world of the Bedouin (closed to male eyes) Lila Abu-Lughod uses the word ‘modesty’ to sum up the female moral code of shyness, self-restraint, and a deferential attitude, the Arabic term for which is hashama which is translated by ‘a cluster of words including modesty, shame and shyness, in its broadest sense, it means propriety’ (Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986], p. 105). By contrast the image of the Western ‘liberated’ woman is one who is brash, loud, and self-assertive.
Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (Titus 2:2-5).

These four texts explicitly state that the wife in the New Creation is to be subject to her husband. It would appear, therefore, that whether a woman lived in the Garden of Eden, or at the base of Mount Sinai, or on the top of Calvary, she was to be subject to her husband. The example of submission is that of Man to Christ and of Christ to God, and of the Church to Christ, “as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:24). And if wives are to submit after the example of the Church, then husbands are to love their wives after the example that Jesus has left of his love for the Church:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to make her holy . . . . In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church . . . each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Ephesians 5:25-33).

From which it may be inferred that if Christ’s men were to love as Christ did, and the Church’s women were to submit as the Church should, then the governments of this world would have a model example of a peaceful and harmonious society. A society held together by mutual love for its members, and built upon a patriarchal authority structure, where the natural laws would be in harmony with the spiritual. The Church’s calling is to be such a model, not as an end in itself, but because it is the desire of its Head—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Given the clear, unambiguous role that God had designed woman to fit into, in relation to man, is it appropriate that she should aspire to exercise leadership over her own husband? The answer is clearly, No. It follows that if her position is one of submissiveness to her husband then she is in no position to exercise any role of any description over another woman’s husband. Her sphere of influence is best fulfilled in the home environment, under the leadership and headship of her own husband (or the direction of her father if she is unmarried).

The older women are given the role of teaching younger women how to be good wives, but the sphere in which women are to operate and exercise this teaching role is clearly in the home according to Titus 2:2-5, and just as clearly it is exercised over other younger women. If older women fulfilled this God-given function today would there not be greater harmony between men and women in Christian marriages? Would there not be less divorces among Church members? Have women failed women to reach their God-given potential? Where are the books written by older women for younger women? The areas delegated to older Christian women to pass on to the next generation of women are set out in Titus 2:4. They are: (1) to teach what is good, (2) to encourage the young women to love their husbands, (3) to love their children, (4) to be self-controlled, chaste, and kind, (5) to be good managers of the household, (6) to be submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited. The home and family is the sphere in which women are envisaged fulfilling God’s will for their lives and bringing credit to His Gospel.

**SUMMARY**

We have noted that the teaching of Headship rests on the order of creation. Adam was formed first; the first of a new order of beings directly related to God and made in His image (which the lower creation is not, being amoral creatures). To Adam (representative Man) was given dominion over all the earth before Eve (representative Woman) was formed.
We have noted that the teaching of Headship rests on the origin of woman. Whereas Man had his life breathed into him directly from the mouth of God (denoting something emanating from the very being of God Himself, rather than God taking a pre-existing creature and “converting” it into a Man), Woman receives her life from the directly created living substance of the Man. A living part of him is taken away and from it a Woman is formed and brought to Man to be with him for life.

We have noted that the teaching of Headship is reinforced in the Fall of creation through the first sin which was made by Woman, who was deceived into reaching for power and authority which was not hers to take. She was in a state of sinless perfection when she sinned. Having lost that state she was instrumental in bringing her husband into a state of disobedience; but he was not deceived into sinning; he chose to sin. If she could be deceived in a perfect state how much more in a fallen state? She is not permitted to put herself in a position of authority over Man lest she be subject to the same deception, and again lead Man, renewed Man this time, into sin once again.

We have noted that the teaching of Headship is upheld in the New Creation in Christ Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, women are commanded not to speak in the Church, and not to aspire to positions of authority over men. We noted that even in a pure state she fell because she reached for a position of authority that God never intended her to have. Speaking, and speaking powerfully with authority, is one sure way of gaining (or regaining) dominance over one’s hearers, and inducing them to be one’s followers. God prevents this avenue of opportunity from opening up by demanding that women be silent in the New Testament Church, as He had ensured they were in the Old Testament Church. But man and woman are part of the New Creation in Christ Jesus, and this opens up a new era for both: they have a real opportunity to fulfil the roles that He had set for them “in the beginning.” With the presence of the Lord Jesus within, and all the resources of the Holy Spirit at their disposal the Christian man can be a second Adam again, and the Christian woman can be a second Eve again, and both can try once again to live within the spheres of their God-given powers and responsibilities and do a better job of it this time round.

PART 3. THE OFFICE OF ELDER AND ITS QUALIFICATIONS

Every family has its male head who “must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect” (1 Timothy 3:4). Paul taught that through the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus Christ has committed the oversight of His Church (the aggregate of all the families) only to those heads of families who have managed their own house well, “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” (1 Timothy 3:5).106 Certain men are excluded from managing the larger unit of the church on the grounds that they have not proved themselves to have the necessary skills to manage a smaller unit, namely, their own family. Since women are not permitted to be head of their own husband they can never be eligible to rule over other heads of families in the larger unit of the church. Only the head of a family is eligible to rule over the heads of other families.

The following diagram may help to illustrate God’s authority structure.

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106 It is interesting that in the Roman world of Plutarch (AD 45-125) a similar view was expressed: “A man therefore ought to have his household well-harmonized who is going to harmonize State, Forum, and friends.” Plutarch, Moralia 144.43 (Loeb Classical Library [1971]. Vol. II, p. 333)
No man can be the head of another man, since all men have Christ as their direct head. The Elders do not have a headship position over other heads of families, or single men. Their position is not comparable to the relation between Christ and the Father as might appear at first sight. Though Christ and the Father are equal in nature, as are men and Elders, yet God is the head of Christ whereas men and Elders are heads of wives/women. The Elders, therefore, manage Christ’s household on His behalf because the office of Elder has been created by the Lord, and is a gift from Him. The Elders are to see that they exercise their authority correctly.
The Elder is to “lead” not to “rule” the Church according to 1 Timothy 3:5 where “to lead” is explained by “to take care of.”

The term “to lead” (ποιεῖν) occurs eight times (Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17; Titus 3:8, 14). Romans 12:8 lists “leading” as one of the gifts of the Spirit: “And having gifts different according to the grace that was given to us, whether—prophecy—“according to the proportion of faith;” or ministry—“in the ministration;” or who is teaching—“in the teaching;” or who is exhorting—“in the exhortation;” he who is sharing—“in simplicity;” he who is leading (ὁ ποιεῖται) —“in diligence;” or who is doing kindness—“in cheerfulness.”

The other uses of “lead” convey the image of one who leads by personal example in good works (esp. Titus 3:8, 14). It suggests someone who is standing out in front of others as a pattern for them to follow. All the office bearers (Elders and Deacons) must be leaders of their own homes otherwise they are not eligible to lead their assemblies (1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12). Those who are recognised as leaders must be leaders “in word and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17) and be alert to admonish the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12) as they would their own families (1 Timothy 3:4, 12).

The male members need not accept any ruling of the Elders that is contrary to the relation that each man has toward his immediate Head—the Lord Jesus Christ. No Elder can override any man’s headship with Christ. So while there may be a diagonal exercise of discipline between a man and his Elder, the vertical relation of headship with Christ is direct and not through Elders. Woman’s duty of obedience to Christ is through her husband (vertical) or through her father (diagonal) if an unmarried daughter and still living with him. But the issue of covering and uncovering the head is gender-based, not headship based, and it applies only when males and females are engaged directly in “praying or prophesying.” Paul leads off with a theological statement in 1 Corinthians 11:3 that at first glance seems like taking a sledgehammer to crack open a peanut. Its scope is so vast that it encompasses God, Christ, Man and Woman within it. Sandwiched between the headships of God and Christ is the disputed headship of Man. This is the theological issue at stake in 11:2-16.

If there is no headship between men and their wives then they are equal, and so both should appear before God with an uncovered head. Paul’s reply is to reaffirm the husband’s God-ordained headship which points up the created differences between the genders at the root level. And these fundamental differences pervade all aspects of human life—physical and spiritual. All males, whether married or unmarried must leave their head uncovered: likewise all females, whether married or unmarried, must cover their heads when, and only when, they are engaged in spiritual activity.

Each male member is responsible to his own Head—Christ—directly and he should not accept any other headship from among men, this includes his own Teaching Elder/Leader or Minister, Pastors, Bishops, Archbishops, Popes, or Kings. Rather, every man is to look upon Christ’s under-shepherds as gifted leaders to help them to order themselves under Christ and bring maximum glory to their Head.

The relation of the Elders to the men is comparable to the relation between a father and his son. The father’s experience, advice, and instruction should never be lightly turned aside by the son. The son’s head is not his earthly father, but Christ—and that from birth. Every man in the Church has only one Head. Every married woman in the Church has Man as her head in the Lord.

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107 This word occurs three times, here and twice in Luke 10:34-35 where it refers to the care that the Good Samaritan showed.

108 See Chart 13. Title: ‘Paul’s reordering of the three headships of 1 Corinthians 11:3.”
The following chart sets out the biblical teaching on the office and qualifications for leadership in Christ’s Church. The following observations are worth noting. First, only the male members are eligible to take on the oversight of the church.109

Second, the choice of suitable candidates is further restricted to those heads of families who have managed their own house well, and restricted further to those who, not only have managed their own house well but, “whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.” Where the candidate is not a husband, or a husband who has no children, it is doubtful if he is eligible to be an Elder because he lacks the evidence that he can take care of a smaller unit—the family. However, if Paul means that should a man be married and should he have a family then he should be able to demonstrate that he is capable of taking care of the church; and if he has a family and does not demonstrate that he can lead it then this is positive evidence that he is not likely to led the church well. However, the unmarried or childless husband cannot be positively tested in this way. But should negative evidence disqualify him? Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Paul points out that “the unmarried man is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he shall please the Lord; and the married man is anxious for the things of the world, how he shall please the wife” (1 Corinthians 7:32-33). The unmarried man is in a better position to lead “in word and teaching” because he is less distracted (7:35). Does the Spirit give the gift of leading only to fathers? Is it a father-specific gift? Jesus was not married. Paul may not have been either. But who can doubt that they had this gift in abundance? Thus the unmarried man (or childless husband) may qualify if in other spheres he shows he has leadership qualities (in youth work, as an employer, or in a position of responsibility in the work place, etc.). If the gift of leadership is given only to fathers then it would seem like a penalty against the unmarried man (or childless husband) if they are debarred from all church offices on the grounds of their greater devotion to Christ! Such men (and childless husbands) must be “blameless” in character—morally and spiritually, as the married candidates are required to be.

Third, the stipulation that the prospective Elder must be living with only one wife (when the culture of those times countenanced two or more) has behind it the teaching that the Elder’s family ought to be a model example for all other families in the church to emulate and follow.110

Fourth, he must be “apt to teach” and this in the public assembly of God’s people. He has to be fit spiritually in order to exhort publicly and to confute those who contradict the teaching delivered to him. Such a public ministry can only fall—by its nature—to the male members of the Christian community, and mature ones at that.

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109 Yet Baldwin (op. cit., p. 16) can say: ‘It is clear that the New Testament writers did not draw the sharp distinctions between men and women in the church which some of our contemporaries maintain to have been the case.’ A case of wishful thinking on her part.

110 The Greek Orthodox Church mistakenly made it a compulsory condition of all its parish priests that they had to be once-married men (see A. J. Maclean, ‘The Ministry of Women,’ Church Quarterly Review 89 (1919/1920) 193-215, esp. p. 208).
THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR PUBLIC OFFICE IN THE CHURCH

"IF A MAN DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO LEAD HIS OWN HOUSE, HOW CAN HE LOOK AFTER A CONGREGATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE?"—1 Timothy 3:5

HIS STATUS
12 2 6 Has only one wife

HIS WIFE
11 She is faithful in everything
11 She is serious
11 She is not a slanderer
11 She is sober/self-controlled

IN THE HOME
HIS CHILDREN
12 4 His children are subordinate
 6 His children are believers
 6 & have a good report by all
12 4 He manages his home well

IN SOCIETY
7 Has a good reputation with those outside the church

NEGATIVE
8 2 7 Not given to wine
2 7 Not physically violent
3 7 Nor a contentious person
8 Not given to double-talk
8 2 7 Not greedy for money
3 7 Nor a lover of money

POSITIV En
8 Righteous and holy
8 Self-controlled
8 Sober and sober-minded
3 8 Gentle and kind
2 8 A lover of strangers
8 8 A lover of good men and things

IN CHARACTER
NEGATIVE
6 Not a recent convert

POSITIV En
2 Able to teach
9 Steadfastness in the faith
9 Able to exhort in sound teaching
9 Able to confute objectors
10 Period of probation first

IN SPIRITUALITY

"BLAMELESS"

IN WORK

"AND THE THINGS WHICH YOU DID HEAR FROM ME THROUGH MANY WITNESSES, THESE THINGS BE COMMITTING TO STEADFAST MEN, WHO SHALL BE CAPABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO"—2 Timothy 2:2
“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:23-24, NIV).

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

We have examined so far the biblical grounds for the headship relation between Man and Woman, and between wife and husband, and found that it fitted into the much broader picture of delegated authorities that pervade all of God’s creation.

Every aspect of God’s creation has delegated authority or hierarchies built into it. This can be seen in the animal world, the human family, the angelic orders, and the Divine Family. Every head is subject to a higher head with God head over all. It turns out, therefore, that the terms subordination, subjection, and submission are not so alien to Christian theology, or offensive to Christian ethics, as some have made them out to be. The lover of God and Christ would find these terms far too weak to express their deepest desires to throw themselves utterly and completely at their feet in utter devotion to them: “His yoke is easy and His burden is light,” would be their testimony.

In the practical outworking of these terms Paul presents Christ Jesus as the supreme example of what true submission means. The Woman is called upon to follow His example. Man, as her head, is called upon to follow His Head’s example of love and care for her as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. Once again there is nothing offensive or unbecoming in such love and submission. The Holy Spirit makes no provision for female Elders. Scripture teaches that “the elder must be the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2), never “…the wife of one husband.” As Bruce Waltke noted: “One cannot appoint a wife as a leader of the church without upsetting this government for if a wife were an elder her husband would be subject to her authority: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority” (Heb 13:17).”

The next section will deal the issue of the visible signs on the head to denote the different powers that God has given to men and women. Here we give a summary of that discussion in order that the reader may have a clear understanding and preview of how this topic relates to the preceding before engaging with the details themselves.

Concerning women covering their heads in the presence of God it will be shown that it is misleading to make it the sign of subjection to her husband when in fact its counterpart in the natural world is the woman’s own hair—her glory. If it were the sign of her subjection to her husband then she would have to wear an artificial covering on her head from the moment she was born to the moment she died.

As woman’s natural covering of hair was designed to bring her glory (doxa) and acceptance among men in the natural world, and make her acceptable/desirable to be in their presence, so her artificial covering was also designed by God to bring her authority (exousia) and acceptance among spirit beings in the spiritual world, and make her acceptable to be in their presence (“because of the angels”)

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111 Ephesians 5:32 says she is to be subject ‘in everything’. Banks (op. cit., p. 86) remarks on this: ‘There can be no escaping the all-inclusive character of her response here, but it is important to note that it is to issue from devotion, not from fear or duty, and that the thrust of the Greek term used is more of her ‘ordering herself under’ her husband than of her ‘submitting herself’ to him.’


In covering her head in the presence of God and His angels, the woman (married and unmarried) is accepting her place in His authority structures, which involves her relationship toward Man. Man in uncovering his head in the presence of God and His angels is likewise acknowledging and accepting his relationship toward God. There is no alternative to these God-ordained symbols. They provide a visible distinction between male and female worshippers.

Most commentators quickly got lost in expounding 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 because they looked among the customs of those times for an explanation for the significance of the covering. Once the “covering” (to be more precise the text reads, “having down [from the] head”; κατά κεφαλής ήδεικνύμεν) was mistakenly identified with the cultural veil (καλυμμα), it was given a cultural meaning. Once the false identification was set up it was just a matter of time before it was discarded because its cultural significance was judged to be incompatible with the Gospel.

Lastly, that the Head of the Church has committed the government of his Church to those who bear “the image and glory of God,” that is, to gifted male members who are clearly in control of their own house, reflecting God’s control of His house (Num 12:8). Both Man and God share the common distinction of beings Heads; Woman is not a head in her own right. The Christian woman may find no difficulty in accepting this if she wants to please her Lord and Saviour who has begun to transform her former unrestrained spirit into a “gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” She may recognise that the family structure was not intended to be a democracy where the wife and children could out-vote their father and impose their will on the head of the family. She may recognise that she belongs to an hierarchical structure, and that she does have God-given authority over her children, and they are to honour their father and mother because of this God-given authority. She may recognise that the family is not only hierarchical but patriarchal. Similarly, she may recognise the same form of government in Christ’s Church.

Man is still her head and Christ is still the Head of Man. There is no question of democracy where the men may out-vote the Head of the Church (for example, by allowing something which He has disallowed). They are called upon to carry out the will of their Head, not to formulate it for him. What Christ is to the Church, the husband should be to his family.

In conclusion, Elisabeth Elliot’s sums up one popular anti-ordination viewpoint in “Why I Oppose the Ordination of Women”:

According to Robertson and Plummer: ‘If a woman thinks lightly of shocking men, she must remember that she is also shocking the angels, who of course are present at public worship’ (A. Robertson and A. Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark] 1929, p. 233). The reference to angels takes on a new meaning in light of the Corinthians’ apparent feeling that they had arrived at an angelic status which seems to have influenced their view of marriage according to Donald Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 266-357. On the Qumran evidence for angels in their assemblies see Raymond F. Collins, First Corinthians (Sacra Pagina Series, Vol. 7; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 412.


115 Yahweh commended Moses for being “faithful in all My house” (Num 12:6) because his attitude was to do His will in everything, “for I have not done them of my own will” (Num 16:28) he could claim.
The fruit of the Spirit which is called meekness is, I believe, the ability to see one’s proper place in the scheme of things. If I as a woman have been endowed with certain gifts that may be good for the “use of edifying,” let me use them within the boundaries set, recognizing that the Spirit of God does not contradict himself. Any attempt to obfuscate the lines drawn will not only impoverish the one who makes the attempt but also deprive the Body of Christ of depth, of variety, and of that maturity which is described as “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Her assessment of the situation could not be put more starkly: “The Church must choose between the ordination and the subordination of women. Which does God command? If subordination is the command of God, ordination is excluded. It is a contradiction.” The theological choice would be better stated as being between abolishing or establishing Man’s headship.

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116 Christianity Today, June 6, 1976, p. 16.
PART 4. OVERVIEW OF HISTORY: GOD HATES DIVORCE

4.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

We are privileged to be living 2000 years after the fulfilment of the major part of God’s plan for humanity. We can look back with the advantage of hindsight to see that the God of all the earth was right in all His ways and dealings with mankind. We see most of all His rule, His governance, His control of history, but most of all we see His sovereignty in His dealings with humans. Humans are His own offspring—His family, set on this earth to love and serve Him, and to govern the earth on His behalf. He created the body of His son, Adam, directly from the substance of the ground, and breathed into his body His own life-force, so that in every sense Adam represented the image of the incorruptible God. Adam did not have his origin in a pre-existing animal body, but from the beginning God created a unique body in which the life-force that He breathed into Adam would be able to express itself fully. God took on such a body Himself when He walked with Adam in the cool of the day as they communed together, like father and son.

God created a helpmate for Adam in the form of Eve. She was created from a pre-existing creature—from Adam. She derived both her substance and her life-force from him. She was made to be dependent on him, and to serve him in a submissive capacity. He was, by his constitution and through marriage, her head, and she was responsible and answerable to him, as he was to God, his father.

Then came the catastrophic spiritual and biological fall of both Adam and Eve. “From a woman was the beginning of sin; and because of her we all die,” so wrote Ben Sira about 200 BC (Ecclus 25:24). Two hundred and fifty years later Paul made the same point, “And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner” (1 Timothy 2:14). “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). “Unto the woman he [God] said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over [κυρίως] you” (Gen 3:16).

117Some have understood the text to mean that woman would seek to dominate man. How this curse has worked itself out in secular society can be seen in Menander’s advice, “The wife ought always to take second place in speaking (legein), and the husband ought in all things to take the lead. For there is not a home in which a wife takes first place which has not been utterly ruined” (edition by A. Körte [1910], quoted from Quinn & Wacker, 1-2 Timothy, p. 225). Menander, the Attic poet, lived between 343 and 292 BC. It is interesting to note the Jewish attitude toward ‘headship’ in Jesus’ day as seen through the writings of Josephus and Philo. Josephus (Con. Ap. 2.201), ‘The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority (to kratos) has been given by God to man.’ Philo (Op. Mun. 167) wrote, ‘In the next place she tasted deprivation of liberty and the authority of the husband at her side, whose command she must perforce obey.’ Others have pointed out as a truism of anthropology that male leadership is normative in every culture and that there is no evidence of matriarchy (see Bruce K. Waltke, “The Role of Women in the Bible,” CRUX 31 [no. 3, 1995] 29-40, esp. p. 36, who has a cross-reference to George Gilder, Wealth and Poverty [New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981], p. 136.).

118 Luke 22:25, “And he said to them, ‘The kings of the nations do exercise lordship [κυριεύω] over them, and those exercising authority [ἐξουσιάζουσι] over them are called Benefactors, but you are not so, but he who is greater among you, let him be as the younger; and he who is leading [ἡγούμενος], as he who is serving.’ In the parallel passages in Matthew 20:25 and Mark 10:42 the terms are κατακυριεύω and καταεξουσιάζω respectively. Luke’s term is found in Romans 6:9

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The Christian always takes the view that whatever God does is right and proper. The Christian acknowledges that quite often God’s ways are not his ways, and God’s thoughts are not his thoughts, but there is an implicit and instinctual belief that the God of all the earth does what is right in His own eyes. The Christian falls in behind God and seeks to understand His dealings with mankind.

Genesis contains the record of God’s dealings with Adam’s descendants. God foretold that there would be enmity in the earth as a result of Adam’s sin. This enmity would be between the seed of the woman (the ‘sons of God’) and the seed of the serpent, the devil (the ‘sons of man’). The ‘seed of the woman’ has been identified with the Lord Jesus, who crushed the head of Satan on the cross.

The promise was made to Abraham that his ‘seed’ would bring a blessing to the entire world. This ‘seed’ has been explicitly identified as the Lord Jesus Christ in Acts 13:23 and Galatians 3:16. This ‘seed’ is said to indwell every disciple of the Lord Jesus, “Every one who has been begotten of God, does not sin, because his seed in him remains, and he is not able to sin, because he has been begotten of God” (1 John 3:9).

The announcement that there would be warfare between Christ and the Devil for as long as human life existed on the earth is borne out to this very day. Both Christ and the Devil will have their disciples, and they will be in continual struggle for supremacy. It is Satan’s goal to rob God of His children by every means possible. The key tactic of Satan is to use mixed marriages. We can divide world history into three eras. First, the era from Adam to Noah’s flood, second, from Abraham to the coming of Christ, and third, from Christ to the present day.

4.2. FROM ADAM TO NOAH’S FLOOD

The hatred that God placed between the offspring of the woman (Christ) and the offspring of the serpent (Satan), manifested itself in two streams of humanity, a very small one (Christ’s sons) and a very large one (Satan’s sons). Cain killed righteous Abel, and was banished from the presence of God. He constitutes the seed of the serpent. He multiplied. His descendants were the “sons of man.” Seth, constituted the righteous line, and he, too, multiplied. His descendants were the “sons of God.” It was always God’s intention to fulfil His promise to Adam that of his seed would come a future Redeemer of all mankind. To fulfil that promise it was essential to keep the two streams of humanity apart and distinct, hence the emphasis placed on the distinct genealogical descent of Seth’s line, which is kept apart from the distinct genealogical descent of Cain’s line. The one plots the descendants of a righteous man, and the other plots the descendants of a murderer. These distinct lines must not be blurred or mixed if the promise was to be fulfilled. It is Luke who gives us the pure line of descent from Adam to Christ via Seth’s descendants.

where death has no more lordship over the risen Christ, and in 6:14 sin has no more lordship over those under grace. In Romans 7:1 the marriage law has lordship over a man as long as he lives, and in 14:7 Christ is lord of the living and the dead. Jesus is called Lord of lords in 1 Timothy 6:15. In 2 Corinthians 1:24 Paul denies that he and Timothy acted as lords over the Corinthians but, rather, he saw himself as a fellow-worker with them. These are the seven occurrences of Luke’s term in the NT. Matthew’s term occurs in Acts 19:16 where a demon-possessed man leap on the seven sons of Sceva and overpowered them. Peter warns elders not to exercise lordship over church members but be a pattern for them to follow (1 Pet 5:3). Matthew’s term occurs only four times in the NT. Because each man has Christ as his Lord then no man may be lord of another man. This agrees with Christ’s headship. As regards headship all men are equal and no man (bishop or elder) may dominate another man against his conscience toward God. This is not to rule out church discipline. Paul is aware that the authority of an apostle which he had received from Christ was to be used to build up the Church (2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:9) not to ‘cast it down,’ but if necessary he would use his apostolic authority to discipline the disorderly in order to preserve the flock from being led astray.
Satan attempted to destroy the fulfilment of the promise to Adam by killing Abel, who would have constituted the righteous line leading to Christ. He may have thought that the seed of Christ was being carried in the loins of Abel. But God raised up a replacement for Abel in the form of Seth, and Seth carried the seed of Christ in his loins. Seth carried the seed of Abraham, and Abraham carried the seed of David, and Christ was of the seed of David according to the flesh (John 7:42; Romans 1:3).

God frustrated the purpose of Satan, but Satan had another strategy—mixed marriages. If he could get the two lines of descent to intermarry, then there would be no ‘righteous line’ leading to the ‘seed of the woman.’ So we read that God was sorry that he had made man on the earth. The descendants of Seth were as wicked as the descendants of Cain, and because they were birds of a feather, they naturally intermarried. The ‘sons of God’ (Seth’s descendants, the so-called righteous line) married the daughters of the ‘sons of men’ (Cain’s descendants). Thus Satan’s strategy worked. The two lines of descent were now intermingled. The distinctness of the two lines of physical descent was so badly compromised that a direct line leading from Seth to Jesus was in real danger of breaking down completely. So wicked had the totality of mankind become that there was only one man left on the earth whom God regarded as ‘righteous,’ namely, Noah. It was at this point that God decided to destroy the entire seed of the serpent, and start all over again with a single righteous man and his three sons and their wives. Because Noah was a direct descendant of Seth, God ensured—by means of the extermination of all mankind except the seed of Noah—that the Messiah’s genealogy from Adam, via Seth, to Noah, could not be altered or frustrated by Satan, because Satan had no descendants left after the Flood. All future generations of mankind would be Seth’s descendants. Noah’s Flood defeated Satan’s strategy to use mixed marriages to frustrate God’s purpose. But Satan was not finished. He did not admit defeat. He would bide his time.

4.3. FROM NOAH TO JESUS

Noah had three sons. The eldest was Japheth, then Shem, then the youngest Ham. Ham dishonoured his father Noah for which God cursed him and Canaan, his son. So Ham and his descendants replaced Cain and his descendants to became the seed of the serpent. So, once again, the battle is joined between the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘sons of man.’ Once again the whole earth becomes disobedient. God said to Noah, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” This is not what men wanted. They wanted to remain in one place. To prevent their dispersion they built the Tower of Babel to frustrate God’s expressed will for them. But God frustrated their will by confounding their one language, “and from there Yahweh scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth,” and in this way He imposed His will on mankind.

The dispersal of Noah’s descendants to all the ends of the earth was not a random affair. God chose where each nation was to dwell on His earth (Deut 32:4; 2:5). In His wisdom He moved the descendants of Canaan—whom He had cursed—to Palestine. He could have moved them to India or Britain, and so they would be well away from Shem’s line, which was now the continuation of Seth’s line, leading to the ‘seed of the woman.’

Abraham was a direct descendant of Shem, but all his contemporaries had long lost their connection to the true religion and had become idol-worshippers. It looked as though, once again, Satan was going to frustrate God’s plan to fulfil His promise to Adam. But just when all seemed lost, God chose a 75-year old, childless, man, and instructed him to leave his tribe and journey to the land of Canaan. God’s ways are inscrutable, because He cursed Canaan, and yet He gave him the land of Canaan, which He had foreordained to be the land of His Messiah. So now the seed of the serpent would be living cheek by jowl with the ‘seed of the woman’ (Abraham).

Abraham almost played into the hands of Satan when he visited Abimelech, king of Gerer, and out of fear for his life asked Sarah not to divulge the fact that she was his wife. God had to step in and retrieve the situation. Then Isaac—himself the subject of a promise of God to Abraham and Sarah—was born. But he, too, almost jeopardised his wife in the same manner, but Abimelech, king
of Gerer, and now king of the Philistines (Gen 26:1)\textsuperscript{119} realised who Rebekah was and was angry with Isaac, informing him of the great danger he could have put one of his men in, if he had lain with her—a married woman. Abimelech was so frightened that Rebekah might be violated that he demanded the death penalty for anyone who committed adultery with Rebekah (Gen 26:11). There may be a remembrance of the fear of God he, or his father, experienced in a similar incident with Sarah.

Satanic threats to the purity of the line of descent leading from Adam, through Seth, through Noah, through Shem, through Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, were unsuccessful. Satan would have to bide his time and wait for another opportunity, but it was a long time in coming. He had to wait 430 years while Jacob’s family grew to nationhood in Egypt, composing an army of over 600,000 men over twenty years of age.

When Israel left Egypt in a long column, the Amalekites butchered the stragglers in the rear and God saw it (Deut 25:17-19). He determined to exterminate the Amalekites, not just for this particular, cowardly sin but because of their, and the Canaanites, whole lifestyle while living on the land that He gave to Abraham and his descendants until the coming of the Messiah. King Saul was eventually given the task of carrying out the sentence of death on them, about 409 years later (in 1037 BC; cf. 1 Sam 15), showing that a holy God cannot let sin go unpunished. He shows mercy on whom He chooses to show mercy, and through this displays His inscrutability. He is not a man to think like a fallen man.

God chose the nation of Israel to be His Elect people because they were the fulfilment of His promise to Abraham to make him into a great nation. The entire nation was raised to the state of being holy to Yahweh. They were forbidden to intermarry with the surrounding nations (Deut 7:3). This blocked off one of Satan’s oft-used strategies to frustrate God’s long-term plan of sending a Messiah to intercede for the entire world. Indeed, God commanded the extermination of Ham’s descendants in Palestine. These consisted of seven nations (Deut 4:32) who were mightier than Israel whose army numbered over 600,000, so the prospect of defeating nations with armies greater than Israel’s was a daunting challenge, but they had Yahweh as their commander-in-chief, and that insured victory every time. The seven nations were the Fittites, Girgasites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. These nations were to exterminated, men, women and children. They were to show no mercy or pity. They had to be ruthlessly efficient because their remnant could lead them astray from their pure worship of Yahweh (Dt 20:17; 2:34; 3:6; 7:2, 16; Exod 23:23). In the case of nations outside Palestine, who fought with them, only the males were to be exterminated. The women and children were to be spared (Deut 20:13). If an Israelite city or town apostatized they had to show the same ruthless efficiency to exterminate every man, woman and child, because they, like leaven, could contaminate the entire nation in time (Deut 17:5). God was not going to tolerate any apostates living on His territory. To ensure that He could hold the nation in check until the arrival of His Messiah, He introduced the Torah to hedge them in, and prevent them adopting Canaanite practices. Yahweh imposed His religion on the entire nation. They were a rebellious nation from the moment they left Egypt (Deut 9:7, 24). Moses experienced their stiff-necked opposition to him and to Yahweh from the moment he knew them, he tells us (Deut 9:24), and if they were like that while he was alive and holding them in check he dreaded to think what they would do once he was dead (Deut 31:27). He knew this nation inside out, and so he predicted they would “become utterly corrupt” as soon as he was dead, and that this would break out in the distant future as well, leading to disaster (Deut 31:29).

On the whole Satan was unsuccessful in getting the Israelites to intermarry until after Israel returned from the Babylonian exile (from 605 to 536 BC). While Ezra and Nehemiah were away in Babylon the people intermarried with non-Israelites. When Ezra returned in 445 BC he discovered

\textsuperscript{119} There are at least forty years between Abraham’s encounter with Abimelech (Gen 20:2) and Isaac’s encounter with a king of the same name (Gen 26:1), that it is possible that ‘Abimelech’ was not a personal name, but like ‘Pharaoh’ a title.
that Israel had intermarried with some of these seven nations whom they had failed to exterminate, such as the Canaanites, Hivites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Amorites, Ammonites, Moabites and Egyptians (Ezra 9:1). Ezra tore out the hair of his head and beard in utter horror, because he, more than any other priest at that time, realised the physical (and spiritual) significance of this contamination of flesh (and genes). “For they have taken some of their [foreign] daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass” (Ezra 9:2). Ezra gathered the exiles together and confessed the sin of the people quoting Yahweh’s command that they were never to intermarry with foreign women. Ezra then forced all these foreign wives and their unclean children to be separated from the “holy flesh” of Israel. The contamination could have been catastrophic because it had reached from the leaders down to the peasants, including the priesthood itself. This could have spelt disaster for the identification of the Messiah that Moses had prophesied would come. It was absolutely imperative that they guarded their racial purity, because intermarriages brought in foreign religions and practices, which Yahweh would not tolerate on His soil. Ezra was successful in withdrawing the clean from the unclean, the holy flesh from the unholy flesh. The genealogical records were cleaned up and good order reinstated.

4.3.1. The horror of adultery and fornication outside Israel

4.3.1.1. The incident of Abimelech and Sarah

We noted above that the punishment for divorce was a life-sentence, but not a death sentence, which Yahweh could have laid down. Consider the case of unintentional adultery between Abimelech, king of Gerar, and Sarah, wife of Abraham. Abraham lived between 2166 and 1991 BC. God threatened the king with death if he did not return Sarah to her husband. The context is as follows:

1 And Abraham journeys from there toward the land of the Negeb, and dwells between Qadesh and Shur, and he lodges awhile in Gerar. 2 And Abraham says of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar reaches out and takes Sarah.

3 And God comes in unto Abimelech in a dream of the night, and says to him, “Lo, you are dying over the woman whom you took, and she is being owned of an owner [= she is married to a husband].” 4 And Abimelech had not drawn near unto [= lain with] her, and he says, “Lord, also a righteous nation do you slay [because of me]? 5 He said to me, did he not, 'She [is] my sister'? And she—she herself said, 'He [is] my brother.' In the honesty of my heart, and in the innocency of my palms, I did this.”

6 And God says to him in the dream, “Yes, I—I have known that in the honesty of your heart you did this, and I restrained you, even I, from sinning against Me, for this reason I have not allowed you to come unto her. 7 And now, send back the man’s wife, because he [is] inspired, and he prays on your behalf, and live! And if you are not sending back, know that dying you do die, you, and all that you have.”

8 And Abimelech rises early in the morning, and calls for all his servants, and speaks all these words in their ears, and the men fear exceedingly. 9 And Abimelech calls for Abraham, and says to him, “What have you done to us? and what have I sinned against you, that you have brought upon me, and upon my kingdom, a great sin? Practices which are not done you have done to me.” 10 Abimelech also says to Abraham, “What have you seen [wrong in my land] that you have done this [evil] thing?” 11 And Abraham replies, “Because I said, ‘Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they have killed me for the sake of my wife.’ And, in any case, truly she is my sister, daughter of my father, only not daughter of my mother, and she becomes my wife. 13 And it comes to pass, when God
caused me to wander from my father's house, that I say to her, 'This [is] your kindness which you do for me: at every place where we arrive, say of me, 'He [is] my brother.'"

14 And Abimelech takes sheep and oxen, and servants and female servants, and gives them to Abraham, and sends Sarah his wife back to him. 15 And Abimelech says, "Look, my land [is] before thee, where it is good in your eyes, dwell there." 16 And to Sarah he said, "Lo, I have given a thousand silverlings to your brother. Look indeed, it is to you a covering of eyes, to all who are alongside you; and by all [with me]. And she is being cleared [of any impropriety].

17 And Abraham prays to God, and God heals Abimelech and his wife, and his second wives, and they bear, 18 because Yahweh restraining did restrain every womb of the house of Abimelech, over the matter of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

Note in 20:6 that God sees the probability of adultery, not so much as a sin against Abraham, her husband, but as a sin against Him. This means that adultery is first and foremost a sin against God, and only secondarily a sin against Abraham. Jesus noted that when a man divorces his wife and remarries "he is being adulterous against her" (Mark 10:11). From the Abimelech incident we can infer that it is also a sin against God, because he has violated the law of union (Romans 7:2).

King Abimelech refers to adultery as "a great sin," and was absolutely clear that he would not knowingly commit such a great sin. The claim was recognised by God as true, and so He stepped in and restrained the king from sinning. As far back as the late third millennium BC, adultery was recognised by non-Hebrews as "a great sin," and deserving of the death penalty. This traditional punishment was carried forward into the Sinai Covenant document.

Note in 20:3 God says, "Lo, you are dying over the woman whom you took." The verb is the participle, 'are dying,' which means that from the moment Sarah came into the possession of Abimelech he began to die as a human being, and he would have continued down that track if he had continued in his possession of another man’s wife. Also, from the moment Sarah came into the possession of Abimelech, God cursed the wombs of all the king's wives, and the curse was lifted only when Sarah was returned to Abraham.

The lesson that comes out of this incident is that unintentional adultery is still adultery and "a great sin" in the eyes of God, and a sin against Him. In modern times, many think that because they remarried in all innocence that somehow this is not adultery. God does not come in a vision of the night to warn such so-called ‘innocents,’ but He does warn them through the faithful preaching of His Word, and through internet works such as this one. The man or woman who is sleeping with another man’s wife, or another wife’s husband, must immediately cease that relationship and send back that person to their first partners. Only in this way will the curse of eternal death be removed that presently hovers over such evil remarriages (Colossians 3:5-6).

4.3.1.2. The incident of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife

Joseph, who lived between 1915 and 1805 BC, was brought into Egypt at seventeen years of age, to be Potiphar’s butler, but he was trusted by Potiphar so much that he had charge of his entire household. When Joseph was in his mid-to-late-twenties, the biblical record informs us that he was “beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance” (Gen 39:6), and this was noticed by Potiphar’s wife who tried to seduce him but she failed, and she failed because of Joseph’s theology.

The incident reads (Gen 39:2-20):

120 This is an Egyptian idiom, meaning no one can infer any wrong, which, in this case, is presented under the form of an expensive present offered in compensation for a non-existent wrong.
And Yahweh is with Joseph, and he is a prosperous man, and he is in the house of his lord the Egyptian. And his lord sees that Yahweh is with him, and all that he is doing Yahweh is causing to prosper in his hand. And Joseph finds grace in his eyes and serves him. And he appoints him over his house, and all that he has he has given into his hand. And it comes to pass from the time that he appointed him over his house, and over all that he has, that Yahweh blesses the house of the Egyptian for Joseph’s sake, and the blessing of Yahweh is on all that he has, in the house, and in the field. And he leaves all that he has in the hand of Joseph, and he has not known anything that he has, except the bread which he is eating. And Joseph is of a fair form, and of a fair appearance.

And it comes to pass after these things, that his lord’s wife lifts up her eyes to Joseph, and says, “Lie with me.” And he refuses, and says to his lord’s wife, “Look, my lord has not known what [is] with me in the house, and all that he has he has given into my hand. No one is greater in this house than I, and he has not withheld from me anything, except you, because you [are] his wife. And how shall I do this great evil? For then have I sinned against God.”

And it comes to pass in her speaking to Joseph day by day, that he has not listened to her, to lie near her—to be with her. And she grasps him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” And he leaves his garment in her hand, and flees, and goes without.

And it comes to pass when she sees that he has left his garment in her hand, and flees without, that she calls for the men of her house, and speaks to them, saying, “See, he has brought in to us a man, a Hebrew, to mock us. He has come in to me, to lie with me, and I call with a loud voice, and it comes to pass, when he hears that I have lifted up my voice and call, that he leaves his garment by me, and flies, and goes without.” And she places his garment by her, until the coming in of his lord into his house.

And she speaks to him according to these words, saying, “The Hebrew servant whom you brought for us, came in to me to play with me. And it comes to pass, when I lift my voice and call, that he leaves his garment by me, and flies without.” And it comes to pass when his lord hears the words of his wife, which she had spoken to him, saying, “According to these things has your servant done to me,” that his anger burns and Joseph’s lord takes him, and puts him into the round-house, a place where the king’s prisoners [are] bound, and he is there in the round-house.

Joseph’s respect for the marriage bond was such that when he was tempted to take advantage of his high status in the household of Potiphar, he informed Potiphar’s wife in no uncertain terms what he thought of her attempt to seduce him. He told her plainly, “How shall I do this great evil? For then have I sinned against God.” Joseph regarded it as a “great evil” to sleep with another man’s wife. But he also states that it is not so much a sin against her husband, which it was, according to Jesus (see Mark 10:11), but a sin against God.

Both king Abimelech and Joseph regard sleeping with another person’s spouse as “a great sin,” and “a great evil.” This is generally not how people in remarriages see their situation, but it is nevertheless true, and there will be a day of reckoning when these sins against God will receive their just punishment—exclusion from the Kingdom of God.

The writer of the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, Ben Sira, recorded the contempt that a remarried woman carried in the second-century BC. He wrote:

So also [is] a wife that leaves her husband, and brings in an heir by a stranger. For first, she was disobedient in the law of the Most High. And secondly, she trespassed against her own husband. And thirdly, she played the adulteress [hemoikeutha aor] in fornication,
and brought in children by a stranger. She shall be brought out into the congregation, and upon her children shall there be visitation. Her children shall not spread into roots, and her branches shall bear no fruit. She shall leave her memory for a curse, and her shame shall not be blotted out (Ecclus. 23:22-26).

Note that the writer sees her sin first as against God, and then against her husband, just as King Abimelech and Joseph viewed adultery and fornication.

To conclude this section we should note that nowhere in the Bible does God ever approve of divorce, use it, sanction it, or give it any credibility. In Deuteronomy 24:1-3 He describes the evil practice of divorce (introduced by man for man, and regulated by Moses) only to impose on it a punishment clause, condemning every man who divorces his wife to a life-long ban on reconciliation to her. There is nothing good about divorce. And anyone who attempts to dissolve a lawful marriage is a sinner, whether they go on to remarry or not.

4.4. FROM JESUS TO THE PRESENT DAY

The Jews managed to maintain their racial purity from the time of Ezra through to the arrival of the Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ. But then a new thing occurred. The Messiah broke down the racial barrier. Race no longer matter. The Kingdom of God was thrown wide open to all the nations of the earth to enter. Descendants of the seven Canaanite nations, the Egyptians, Moabites, Ammonites, and every Tom, Dick and Harry, plus all the Jews, were to become one, new people of God. Instead of God’s Kingdom being confined to one nation’s territory, the boundaries of the new Kingdom of God would be expanded to encompass the entire globe of the earth.

Instead of the Temple being a single building in the heart of Jerusalem, it would be found everywhere in the world. Each member of the new Kingdom would represent a single building block of the new Temple of God, making up a huge, spiritual Temple of God. Instead of an external, imposed system of law and religion, each member of the new Kingdom of God would have God’s new law inscribed internally on their hearts and in their minds. Instead of God localising His present in a single building on the earth, in future He would indwell each member of His new Kingdom.

Instead of the Torah, each new member would follow the teaching of God’s long-awaited Messiah. His teaching would take precedent over all that the Torah contained. Moses pointed to the Lord Jesus when he wrote, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, Him you shall hear. . . . And the Lord said to me, . . . ‘I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.’” (Deut 19:15-19).

Keeping the letter of the Torah was a challenge, but unless it was kept in its entirety and perfectly, then the follower of Yahweh had sinned and transgressed the Law. So demanding was the Torah that it condemned all men, for all fell short of its high requirements, especially the supreme goal to be holy as God is holy. What the Law could not do, in that it was unable to give the inner power to resist sin in the mind and heart of its followers, God introduced a New Covenant and embedded in that Covenant was a personal promise that He, God, would take up residence in the heart and mind of each member of the new Kingdom, and give them the inner power to overcome the power of sin in their body and mind.

As a way of life the Torah was now obsolete, but it was useful in that through all that God did and said, the new member of the New Covenant would be strengthened in their inner being to learn all that they could about their Creator and Saviour. What was obsolete and redundant they could lay to one side, and extract from the Torah what was good and edifying to the new nature that God had implanted in their bodies.
Behind the letter of the Law stood the spirit of the Law. The letter of the Law could be kept, but seldom its spirit, the spirit being the ultimate meaning that the Writer (God) of the Law intended it should have. He wrote, “You shall not commit adultery,” but He intended, “You shall not look lustfully on a woman to desire her.” God was pleased that the letter of His Law was observed, but by asking that the thought of adultery should never enter His people’s minds was a bridge too far for them to go. But now, by giving each new member of the New Covenant the gift of His Holy Spirit, the spirit as well as the letter could be observed and kept, and kept willingly and joyfully, and not because it was imposed upon them from the outside. God assured all His disciples that He would write His new Law on their hearts. It would be internalised. The day of the external instructions on how to please God were gone. A new method of communication between God and each member of the Body of His Son was established through the indwelling of the Son in each believer. This was a far more secure way of bonding each believer to the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the abolition of the need for genealogical or racial purity, Satan lost a valuable means for attacking the genealogical link from Adam to Christ. Luke demonstrated the link from Adam to Jesus (Luke 3) and with the completion of that link the race card became ineffectual. Jews and Gentiles could now freely intermarry with no fear of offending God. A new genealogical principle took over from the physical one. Likeness to God now became distinguishing mark of the spiritual ‘Jew’. He was not a spiritual Jew who was physically born a Jew. Neither was he a son of Abraham who was a physical descendant of Abraham (and could prove it with his own family genealogical roll). From now on all Gentiles could be ‘sons of Abraham,’ and ‘sons of God,’ through the evidence of having the same faith as Abraham in God’s promises.

God introduced a fundamental alteration in His relationship with all mankind. Where once He confined Himself to one small nation, now He burst forth to embrace all the nations whom He scattered over the face of the earth, and with wide open arms He announced that He had reconciled Himself to all peoples, nations, tribes and tongues, and all were freely invited to take up the offer of full reconciliation and become His sons and daughters. The same offer was made to Jew and non-Jew. Faith was all that was required.

Where once the great divide was between Jew and non-Jew, this was abolished, and in its place the great divide has now become between believer and non-believer. Where before the Jew was under a strict obligation to remain racially pure, now the obligation is to remain spiritually pure.

Satan had to adjust to this new era of grace that his Enemy had introduced into the world. If the new battle-line was drawn between believer and non-believer, then the race card was useless. To hurt his Enemy his tactics would have to change. He had to find ways of destroying the believer’s faith.

Two avenues were open to him. First, he could get a believer to marry an unbeliever. This was like getting the Jews to intermarry with the Canaanites, as they did in Ezra’s day. The unbeliever would then contaminate the believer’s faith and wean him away from Christ. This was like the Canaanite wife bringing her idols and religious ideas into her Jewish husband’s house. God recognised the danger of mixed marriages, so He banned them completely, and so shut off a possible leakage of His followers to His enemy (Deut 7:1-3).

The second avenue open to Satan was to smuggle in his doctrines and teachings and ideas into His Enemy’s new chosen people, the new ‘Israel of God,’ to dilute, if not replace, those of his Enemy’s Son.

Paul was not ignorant of Satan’s devices. To meet the first threat of believer marrying an unbeliever he instructed his churches:  
Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.  
For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?  
And what communion has light with darkness?  
And what accord has Christ with Beliel?  
Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?
And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?
For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore, “Come out from among them and be separate,” says the Lord. “Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters;” says the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Believers must only marry believers (1 Corinthians 7:39). This replaces the previous arrangement where Jew must only marry Jew.

To meet the second threat to the believer, namely, false knowledge and heresy, Paul puts his churches on the alert:
Now I urge you, brothers, be alert to those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own stomach, and by smooth words with flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. . . . And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly (Romans 16:17-20).

To the brothers in the church in Phillipi Paul wrote:

Brothers, join in following my example, be alert to those who so walk as you have us for a pattern. For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their stomach, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things (Phil 3:17-19).

To the brothers in the church in Thessalonica Paul wrote:

But we command you brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. . . . For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such, we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ, that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. . . . And if anyone does not obey our word in this letter, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

To Timothy Paul wrote:

Teach and exhort these things. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. By professing it some have strayed concerning the truth (1 Timothy 6:20-21).

To the brothers in the church in Thessalonica Paul wrote:

I wrote to you in a letter not to keep company with fornicators, but I certainly did not mean with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with
anyone named a brother who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

The Christian not only has a battle going on inside himself between the Spirit and the flesh, which he has to win, but he is being constantly bombarded with all kinds of false teachings and interpretations of Scripture some of which will be detrimental to his faith, and paralyse him, making him lethargic to work out his own salvation, and take the Gospel of reconciliation out into all the world.

There is no let up in the attempt of Satan to confuse young Christians, but older Christians should take on the responsibility to teach them the certainty of the things which the sacred writings of the New Covenant contain, so that they in their turn will teach the next generation.

Paul the aged, the old warrior, had a true pastor’s heart, and the older he gets the more insistent he becomes to be on the look out for the roaring lion that is the Devil, whose aim is to terrify Christians through powerful, human agents. In his letters he emphasises the need to be alert to the predatory nature of the serpent, Satan, with his subtle ways of sowing discord among brothers. He encourages church leaders to be constantly reproving, rebuking, and exhorting Christ’s disciples (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4; Titus 1:13; 2:15; 3:10). Discipline is vital for growth and maturity (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 2:6-7; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). The desire to see Christians blossom and bear much fruit in a setting of perfect harmony and unity is what the Lord Jesus wants to see in His people (Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 4:1-8; Phil 1:27; 1 Pet 3:8). Respect for church leaders should be evident among Christ’s churches (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-20; Hebrews 13:7, 17). God, in His infinite wisdom, has given us sufficient external revelation in writing to guide us into all truth. He has also given each disciple the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide each of them into all truth. He has also given us spiritual gifts which are to be used to build up and edify the Church of His Son.

Discipline, to bring out the best in the Christian, may sometimes be resented by the disciplined person, often resulting in church splits. And so fragile are some churches financially that it would result in dwindling numbers if a hint of discipline is mentioned. What would happen if a minister explained Jesus’ teaching that all remarriages, where the spouses are still alive, are adulterous relationships? With the rate of divorce and remarriage the same in Church and State, such a teaching would be dangerous for the preacher. Where there is no godly discipline for the building up of the faith of the Elect, anarchy at the spiritual level will inevitably ensue. We see the pattern at the physical level in discipling our children. If you leave them to their own devices they will accumulate vices, and end up in jail.

4.5. OVERVIEW OF INTERPRETATIONS OF JESUS’ TEACHING ON DIVORCE

There are six major explanations to account for the so-called exception clauses. They are

1. Inclusivist Interpretation (‘not even the case of fornication’). Porneia means any unlawful sex act, including adultery.

2. Preterative View or the Exclusivist/Augustinian View, where Jesus ducks the issue with a ‘no comment’ [“I do not discuss ‘fornication’”], or, ‘setting aside the matter of πορνεία.’ Porneia means ‘whatever uncleanness means in Deuteronomy 24:1.’

3. Separation View (the exception permits separation but not divorce). Porneia means any unlawful sex act, including adultery.

(4) Offense-Clarification View (divorce based on porneia is not adulterous, because it was committed before she was divorced). Porneia means adultery before a divorce.

(5) Permissible Divorce [Patristic] (takes the exception at face value). Porneia means any unlawful sex act, including adultery. “He who divorces his wife is guilty of adultery unless he is forced to do so because his wife has committed adultery, in which case she is responsible for the sin that such divorce instances.” (Explanation of Mt 5:32)

(6) Betrothal Interpretation. Porneia means premarital sex.

4.5.1. The Preterative view

This should more accurately be called the ‘focus clause’ solution. Jesus is said in this theory to refuse to consider the ‘case of porneia.’ The so-called ‘exception clause’ is, in fact, a ‘focus clause,’ on this view. Here Jesus puts the spotlight on those divorces obtained for non-fornication causes, and condemns them, but does not explicitly condemn divorces obtained for fornication. Matthew 19:9 would then be translated as: “I say to you that whoever divorces his wife (I am not speaking about fornication) and marries another commits adultery.”

This interpretation acknowledges that the Gospel of Matthew, which was written for the Jews, does not specifically rule out divorce for fornication. This interpretation limits Jesus’ condemnation of divorces obtained for non-fornication causes, and divorces based on hate. While this interpretation leaves a large loophole in Jesus’ teaching on divorce in Matthew’s Gospel, we are assured that when the readers of Matthew read Mark and Luke—which were Gospels written to the Greeks and Romans respectively—they would realise that Matthew had an exception at 19:9 and 5:32, which those Gospels must take into account lest they misunderstand Jesus, and make Him out to be more absolutist than He really was. Likewise, when the readers of Mark and Luke read Matthew they would realise that Jesus was not as absolutist as they had been led to believe by Mark and Luke.

4.5.2. Criticisms of the ‘focus clauses’ solution in Matthew

Such a targeted focus lets those who obtained their divorces on the grounds of fornication off the hook. They are not condemned anywhere in Matthew. This opens the door to the possibility that divorce for fornication was not disallowed by Jesus, on the grounds that what is not condemned is permitted.

Is Matthew to be read in the light of Mark and Luke, who both present an absolutist position ruling out divorce on any grounds, or are Mark and Luke to be read in the light of Matthew?

If the former, then the universal scope of Mark and Luke must be narrowed to reflect the focus on one class of divorcees who are not guilty of adultery if they remarry. As a result of this focusing on one particular group, no criticism is made of the other divorce group.

If the latter, this would justify the interpretation of the historic Christian churches of the Reformation to read Matthew’s clauses as ‘exception clauses’ to what is said in Mark and Luke, on the grounds that all four Gospels would have been consulted and thoroughly examined before coming to a definitive understanding of Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage.

If the answer is the former, then, why, when Matthew came to write his Gospel some 15 years (according to some very early source) after this confrontation with the Pharisees did he (or the Holy Spirit) create a deliberate misunderstanding of Jesus’ position on divorce? The parallel in Mark 10 shows that the editing of what Jesus said was in the hands of each of the Gospel writers. Mark deliberately omits information that Matthew admits, and vice versa. And what Mark omits is done with an eye to conveying the truth of Jesus’ teaching to his target audience (the Romans) in as clear a manner as he can. Telling half the truth amounts to a half-truth.

On the presupposition that the Gospels do not present contradictory records of Jesus’ teaching on divorce, the assumption must be that Matthew, Mark and Luke are singing from the
same hymn sheet as they now read. Matthew is not falling short of what Mark and Luke are saying on Jesus’ teaching, especially on the issue of divorce.

The Gospels were written for distinct cultural communities. Where Mark and Luke have successfully conveyed the full truth of Jesus’ teaching on divorce to the Greeks and Romans respectively, Matthew, we are informed, failed to do the same to his Jewish audience. He conveys half-truths twice. It is argued that Matthew allowed himself to present half the truth because this was all the Jews were given at that time. This might explain away Matthew 19:9 but not Matthew 5:32. Why, on the only two occasions that Matthew records Jesus’ teaching on divorce does he insert the ‘focus clause’ on both occasions? In the Sermon on the Mount there is no dispute with the Pharisees. There must be a reason why Jesus feels the need to qualify what He is saying to a Jewish audience, but no need to qualify His statement when His Gospel is preached to a Gentile audience, by the Holy Spirit, through the Gospels of Mark and Luke.

So deficient is Matthew in conveying the true teaching of Jesus on divorce that the Jews have to go to the Gentiles, and read the Gospels written to the Gentiles in order to discover the full extent of Jesus’ teaching on divorce. This is a serious weakness in this scenario, apart from the danger of misrepresenting the integrity of Matthew. A solution which requires us to look down on Matthew as being incapable of recording Jesus’ teaching to make sure he does not misrepresent it, is a suspect solution.

It is surprising, therefore, that Wenham & Heth devoted a chapter to it, and even more surprising that Abel Isaksson is criticised by them for not considering this view in his major study of solutions. But should not Isaksson be congratulated for showing good discernment and focusing the attention of serious scholars on biblical solutions that translate the Greek text in front of them? There are hares and hairs.

4.5.3. Criticisms of the betrothal interpretation

The only criticism of any substance made against this view by Wenham & Heth is the observation that it restricts the meaning of ‘fornication.’ See 6.6. for a fuller critique of the betrothal interpretation.

Of greater substance is the objection (but not made by Wenham & Heth) that the question put to Jesus concerned the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which is explicitly dealing with a consummated marriage, and not with a betrothal marriage. Consequently the idea that Jesus inserted the exceptive clause to cover the case of the betrothed husband who divorced his betrothed wife ‘on the grounds of fornication,’ is dismissed on the grounds that He starts off talking about a married man divorcing a married woman and so the exception must refer back to the same married pair.

This criticism would have some substance if the negative μὴ must be translated as ‘except’ in Matthew 19:9. However, if 19:9 and 5:32 deal with the same exception, then the 5:32 exceptive clause (‘apart from the case of betrothal fornication’) favours the view that Jesus is referring to a different but parallel scenario, namely, the divorce of a betrothed wife. If we use 5:32 to throw light on the highly abbreviated form of the exceptive clause in 19:9 then μὴ can resume its normal use as a negative before an elliptical verb which must be ‘divorce,’ as it has just been mentioned. So the exception (‘except …’) becomes an exemption (‘not divorced for …’). Jesus, referring back to the married husband, instantly thinks of another kind of husband, namely a betrothed husband, and exempts his divorce action from what He is about to say to the married men standing around Him.

122 Wenham & Heth, op cit., p. 278 n. 2.

123 Splitting hairs over whether porneia states the grounds why the first marriage ought never to have taken place, i.e. is understood as a ground of annulment rather than divorce, misses the thrust of Jesus’ accusation of adultery which is inescapable in all second marriages while the partners are still alive.

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The exemption clause should read (paraphrased): “The husband who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, but I exempt the husband who divorces his betrothed wife for fornication and marries another woman. He is not guilty of committing adultery because he never actually married her, to become ‘one flesh’.” Jesus is not talking about an exception to divorce (a special category of divorce) that would exempt the married husband from the guilt of committing adultery, but an exemption for the betrothed husband (a special category of husband) who divorces his betrothed wife.

When revising their book, Wenham & Heth, took another look at the case of Joseph’s proposed divorce of Mary and concluded: “But there is nothing in this story that conflicts with Jesus’ teaching that divorcees may not remarry.”

The law of the land at that time probably recognised the espousal vows as binding as the wedding vows, but we have no direct evidence that Joseph went along with the law of the land (if such existed) in going through a fictitious divorce of a ‘one flesh’ marriage which never took place! The word ‘secretly’ puts paid to a public divorce. Gossip will bring Joseph’s action to light, and will he still be seen to be a righteous man when the truth gets out? It is an assumption from the use of the verb apoluo that this can only mean ‘divorce’ when used in a betrothal/marriage context. But is it safe to assume this in every context, without exception?

However, God used the law of the land to smuggle in His Son into our estate. For we know that Joseph, having gone through the wedding vows with Mary, did not consummate the marriage until after she bore the Lord Jesus. So some might say that Joseph was not married to Mary until he consummated the marriage. But God shielded the legitimacy of His Son’s birth by using the Jewish Marriage law to bring Joseph and Mary together as legitimate husband and wife before they became ‘one flesh.’

4.5.4. The death penalty for adultery (fornication)

The essence of this solution is that Jewish culture was overwhelmingly a religious culture, whose laws were set by Yahweh Himself. No divorce was permitted for adultery. It was so heinous a sin that it was incorporated into the Ten Commandments, which were capital offences. Jesus said, “Now I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his woman—not over fornication which carried the death penalty—and may have married another, is being adulterous against her.” If a wife committed fornication with another man Moses was instructed to issue a death certificate, not a divorce certificate. So, in Jesus’ eyes, the divorce certificates issued on the basis of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 did not, and could not, cover divorce for adultery or fornication. They could only be given for non-fornication causes, such as ‘an indecent thing’ or if her husband ‘hated’ her.

So if Jesus wanted to condemn the complete list of causes that the Jews had been using to break up consummated marriages, He just needed to exclude the one cause, fornication, in order to

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124 Wenham & Heth, op cit., p. 235.
125 Or, “excluding fornication,” for which the death penalty, not divorce, was commanded.
condemn every other cause. In so doing He was condemning anyone who did not carry out the death penalty for adultery, but instead, used adultery as their grounds for a divorce.

In order to justify their divorces they could have by-passed Deuteronomy 22:22ff., and gone to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and used the charge of ‘an indecent thing,’ or ‘hate’ to get their divorce. In effect Jesus covered, and condemned, every possible grounds for divorce below adultery/fornication. It now turns out that the ‘exclusion clause’, “not over fornication” was Jesus’ way of condemning all divorces, because in the case of fornication this was already covered by the death penalty.

Consequently, Jesus undermined the law on divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 by pointing out that if the Pharisaic husbands obtained a divorce on the basis of this law, that is, for non-fornication issues, and married another woman, they were guilty of committing adultery against their non-adulterous wives. This was an indictment on every husband who remarried since the time of Moses as narrated in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Every such husband, without exception, was an adulterer, in Jesus’ eyes. This must have come as a stunning revelation to the entire Jewish nation, and a great relief to the female population. Jesus was protecting their marriages from easy divorces from hard-hearted husbands.

We noted below, when examining Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in detail, that Jesus unambiguously distanced His Father from the command that a husband had to write out a bill of divorce and hand it to his wife as she left his house. This command did not come from God, but was created by Moses on his own authority to appease hard-hearted husbands, who were not prepared to forgive their wives for non-fornication issues.

Of particular concern to all Jews, who were bound to live under the Law, was sexual purity. Yahweh exterminated the inhabitants of Canaan because of their sexual excesses, which He warned the Israelites not to imitate, otherwise they, too, would be thrown off the land.

For adultery, Yahweh decreed that both offending partners must die. Therefore, there was no need for a divorce certificate. The defiled spouses were physically put to death, so that the innocent partners were free to remarry. Proverbs 6:32-35 reveals the depths of passion that adultery arouses in an offended husband. No amount of payment will save the adulterer. He cannot escape the vengeance or appease the aroused husband.126

The three ‘wife-sister’ stories (Gen 12:10-20; 20; 26:1-11) reveal that adultery is a sin against Yahweh. He punished Pharaoh (Gen 12:9) and terrified Abimelech (Gen 20:3-7). David committed adultery with the wife of Uriah but because David confesses his sin he is forgiven. However, he does not escape punishment. The double penalty is that his own wives will be ravaged (cf. Job 31:9-11) and his child will die. In Hosea 1:2 the marriage of Hosea to Gomer, the ‘wife of prostitution,’ serves as an example of Israel’s relationship with Yahweh. Using Gomer, Israel is metaphorically threatened with repudiation, with stripping and with the withdrawing of bed and board, but the marriage is never dissolved. Ezekiel uses the same metaphor of Jerusalem and Yahweh (Ezek 16:23).

For fornication before marriage, described as ἐκτορνέωσαι (ektorneusai) (Dt 22:21, and within marriage, see Jeremiah 3:1 ζητορνέωσας [exporneusas]), Yahweh decreed that if the bride was not a virgin on her wedding night, she was to be stoned. Her parents needed to be vigilant if the tokens of her virginity were to be accepted in a legal challenge (Dt 22:13-19).127 Again, there was no need for a divorce certificate if the bride was not a virgin. The innocent bridegroom could remarry because she

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126 Some see a discrepancy between the way adultery is handled in Hos 2:4-5; Jer 3:8; Isa 50:1 and Prov 6:32-35, and explain it in terms of the difference between practice and ideal. The laws stress the utter seriousness of the offence, and that is its main function.

127 The morning after a daughter’s wedding, the sheet of the nuptial bed that was stained with hymenal blood was handed to her parents as proof of their daughter’s virginity. This insured that the bride price would remain theirs. Gordon J. Wenham (”‘Betûlãh’ A Girl of Marriageable Age,” VT 22 1972] 326-48) assumes bethûlim refers to menstrual blood as the tokens of the bride’s virginity.
was physically put to death by stoning. If his challenge was not upheld by God then he could never divorce her and the parents were to receive double the (fixed) price of the bride-price (Dt 22:19).

Also, where a man raped a girl he was obliged to marry her (should her father consent) and he could never divorce her (Dt 22:29). In these two cases God prevents divorce which is proof of its existence before He gave the full Covenant Law on Mount Sinai.

It might seem harsh on the raped women that they could not get a divorce from men whom they may very well hate as a result of their actions. Since every man had the right to expect to marry a virgin, raped virgins were doomed to live out their lives without a husband. But the ‘no divorce’ provision is looked upon by Yahweh as a deterrent to other men, because the offender had to support her financially all his days. The law ignores the girl’s wishes in its concern to ensure that pre-marital sex is not treated as casual sex, such as a man may have with a prostitute, and get away with responsibility for a subsequent birth. The lesson for the men was that they must exercise self-control or there will be a penalty to pay in sowing their ‘wild oats.’

Yahweh also made provision for cases of rape of betrothed and unbetrothed virgins (Ex 22:16; Dt 23:28-29) and when a slave acquires a wife from his master (Ex 21:3), or when, through economic hardship, a father has to sell his daughter (Ex 21:7), but she cannot be sold to be a prostitute (Lev 19:29). He covered sexual relationships between masters and female slaves (Lev 19:20-22), and captured females (Dt 21:11-14). 32,000 Midianite virgins were incorporated into Israel (Num 31:35). He thus had a comprehensive coverage of a wide range of common situations. All difficult or unlegislated for situations were to be brought to the priests and Levites, who would receive His further judgments (mishpatim)(Dt 17:8-13) which had to be obeyed on penalty of being cut off from Israel.

For suspected fornication, Yahweh decreed that the wife should undergo a test in His presence. If she was innocent she went out free. If she was guilty then He punished her with a disease and illness that would prevent her from having any further children, leading to death, presumably (Num 5:11-31). Again, there was no need for a divorce certificate. Provision was made for the innocent husband to have a second wife (Ex 21:10).

The standard for all priests and high-priests was that they could only marry a virgin. They were forbidden to marry a divorced woman or a prostitute, and so a defiled woman, because “he is holy to his God” (Lev 21:7) and because he is not to “pollute his seed among his people” (Lev 21:15). The two types of women mentioned here would have ‘polluted’ his seed. There is a concern here to see that the seed of ceremonially holy men should be deposited in a holy womb (Ex 22:31). Sowing ‘wild oats’ was not an option for priests. However, the priest could marry a widow of a priest. What separates her off from the other three types of women is that they are still one flesh with whoever had intercourse with them, whereas the widow had broken that one-flesh link. In the case of the high priest, even the widow is excluded (Lev 21:14). God takes into account that even the daughters of His priests may be divorced by their husbands. If these divorced daughters have no children and return to their father’s house ‘as in her youth,’ then she can partake of her father’s holy food (Lev 22:13)

Yahweh used death, not a divorce certificate, to terminate broken marriages. He hated the divorce certificate which Moses was forced to introduce because the people would not live

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128 In addition, the high-priest could not marry a widow, and the virgin must be an Israelite, Lev 21:13. These stipulations made the keeping of female genealogies imperative, although none have survived in the OT. A high-priest needed to know the last five-member genealogy of his bride, according to rabbinic tradition.

129 Yahweh assumes divorce is a tradition because some of His laws presuppose its existence soon after they left Egypt. It may be that Moses only ratified what was the practice in Egypt, rather than that he set it up for the first time. The reason for its introduction was “hardness of heart,” which suggests that divorce was a very early institution in human society.
argued that he should be permitted to remarry (see Wenham & Heth, p. 42). Suggested

sin it is in the body of Christ, be that at the individual or church level. Pollentius, writing to Augustine (354-430), in order to justify divorce and remarriage, suggested that the adulterous partner should be considered as dead and then, using 1 Cor 7:39, argued that he should be permitted to remarry (see Wenham & Heth, p. 42).

Paul cannot shout it loud enough, ‘flee fornication,’ because he knows how deadly a sin it is in the body of Christ, be that at the individual or church level.

Those who do not accept Jesus’ view on the status of the divorced wife, have cast around for another reason why the first wife is not permitted to be reconciled to her first husband, and suggest that when a man married a woman he became related to all her close female relatives, and should his wife die or he divorce her, he could not marry any of them. Some think this may throw light on the divorced woman’s status as though she had become a close female relative, and therefore ineligible to marry the second time round.131

Paul applies this in the case of the man who married his mother (1 Cor 5:11)—a sin which involved the death penalty. The physical death penalty is transmuted into excommunication from the people of God, ‘he is to be removed out of the midst of you.’

To be put outside the Church was a spiritual death penalty. This method of dealing with sins involving the death penalty under the Torah enables the Church to apply it in the case of all the others sins that come under the death penalty, including adultery and fornication. All adulterers (i.e., those involved in a second marriage while both partners are still alive) are to be excommunicated from the Church because they are excommunicated from heaven (Gal 5:19-21), or prohibited from becoming members of the Church, because adulterers cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

The administration of discipline is a communal one both in Deuteronomy and in Paul. It shows that all members of Israel and all members of the ‘new Israel of God’ are responsible for actualizing God’s blessing by obeying the law. An individual may pollute a church, and a polluted church may pollute the whole Body Church. The Church is one body, made up of member churches, therefore, to maintain purity, it is essential that all communicating churches are obeying the law of Christ, otherwise one bad apple will pollute them all. A church without eyes to exclude any member who is polluted is blind and soon pollutes itself. To embrace a polluted member is to embrace pollution itself. Paul cannot shout it loud enough, ‘flee fornication,’ because he knows how deadly a sin it is in the body of Christ, be that at the individual or church level.

130 Pollentius, writing to Augustine (354-430), in order to justify divorce and remarriage, suggested that the adulterous partner should be considered as dead and then, using 1 Cor 7:39, argued that he should be permitted to remarry (see Wenham & Heth, p. 42).

4.5.5. The merits of the ‘No Divorce for Fornication’ interpretation

The merits of this interpretation are better than the betrothal solution in that Jesus’ statement that marriage is about becoming ‘one flesh’ implied that divorce could only really apply to a consummated union, which the betrothal stage was not, so that if Jesus did not intend to be comprehensive in His statement, His position on betrothal divorces could easily be worked out from His theology. In any case, fornication in the betrothal period would also have led to a death certificate, not a divorce certificate. This may explain why Joseph decided to divorce Mary ‘secretly,’ otherwise she would have been stoned, showing that the Law was still being practised.

Given that the Jews knew that God had demanded the death penalty for adultery, homosexuality and bestiality, and that divorce was not permitted for adultery, this explains why the Jews demanded the death penalty for the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:5, “Moses did command us that such be stoned;” cf. Lev 20:10; Dt 22:22-24). The inference is that this was the current practice in Jesus’ day. Ezekiel records Yahweh’s speech demanding an assembly of righteous men to condemn the two adulteresses, Aholah (Samaria) and Aholibah (Judah), by stoning them (Ezek 23:46-47). Nothing is said about divorcing them.

When God’s people become corrupt and live by double standards, whereby they commit adultery with their neighbour, Yahweh is not blind to what is going on. So when their wives commit adultery with another man they want to use the Ordeal of Suspicion (in Num 5) to get God to confirm their suspicion about their wife’s infidelity, but Yahweh refuses to be used as a tool in their social politics, and yet that Ordeal was there to be used. So if a nation is living a righteous life, and a righteous man has his suspicions about his wife’s unfaithfulness, then one would expect God to be the Judge of the matter.

Now, if we rule out adultery as a means to obtain a divorce, then this leaves only issues other than adultery (or fornication) on which a man could get a divorce certificate. And this appears to be what Jesus is saying in His ‘not upon fornication [charges, as these are not permissible in law].’ Whichever way we translate the text, the sense is clear, in that we hear Jesus saying: “Divorce continued to exist for non-fornication issues after God gave His Torah on Mount Sinai. Now, if you get a divorce according to this tradition, and remarry, then you are an adulterer, and so is the person who sleeps with your wife after you have put her away.”

The punishment for adultery seems excessive until one realises that the continuity of a man’s lineage was crucial to the identification of the Messiah when He appeared. He had to emerge from Judah’s line, so each of the twelve tribes had to keep strict records of each family, so that the tribe of Judah would remain distinct from all the other tribes. Then within each tribe, each clan or family had to maintain strict genealogical records because the Messiah had to emerge from one particular family, from David’s House. Then within each family each branch of it had to maintain an exact record of each man’s paternity, so that when the Messiah did eventually emerge His genealogy would identify Him alongside His miraculous works.

Nothing would taint a line more effectively and catastrophically than a wife bearing the son of another man and passing it off as her husband’s own son. Hence Yahweh makes special provision to ensure that a man could expect his wife to bear his children. If he had any suspicion then he could make use of the Ordeal of Suspicion, and Yahweh personally superintended the proceedings and punished the guilty wife with barrenness.
PART 5. MOSES ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

5.1. MARRIAGE AMONG FREEBORN WOMEN, CAPTIVE WOMEN, CONCUBINES, AND FEMALE SLAVES

This first section is a collection of biblical texts relating to marriage customs among the Hebrews. It is intended to widen the horizon of the reader with regard to the diversity of customs that the Bible contains, and which directly affect how marriage is regarded among the social classes.

FREEBORN WOMEN

These are the daughters of registered males in the genealogical records of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Daughters may never be sold into slavery. Their families, however, may fall on hard times and they can become servants for a period of six years. They must be released in the Sabbatical (Jubilee) year.

LEVIRATE MARRIAGE

Where a man dies without children, it was the duty of a brother to marry the widow, and the first child born to her is deemed to be the child of her first husband, and this child will inherit his dead father's estate. Naturally, this law came to an end with the birth of Jesus Christ, when the focus shifted from physical offspring to spiritual offspring, as part of the seismic shift away from the physical to the spiritual, as in physical sacrifices giving way to spiritual sacrifices, and from physical land (old Jerusalem) to spiritual land (New Jerusalem).132

ILLEGITIMATE MARRIAGE

However, “If a man takes his brother’s wife [while the brother is still alive], it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless” (Lev 20:21). Only when his brother is dead and childless may he take is brother's wife and raise up children to carry on the name of the dead brother.

QUALIFICATION OF A PRIEST’S WIFE

Lev 21:7, “They [priests] shall not take a wife who is a prostitute or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband, for the priest is holy to his God.” There are three classes of women a priest cannot marry.

1. A prostitute. This woman has had unions with one or more men. She is defiled.

2. A defiled woman. This woman has been divorced and remarried.

3. A divorced woman. This woman has been divorced but not remarried (Ezek 44:22). So long as she remains unmarried she does not become defiled.

Presumably he can marry a widow, provided she is a priest’s widow (Ezek 44:22). He cannot marry a widow of a non-priestly tribe of Israel.

Note the progression from the least likely toward the most likely candidates.

132 Paul was thoroughly aware of this seismic shift and the futility of keeping up one’s genealogical record to prove one’s 'clean' descent: “But avoid . . . genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” (Tit 3:9); “Neither give heed to . . . endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith” (1 Tim 1:4). It does not matter how we came into the world, it is how we leave the world that counts.
Regarding the High Priest, “He shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or a defiled woman, or a prostitute—these he shall not marry, but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife” (Lev 21:14).

1. A widow. She is a clean woman if she only had one husband.
2. A divorced woman. This woman has not yet been remarried. So long as she remains unmarried she does not become defiled.
3. A defiled woman. This woman has been remarried after a divorce.
4. A prostitute. This woman has had unions with one or more men.

Note the progression toward the most unlikely candidates.

In the case of the high priest he cannot marry a widow, not even the widow of a priest, but priests can marry a widow of a priest. This shows that when a priest dies his widow can re-marry another priest; but if a priest’s wife dies he cannot marry a divorced priest’s wife. This discrimination against the divorced priest’s wife shows that she is still considered by God to be married to another priest, and therefore the priest who married her would become a defiled person and so disqualified from his office as priest to God. All his future ministry would have been a defiled ministry if he married a divorced woman. This discrimination against the divorced woman shows clearly that death is the only way that a marriage can be dissolved. Members of the New Covenant are all priests (not priestesses) to God. Jesus has excluded any member who has married a divorced person. Galatians 5:19, 21, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, . . . those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”

There is a difference if the father of a prostitute is a non-Levite or a Levite. If her father is a Levite, a priest, then she is burned with fire (Lev 21:9). If her father is not a priest she is not burned.

The fact that the text excludes priests from marrying prostitutes and divorced wives, implies that Israelites, who were not priests, were prepared to marry such defiled, unclean persons. This gives us some idea of the degradation that existed in Israel for men to marry prostitutes who should have been stoned (Deut 22:21), and divorced women who were defiled through a remarriage, and so ‘unclean.’ It is through laws like these that God reveals what He really thinks about divorced women: He puts them in the same category as prostitutes, and they remain there in this category to the end of time, even through the present age, if they do not repent.

However, such women can be made clean, but only through the blood of the Lord Jesus and become members of His Body, the Church, through repentance and faith. Under the Old Covenant, no divorced and remarried woman could change her status from ‘unclean’ to ‘clean.’ She became permanently ‘unclean’ in the eyes of God, and whoever she remarried, he became unclean. She became a contaminating influence in the land. It was a deep concern of God that His land should not become contaminated by a defiled people; and divorced women were the chief source for this contamination.133

FEMALE CAPTIVES

Deuteronomy 21:10-14 lays down the procedure for captive females. Marriage with female slaves and captives were arranged without any other real ceremonies than the husband’s going in to

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133 It was probably the concern not to be contaminated by an unbelieving spouse that prompted the Corinthians to ‘separate’ from their ‘unclean’ partners, because under the Mosaic Covenant the ‘clean’ could never convert the ‘unclean’ to be ‘clean.’ The contamination worked in only one direction, but Paul revealed that under the New Covenant a strange thing happens, the ‘clean’ contaminates the ‘unclean’ and makes it ‘clean!’ (See 1 Cor 7:14). This turned the whole O.T. system on its head.
them (Gen 30:4; Deut 21:13). If she is slept with by her captor and then he decides not to keep her as his woman, he is not allowed to sell her, but she goes out free, and the reason for this is because ‘he humbled her.’ This means that he had relations with her, and therefore she had no say in the matter. The same term, ‘he humbled her,’ is used of the rape of a virgin (not betrothed) in Deuteronomy 22:29. The rapist has to pay the father fifty shekels of silver, “and she shall be his wife.” If the victim agrees to marry the rapist, he cannot divorce her all the days of his life. But the rape victim can choose not to marry him (Exod 22:16-17). In this case the rapist must still pay the fifty shekels to the victim’s father, and does not have her for his wife.

As a non-virgin a rape victim had very little prospect of finding a husband, and her future was bleak. Like salt that has lost its savour, so is a woman who has lost her virginity. Both were of little value. If she wanted children, she was only likely to get them through the man who robbed her of her virginity. If she detested to marry her rapist, then her bride price by another man would be little or nothing, and she may have to accept a lower-ranking, poorer husband, who could get her for a fraction of the bride price.

What is instructive about these two cases is that where compulsory sex takes place, it is done under abnormal circumstances of ‘humbling’ the female. It is not a legitimate union, and even an unregenerated people recognised that an evil had been perpetrated on the virgin. God took advantage of this sense of injustice to step in and slap a ‘no divorce’ order on such rapists. But because divorce was endemic from the time the nation left Egypt it would have been impractical to slam a ‘no divorce’ order on the entire nation. The reality of divorce is assumed, not its validity. A universal ban on divorce would have been akin to slapping a ‘no sin’ order on the nation. This unregenerated nation offered sacrifices on every hill in spite of there being a universal ban on divorce would have been akin to slapping a ‘no sin’ order on the nation. This unregenerated nation offered sacrifices on every hill in spite of there being a specific command forbidding it. This shows how stubborn this nation was in getting its own way. Sacrificing on every sacred high place and divorce were national traits that God put up with under severe provocation. His tolerance of such openly disobedient sinners reveals His patience and character.

It is instructive that it is God, not Moses, who imposed a ‘no divorce’ order on the rapist. Now, if a compulsory marriage contracted after violence is made permanent by God, how much more should a voluntary contract be considered permanent by Him, seeing it was entered into voluntarily by the freeborn virgin? Daniela Piattelli noted that ‘it seems certain that in Israel there was no payment of the mohar for a slave woman, even though she was taken as a lawful wife; no reference is made in the biblical passages already quoted. At Elephantine, the situation seems to be the same.’ The mohar, which was put aside for the woman in view of a possible repudiation (divorce), could, if the circumstances of the divorce were correct, be given back to her when a repudiation took place (Ketubot 4:7). The discovery of P. Mur. 19 gives the actual wording of the text of a divorce document in use in Palestine in the 2nd century A.D. for which see Markham Geller.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) favoured celibacy over marriage without disparaging marriage. But he urged all to overcome the desire to enter into marriage because it detracts from serving the Lord (see Appdx. H). He noted that the Law laid down the injunction,

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135 The same point was made by Tertullian (part second, book 4, Chapter 34, p. 727, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 3).


137 Markham J. Geller, “New Sources for the Origin of the Rabbinic Ketubah,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 49 (1978) 227-45. He compares the Mishnah with Mesopotamian and Egyptian (Elephantine) practices. He concluded that prior to the 1st cent. B.C., Jewish marriage law adhered closely to the Akkadian prototypes.
You shall not desire your neighbor’s wife” [Exod 20:17] in anticipation of the Lord’s closely connected dictum . . . I say, “you shall not lust.” The Law wished males to have responsible sexual relations with their marriage partners, solely for the production of children. This is clear when a bachelor is prevented from enjoying immediate sexual relations with a woman prisoner-of-war. If he once falls in love with her, he must cut her hair short and mourn for thirty days. If even so his desire has not faded away, then he may father children by her. The fixed period of time enables the overpowering impulse to be scrutinized and turn into a rational appetency.

BETROTHED VIRGIN CONCUBINE

Leviticus 19:20, “Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to a man as a concubine, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for this [sin] there shall be scourging; but they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.” Note that God makes a sharp distinction between a freeborn virgin and a concubine virgin, when both are betrothed to be married. The rapist who raped the freeborn virgin is stoned to death (Dt 22:22), but the rapist who raped a lower status virgin was only scourged, and allowed to live. The criteria that God used was class, “because she was not free.” Why did God discriminate between these two virgins? The answer lies in the term ‘concubine.’ A man’s genealogical line descended through freeborn virgin wives. Her children took precedent over the sons of concubines. God safeguarded the transmission of the prime line through the freeborn virgin.

It was on account of the lower status of sons born to concubines that God introduced a lower punishment on the rapist. In this unequal treatment before the Law we see the care with which God safeguards the descent lines of His freeborn sons of Abraham. The line of descent leading to the birth of His Messiah will come through freeborn virgin mothers, and not through slave concubines. It is this that explains the unequal punishment meted out to the betrothed virgins. If the same rapist rapes the concubine first, he is let off with his life, but if he rapes the freeborn virgin next, he forfeits his life, as does she, if she does not resist him. What is driving this discrimination is the need to provide His Son with an uncontaminated, uncontested, genealogy, that will fulfil His promise to the nation that He would raise up a son of David who would rule the world. The Father frames every law to accommodate and facilitate the pivotal entrance of His Son on to the stage of human history. Everything revolves around the Son. His coming has even determined the punishment meted out to the rapist.

BETROTHED VIRGIN FREEBORN

Deuteronomy 22:23-27, “If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbour’s wife, so you shall put away the evil from among you. But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbour and kills him, even so is this matter. For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her.”

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ADULTERY WITH A CONCUBINE

Leviticus 18:20, “Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbour’s [concubine] wife, to defile yourself with her.” That it must be a concubine wife can be deduced from Leviticus 20:10, “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death” (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). Here the death penalty is imposed, but there is no penalty when the adultery is with a concubine, except that the man becomes defiled in the eyes of God. A concubine had no status, therefore, there was no dowry, and no marriage contract. She is a possession.

So God makes a distinction between a concubine wife and a freeborn wife, just as He made with the betrothed concubine virgin and the betrothed freeborn virgin, and for the same reason as given above.

CHILDREN OF LOANED CONCUBINES BELONG TO THEIR MASTERS

Exodus 21:2-4, “If you buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gave him a woman and she bore him sons or daughters: the woman and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself.”

That this was a very ancient and widespread custom among Near Eastern cultures can be seen in Laban’s attitude toward Jacob’s offspring. Laban regarded Jacob as his slave to whom he gave his daughters as wives while Jacob was his slave. Consequently, when he caught up with the fleeing family of Jacob he could claim, “These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock, all that you see is mine” (Gen 31:43). That Jacob was in some sort of slave contract for the last six years of his service can be gauged from the fact that none of his four wives born any children during those years. Laban put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, and this may have separated him from his wives. Indeed, he could not leave Laban’s flocks of sheep and goats, so his wives had to do the three-day journey out to visit him (Gen 31:4).

Laban’s daughters complained that their father had sold them to Jacob as if they were his female captives (Gen 31:15). And as his captives, he was entitled to retain them and their offspring, and send Jacob away empty-handed, as he intended to do (Gen 31:42). Laban had already taken advantage of local custom to get an extra seven years’ service out of Jacob for Rachel, and he was prepared to do the same over selling off his daughters as loaned wives.

God did not put the union of the concubine and the male slave on the same level as the union of freeborn wives with freeborn husbands. In essence the concubine was only on loan to the Hebrew servant: they were not married. God approved of the master’s right to claim back the loaned wife and any children she bore, and to send out the male slave empty-handed.

The custom described in Exodus 21:2-4 became an integral part of God’s law for His Old Covenant church. Many evangelical writers on divorce and remarriage, who use the Old Testament to prove that God approved of divorce under certain circumstances, avoid commenting on Exodus 21:2-4, because they see an injustice here which they find incompatible with the image of the God that they have formed in their mind. Selective editing of God’s revelation to the Old Testament

139 Republican and imperial Rome refused to sanction the marriage of the slave. Male and female slaves were allowed and even encouraged to cohabit together. The union was not considered as a marriage: it was called contubernium, not nuptiae, or matrimonium. This continued into Christian times, for Christian slaves, living as husband and wife, were not joined together by any religious ceremony by the priest. If a slave married without the permission of his master he could be put to death (see Davies Morgan, op. cit., I. 264).
saints is not a viable tactic to make God the approver of divorce. Eventually Exodus 21:2-4 will keep resurfacing no matter how much it is suppressed, ignored, or discarded as irrelevant. The truth is, God recognises that in human society there is an underclass of misfortunate persons, who, due to the depravity of fallen human nature, fall from their freeborn status to become the servants of others. As another teacher once observed, “The poor [the underclass] you always have with you.” And this will always be the case while human society exists on this planet.

NEGLECTED FEMALE SLAVES CAN GO FREE

Exodus 21:7-11, “If a man sells his daughter to be a slave girl, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she please not her master, who had engaged her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed: to sell her to a strange nation, he has no power, seeing he had dealt deceitfully with her. And if he engaged her to his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take to him another female, her food, her clothes, and her ointment, he shall not diminish. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free without money.”

Note it does not say “…after the manner of wives,” but “after the manner of daughters.” A man does not have sex with his daughter. A freeborn daughter can lose her freeborn status. When she is bought for money she becomes a chattel, and so divorce is not necessary to end the sexual relationship, because there was no marriage.

In ignorance of Near Eastern culture, and, in particular, of early Hebrew culture, it is sometimes assumed that Abraham divorced Hagar, and consequently divorce is justified and lawful in some cases. This assumption ignores the fact that Hagar was a bondwoman, a female slave. There never was a marriage between Abraham and a freeborn Hagar. The Western world cannot come to terms with this extramarital, ‘free sex’ Hebrew culture, but God can. God agreed with Sarah’s sentiments to cast out Hagar and her son. No bill of divorce was necessary when sending out a slave wife. “And Abraham rose up early in the morning and took bread and a bottle of water, and placed them on the shoulder of Hagar …, and sent her away (LXX ἀπ’ ὑπὲρτηλεύ)” (Gen 21:14). That is how easy it was to get rid of a troublesome slave-wife, and God approved of it. But the marriage of a freeborn woman to a freeborn man was a different matter, and on a completely different level. These marriages were for life, with no prospect of a divorce, in accordance with God’s design for marriage, as set out in Genesis 2:24.

In Abraham’s testamentary speech to all his sons in the Book of Jubilees he reminded them that God commanded, “that we should keep ourselves from all fornication and uncleanness, and renounce from among us all fornication and uncleanness. 4. And if any woman or maid commit fornication among you, burn her with fire,140 and let them not commit fornication with her after their eyes and their heart; and let them not take to themselves wives from the daughters of Canaan; for the seed of Canaan will be rooted out of the land. 5. And he [Abraham] told them of the judgment of the giants [Gen 6:1f.], and the judgment of the Sodomites, how they had been judged on account of their wickedness, and had died on account of their fornication, and uncleanness, and mutual corruption through fornication. And [he urged] guard yourselves from all fornication and uncleanness” (Jubilees 20:3-5).

In Jubilees 25:1-3, Rebecca urges Jacob to obtain a wife from Abraham’s ancestors in Mesopotamia saying to him, “My son, do not take for you a wife of the daughters of Canaan, as Esau your brother did, who took him two wives of the daughters of Canaan, and they have embittered my soul with all their unclean deeds: for all their deeds are fornication and lust, and there is no righteousness with them, for (their deeds) are evil.” These married wives committed fornication, which would embrace adultery. The general does duty for the specific.

140 According to the Law only the adulterous priest’s daughter was to be burned with fire; others were to be stoned (cf. Lev. 21: 9; 20: 10).
Jacob was still single at 63 years of age and was pleased to inform his mother that “I neither know, nor have I touched any woman, nor have I betrothed myself to any, nor even thought of taking me a wife of the daughters of Canaan. For I remember, mother, the words of Abraham, our father, for he commanded me not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, but to take me a wife from the seed of my father’s house and from my kindred. I have heard since that daughters have been born to Laban, your brother, and I have set my heart on them to take a wife from among them. And for this reason I have guarded myself in my spirit against sinning or being corrupted in all my ways throughout all the days of my life; for with regard to lust and fornication Abraham, my father, gave me many commands” (Jubilees 25:4-7). The words ‘lust and fornication’ are well-suited to each other.

Marriage between Hebrews and Canaanite women, while they may be conducted correctly according to the laws and customs of either ethnic group, are null and void in God’s sight. The equivalent in the New Testament, would be the marriage of a Christian (who was single upon conversion) to a non-Christian. If such should occur, the Christian should be excommunicated from membership of Christ’s church, and refused Communion, until the marriage is regularised. The discipline is always administered in love in the expectation that the offender will conform to Christ’s teaching, and put Him first in their lives.

The Jews have never denied the discriminatory nature of their grounds for divorce as described by Yahweh in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, that divorce could only be initiated by the husband, never by the wife. But in the case of Exodus 21:1-11 they could not deny that a slave-wife (bondwoman) could take the initiative to separate from her ‘husband’ if he did not meet the three statutory provisions that he must provide for her, namely, her food, her covering, and her ointment.

However, we need to watch the context here. Exodus 21:1-11 is concerned with Israelites who through some circumstance, or change in their social status, lose their independence and are subject to the control of a fellow Israelite male. The first case involves a male, vv. 1-7. He can ‘go out free’ after he has served six years. The idea of ‘divorce’ in the words he can ‘go out free’ is out of the question here, because the same term (ἐξέλυσεν) is used of the woman in v. 11, who likewise ‘goes out free.’

The second case involved selling off one’s daughter to be a house-servant (not a wife), vv. 7-9. She can be ‘ransomed’ but not divorced.

The third case involves ‘taking to him’ another woman, whether as a concubine or a servant (possibly on a par with the male in vv. 1-6) is not stated. She could be a woman bought in the marketplace with a view to providing the Hebrew bond-servant with a wife (21:4). The text reads, ‘If another [woman] he take for him, her food, her covering, and her ointment (or oil), he does not withdraw.’ The same three words occur in an Old Babylonian law on the exact same topic, where it translates as ‘food, ointment and a garment’ in that order.141 Neither the word ‘habitation’ nor ‘sex’ are the right meaning here, as some translations have it. In any case, God would not force a man to have sex with his ‘second,’ if ‘it is evil in his eyes,’ as Scripture puts it. It is sufficient that she has all the expectations that a man’s daughter should expect in a family.

I suspect that personal hygiene was rated highly among Old Babylonian and Hebrew women, but husbands controlled the purse strings, so that it was impossible for a ‘second’ wife (or concubine) to have the financial independence to buy her own perfumes. So if the ‘second’ wife (or concubine) can keep herself clean (= through the use of oils), hide her nakedness (= by means of clothes), and not starve (= through the provision of food), then she can exist quite comfortably even if she is denied love (and sex). It is clear from the context that this woman is not a free woman.

Now, if she is not looked after properly, she ‘can go out for nothing—without the payment of money.’ He cannot sell her off. This is not a case of a free woman taking her husband to court and divorcing him for neglect. The context refers to a lower status woman.

So we do not have any evidence in the Old Testament that freeborn, native Israelite women, could divorce their husbands. Hence the conclusion, by some writers, that Hebrew wives could divorce their husbands for neglect, needs to be qualified to read ‘they had the right to go free,’ without implying the handing over of a bill of divorce, and the text is limited to lower status women, who may, or may not, be in a sexual relation with their owners.

It is said by those who believe that Jesus took His understanding of Scripture from how the rabbis of His day interpreted it, that He would have accepted divorce for adultery. They assume that Exodus 21:10f allows a female ex-slave to be freed from her marriage if three conditions were not met. From this, we are informed, Jewish interpreters assumed that if the lowest of society had this right, then all men and women had this right.

Those who support the suggestion that Jesus naively followed the interpretation of the rabbis of His day (assumed to be men like Hillel and Shammai) agree that being set free is not the same as divorce. Nevertheless, they assume that this text was used as a cornerstone of Jewish divorce law.

The challenge to this assumption takes the form of asking when did Exodus 21:10 become the cornerstone of rabbinical exegesis? The evidence, such as it is, points to it being later than the time of Jesus.

First, as exegetes, we must go back to the text of Scripture itself and to the middle of the 15th century BC, in particular, to understand what that text meant at that time, without being influenced by the interpretations that were extracted or imposed on it 1400 years later. Jesus was very wary about how the Pharisees did their exegesis of the text, and the ‘burdens’ they laid upon the people (Mt 23:4; Lk 11:46).

The second observation is that we have, in the rabbinic sources (collected from the mid-2nd century onwards, and written up in the mid-3rd century after the time of Jesus), an abnormal view of how Moses’s divorce law operated, because, it is assumed, the death penalty for divorce was taken away from them under Roman rule. Consequently, the only context under which divorce appears to have been discussed (as it has come down to us in the Mishnah and other rabbinical sources) is how it was practiced under foreign domination which has skewed the ‘normal’ situation. Consequently, when it is argued, ‘this text [Ex 21:11] was used as a cornerstone of Jewish divorce law,’ we have to add that this cornerstone has been drastically cut down to size by the Roman restriction on their freedom to follow the Law in a ‘normal’ situation. The Jews were thrown off the ‘normal’ use of the Law, and had to find temporary ways of getting round the foreign curtailment on their ability to keep the Law as they wanted to.

Humanly speaking, if the Jews, after they were dispersed abroad, could not freely execute adulterers, then the next best thing would be to allow divorce. But this could and should have been seen only as a temporary measure until such time as they regained their freedom, when the death penalty would come back into use. The same thing applied to sacrificing in the Temple, after it had been destroyed in AD 70. Until they regain the use of the Temple Mount the Jews are in an ‘abnormal’ situation.

So, if we assume for the sake of argument that the Jews in Jesus’ day were in an abnormal situation, and were forced to permit divorce for adultery (as a temporary measure) because they could not freely execute the adulterers, it is highly unlikely that Jesus would accept this temporary, stop-gap, provisional law governing divorce under a foreign government, as His new, permanent teaching on marriage and divorce, would He? Jesus said, ‘My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me’ (Jn 7:16).

If Jesus were a true teacher come from God (Jn 3:2; 13:3), and if His Herodian, Hillelite and Shammaite enemies could say, ‘Master, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God in truth, neither care you for any man: for you regard not the person of men. . . .’ such a testimony would suggest that Jesus did not take His doctrine from men (or contemporary Pharisees) but from God. His reputation for overturning rabbinical exegesis was well known from His Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus cancelled rabbinical interpretations in order to fill their place with His own
God-given exegesis of the text. In the light of all that we know about Jesus’ supernatural source for His teaching it is hard to see Him falling in meekly behind the quirky exegesis of Hillel or Shammai (whose existence in Jesus’ day has yet to be established). We can conclude that it is inconceivable that Jesus would have been duped by His contemporaries, and to have His teaching determined by the temporary or abnormal situation the Jewish rabbis found themselves in, in having to compromise implementing God’s Law over the death penalty for adultery.

But there are some writers who believe that Jesus was a man of His culture and could not extract Himself from taking on the views of His contemporaries, and they sincerely believe that Jesus went along with Hillel and Shammai in permitting divorce for adultery. In this they have the support of Erasmus, who doctored the Greek text to make Jesus a disciple of Hillel and Shammai.

Jesus does not strike me as one who would compromise God’s view on marriage as it had been formulated by God ‘from the beginning of the creation.’ Indeed, the whole Torah was, in its entirety, a temporary measure. The credit goes to Jesus for being the only rabbi in history to recognise the temporary nature of the Torah, and the Mosaic dispensation. When He had fulfilled the Torah, He abolished it, and He took His followers back to the teaching that preceded the giving of the Torah. In the case of His doctrine of marriage, He took His followers back to what His Father revealed in Genesis 2:24, and declared that no provision for divorce was contemplated for any lawful marriage when God instituted marriage, for He deduced that when God fused male and female in a one-flesh union, no man could take it upon himself to separate what His Father had joined together.¹⁴²

The reason why Jesus took His teaching on marriage from Genesis 2:24, and not from Deuteronomy 24 and Exodus 21, was because Adam and Eve were at the time of their marriage in a sinless state. They were in a state where it was possible not to sin. They were God’s pure offspring. Through the ‘born-again’ experience all believers are taken back to the same position that Adam and Eve were in, where it was possible for Adam and Eve not to sin. This is the new starting-point of every new convert’s life in Christ. When Christ Jesus takes up His abode in the body of each of His converts, they enter a new level of existence comparable to what Adam and Eve experienced before their fall. All things become new. They see God and His creation in a new light. They see the significance of Christ’s life and death in a new light, and they experience it with growing clarity and understanding, through the spiritual gifts that Jesus has endowed His Church with. Yes, they can sometimes trip and stumble and temporarily be duped by false teachers, but while the Spirit of Christ dwells within their mortal bodies they can never fall away or apostatize, if they abide in Christ at all times.

Christ Jesus raises all His people to a new level, and at that level there is no place for divorce. Divorce belongs to the lower level of those who are not yet born again of the Spirit of God and who are slaves to their fleshly nature, and who will die in their sins, resulting in a destiny in the company of the Devil and all his angels. On the other hand, those who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them will recognise that divorce is of the Devil and is obtained through his divorce courts, secular and religious.

5.2. AT WHAT POINT DOES A MARRIAGE BECOME PERMANENT?

Some have argued that every marriage is provisional until the bridegroom confirms the following morning that his bride was a virgin. At this point his marriage is deemed to have entered

a permanent state. Others say that it is not until other expected conditions have been met by the bride and the groom, especially if the conditions are stated in the marriage contract.

Some have likened a marriage contract to buying a washing-machine. A man buys it in good faith, but when he gets it home if is not working properly, as he expects it should, or if it is defective, he is entitled to send it back to the buyer and get his money back.

The status of a married couple is that they are married in the eyes of the State from the moment they are pronounced 'man and wife,' and sign the Registry, and walk out before the congregation as 'husband and wife.' If they change their minds before they go off on their honeymoon, they must obey the law of the land and get a civil divorce to reverse their decision to be man and wife. So long as there has been no physical, sexual union between them, what Scripture terms 'one flesh' (coitus), they can free themselves to marry other persons. But once they have lawfully become 'one flesh' (i.e., consummated the marriage) then they are married for life in the eyes of God (and the State). And what God has joined together no State divorce court can separate.

Others suggest that a marriage is formally entered into with the public recognition that a man and a woman have agreed in public (before witnesses) to live together as husband and wife. This is common to most civilised cultures. That marriage then becomes an unbreakable union when the two become one flesh (at coitus). At this point there is no turning back. The marriage is for better or for worse, and ends when one of the partners dies.

If coitus does not occur, following the public endorsement by the community of the legitimacy of the proposed union, then there is no one-flesh union in the eyes of God, yet it is still a marriage in the eyes of the community and of God, because their status is one of husband and wife. They cannot be divorced, because Jesus did not set up any courts that could undo the covenantal agreement that they have entered into.

In real life, because the couple are deeply in love, there is no gap between the ceremony and first coitus. It would be nigh impossible to get hold of a case where a couple split up after they had entered into a covenant agreement to live together ‘forsaking all others,’ and before they slept together. In real life there is a one hundred per cent transition between vows and sex, as it should be. There is no thought in anybody’s mind that the first few days or weeks of a wedding are provisional.

God did make provision for the rare occasion when a husband, after sleeping with his bride, accused her of not being a virgin (the Bitter Waters Ordeal, Num 5:11-31). God, personally, judged these cases, because only He could know infallibly if the accusation was true or false. If the accusation was false, God decreed that the man could never divorce his wife (and presumably vice versa). But here again we are seeing life under the Law, which has passed away as obsolete, and God is not going to adjudicate any man’s allegation of sexual impurity in any bride, Christian or non-Christian.

If we stand back and view the purpose of the Torah, we can see that virginity was essential to safeguard the genealogical lines of each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel so that each tribe inherited its promised future and lands, but it was also essential to safeguard the lineage leading to the Messiah of Judah, and this might be considered its chief goal. Now that the Messiah has come, the need for strict genealogical records has passed. They have no longer any future goal or function. Jesus was the terminus of all the genealogical record-keeping. Once He came the need for purity of descent in all the tribal genealogies of Israel was past.

We must make a distinction between the purpose of Old Testament marriage and marriage following the birth of the Messiah. During the Old Testament period, the emphasis was on keeping your name alive through physical descendants, hence it was crucial that a man’s descendants came through a virgin wife. This also explains levirate marriage. Levirate marriage is no longer necessary once the Messiah was born. The requirement that all gentile brides should be virgins is also no longer conditional to constitute a lawful marriage. Having children is no longer required of any marriage, now that the Messiah has come. It would be ideal to marry a virgin, but if a man discovers
that she is not a virgin this is no longer any grounds for stoning her to death. Marriage is now incidental and is on a what-you-see-is-what-you-get (WYSIWYG) basis.

Virginity is no longer essential (though highly desirable for many good reasons\textsuperscript{143}) as a precondition to form a valid marriage in the sight of God. If it was essential, then the majority of marriages in the Western world would be invalid. Now, because virginity and other non-biblical preconditions were never essential to constitute a valid marriage among the gentile nations of the world by God, they cannot be imposed on any society, culture or religion under the present dispensation of Grace.

Marriage among the gentiles has always been on a WYSIWYG basis. Given the dangers inherent in marriage the apostles got it right when they observed, “It is better not to marry.” There are better things for a Christian to do than spend precious time raising a family. It is too wasteful of the Lord’s time. It is not all that it is cracked up to be. Better to pray not to have the gift of marriage and be more devoted to the Lord’s interests.

The Messiah introduced a paradigm shift from the physical to the spiritual, and this is what sets His kingdom apart from all other kingdoms, past and present, including ancient Israel.

It is a mistake to bring forward the demand for virginity, and to make it absolutely essential in a lawful, permanent marriage. Physical circumcision avails nothing if it is not accompanied by spiritual circumcision. The same goes for virginity. Physical virginity avails nothing if it is not accompanied by spiritual virginity. Spiritual circumcision and spiritual virginity are what matters before God and His Christ in the present age.

The Early Church was composed of purified sinners such as murderers (who should have been put to death), adulterers and fornicators (also subject to death under the Law), and, presumably, many converted non-virgins, who, under the Law, would have been stoned to death.

It would be a backward step to live under the Law and not under Grace, or to try to bring forward some hand-picked, obsolete laws of physical Israel and transplant them into the spiritual Israel, and impose them on Christ’s elect people.

Marriages among Christians have to be on the level of WYSIWYG. Virginity is desirable, but not essential, to create a permanent marriage. Backsliding is not a grounds for divorce. Nothing is a ground for divorce in Jesus’ world.

Some pro-divorce writers argue that the Torah is a complete legal system so that whatever is not forbidden is permitted. Since divorce is not banned by God in the Torah then it is permitted. But it should be noted that God did not need to make a law banning divorce, because there was a law already in place making it clear that marriage is indissoluble. That law was in force ‘from the beginning of creation,’ Jesus says. Everyone knew about it, from the time of Adam onwards. As Adam’s descendants spread out into all the world, they took this law (or will of God) with them.

The Mosaic Law was not for the righteous but for the unrighteous, or hard-hearted man. Because the Israelites would brazenly not live by the will of God, which He clearly revealed to all mankind in Genesis 2:24, they pushed through divorce on pragmatic grounds.

Moses had to come down to their lower level of morality and try to regulate sin. So he put together the best package he could, introducing a ‘bill of divorce’ (which he was not authorised to do), but Yahweh disdained it and slapped a non-reconciliation order on Moses’ Mickey Mouse law.

It is sub-standard. It is sub-human. It is degrading to women. It is of the Devil. But it is the natural level to which the sinner sinks to. It is an unnatural level in God’s eyes, so He shows His contempt for it. He nowhere endorses Moses’ cosmetic law. The only complete moral system is, ‘To love God and love your neighbour as yourself.’ Divorce is a denial of both parts of this moral system.

5.3. DID GOD USE MOSES TO REGULATE DIVORCE?

Some take the view that God guided Moses to regulate divorce. If He did, then He has colluded with Moses to undo what He has fused together. I do not see God colluding with Moses, or worst still, guiding Moses to introduce laws facilitating the splitting up of lawful marriages. If that is how some read 24:1-4 then consistency demands that God also facilitates the man-stealer in 24:7, because God describes the method used by the thief to steal a man. Description is not prescription.

If divorce had been of God He would have set up priestly courts to adjudicate each case to ensure fairness. Deuteronomy 17:8-13 reads:

8 When anything is too hard for you for judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke — matters of strife within your gates — then you have risen, and gone up to the place on which Yahweh your God fixes. 9 And you have come in to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge who is in those days, and you have inquired [for a judgment], and they have declared to you the word of judgment, 10 and you have done according to the tenor of the word which they declare to you, (those) of that place which Yahweh chooses. And you have observed to do according to all that they direct you. 11 According to the tenor of the law which they direct you, and according to the judgment which they say to you, you do. You do not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, right or left. 12 And the man who acts with presumption, so as not to listen to the priest (who is standing to serve there Yahweh your God), or to the judge, even that man has died, and you have put away the evil thing from Israel, 13 and all the people do hear and fear, and do not presume any more.

The fact that Yahweh did not pass a law stating that all divorces must be taken before these priestly tribunals to be judged on their merits is highly significant. It means that He would have nothing to do with these sordid affairs. He was not going to waste the valuable time and energy of His priests in dealing with men who could not show love, mercy, forgiveness and kindness toward the wives of their youth. Now just as God made no provision for divorce courts in Israel, so neither has His Son made any provision for similar courts within His Church. The dominant chord in all Jesus’ teaching is forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness. There is no place in His kingdom for unforgiving men and women. They are excluded because they do not have Christ living in their bodies, minds, and spirits. Such hard-hearted persons belong in the kingdom of Satan.

Another procedure that God used to safeguard the legitimacy of a man’s offspring was the test for fornication, touched on above. The suspected wife had to drink the ink which was used to write out a curse against any woman who lay with another man, but there was no proof or witnesses. God, Himself, would be the Judge in all these cases. He would not leave it to the judicial system in Israel to adjudicate in all these cases of suspected adultery or fornication. The reason for God’s intense interest in these cases was that they affected the purity of the male line of descent, one of which would lead to His Son, the Messiah.
But God shows His disdain for husbands who, on non-sexual grounds, divorce their wives over trivial matters, which He refers to as an ‘ERVAT DABAR “an exposed thing,”’ and “hated” (Deut 24:1-3). He is not going to be at their beck and call to sort out their sordid squabbles. He will not even allow His priests to get involved in the evil of divorce. The very idea of divorce is repugnant to Him. As far as Yahweh was concerned the evil of dumping a wife on the street was on a par with all other acts of domestic violence, and just as He passed no laws relating to what goes on in private in a man’s household, so likewise He passed no law explicitly condemning the private act of divorce. Divorce was a private matter, as the procedure in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 shows.

The theory that Hillel’s ‘no-fault’ divorce was a new thing and the talk of everybody in Jesus’ day exists only as a theory, because divorce for any excuse is inherent in the words ‘ERVAT DABAR and divorce existed before the giving of the Torah in 1406 BC. Prior to 1406 BC any man could privately divorce his wife for any reason. Divorce was a private matter, it belonged to domestic, not public law. Moses did not take away the private right of any husband to divorce his wife. He only commanded them to make it publicly clear that they had privately exercised their unalterable tradition and inalienable, patriarchal ‘right’ to divorce their wives. Nowhere in the Torah are men required to take their divorce cases to the priests. It was a private matter.

It should be pointed out that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is to be dated to 1406 BC. It records what was the practice of private divorce in those days, and as it was still practised in Hillel’s days (cf. the action of Joseph toward Mary; he sent her away privately [no divorce was needed]). Hillel, and not Shammai (I say this without prejudice to their existence, and the existence of their ‘schools’), represents the life-style of the Hebrews before Deuteronomy 24 was written down. Hillel is the authentic voice of Hebrew man, and not Shammai.

In the Torah, Yahweh described a sin and then followed it with a punishment clause. In Deut. 24:1-3 He described the evil practice of divorce, and in v. 4 we have His punishment clause. The sin of private divorce is laid bare for all to see its arbitrary nature. A man comes to hate his wife or he uncovers a matter that disgusts him, so he divorces his wife. He is not obliged to take his case to a court, and his wife has no appeal. This practice was common in all the surrounding nations going back to the time of Hammurabi and before him. Israelite men were no different from all other men in adopting this arbitrary divorce procedure.

As with all cases of domestic violence, God stood aloof with respect to laying down rules and regulations governing every possible grievance that a man might encounter after the honeymoon. Common-sense, natural justice, and exposure to the demands of the Torah, should be sufficient to mould and shape every man’s moral development from boyhood to manhood.

It is very likely that the origin of handing a written bill of divorce to a divorced woman was the introduction of the death penalty for adultery. It was to avoid this sin that Moses introduced the written bill of divorce (apostasion), even though he had no authority to do so from God, who hated divorce.

Moses certainly, using his privileged position as leader of the nation, wrote down (cf. Mk 10:5) a law, which is not contained in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, that if any man could not live with his wife he could not just dump her on the street in case someone misunderstood his action as an act of divorce. Moses wanted the status of every married woman who was dumped on the street to be public knowledge, hence his ingenious decision to command all husbands to issue such dumped wives a handwritten note so say his marriage to her was dissolved. This was the best thing that Moses could do under the circumstances, because he had no law from Yahweh forbidding this kind of domestic violence. The fact that the bill of divorce had to be public knowledge to prevent accidental adultery taking place, throws light on Joseph’s action of putting away Mary secretly. That fact that it

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144 This meaning has no connection with the ‘matter of fornication,’ λόγος πορνείας of Mt 19:9. If Jesus had intended to refer to the ‘ERVAT DABAR category He would have used the phrase ἀσχήμων πράγμα (the LXX translation of ‘ERVAT DABAR). One (λόγος πορνείας) is sexual, the other (ἀσχήμων πράγμα) is non-sexual.
was going to be done in secret undermines the case that he was intending to issue her with a bill of divorce. A secret divorce defeated the whole purpose of issuing a bill of divorce. For it to be effective it had to be made public to avoid accidental adultery. Neither Hebrew nor Greek have a word for ‘divorce.’ Instead, verbs are used, verbs that are descriptive of the act of sending someone away from one’s presence.

Yahweh did not approve of this action by Moses, because it gave a semblance of legitimacy to the private action of an evil man. For this reason Yahweh did not endorse Moses’s written command, which had to be transmitted well away from, and outside, His written Torah. By refusing to include Moses’s private judgment respecting his creation of a ‘Bill of Divorcement’ in the Torah, God refused to sanction Moses’s innovation. He disowned it.

Moses may have thought he was removing an undesirable evil consequence if private divorces were allowed to go unchecked, but by regulating these private divorces, instead of condemning them, he accidentally multiplied divorce in Israel, because, by regulating it at an official level, by means of a legal procedure, he inadvertently gave divorce a legal standing. The impression then arose that so long as a husband obeyed Moses’s legally-binding command, then Moses could not object to their domestic violence toward their hated wives. In effect Moses’s personal command gave these men the justification they were looking for to dump their wives. You do not eliminate thieves by limiting their thefts to low value goods. The limit only creates thieves. And Moses’s requirement of a bill of divorce only created more divorcers.

The evil of divorce was justified still further (probably after A.D. 70) by the schools of Shammai and Hillel. Although these schools had no written document passed down from the time of Moses, which recorded the actual words of the command that Moses used, they did have Yahweh’s description of how it worked out in practice, which is recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-3. Yahweh used the umbrella term ‘ERVAT DABAR to cover anything that offended one’s sensibilities of what was ‘seemly’ or ‘right.’ The term itself was non-specific, and deliberately chosen by God for this reason. It was a collective term because the range of faults that an evil man could use to dump his wife was almost limitless.

So while Yahweh chose a term that reflected this limitless range of causes, the rabbis took the two-word term, separated it into its constituent parts, and used each part to justify a multitude of causes, or rather justify their infinite range. The word ‘ERVAT literally means ‘nakedness.’ The rabbis declared that this covered any form of literal nakedness that gave offence! The word DABAR means ‘word, thing, deed,’ so they said this covered any ‘thing,’ or ‘deed,’ that gave offence! Little did they realise that Yahweh’s umbrella term had got there before them! The school of Hillel, and not the school of Shammai, had correctly understood the open-ended nature of the term to embrace any cause that a man might nominate, and which evil men had been using from the time of Moses (if not long before his time in Egypt) to legalise private, domestic violence.

The method of exegesis used by the rabbis to justify divorce for any cause is quite bizarre. By splitting Yahweh’s umbrella term ‘an exposed thing,’ and using ‘exposed’ and ‘thing’ separately, puts this method on a par with a foreigner, who does not understand English, splitting ‘mother of pearl’ into its constituent words, ‘mother’ and ‘pearl,’ and looking up each word in an English dictionary to try to understand its meaning!

When a man takes seriously that Jesus had inside knowledge of all that went on between Moses and God at Sinai, and between Moses and the evil generation he had to lead, and His statement that God did not give any law on divorce, it leads to only one conclusion: Moses must have bowed to pressure from an adulterous generation and consolidated the evil practice of divorce that was common to all societies before Israel left Egypt in 1446 BC. If Jesus said that Moses, not God, gave them a law permitting them to divorce their wives, then the evangelical should take Jesus at His word and believe Him.

If God, in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, is laying down the law when it is right in His sight to divorce a wife then He would have given the wives the same right as the men. As it is, the practice described in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, is unfair in that it gives the right to divorce to men only, and
women are denied this right. This unfair law was the practice of the ancient Near Eastern cultures, as their unearthed literature reveals. It was a law made by men for the advantage of men. It does not have the wisdom of God in its provisions.

Now if Jesus said that Moses, not His Father, gave them the unfair privilege of divorcing their wives, that should be enough for the evangelical. They should not entertain the idea that Jesus meant to say that the Law came from His Father, but was passed through Moses, which is the position of those who are pro-divorce.

As co-Creator, Jesus knew the mind of His Father when He created male and female. He also knew that there was only one relationship that pleased God and it was revealed in Genesis 2:24, namely, that what He had joined together no man should put asunder (or divorce).

When Jesus pointed out that the ‘no divorce’ state had been the Father’s will ‘from the beginning of the creation,’ the Pharisees were quick to spot a contradiction. ‘They say to him, “Why, therefore, did Moses command to give a scroll of legal divorce, and to put her away?”’ Jesus saw no contradiction because God did not give any law setting up or sanctioning divorce. Moses did not give any law setting up divorce. Divorce was already established in Israel before Moses was born. The Pharisees did not credit Moses with the origin of divorce in Israel. They correctly point out that the only thing Moses commanded was that a bill of divorce should accompany the act of putting the wife out into the street, and giving her permission to marry whoever she wanted. So, although Moses did not originate divorce in Israel, by commanding that a bill of separation must accompany the divorce, he implicitly approved of it.

Some pro-divorce writers seem to think that God, in the time of Moses, contemplated man’s permanent tie to one woman, which Genesis 2:24 expected of all marriages, and said to Himself, ‘It is not good that man should be tied to one woman for life. I will pass a law which will permit him to divorce his wife ‘for any cause’ that annoys him, so that he can put her away, get another wife, and have a jolly good time on the earth.’ Jesus thought otherwise. He noted that its origin lay in the hardness of man’s heart; and that Moses only consolidated or confirmed them in their determination to divorce their wives. Hard men decided that they would not live by the law of Genesis 2:24. An evil law had its origin in an evil heart. This law could not have its origin in a pure, holy God, and we have Jesus’ express words that Moses, not God, hardened them in their own, man-made divorce tradition.

The Pharisees considered that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 contained a command that must be obeyed, whereas Jesus declared that this practice was only Moses’s concession. If Jesus had stopped there, then it was just His opinion against theirs. But as soon as Jesus said that this concession was granted by Moses and not by God, He had become a heretic in their eyes. It was an incontrovertible fact among the Jews that every word in the Torah came from God. “And even if one asserts that the whole Torah is from Heaven except one verse, which not the Holy One, may He be blessed, has said but Moses himself, that one has despised the word of the Lord.” Jesus knew perfectly well that Deuteronomy 24:1-3 was descriptive, not prescriptive. It was out of such ignorance on the part of the Pharisees that new rabbinic traditions were created and imposed on the people of God, much to the disgust of Jesus.

5.4. DID MOSAIC DIVORCE DISSOLVE A LAWFUL MARRIAGE?

Theologically, divorce began very soon after the Fall of Adam. It was endemic throughout all Near Eastern civilisations as ancient literary finds have shown. Divorce very likely entered into Israelite society during their stay in Egypt. Israel wanted to be like all the nations round about her. They wanted kingship because others nations had kings. God was displeased with this request. It was not His will. A similar thing may have happened with divorce. Moses inherited divorce. He did

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145 Sanhedrin 99a.
not introduce it into Israel. He inherited a potential threat to the purity of genealogical lines of
descent leading to the line of the Messiah who was to come, along with other social evils. It was
essential to find some method for ensuring purity of descent. Moses, using his own initiative,
commanded the divorcer to write out a “roll of severance” and hand this to his wife as he dumped
her in the street. This was a common-sense solution to avoid adultery. Moses did it with the best of
intentions, but the suggestion did not come from God. It came from Moses, as Jesus pointed out.
God had nothing to do with it.

In Matthew 19:7 the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Why, therefore, did Moses command to give a
roll of departure . . .?” Note the use of the word ‘command.’ In Mark 10:3 Jesus asked the Pharisees,
“What did Moses command you?” Again, note the use of the word ‘command.’ Jesus is here
drawing on His supernatural knowledge of what happened in 1446 B.C. when Moses introduced the
idea of writing out a bill of divorce after the contents of the book of Exodus had been written down.
Moses at that time in 1446 B.C. commanded the nation to adopt his scheme in order to avoid
accidental adultery. It was a precautionary measure. Forty years on at the second giving of the Law
in 1406 B.C., when the contents of Deuteronomy were written down, God had seen how Moses’s
innovation of his bill of divorce had usurped His revealed will (as expressed in Gen 2:24) was being
ignored.

Now we do not have any record of Moses giving this ‘command’ in the Hebrew Bible.
Why? Because it was given ‘off the record.’ It was a written command, which God refused to allow
into His written Word for His people, otherwise it would have entered the Torah, but it is excluded.
However, the record of Moses having given such a command was carried down in the oral traditions
of the Hebrew fathers, just as the names of the magicians who opposed Moses are recorded in 2
Timothy 3:8.

5.4.1. The descriptive interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4

The crucial question for the exegete to answer is: Is God condoning divorce or condemning
divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4? The conclusion of the writer is that He is condemning divorce.

In Deuteronomy 24:1-3 God takes us through a typical scenario, describing the stages that a
typical sin of divorce would take. God then shows us that the typical divorcer obeyed Moses’s
unrecorded (but written down, Mark 10:5) command to write out a ‘roll of severance.’ God then
switches our attention to the fate of the divorced wife. She remarries a man, and by becoming his
wife she becomes a defiled woman. Now, if she had been truly divorced, and was a free woman,
then marrying a second time should not have defiled her. It is the fact that a second living man has
slept with her, while her first husband was still alive, that constitutes her a defiled woman in the
eyes of Yahweh, so her divorce did not change her marital status to her first husband in the eyes of
God. She was still married to her first husband even after he had written out his bill of divorce and handed
it to her and she walked away from his house.

The proof of God’s rejection of divorce is seen in His judgment of the divorced wife (she is
an unclean woman in His eyes for the rest of her life) and His judgment of the husband (his sin will
not be forgiven). Both judgments would be lifted and forgiven and ‘cleanliness’ restored to the
‘abominated woman’ in her lifetime, and the husband allowed to return to his divorced wife, when
the Messiah arrived and introduced a new ‘law’ by which all men and women were to live by. This
‘law’ had existed in the beginning with Adam and Eve, and it would be a return to this ‘law’ that all
the disciples of Jesus Christ would automatically aspire to, and revel in, when they ‘put on’ Christ
and “clothed themselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14).
To enter into Christ requires a new heart and a new spirit, which the natural man is not born with. It
must be requested from Christ Jesus in a direct, personal request. It cannot be imparted through the
laying on of hands, or through human effort. It is the gift of God, freely available to all men
everywhere.
No Jew or Jewess in Jesus’ day, who got a Mosaic divorce, would agree with God’s decision that her remarriage was invalid, and that she was an abomination in His eyes, because two living men had slept with her. This shows that God did not change His mind throughout history over the issue of a woman sleeping with two living men. Jesus was one with the Father in noting the consistency in God’s attitude toward a divorced and remarried woman throughout human history.

To conclude this first point, note that God is not approving or sanctioning what He is describing in vv. 1-3. He is describing a sin, which happens to be a human institution, created by man for man. Divorce is of human origin, that is what God is pointing out in His description of this particular sin.\footnote{William F. Luck, \textit{Divorce & Re-Marriage: Recovering the Biblical View} (2nd revised ed. (Richardson, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 2009), misunderstood Deut. 24:1-4 as God giving permission to allow divorce to protect abused wives, hence God has not withdrawn this provision right up to the present day. Adultery is not just the sex act, but the ‘ill-treatment of wives’ (pp. 241, 273-84). Jesus was wrong to abolish divorce for any cause. W. Luck is not alone in re-applying rabbinic teaching to override what Jesus taught (‘no divorce and no remarriage’). Luck’s teaching is OT wine (designed for the lawless) put into NT wine-skins (designed for the born-again person). Luck claims that there was nothing really new in what Jesus taught (p. 241). ‘We did not find that all remarriage was considered [by Jesus] adulterous, but only the kind that involved treachery’ (p. 241). The trouble is, that today 100% of all marriages involve treachery of some kind; so all remarriages are justified on the grounds of Exod 21:10-11, because Luck believes that God has not withdrawn any provisions relating to divorce that He gave under the Law. \textit{They all carry over into the New Covenant.}}

\section*{5.4.2.  Descriptive parallel with the thief (Deuteronomy 24:7)}

It is a very common assumption that when God introduced the law of ‘no reconciliation after divorce,’ that He approved of divorce \textit{per se}. What this assumption fails to notice is that in Deuteronomy 24:7 God introduced the death penalty (just after He dealt with divorce) for stealing a man, but no one would assume that He approved of stealing, yet look at the structure of both laws. They both conform to the casuistic (protasis-apodosis) style, ‘If . . . then.’ In apodictic laws, there is an imperative, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ Deuteronomy 12-26 contains 31 cases of casuistic law.\footnote{See J. Carl Laney, “Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and the Issue of Divorce,” in \textit{BibSac} 149 (1992) 3-15, espec. p. 7 n 12.} The majority of all laws in the Torah are in the hypothetical style, ‘If you do such-and-such a thing, then this will happen to you.’

In the case of stealing we have the protasis: “When [If] a man is found stealing a person, . . .” Then follows the apodosis: “Then has that thief died.” Now, in between the protasis and the apodosis we have a description of the thief’s action. It reads: “…and he has tyrannized over him, and he has sold him, . . .” The structure “When . . . then . . .” is the same here as in the case of divorce. The latter reads: “When [If] a man has taken a wife . . . and sent her out of his house, . . . then he is not able to take her back.” The identical structure: “When [If] . . . then . . .” between stealing and divorce, shows that God is describing an evil situation in both cases, and following ‘When’ comes the punishment clause in both cases.

The King James Version has been responsible for leading myriads of Christians into thinking that the apodosis comes at the end of verse 1, so that it reads: “When a man has taken a wife . . . and she finds no favour in his eyes . . . then let him write her a bill of divorcement.” This is not what the Hebrew says; it is what the Reformers of the Protestant Churches wanted it to say, so that they could use Erasmus’s tampering of the text of Matthew 19:9 to justify divorce for adultery. The faulty translation of the AV is followed in the ASV (1901) and the RV (1881). The correct translation is found in the NKJV, RSV, NAB, NIV, ESV, and many more.

The sin of the thief is not to be forgiven. It is an unforgivable sin. In this case, so heinous is the crime that God demands the death penalty for it. The sin of the divorcer is likewise not to be forgiven. It, too, is an unforgivable sin. In this case, however, the sin is so pervasive and has infected the entire body of the nation that it became impracticable to demand the death penalty for it. Instead, the punishment was reduced to a life-time ban on reconciliation. The significance of this is that while the divorcer is allowed to live, he will never be forgiven by God, and this damnation is sealed in his inability to reverse his sin, and so be reconciled to his first wife. Under Grace, the wickedness of putting a wife out into the street (concealed under the euphemism of ‘divorce’) can be forgiven, and the sinner can be reconciled to both God and his wife.

We have the bizarre situation among some conservative-evangelical writers that because God presented a law forbidding reconciliation that this constitutes His approval of the wrong that He is describing. This is how those whom Jesus condemned as hypocrites had interpreted the text to get what they demanded.

5.4.3. Descriptive parallel with the hated wife (Deuteronomy 22:13-19)

An even closer parallel to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 occurs in Deuteronomy 22:13, “When a man takes a wife and goes in to her and hates her . . . then shall the father of the young woman . . . bring out the tokens of virginity . . . the elders shall chastise him . . . he may not divorce her all his days.” Yahweh is describing a typical scene that could occur. He is not endorsing it. He sets out a probable scenario in order to punish the wrong-doer. The opening four Hebrew words are the same in Deuteronomy 24:1 and 22:13.

Another parallel occurs in Deut. 22:23-24. These cases prove that the description of sinful deeds cannot be taken as God’s endorsement of those evil deeds.

Under the Law the punishment for divorce is severe, as it was for man-stealing, rape, and other crimes, but the life-sentence for divorce should have been a deterrent to any man to inflict such evil on his wife. But hard-hearted husbands (for this law is focused only on husbands) traded in their lust to have ‘sex now and pay later.’

When Yahweh described the sin of the thief, and described the sin of the divorcer, and described the sin of the rapist, He was not thereby condoning the act of the thief, or the rapist, or the divorcer. He had to describe what they were doing wrong in order that He could spell out the appropriate punishment.

There are many who have missed this point, and they have assumed that in the case of the divorcer, God was noting a very minor, cultural adjustment to an institution which He had set up, and sanctioned. They mistook the description for prescription. Most commentators today recognise the danger of reading Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as legislating for divorce, but the full impact of viewing verse 4 as an expression of God’s anger over divorce per se is seldom brought out, or if noted, few see the connection with the Son of God’s blanket condemnation of divorce, which was in place from the foundation of the world (cosmos).

When the Pharisees questioned Jesus, “Why, therefore, did Moses command to give a roll of departure and to put her away?” (Mt 19:7) they were not implying that Moses’s command was actually recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, rather, they were aware that off the record, Moses had commanded them to write out a roll of divorcement, and God was referring to this off the record command. So the Pharisees were referring to a written law laid down by Moses before Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was written. The actual command of Moses is not recorded in Scripture.

Jesus was aware that before Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was written down, Moses had already commanded them how to regulate their divorce procedure, because in Mark 10:3 He asked, “What did Moses command you?” So both the Pharisees and Jesus were aware that a command was issued by Moses prior to the writing of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, and it is to this unrecorded command that both Jesus and the Pharisees allude to.
Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, who accompanied Israel when she left Egypt, knew the exact circumstances under which Moses made his command, which the rabbis of Jesus’ day were ignorant of. Jesus was able to reveal that Moses’s command originated in the unforgiving nature of unregenerate men (Mt 19:8). This is a very telling revelation and completely demolishes the case for divorce, as Jesus knew it would, when He took all men back to Genesis 2:24.

Lastly, we need to look at Jesus’ side-lining of Moses’s unrecorded command to the Israelites that if they are going to divorce their wives then they must write out a ‘roll of severance’ and hand it to their wives. Jesus has no time for this command, and cancels it on His own authority as the Son of God, and in accordance with all that He taught, for He taught nothing but what was given directly to Him from His Father to teach (Jn 7:16-17; 14:26).

When we take a closer look at the descriptive interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 it sets the scene of a man who finds some moral or physical defect in his wife. The defect, as circumscribed by Yahweh’s terminology and by separate laws elsewhere, can only be a non-sexual matter. This is described in many translations and commentaries by the expression, ‘nakedness of a thing.’ The knee-jerk reaction to the term ‘nakedness’ has been that it refers to literal nakedness in this context.

This is not so. The only other use of the same phrase in the Old Testament refers to human excrement that is not covered over (Dt 23:14). So, there, it refers to something that is exposed which ought to be hidden. In Deuteronomy 24:1, it refers to something that was hidden which became exposed, or comes to light, that displeases the husband, and which is not covered by other laws (cf. ‘for every cause’ in Matthew 19:9, which harks back to the ‘eravat dãbãr in 24:1). It would be better to translate ‘eravat dãbãr as ‘uncovering of a matter.’ This would remove the sexual element and throw the focus on to the ‘matter’ that came to light.

Yahweh next focuses our attention on the events in the divorced woman’s life. She remarries. By this action she becomes a defiled woman, because in His eyes she is still married to her first husband (as Jesus’ teaching makes clear). She is an abomination in His eyes, through the fault of her first husband’s action of divorcing her leading to her remarriage.

Yahweh continues to keep our focus on the divorced woman. Her second husband hates her. The reason for the hatred is not relevant to Yahweh’s main purpose. The hard-hearted husband follows the same divorce procedure as the first husband, and divorces her. So she is now ‘free’ to remarry anyone she chooses, it would seem. She could remarry her first husband. However, Yahweh mentions another possible scenario, which would also leave the divorced woman in a position to remarry anyone she chose, namely, the death of her second ‘husband’ (who was not her husband, in God’s eyes). Now, according to Romans 7:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:38, the death of a husband dissolves the marriage bond, and in the eyes of God, it is lawful for a first-time widow to remarry. Yahweh has carefully noted the two windows of opportunity whereby the defiled wife could return to her first husband.

Now in terms of Moses’s permission to divorce, this widowed woman was clearly entitled to remarry whoever she chose to. She was entitled to remarry her first husband, it would seem. But

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148 John Murray, Divorce (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1961), pp. 10-12, sets out five reasons why the eravat davar cannot refer to a sexual matter. The divorce spoken of in Deut 24:1-3 must refer to non-fornication issues.

149 The Vulgate translates ‘eravat dãbãr as aliquam foeditatem ‘for any reason of impurity.’ The metaphorical use of the term is ignored.
there is a snag. Yahweh never recognised the first divorce. It was unauthorised in His eyes. As a punishment for the first husband causing his wife to become a defiled woman and an abomination in His eyes, she is barred and banned from returning to her first husband. The ban is for life. The divorced woman is shut out. She can only continue on in her life of adultery, through further ‘marriages,’ as God and Jesus would view her life.

Yahweh carefully chose the sequence of events in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in order to bring to the attention of all would-be divengers that their action results in God’s disapproval. Divorce was sexist. Only men could initiate it. The practice was set up by men for men. It was institutionalised domestic bullying of the worst kind.

The sequence of events, as described in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, is no longer possible for Jesus’ disciples to copy, or use for pastoral purposes. It is incompatible with Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness.

How each divorce came about is totally irrelevant to Yahweh, as no cause could justify it. The nature of the disapproval is significant. Under the New Covenant, such a divorced woman would be able to be reconciled to her first husband because any subsequent marriage by her or her husband would not be viewed as a marriage, but as adultery. Reconciliation meets with God’s approval under the New Covenant, but meets with His disapproval under the Old Covenant, showing that the ban on reconciliation was double-edged. Under the Old Covenant the offending Israelite husband was not reconciled to his wife or to God, showing that there was no way back into God’s favour. Under the New Covenant the offending Christian husband is reconciled to his wife and to God, showing that there is a way back into God’s favour. Divorce is a sin in itself, even if it is not followed by a remarriage. It needs to be forgiven, as it is never right to enact a divorce under any circumstances.

The fact that a husband might seek to take his wife back again, shows that he divorced her on trivial grounds. In effect he is turning a blind eye on his original action in making her an unclean person, and thereby constituting her unworthy to bear his children. By attempting to reverse his original judgment and assessment of his wife, and by taking her back as a clean person, he is admitting that he was wrong in the first place. Of course, being a hard-hearted individual, he is unlikely to say ‘Sorry,’ to her.

The idea of reconciliation, per se, cannot constitute the meaning of ‘abomination,’ since God desires this of all marriages. Neither is it the attitude and behaviour of the husband in getting a cheap divorce and then attempting to reverse her unclean status to clean, just to get her back again as if he never divorced her in the first place and soiled her reputation. What constitutes God’s abhorrence in this context is the remarriage itself. As Jesus was to point out later, this remarriage defiled the woman and her next husband(s), and constituted them adulterers, and her an adulteress, who would not enter the Kingdom of God.

Marriage was a covenant (Mal 2:14), and Yahweh used this as a metaphor of the covenant-status He had with Israel—His bride (Ezek 16:8).

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150 Jesus revealed that when the woman of Deut 24:2 entered into her second marriage, unknowingly, she was committing adultery, as was the man who married her, because in the eyes of God and the Son of God, she was still married to her first husband, because the document he put into her hand had no status (legal or otherwise) in God’s eyes. It was a man-made set-up, which Jesus exposed and then demolished in Matthew 19:9, so that those entering God’s New Covenant would have to abide by a new appreciation of marriage. It was not really ‘new,’ as Jesus was quick to point out, because it had been in existence before Moses made regulations to control the evil consequences of the sin of divorce. It is to the standard of Gen 2:24 that all Christians must rise to if they are to lead a life pleasing to God.

151 God does not follow the metaphor of marriage and divorce to its conclusion in Deut 24:4. He chooses to adapt it to suit His own teaching on marriage as a permanent covenant between man and wife. See D. H. Aaron, Biblical Ambiguities. Metaphor. Semantics and Divine Imagery (Boston, 2002).
Using the bold, *ad hominem* metaphor of marriage and divorce, Yahweh imagines Himself married to Israel and Judah (polygamy). He conveyed to both ‘wives’ (who were sisters) His deep sense of grievance over their ‘fornication’ (i.e., their apostasy), but it had no effect (Jer 3:6-10). If the metaphor justifies divorce, then it also justifies polygamy and gay marriages (i.e., He is married to the men of Israel). The Lord’s second coming will be ‘like a thief in the night’ (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10). This does not make Him a thief! Yahweh is only like a husband married to a wife, and the analogy is taken from current practice.

Yahweh can choose any analogy from any real life situation to carry His message to His rebellious people, and what could be more suggestive of His broken relationship with Israel than a divorce? In this case, the evil practice of divorce lent itself as fit for metaphor to convey His disengagement from them.

In the case of Israel she made herself unclean (Jer 13:27), and therefore Yahweh’s ‘divorce’ did not make her unclean. His ‘divorcement’ only confirmed to her that she was in an unclean state. Hosea 2:2 may reflect the current language of divorce in Hosea’s day: “She is not my wife, nor am I her husband.” After Israel committed ‘adultery’ by serving other gods (baals), she eventually came to her senses and resolved, “I will go and return to my first husband.” If God had followed through with the metaphor, He could have refused to have her back, because the sin of adultery was not punished by a divorce, but by death. He should have killed her. But, fortunately, His covenant was an everlasting covenant made with Abraham, and was indissoluble. Nevertheless, such a covenant allowed for only two righteous men to enter into the Promised Land, or into God’s rest (Hebrews 4:1-10). Hosea is told to take back his adulterous wife on the analogy that God is taking back His adulterous wife—Israel (Hos 3:1). So the idea of reconciliation, *per se*, cannot constitute the meaning of ‘abomination,’ since God desires this of all marriages. The ban on reconciliation under the Old Covenant comes in the form of a punishment for a widespread heinous sin, which God will not forgive.

One direct inference that one can draw from God’s expressed anger over the example of a husband divorcing his wife for a non-sexual offence is that all such Mosaic divorces are an abomination to Him (as they have remained to this day). It also means that when the school of Hillel permitted God’s people to divorce their wives (and it was only men who did the divorcing; see Ecclus 42:10) for trivial reasons such as burning the husband’s food, or Akiba’s justification that a man found a more beautiful woman, these men were utterly obnoxious and an abomination in the eyes of God.

After the woman of Deuteronomy 24:2 was divorced by her second husband for a non-sexual offence (which it had to be\(^ {152} \)), such as hate, it is certain that he could not take her back. The same would apply to her third, fourth, and subsequent husbands. None of them could have her back once they had divorced her, for whatever reason, because she had defiled them all. So God’s law of

\(^ {152} \) The Jews were prepared to inflict the death penalty on the woman taken in adultery (John 8:5) in accordance with the law of Moses (Lev 20:10), therefore we must reject the interpretation that Deut 24:1-3 allowed divorce for adultery. It is assumed that under Roman rule capital punishment was abolished (see D. W. Amran, ‘Adultery,’ The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1925), I.217). This is incorrect, because Pilate gave the Sanhedrin the necessary permission to execute Jesus “according to your law” (John 18:31), but the Jews wanted the Romans to do it for them, so the charges were changed to put Jesus in conflict with Roman law (Luke 23:2, 5, 14; John 18:30b), but he was found not guilty on those charges (Luke 23:14-15, 22, 23; cf. Matthew 27:18, 23). With the dispersal of the Jews after the Second Jewish War in AD 132-35, and lacking nation status to implement the requirements of the Torah, rabbinic law developed to make divorce mandatory for an adulterous wife, see Mishnah Sotah 5:1, Sotah 18b, 27b, Ketubot 9a. This was just one of a number of adjustments that the Jews had to make after AD 135, when God permanently took away their power to enforce His Law.
both spouses were alive. This is not reading back New Testament doctrine into Deuteronomy 24:1 that the first marriage bond was for men. Jesus' exegesis of Deuteronomy 24:1 rid of divorce. It is a discriminatory law against women. It is an unjust law. It was drawn up by men for men. Jesus’ exegesis of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is not difficult to work out. He would have declared that the first marriage bond was indissoluble and the second marriage was an adulterous one while both spouses were alive. This is not reading back New Testament doctrine into Deuteronomy 24:1-4
but recognising that the Father and the Son were, and are, consistent in their Law of Marriage ‘from the beginning’ of human society. And we would expect the Father to act in a way consistent with His own revealed will in the reader He placed against reconciliation.\footnote{See 3.3. below. Letter 3. Can a Christian use Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to get a divorce?}

5.4.4. \textbf{The prescriptive (or directive) interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4}

It should be pointed out that some versions (and commentators) translate Deuteronomy 24:1-4 differently, and read the text as a directive from Yahweh, thus: “When a man has taken a wife, and married her, and it comes to pass that she finds no favour in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement (biblion apostasion) [LXX \textit{biblion apostasion}], and give it into her hand, and send her out of his house.”

This translation clearly presents God as giving the man who wants a divorce clear instructions on how he is to go about this. The assumption is that God does not object to the divorce of a wife, and so He lays down the exact procedure how the divorce is to go through, and a crucial element in this procedure is that the woman is entitled to a divorce certificate.

But some who read the text in this prescriptive way draw back and say that God does not approve of it. The argument goes, “The command only states their duty toward the wives whom they are dismissing, and in no way can it be construed that God condones such action.”\footnote{Spiros Zodhiates, \textit{What About Divorce?} (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), p. 93.} This does not make sense. God must be in favour of divorce certificates if He is giving commands which must be obeyed. At the very least God is obtaining a divorce certificate for the wife, whether He approves of it or not is another issue. This view believes that Jesus’ concern in Matthew 5:31-32 was to defend the rights of oppressed women who should be given a divorce, which would clear her of guilt in the event of the break up of her marriage. This comes out in the translation, “He, who, if he dismisses his wife, let him give her a bill of divorcement.” If she had been divorced for adultery then he was not obligated to give her such a bill of divorcement. Deuteronomy 24:1 (we are told) refers to the toleration of divorce for reasons other than adultery. In Deuteronomy 24:2 God (we are told) informs her that she is free to marry another man. The sinful state had to regulated for the protection of the innocent woman who was dismissed unjustly by her husband. The supporters of the directive interpretation believe that, “The Lord [Jesus] agreed with the Old Testament prescription that a bill of divorcement should be given to the wife, unjustly divorced, enabling her to remarry. . . . He in no way implies that no divorce certificate should be given to her. The Lord does not violate man’s free choice to sin, but He does show His interest on behalf of the innocent victim of sin. . . . It is best not to put your wife away at all for any reason other than her infidelity, but if you do put her away when she does not deserve it, at least give her a bill of divorcement.”

On this interpretation the ‘abomination’ is not the second marriage but the remarriage to her first husband, “Because she would have been the wife of another man.”\footnote{Spiros Zodhiates, \textit{What About Divorce?} (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), p. 97.} This does not make sense because Deuteronomy 24:3 specifically mentions the death of her second husband as one way of making her available to remarry her first husband, so she is not the wife of another man at the time the first husband wants to take her back. This shows the confusion that results when the text is interpreted prescriptively.

5.4.5. \textbf{Moses introduced his divorce reform to avoid adultery (a lesson for leaders)}
Jesus correctly stated in Mark 10:3b, 5 that Moses wrote down a command that when any man wanted to avail himself of the centuries-old practice of divorcing a wife, he was to write out a ‘roll of departure’ (גָּ֣דֶשׁ ְגְּדוֹלָה) and hand it to her. What Moses wrote down has been lost. His command never entered the Hebrew Bible, and Deuteronomy 24:1-3 does not record Moses’s written command. Deuteronomy 24:1-3 records Yahweh’s description of a made-up scenario for teaching purposes.

When Moses commanded irate husbands to write out a ‘roll of severance’ when they were dumping their wives out on the street, he did this out of the grief of his own heart for the plight of these divorced women, and to avert the likelihood of adultery that would result if such wives had to find another husband to take them in and feed them.

The sin of adultery was punished with the death penalty in those days, so a new husband had to be absolutely sure that the divorced woman he was about to marry was indeed legally free to be married. Today, we would consider Moses’s command to write out a bill of severance to be a very humane law in the context of Near Eastern civilisations, and their treatment of divorced wives. The problem was, Moses did not receive the command he laid on the people from God. He, and he alone, imposed the idea of a written divorce document on the people. Humanly speaking, we might consider he used his common-sense to avoid a potentially messy situation.

Sometimes Christian leaders introduce common-sense ideas into the Church, such as a rota of male and female preachers, on the assumption that they are equally entitled to speak in the Church. The new situation then becomes a tradition, and the tradition then conditions the next generation to accept it as ‘normal.’ Just so in the case of Moses’s innovation over his new ‘bill of divorce.’ But what is significant about Moses’s command is that God did not endorse it, and neither did Jesus, or the Early Church. The command Moses gave to the men was never allowed to enter God’s Word. In other words, God never endorsed it, approved of it, sanctioned it, or in any way, shape or form accepted it as an integral part of His Law. It always remained on the outside.

Note that in both Matthew 19 and Mark 10 we learn that Moses commanded/insisted that a ‘roll of severance’ be part of the divorce transaction. Moses did not command divorce, nor did he invent it. He inherited it from centuries of tradition. However, through his command he regulated divorce, and so he was not anti-divorce, so in this restricted sense I have credited him with instituting divorce in Israel. Moses’s command had the effect of consolidating the tradition of men.

We do not have a written record of the actual words of the command that Moses used. They are not recorded in Scripture. He gave the command ‘off the record.’ If we did not have Jesus’ contribution we would never have known of this ‘off the record’ command given by Moses, because God does not refer to Moses as the one who introduced the idea of writing out a ‘roll of severance.’

If divorce did not exist in the earth until Moses instituted it, then he would have been punished by God. Moses did not originate divorce, so he cannot be blamed for its practice in Israel. Everything we know about Near Eastern societies point to divorce as a fixture going back to the earliest records of human society. Moses did nothing wrong. If anything, his introduction of the ‘roll
of severance’ was a humane law, designed to alleviate the vulnerability of the exposed wife standing out in the street in the clothes she was dressed in.

Moses was not punished by God for trying to alleviate the evil that is inherent in every divorce, ancient or modern. But Jesus did disdain Moses’s innovation because it encouraged hard-hearted husbands to believe that so long as they wrote out a bill of divorce their action was justified, and was not a sin against God.

We only know of the existence of a written bill of divorce because God, in describing the procedure whereby husbands dumped their hated wives on the street, mentions that they wrote out a bill of divorce and handed it to their abandoned wives. It is only in the New Testament that we learn that it was Moses who commanded that such bills of divorce be issued, and Moses acted alone in doing so, not that he didn’t have the support of his elders (we can assume), for the legislation had common-sense behind it.

5.5. DEUTERONOMY 24:1-4

The prime source for our understanding of divorce during the Old Testament period comes from Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is the backcloth against which the Pharisees challenged Jesus about His new teaching on divorce and remarriage. The following is a literal translation of the Hebrew text.

24:1 When a man takes a woman and he owned [= ba’al] her, and it was happened, if not she is finding favour in his eyes—because he found in her an exposed matter,\textsuperscript{156} and he wrote for her a document of cutting-off [= severance], and he gave [it] into her hand, and he sent her out of his house.

24:2 And she went out from his house, and she walked away, and she became to another man.

24:3 And the latter [= next] man hated her, and he wrote for her a document of cutting-off [= severance], and he gave [it] into her hand, and he sent her out of his house.

Or, when the latter man died who took her to him for a woman,

24:4 not he is able—her first owner, who sent her out—to turn back to take her to be to him for a woman, after that she has been made unclean,\textsuperscript{157} \textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{156} On the term ‘\textit{ervat dābār} (דָּבָר נַפְּרָה),’ J. Blenkinsopp (‘The Jewish Family in First Temple Israel,’ in L. G. Perdue et al., \textit{Families in Ancient Israel} (Louisville, 1997), 48-103) wrote: ‘The impossibility of a literal translation (‘nakedness of a thing’) indicates idiomatic usage; it occurs elsewhere only in Deut 23:15 [EV 23:14], with reference to feces or other unclean matter in the camp.’ He takes the term to mean something ‘improper, indecent or at least objectionable,’ and was ‘probably chosen precisely because it was vague, ill-defined, and nonrestrictive.’ Blenkinsopp (pp. 65, 97 n. 33) denied that Deut 24:1-4 was designed to state the basic law of divorce (it is descriptive rather than prescriptive), and blamed Jerome’s misunderstanding of its syntax as placing the divorce procedure in the apodosis rather than the protasis. It makes sense that God would point to the non-sexual excuse for the divorce, and it amounts to ‘any cause’ a man might arbitrarily nominate to get rid of her. The rabbis exploited its vagueness to fit their theology; see Mishnah \textit{Gittin} 9:10. For sources, see Bernard S. Jackson, ‘The ‘Institutions’ of Marriage and Divorce in the Hebrew Bible,’ \textit{JSS} LV1/2 (2011) 221-251, esp. p. 241 nn. 82-84. The term ‘\textit{ervat dābār}’ is found in the Sifre to Deuteronomy 23:15, citing Sotah 17a, where it is translated as an ‘indecent thing’; cf. D. Daube, \textit{The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism} (London, 1956; reptd New York, 1973), p. 368f.
because an abomination it [is] before Yahweh, and not you are causing the land [= inhabitants of the land] to sin, which Yahweh your God is giving to you [as] an inheritance.\textsuperscript{160}

Note the underlined texts. This draws attention to the fact that the cultural procedure is the same.

The pivotal clue to Yahweh’s disgust lies in the phrase, “after that she has been made unclean [by someone or something].” The verb here is הָנַת (ḥuttaʾmānāḥ), which is a recognised mutation of הנַת (ḥuttmānāḥ), which is the rare Hothpa’el theme in Hebrew.\textsuperscript{161} So rare is this theme that it occurs only seven times in the Hebrew Bible. The occurrences are Num 1:47; 2:33; 26:62; 1 Kgs 20:27 (all using the root רָפָא); Lev 13:55, 56 (root שָׁנַח); and Deut 24:4 (root לֹא). The Hothpa’el is the passive form of the Hithpa’el, which occurs more frequently, and means to do something with oneself (reflexive), such as “to walk about.” The passive of this would be “to be walked about [by someone, such as a nurse].” The passive meaning of the Hothpa’el comes out in its use in Isaiah 34:6 where Yahweh’s sword is “coated [or enveloped] with fat.” The Hothpa’el meaning of the four occurrences of רָפָא is \textit{to allow oneself to be reviewed} for numbering purposes (“not they were presented for numbering”).

\textsuperscript{157} It is the action of the second husband sleeping with her that actually defiles her, but the first husband will be held accountable for her defilement and the sin of her remarriage (cf. Matthew 5:32).

\textsuperscript{158} In Islamic law a divorced wife can return to her first husband but only on condition that she has slept with another man in the meantime: ‘If he divorces her, she is not lawful for him afterwards, until she marries another husband’ (Qur’an 2:229).

\textsuperscript{159} The ‘land’ cannot sin (i.e., break a law—the ‘law of the husband,’ Romans 7:2), only the inhabitants of the land can sin, or more specifically, the \textit{men} of the land, because they are the ones who instigate the divorce proceedings.

\textsuperscript{160} Alternative grammatical translation of verse 4: “. . . after that she has been made unclean, because an abomination [is] SHE (יִשָּׂרָא) before Yahweh, and not SHE (יָשָׂרָא) is causing the land to sin, . . . .” Grammatically, the pronoun יִשָּׂרָא could be understood to refer to the woman or to the abomination, since both are feminine. The verb יָשָׂרָא can be parsed as either 2 pers. masc. sg. (“you are causing”), or 3 pers. fem. sg. (“she is causing”). In this syntax, it is more usual for SHE (יָשָׂרָא) to refer back to ‘abomination’ and to read: “because an abomination it [is]” (cf. Lev 18:22). This would make the act of sleeping with a second man constitute the abomination. The syntax, however, does not rule out the translation “because an abomination [is] she [= the defiled woman] before Yahweh.” It so happens that this translation fits in with Jesus’ insight that the divorced woman becomes a cause of sin to other men who might think that her legally conducted divorce ended her marriage, and that she was legally free to remarry. She becomes a polluting force in God’s world. God gave David many contemporary wives, but He never gave a wife many contemporary husbands. The latter is an abomination, while the former is a blessing. Under the Old Covenant, a wife may have only one husband at a time, while a husband may have many wives at the same time. This arrangement had the approval of God. Polygamy, \textit{per se}, is not a sin, but for leadership purposes in Christ’s Church only those with one current wife are eligible to become bishops (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).

Both Gesenius and Fuerst\textsuperscript{162} give the active Hithpa‘el of אָפָל (the root verb used in Deuteronomy 24:4) the meaning, to be or become unclean, impure; to be defiled, polluted, chiefly of Levitical uncleanness, both of persons and animals. In Numbers 5:13, 14 it translates to defile oneself (as of a woman in adultery), or a people polluted by fornication or idolatry, as in Hosea 5:3; 6:10. In the case of the Hothpa‘el in Leviticus 13:55, 56 the priest examines the plague in the skin of a person “after that it has been washed [by someone].” Here the passive aspect of the Hothpa‘el can be seen. If the Hithpa‘el means to make oneself unclean, then the passive of this is to be made unclean (by something). Hence my translation of the Hothpa‘el verb in Deuteronomy 24:4 as, “she has been made unclean [by him].” She is passive and something is done to her. In the case of her first husband, by his decision to put her out in the street to fend for herself, as no longer under his care, or wanted by him, she becomes in the eyes of her community an unclean woman. She may have been perfectly innocent, but now, for the rest of her life she is tarred with the brush of being a defiled woman, and no man, you would think, would want to use her womb to have sons and daughters, who would come into the world with the stigma of being the offspring of an unclean woman.

5.5.1. Why was reconciliation banned to the first husband?

The immediate explanation why Yahweh placed a ban on the first husband taking back his first wife was to ensure the purity of the descent of his male line. A man’s pre-divorce sons alone are to constitute his lineal descent, it would seem. Theoretically, if a man remarried his first wife and had further sons through her, then these could become his lineal descendants should all his pre-divorce sons die in battle. Was there also the possibility that the man would have two ‘firstborn’ sons, one from the first marriage, and one from the second marriage (albeit from the same woman)? By debarring the first wife from remarrying her first husband, Yahweh ensured there could be no further offspring between the two, even if they wanted to get back together. So there was a penalty imposed by God on any man who divorced his wife, and that penalty ensured that they would not be allowed to add to the number of human beings on God’s earth. Following every divorce is the curse of barrenness and irreconcilable reunion. They must forever wander the earth as separate individuals. But under the New Covenant, this curse on Mosaic divorce is removed, because divorce itself has been abolished as a reality, and since ‘divorce’ is only an empty word in Jesus’ vocabulary, with no substance, reconciliation can be achieved between ‘divorced’ couples.

5.5.2. What constitutes the ‘abomination’ in Deuteronomy 24:4?

There is a possible confusion over what the ‘abomination’ refers to. Some take it to refer to the reconciliation itself of two divorced persons getting back together, which is highly unlikely since reconciliation is what the New Testament revelation teaches and encourages as the inevitable outcome of forgiveness. This leaves the defiled woman herself, through her remarriage, as the ‘abomination’ and this fits the complete revelation on the subject. As Jesus noted, this was not a legitimate (re)marriage, but simply the case of a man having unlawful sex with her, and in the process defiling her body (cf. John 4:16-18).

Yahweh regards every wife, who has remarried in the lifetime of her first husband, as an unclean (or defiled) woman. That stigma will stick with her for the rest of her life unless she repents of her second marriage and ends it.

\textsuperscript{162} William Gesenius, \textit{A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament}. Translated from the Latin by Edward Robinson (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1836); and Julius Fuerst, \textit{A Hebrew & Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament}. 3rd edition. Translated from the German by Samuel Davidson (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1867).
Her first husband’s action might appear to determine her status in God’s eyes, if we read Deuteronomy 24:4 as “…after that she has been constituted unclean by him (i.e., by the first husband).” Or, as we have noted above, her defilement came about by sleeping with another man, if we read verse four as “…after that she has been made unclean by him (i.e., by the second husband).” The abomination would then consist in the same woman passing between two contemporary men, which was totally contrary to God’s design for woman. She was designed to live with one man for the duration of her life, or for the duration of her husband’s life, and only on his death could she sleep with another man.

On either reading, the ban on reconciliation is a punishment meted out by God on the first husband. In other words, the first husband’s sin cannot be reversed. He has committed an unforgivable sin in the eyes of God. A hard-hearted husband may use his superior strength and dominance to inflict terrible cruelty on his defenceless wife, but Yahweh slaps down hard on such men and imposes a penalty on them that shuts them out of the Kingdom of God. God’s Son pointed out that such divorces will lead to the divorced wife sinning if she remarries, but her sins will be laid at the door of her first husband, and he will be made accountable for her defilement (Mt 5:32).

God never introduced divorce into Israel. Man did. Deuteronomy 24:4 is God’s judgment on man for this evil practice. He, and the Son, are the same yesterday, today, and forever, in regard to their detestation of this man-made institution. God hates divorce. Full stop. It was an abomination to both members of the Trinity in Moses’s day, and it is the same today. There has been no shift in God’s value-system. But the good news is that all sins can be forgiven under Grace, including the unforgivable sin of divorce which obtained under the dispensation of the Law. Reconciliation under Grace abolishes the need for the injunction (mishpat) in Deuteronomy 24:4. But for all Jews throughout the world who are still living under the Law the force of the injunction is still in place for them.

To return to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the action of a wife’s husband is pivotal to her destiny. He is in total control of her life, and at his mercy. If he is an abusive or hard-hearted husband she is in for a hard life. If he is a righteous man then she can expect a more tranquil lifestyle. It all depends on the husband. Her life hangs by a thread—a daily thread. He can divorce her at a moment’s notice. He is answerable to no one for his actions. He is her lord (ba’al), her owner. She is but a possession, to be disposed of or retained at the whim of the owner. Such was the plight that wives were in when Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was written.

It is clear from Yahweh’s other laws that the grounds for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 cannot be adultery or, that she was not a virgin when he married her, for which two deviations He decreed the death penalty (Deut 22:13-19). The grounds, in this case, must be non-sexual. The words ἐρεβὸς ἀδήρ refer to a broad range of ‘causes’ that can be exploited by unforgiving, hard-hearted husbands. In the context of Deuteronomy 24:1 it means the ‘uncovering of a matter,’ or the ‘exposure of a matter.’ Journalists expose or uncover scandals, such as Watergate. Investigators bring to light things that have been hidden. And if a groom has only met his arranged bride once or twice before he married her, then things about her will come to light, be exposed, be manifested, and he may not like what he sees. This is what ἐρεβὸς ἀδήρ means in 24:1.

Underlying Jesus’ position is the attitude of His Father toward the divorced wife in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 who is termed an ‘abomination’ by Yahweh. The reason being that a woman may not have sexual relations with two living men. It is her remarriage that defiles her, and defiles every modern woman who divorces and remarries. God does not change His value-system over time.

163 See the grammatical argument under 3.5.
164 The Christian Jew must on no account come under, or accept, this ban on reconciliation. Christ has abolished this rule through His teaching on total forgiveness (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:11).
Christian leaders and pastors who have family members who have divorced and remarried, or who have close friends who have done the same, will avoid saying that remarriage defiles all who enter into such relationships, for fear of the repercussions that will follow such a statement. So they keep quiet.

5.5.3. Why was Deuteronomy 24:1-3 included in the Torah?

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 should be viewed as follows. Part A: verses 1-3. Divorce was man’s idea. Part B, verse 4. This was God’s idea. Part A was not God’s will for His people ‘from the beginning,’ as Jesus pointed out. But hard-hearted Hebrew men forced it upon Moses as a fait accompli, so he complied, and he sanctioned an unrecorded command (but written down at the time by Moses, see Mark 10:5) to alleviate the confusion that would follow if men were permitted to divorce ‘for any cause.’

Divorce is an evil. God hates it. He will not positively initiate a law to permit the ‘one flesh’ union to be dissolved. Having seen the unsanctioned tradition that sinners secured for themselves and described in Part A, God stepped in and put a rider on it, namely, verse 4, which Moses was obliged to write down and hand on. So the only reason why Part A appears in Scripture is because of Part B.

Part B had to be given a context, and that context is Part A, dictated by God Himself to Moses. The judgment ( mishpat) in 24:4 should be viewed as coming from God, and verses 1-3 constitute God’s own composition setting out the tradition that appertained among His people (as modified by Moses) on the eve of their entry into the Promised Land. This means that God carefully chose the term ‘ ervat dãbãr in 24:1, which is deliberately imprecise to convey the innumerable ways that hard-hearted men have used to divorce their wives.

Too much commentary time is given to Part A as if divorce was God’s idea. Commentators should start with verse 4, and ask themselves, “Why did God not allow reconciliation of the original marriage under the Old Covenant, when He expects it of all those who enter the Kingdom of God under the New Covenant?” That question shows up the difference between God’s people living without the gift of the Holy Spirit (and without faith), and God’s people living with the gift of the Holy Spirit (through faith), and thus able to go back to the law that existed ‘from the beginning,’ which was God’s true way of living, and not take advantage of the law of divorce that hard-hearted men had introduced.

The rider tells us that God is disgusted when a husband divorces his wife over any matter (cf. Jer 3:1). The inevitable result of his private punishment (for the hard-hearted husband is both judge and jury) is that his wife is obliged to sleep with a second man. But in God’s original decree no woman could sleep with two living men. He was disgusted then, and He is disgusted today, when the same thing happens. His disgust has not changed or abated. It has remained constant ‘from the beginning.’ The difference is that today, under grace, all sins can be forgiven and reconciliation is encouraged. Under the Old Covenant, the disgust over a husband’s unjust action in constituting his wife an unclean woman was not forgiven, and the sin stood unforgiven for all time, which is conveyed to the sinner by a road-block to any future reconciliation with his first wife. The calm anger of God behind 24:4 comes out very strongly when viewed in this light.

God’s new people have the gift of the Holy Spirit, and they have saving faith, and both of these take the Christian into a new realm of living, in which divorce is a violation of that Spirit-filled life. The two are incompatible for anyone living ‘in Christ.’ God has reconciled Himself to all men through the death of Jesus (Rom 5:10; Heb 2:9; 1 Jn 2:2), and that reconciliation includes the forgiveness of the sin of adultery through second marriages, the sin of adultery while still married, and the forgiveness of pre-marital sexual promiscuity. The slate is wiped clean for those who are in Christ Jesus, and He in them. Once in Christ the Christian must flee fornication from that point on to the end of their lives.
The Christian should no more think of contemplating divorce than he would think of contemplating stealing. Stealing and divorce belong to the same sub-standard world of Moses, and God interacted with these sub-standards when He held His people together ‘under Law’ until the coming of Christ.

I understand (with Paul) that in and of itself the Law is good and spiritual, if used legitimately, because whatever comes out of the mouth of God reveals something of His nature, His values, His ideas, and His hopes for His people. Paul goes on to say that “the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, . . . for fornicators, for sodomites, . . . and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Tim 1:9-10).

The sexist and discriminatory nature of the description of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 has never been denied by the Jews. Although Yahweh only described what they were doing wrong in divorcing their wives, they read the text as though Yahweh was approving of what He was describing! And many Christians do the same, who want to present Jesus as supporting divorce.

Some so-called Christian writers have tried to exonerate the Jewish practice of divorce by suggesting that Yahweh intended that wives could divorce their husbands in a vice versa understanding of the principles involved. This meets the serious objection that we cannot project back into the mid-15th cent. B.C., later ideas of economic equality between the sexes, so that she could send him out of his own house. It could not operate on a vice versa basis in 15th century BC culture when it was penned, because (1) A wife does not take a husband. It is the other way round. He is the ba’al, the owner of her, not vice versa. (2) The wife does not own the home. It is the other way round. (3) She cannot send her husband out of his own father’s house. It is the other way round. (4) The man is not defiled. It is the other way round. (5) The abomination and what pollutes the land is not a divorced and remarried husband, but a remarried woman.

Verse 4 is crucial. It is the remarried wife who pollutes the land, not the remarried husband. A husband could have more than one wife, but a wife cannot have more than one living husband. So the charge of Hebrew divorce being discriminatory and sexist still stands to this day.

5.5.4. The syntax of Deuteronomy 24:1-4

In Deuteronomy 24:1-4 we have the words of God, not the words of Moses—a mistake often made by careless commentators. God describes (not prescribes) the unauthorised act of divorce itself, and then imposes on this hateful act a punishment clause, in verse 4, which bans the husband from returning to his first wife. The only reason why Deuteronomy 24:1-3 is in God’s Word is to give God’s mishpat of disapproval a context. Verse 24 is the crucial truth we are intended to fix on and contemplate, not on vv. 1-3, which is taken up with describing the sin of divorce.

God never introduced divorce for hardness of heart as some so-called evangelicals believe, and neither did Jesus. Because Deuteronomy 24:1-3 is descriptive, and not prescriptive, God only describes the sin (as He does the sin of stealing in 24:7) only in order to convey His disapproval of divorce. He expresses His disapproval by placing a ban on reconciliation.

The English Standard Version and the New International Version correctly reflect the Hebrew in viewing the whole four verses as one long conditional sentence (v. 1, “if . . . [through to the end of v. 3] . . . then her former husband . . . may not take her.”). John Murray pointed out that by separating v. 1 from the three following verses, many translators have given it a meaning which it

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165 The ESV and NIV have correctly supplied “then” here, even though it is not explicitly in the Hebrew. The construction demands it.
166 Translating the waw+Suffix by a series of present tenses in English is an acceptable way to convey the Hebrew Attributive action in this particular passage, but it would be closer to the Hebrew to use the past tense throughout, as in my translation above.
did not originally have. He went on, if we read v. 1 independently of the next three verses, we get the idea that divorce is not only permitted but also commanded. And this is how pro-divorce writers like to read the text, especially those who wish to reintroduce divorce into Jesus’ teaching, following the lead of Erasmus.

The descriptive translation is well expressed in the following ET:

A man might marry a woman but later decide she doesn't please him because he has found something bad [indecent; objectionable] about her. He writes out divorce papers for her, gives them to her [places them in her hand], and sends her away from his house.

2 After she leaves his house, she goes and marries another man, 3 but her second husband does not like her either [hates her]. So he writes out divorce papers for her, gives them to her [L: places them in her hand], and sends her away from his house. Or the second husband might die. In either case, her first husband who divorced her must not marry her again, because she has become unclean [in a ritual sense]. The Lord would hate [detest] this. Don't bring this sin into the land the Lord your God is giving you as your own [L: inheritance].

(Expanded Bible, 2011).

The prescriptive translation is well expressed in the following ET:

A man might marry a woman, and then find some secret thing about her that he does not like. If that man is not pleased with her, he must write the divorce papers and give them to her. Then he must send her from his house. 2 When she has left his house, she may go and become another man’s wife. 3-4 But suppose the new husband also does not like her and sends her away. If that man divorces her, the first husband may not take her again to be his wife. Or if the new husband dies, her first husband may not take her again to be his wife. She has become unclean to him. If he married her again, he would be doing something the Lord hates. You must not sin like this in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

(Easy-to-Read Version (2006).)

John Murray was right to point out that the purpose of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was to forbid a man to re-marry his divorced wife after she had been married to another man in the interim. There is no hint that divorce takes place with divine consent or moral sanction. The idea that a remarried woman is a defiled woman and should be avoided is clear from David’s refusal to have sexual relations with his ten concubines once they had sexual relations with Absalom (cf. 2 Sam 16:21-22 with 20:3). The same goes for Jacob who refused to have sexual relations with his wife Bilhah after Reuben slept with her (Gen 49:4). Defiled women polluted the land, ritually and morally. This is very clear if we compare Deuteronomy 24:1-4 with the almost identically worded case in Jeremiah 3:1, which reads:

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168 The following ETs support the ‘descriptive’ reading of Deut 24:1-4: AMP (1954); CEB (2011); CJB (1998); CEV (1995); ESV (2001); GW (1995); GNT (1992); LEB (2012); NASB (1960-1995); NCV (2005); NIRV(1996-1998); NIV (1973-2011); NKJV (1982); NLT (1969); NLT (1996-2007); NRSV (1989); RSV (1946-1971); VOICE (2012); YLT (1862, pb). pb = public domain.

169 The following ETs support the ‘prescriptive’ reading of Deut 24:1-4: KJV (1611); DARBY (1899); ERV (2006); GENEVA (1599); HCSB (1999-2009); JUB (2000-2010); KJV (1611); TLB (1971); MSG (1993-2002); NET (1996-2006); OJB (2002-2011); WEB (pb); WYC (2001); JPS TANAKH (1917); Lesser Old Testament (1853); Jewish Publication Society O.T. (1917); NHEB (2010); Joseph Smith Translation (2013). pb = public domain.
They say, 'If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again?' Would not that land be greatly polluted? You have played the prostitute with many lovers, yet return to me,’ says the Lord.

The idea here is that the ‘wife’ of Yahweh defiled herself by having sex with another ‘man.’ Yahweh knows she has entered a defiled/unclean state, yet despite this He invites her to return to Him again and resume their ‘marriage’ relationship. This was contrary to the mishpath laid down by God Himself in Deuteronomy 24:4. In this invitation we see an early glimpse into the age of Grace that was to dawn some 600 years later, where the defilement of divorce and remarriage could be forgiven and reconciliation encouraged, due to the clean status that the Christian imparts to the one-flesh union.

The background to the mishpath in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is that God designed woman to have sexual relations exclusively with one man as set out in Genesis 2:24, and that if she broke that rule she became so unclean in His eyes that her husband must not have sexual relations with her again. She becomes an outcast in His eyes. And what applied then, applies today.

5.5.4.1. Exegetical notes on Deuteronomy 24:1-4

The use of the Hebrew Suffix-form of לְבָּדָר (larded, owned, mastered) indicates that the marriage was consummated, whereas the notice that “he takes a woman” (Hebrew Prefix-form) is ambiguous since it could indicate a betrothal, but taking ownership puts what follows in a definite marriage context. The use of the Suffix-form of פָּדָה indicates that some time after the marriage was consummated (for this is the way Hebrew recommences events some time in the future), she did something that he considered ‘obscene.’ The term used: ‘ארט דָבָר (טַבְן בָבֹ), occurs only twice in the Old Testament, here and at Deuteronomy 23:14 where it is used of Yahweh inspecting the desert camp of Israel and coming across an ‘ארט דָבָר. The sight of an ‘ארט דָבָר would disgust Him, He says, and cause Him to withdraw from the site—to separate Himself from the ‘exposed thing.’ The immediate context is human excrement which must be defecated outside the camp and covered over. An ‘ארט דָבָר in the camp would lead to Him removing His presence from among them (Deut 23:14) and this is the phrase He uses to refer to the ‘behaviour’ of the divorced woman in Deuteronomy 24:1.

The LXX translates ‘ארט דָבָר in Deuteronomy 24:1 literally by ἀδεχμον πρόμα and in Deuteronomy 23:14 by ἀδεχμοσοφὴ πρόγματος. The Hebrew term ‘ארט occurs 54 times in the Old Testament and in the LXX it is translated by ἀδεχμοσοφὴ 41 times and eight times by οἰχείν. The

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170 There is a parallel of sorts with 1 Cor 6:15-20, where a married man is defiled when he has sex with a prostitute, and becomes ‘one flesh’ with her. He can return to his wife provided he is cleansed by the blood of the Lamb of God, and the affair is over for good.

171 Only four married couples were saved in Noah’s Flood. If polygamy was acceptable to God, then He would have provided the four males with a few females each. Even the animals were saved as pairs.

172 See §3.4. Letter 4, “What is the ‘nakedness of a thing’ in Deuteronomy 24:1?” For a summary of interpretations of this term, see C. Pressler, The View of Women found in the Deuteronomic Family Laws (BZAW, 216; Berlin/New York: W. de Gruyter, 1993), pp. 45-62.

173 The same idea occurs at 1 Corinthians 12:23, “our unseemly parts (τα ἀοείμονα) have seemliness more abundantly.” This is a euphemistic expression for the human private parts. It was her sexuality that was in question, not her looks or disabilities or lack of skills, etc.

174 This word may also be a euphemism for unlawful sexual conduct in 1 Thessalonians 4:6, though its primary meaning is a thing done, fact, deed, affair.
former means, something indecent, obscene, nakedness, shame, the private parts. The latter means, disgrace, scandal, infamy, shame.

The predominant context for the use of 'ervat/ἀυξημοσύνη relates to human nakedness, especially the nakedness of close, female relatives. The closer the relative, the greater the obscenity was felt to be. The first occurrence of 'ervat/ἀυξημοσύνη relates to Noah’s nakedness as he lay drunk in his tent. His son, Ham, laughed at him, but his other two sons put a garment on their shoulders and walked backwards into the tent so as not to see their father in that state. They were blessed and Ham was cursed by God, who also put great emphasis on His priests wearing undergarments so that their nakedness was not seen when officiating in His Temple (Exod 28:42; 20:26) which incurred the death penalty (Ex 28:42–43).

It should be clearly understood that Jesus did not rescind Deuteronomy 24:1-4, as thought He had given Israel licence to divorce their wives for non-sexual causes, and then withdrew this licence through His Son’s teaching. The idea of rescinding assumes that God gave permission to divorce under the Old Covenant, which is not the case.

5.5.5. Deuteronomy 24:4 should be viewed as a punishment for divorce

Philo confirms the no-return custom in Deuteronomy 24:4, when he wrote:

Another commandment is that if a woman after parting from her husband for any cause whatever marries another and then again becomes a widow, whether this second husband is alive or dead, she must not return to her first husband but ally herself . . . .175

On the basis of the phrase “for any cause whatever,” some scholars concluded that Philo accepted the ruling of the school of Hillel.176 But the 'ervat davar was sufficiently, and deliberately vague (as it was Yahweh’s choice of term to cover any non-fornication cause) that a lawyer could drive a horse and cart through it to obtain a divorce for any of his clients. In truth, the school of Hillel was not saying anything new. It represented the status quo position, which went back before Moses’s time, and this is all that Philo is saying here.

5.5.5.1. Denial of reconciliation seen as a mild punishment

Deuteronomy 24:4 reveals God’s reaction to the abuse of a man misusing his headship authority over woman, which was given to him at the beginning. Some regard the punishment meted out to the abusive husband as a mild punishment, and certainly not a deterrent. But this ignores the character of God. He is concerned for the poor and needy and he hears the cry of the oppressed. If His action is only to shield the abused wife from further abuse, then should we look further than that for an explanation for His ban on a return to the control of an evil man? We can see wisdom in God’s action in the way He steps in to remove abused wives from the grip of hard-hearted husbands. That is the action of a merciful God, who cares for the downtrodden and oppressed.

Divorce, like sin, is here to stay. Sin and divorce are natural and characteristic traits of the old nature. Until one is ‘born again’ from above both evils will feature in everybody’s genealogy somewhere along the line. One correspondent wrote:

“If you say to the husband: ‘Divorce this woman and you can never remarry her once she has taken another husband,’ he would laugh in your face and say, ‘I don’t ever want

It is sometimes alleged by evolutionists (and there are plenty of theistic evolutionists inside Christ’s Church) that when God cursed the ground as a punishment for Adam’s sin, this was no punishment because thorns and thistles already existed! So Adam got off very lightly for a devastating sin that affected all his male descendants.

Be that as it may, if God told me that if I go ahead and commit a particular sin, and that He will not forgive it ever, I would be alarmed at the short-term and the long-term consequences of such a warning. In the short-term I could not expect Him to answer any of my prayers, or bless me, etc. In the long-term I would not enter ‘into His rest.’ When God speaks, He speaks with measured wisdom to draw back the sinner from his proposed course of action. I do not regard His proposed punishment as ‘mild,’ and therefore to be brushed aside as a trifling reprimand. To disregard anything that God says is to reveal an evil disposition toward Him, and the Elect who see it will take note of it, and be wary of any leader in whom it is found.

In the Book of Deuteronomy Yahweh covers a wide selection of cases in order to set up case law, from which principles and analogies can be drawn. Yahweh constantly requires His people to remember the travelling non-Israelite in their midst, the widow, and the orphan, and those within their jurisdiction who have no family structure to protect them, and not to abuse them, especially before the law.

God saw the vulnerability of the wife who was divorced in an instant, and this displeased Him intensely. It is bullying of the worst kind. Fortunately, such wives would have their father’s house to return to in most cases, but Yahweh was not prepared to let these hard-hearted husbands get away lightly with their cruelty, and so He imposed on them a law that they must never return to their abused wives. He did not punish this sin as He did in the other cases, because divorce, like sacrificing on the high places, was such a persistent violation of His will for His people, that Israel would have been under a cloud of heavy discipline all the days of its existence if He punished these sins with the death penalty.

However, even in the case of the priests who persistently offered sacrifices on the high places of Israel against the revealed will of God, they did not go unpunished, even if it might seem to be a mild slap on the wrist, and even if it seems to have been late in the day (for it came about under Josiah’s reformation). When these offending priests came up to Jerusalem they thought they were entitled to offer sacrifices on the temple altar, but God placed a ban on their service to Him in that holy place, but He allowed them to eat unleavened bread among their brothers in the temple area (2 Kgs 23:9). We might have expected God to be harder on these hardened offenders, and on hard-hearted husbands who divorced their wives, and His leniency surprises us.

A question that often crops up on internet discussions on web sites devoted to divorce and remarriage is, Why is there not a separate law in the Bible specifically banning divorce? My reply is that there was a law specifically banning offering sacrifices to God on the high places, but the priests deliberately flouted this law, and got away with it with a slap on the wrist and a ban on sacrificing to God on His altar in Jerusalem. Despite this (mild) punishment, these hardened priests continued doing what they knew was wrong, but God did not order their deaths because they were sacrificing to Him, albeit in an unapproved manner. But He did not leave them, or the divorcers, without a permanent warning written in His lawbook.

If you are going to judge a man for his sin, then you have to allow him to sin, and to build up a catalogue of evil such that he will approve of God’s final judgment on him. It is for this reason

that God does not prevent any man from sinning. He even allowed David to kill Uriah and take his wife to be his wife.

The significance of the long-term punishment meted out to the divorcer was probably lost on the husband. However, it was a ban that hung over him for the rest of his life, as did the ban on the offending priests. A ban that has no immediate impact makes no sense, say some. But it was, nonetheless, a severe punishment in that Yahweh would not forgive the divorcer (and the priest), either in this life or the next. The short-term punishment of being deprived of reconciliation to his ex-wife was seen as a price worth paying to be rid of her and get his own selfish way. There is wisdom in all that God does, and this stretches to His apparent leniency toward offenders, so when He refused to allow reconciliation to occur after a hard-hearted husband dumped his covenant wife on the street, He knew that only a ‘born-again’ experience would remove the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26-27). That new era was still in the future, so, wisely, God sealed the hard-hearted husband in his sin because his heart of stone could not be changed. He also sealed the stubborn priests in their wilful state of disobedience even though they were offering sacrifices to Him.

Despite the leniency displayed by God toward offending husbands and priests, ordinary Christians still wish that God had said explicitly, “You shall not divorce your wife or your husband,” because then this would have been the end of the matter. But God commanded the people, “Be you holy as I am holy” (Lev 11:44-45; 19:20; 20:7; Num 15:40; cf. Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; Ezra 8:28; Ps 34:9; Eph 1:4; Col 1:22). Christians are to imitate the Lord Jesus (1 Thess 1:6). The Apostle Peter reminded all Christians of the standard that God set for the Old Covenant saints, and that this goal of perfect holiness carried over into the New Covenant ‘holy nation’ (1 Pet 1:16; 2:9), and was attainable through the indwelling of the Lord Jesus in the lives of His saints.

The proof that it is the act of divorce itself that God regards as a sin against His revealed will in Genesis 2:24 comes out in the fact that God makes no distinction between a so-called righteous man divorcing his wife (for what some would regard as a legitimate cause) and an unrighteous man divorcing his wife. It is the very idea itself of putting asunder what God has designed to stay together—once the one-flesh union has been formed—that God hates. This undercuts the modern idea that there are legitimate and illegitimate causes, and Jesus has been, and is, used to maintain this distinction. Hence the Westminster Confession of Faith (to name just one highly, influential guide) gives ‘fornication’ and ‘desertion’ as righteous causes for dissolving a lawful marriage. God makes no such distinction in Deuteronomy 24:1-3. In His eyes, and by His example, no cause is legitimate to undo the marriage bond.

It shows how shallow modern Christianity is when ‘christian’ men can contemplate divorce as described in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 as a ‘normal’ thing, as something that happens, and God just has to adapt to it because there is nothing else He can do about it. The evil and cruelty of instantly dismissing a wife over a non-sexual matter, and setting her out in the street with no recourse to a tribunal or compensation, is considered ‘inevitable,’ and therefore ‘normal,’ by these advocates for divorce. They have decided that this action is no longer to be considered a sin against God. It has been redefined as ‘human nature.’

If these advocates had paused for a moment to examine the scenario that God described in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, they would have seen how unjust and evil it was. What God described, taking us through the procedure step by step, shows up the absolute power of every man in Israel to be his own judge and jury. He has absolute sway over his wife’s life. She is virtually his slave, and as such he can dispense with her as and when it pleases him. He is answerable to no one in the scenario that God lays before us. God presents the husband as a dictator with unbridled power and authority over his wife. God presents this dictator as a heartless, unforgiving man, using his superior, masculine strength and authority as head of his household, to convey his hatred for her in what looks like a legal procedure.
Those who advocate divorce as a lawful practice during the Old Testament period and as something that was culturally ‘normal,’ and which God did nothing to eradicate, should consider the culturally ‘normal’ practice of sacrificing on elevated places in Israel, which the prophets railed against, but which kings of Israel and Judah were unable to eradicate. Even of good kings who were said to walk in the ways of David (the standard), the black mark against their reigns was that they could not stop the illegal worship on the high places. Apostasy was endemic throughout Israel’s history, and in the background men were divorcing their wives at the private level, with the apparent approval of God, some must have thought, otherwise He would have prevented their remarriages from taking place.

On any reading of Deuteronomy 24:1-3 it is clear that God could not have given any man instructions on how to go about divorcing his wife. It is blatantly obvious that divorce in 24:1-3 is the unilateral act of the husband to vent his total frustration on a weaker human being, and use his power and position to bully her remorselessly to the point that he jeopardises the means to keep her body and soul together. He no longer cares what happens to her, whether she lives or dies. That is all encapsulated in the scrap of paper he hands her as he thrusts her out of her family home. The writing on the papyrus sheet did not dissolve the marriage. The marriage was dissolved the moment he hated her for something that festered and festered. The existence of divorce did not help to reverse what was happening in his soul. It had the opposite effect: it drew him toward it as an instrument to cut her out of his life.

The key to understanding Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is to read the first three verses following the initial word, “If …” and for the fourth verse to begin with, “Then …”

It is unfortunate that many Christians take it for granted that God tolerated divorce with only a slight mark of disapproval against it under the Old Covenant, and they have carried this over into the New Covenant era, thinking that God shows the same tolerance for their culture of divorce and remarriage. If God had expressed greater anger and imposed a heavier penalty for husbands who divorced their wives, the argument goes, then this would have made it impossible for Christians to sue for divorce in the secular law courts of this age. Indirectly, God is to blame, some assert, because He did not frighten or terrorise His people with the most dire consequences if they divorced their wives. By going ‘soft’ on this particular injustice by men toward women, He inadvertently gave out the wrong signal to all men that divorce was not such a big sin after all. In fact, He played into their hands by barring them from going back to their first wives, as if they would ever want to do that! They were only too glad to be rid of them!

But to the spiritual man and woman the next sections reveal the true attitude of God towards the sin of divorce among His people under both Covenants. Here we see the Father and the Son holding the same position on the fictitious nature of human divorce. It has no validity in their eyes, and never did have, since the days of Adam and Eve. There has never been a single human divorce that has dissolved a single, lawful marriage in the whole of human history. This is the universal lesson coming out of Deuteronomy 24 verse 4, which Jesus took up and amplified in His teaching.

5.6. IF THE DIVORCER IMMEDIATELY REGRETS HANDING HIS WIFE A BILL OF DIVORCE, CAN HE BE RECONCILED TO HER BEFORE SHE REMARRIES?

Suppose the divorcer, in a moment of rage, and in a fit of temper, and full of hatred for his wife, wrote out her bill of divorce and sent her out in the clothes she stood up in, completely destitute, at a moment’s notice. The hatred, the rejection, the shame, that that wife experiences at

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178 John Ignatius Döllinger, The First Age of Christianity and the Church, translated from the German by Henry Nutcombe Oxenham (1st ed; London: Allen, 1866, pp. 222-36) makes the point
that moment of time must have been truly devastating, and if it was accompanied by black eyes and bruises she would not have been in any fit state to go back to that house. But when his temper had cooled, he might have gone after her to get her back. Is she obliged to come back? The answer is a firm 'No.' The moment he places a bill of divorce in her hand, the covenant is broken in his eyes, as well as in hers. It is an experience. Both are free, under the law sanctioned by Moses, to go their separate ways and the husband says to his ex-wife, “You are free to marry whomsoever you want.” God also says a firm ‘No!’ to this hard-hearted husband, and so he is left without a wife. He will have to go off and find another one, and if his reputation goes ahead of him few fathers would give him their daughters fearing what might happen to them. At best he might pick up another divorced woman or a widow.

Some think that the bill of divorce does not take effect until the moment she remarries. Up until that moment she can exercise her judgment to forgive her husband, tear up his bill of divorce, and return to him as if nothing had happened. Isaksson reports that as soon as the divorced wife had intercourse with another man, her husband was forbidden to have intercourse with her. This makes sense because she does not become defiled until she has intercourse with another man.

The school of Hillel had some peculiar laws. For instance, if two divorced persons had been alone together after the divorce, the school considered that there were grounds for assuming that they had sexual intercourse with each other, and had got back together again. As a consequence, the school demanded that there should be fresh divorce proceedings if they wanted to stay divorced.

It is likely that this ruling goes back to an earlier ruling that a wife can be acquired in three ways, (1) by money, (2) by writ, and by (3) intercourse. So that in some cases sexual intercourse alone was considered sufficient to constitute a marriage.

The rabbinic schools appear to have agreed to overwrite God’s two cases where He imposed a life-long ban on divorce in two special-case marriages (Deut 22:19, 29). However, the rabbis ruled that if the wife in these two cases commits adultery, she must be divorced (M. Sot. 5.1; M. Yeb. 2.8). We are entitled to ask, On what grounds? If the grounds are that she committed an ‘eruvat dābār (Dt 24:1), then the rabbis have, once again, made the law of God of no effect, because they have circumvented God’s ban by inventing a new interpretation. Jesus charged the religious leaders of His day with the same offence (Mt 15:6; Mk 7:13). In effect they have removed the guarantee that God gave these wives that they could never be thrown out of their marriages. It is well-known that an ‘eruvat dābār was a synonym for ‘any fault’ divorce. The rabbis also ruled that if a wife did not bear children in the first ten years of her marriage her husband must divorce her, or else take a second wife (M. Yeb. 6.6; M. Gitt. 4.8). There was no divorce in the case of first degree incestuous marriages. The marriage is simply deemed to be null and void. Why could this not apply where the betrothed wife was proved to have committed fornication before her wedding, as in the case of

that, “There was no interposition of others, or sentence of a court: the man acted wholly for himself, and only his right was allowed—the wife could not separate herself” (p. 222).

179 M. Sot. 1.2; 5.1; M. Yeb. 2.8; M. Gitt. 4.7. The wife who breaks the law of Moses and Jewish custom receives no Ketubah; see M. Ket. 7.6; and Isaksson, ibid, p. 41.

180 See M. Gitt. 8.9.

181 M. Kidd. 1.1.

182 Cf. Isaksson, ibid, p. 40, “If the wife committed adultery, the husband was not allowed to forgive her but was compelled to divorce her.”

Joseph and Mary? After all, there was a real marriage in the case of the incestuous union; but none in the case of Joseph and Mary.

We cannot impose Western values on ancient Near Eastern societies. Cultural norms would play a part in preventing him from taking her back, because if the ‘ervat dàbãr was a valid ground to divorce her, then he cannot ignore it and pretend that the ‘ervat dàbãr never existed. He has to go through with his accusation, and stick by it, otherwise he would lose credibility in the eyes of his community. The interval following his covenant-breaking act is when the divorced wife will marry a second husband. Very quickly she becomes the wife of another man, which doubly ensures that, should he change his mind, he cannot have her back. Yahweh’s narrative of her movements is what one would normally expect, and so He does not take into account a change of heart in the evil divorcer.

So there are two distinct issues. There is the issue, Can he take her back before she remarries? And, is it because she becomes unclean through her remarriage that she cannot return to him? The latter is not likely because he is not a clean individual himself, so the focus must shift to Yahweh’s care for the abused wife. He will not allow her to return to an abusive environment, either in the short term or the long term, irrespective of any reform that the first husband might undergo. His past will hang over his head and conscience for the rest of his life.

The bill of divorce takes effect the moment it is put into the hand of the woman whose husband is a priest (M. Yeb. 4.12). The rabbinic tradition is clear about this. If the woman flees the house before her husband can place it in her hand then the divorce certificate is not valid. She is still married to him. It must be placed in her hand to be valid. At the moment it is placed in her hand she is free to marry any other man she chooses. He cannot withdraw it. And she is under an obligation by God not to return to her first husband. She has no choice in the matter once she has been divorced. God has spoken and He has decreed that there can be no reconciliation with an ex-husband, which is the moment she accepts the bill of dissolution. Within the culture that Moses created, the bill of divorce means what it says and the proof is that she can stay single in her father’s house for the rest of her life, if she so pleases, as an ex-wife. She is no longer his wife the moment she accepts the bill of divorce.

God treats the divorced woman like a widow in Numbers 30:9. After a wife is divorced, if she makes a vow to God it stands. However, if she was a married woman, her husband could annul her vow (30:10-15). A wife’s vows must go through her husband to God, and her husband has been given the authority by God to annul her vows, because God has given the leadership of the family to the husband, otherwise the wife could usurp his position by claiming that God had accepted her vows.

This proves that once the husband hands her a bill of divorce and she walks away from his house she is totally free of his headship over her, and he has no powers to force her to come back to him. She can make her vows directly to God, and she must fulfil them. God acknowledges the facts on the ground, and treats her accordingly. God does not accept the dissolution of the bond, but He imposes a permanent ‘separation’ (χωρισμός) under the Law, which contrasts sharply with the non-permanent separation under Grace (see 1 Cor 7:15).

From this I conclude that once divorced she stays divorced from him, and God forbids her to rejoin her ex-husband, because that would require a fresh marriage to rejoin him, such is the power of the bill of divorce. Culturally, it does what it claims—it ‘dissolves’ the first marriage in the eyes of man and the community, but not in the eyes of God. Yahweh points out that if her second husband dies, and so she is free to remarry whoever she chooses (just as when she was first divorced), she is banned from remarrying her first husband. She is forced into a remarriage to another man by the evil divorce of her first, unforgiving, hard-hearted husband. It is through this remarriage that she becomes a defiled woman in the eyes of God, because while the community gives the bill of divorce the power to dissolve a marriage, Yahweh does not recognise that it has this power. That is the key to understanding Yahweh’s actions. It is only because He regards the ‘divorced’ wife as still one-flesh with her first husband that she can be regarded as an unclean
woman if she remarries. It is clear from her transfer from a ‘clean’ to an ‘unclean’ status, in the eyes of God, that her first marriage is still in force. The community does not recognise this transfer of status to be valid, because in its eyes divorce dissolves the first marriage, and so the transfer is from ‘clean’ to ‘clean.’ Yahweh’s actions are consistent with those of Jesus, who revealed that a bill of divorce cannot dissolve any lawful marriage, and anyone who marries a divorced person becomes an unclean/defiled person. And unclean, defiled persons cannot enter the Kingdom of God, “For this you know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:5). 

It makes sense to read Deuteronomy 24:4 as God acting in the interests of the abused wife, to protect her from further abuse by this unrighteous husband. That is the solution, and it makes perfectly good sense. God deprives this hard-hearted individual of a wife, as a punishment for divorcing her. It was an expensive business to buy, a good, well-breeding wife.

Deuteronomy was written before Israel entered Canaan, but so evil was the nation that left Egypt that that whole generation was debarred from entering the Promised Land, that is how evil this generation was who were practising divorce which they had introduced into Israel, very likely during their 430-year stay in Egypt. There were only two righteous men (Caleb and Joshua) in the whole nation who were allowed to enter the Promised Land.

The positive effect of not being able to take back an ex-wife once she has been ejected from her home, is that all hard-hearted husbands would have to think hard about the consequences of resorting to divorce in a pique of anger toward her.

We know from the New Testament that it is God’s express desire that the divorcer should return to his first wife. The fact that God says to the Old Testament divorcer, “I do not permit you to return to your ex-wife,” and He says to the New Testament divorcer, “I do permit you to return to your ex-wife,” shows an unwillingness to forgive the Old Testament divorcer his sin, but a willingness to forgive the New Testament divorcer his sin, because His Son stands between Him and all men, because the Old Covenant has been replaced with the New Covenant. All men now must come through the Son of God if they are to be reconciled to God the Father. A new era, and a new relationship began when Jesus came to this Earth to be the Mediator between God and Man. This explains the difference between the two covenants’ attitude toward reconciliation.

Some hold that the divorcer of 24:1 is not an evil man but a righteous man. Having divorced his wife, he thinks better of it, repents, and goes after her to bring her back home. Can he do so? The answer is ‘No,’ because he is operating under the Law. By resorting to a bill of divorce and handing it to her, this action is not a provisional dissolution but an immediate and permanent dissolution of the marriage bond. It is final. There is no provisionality about it. It does what it says it does: it dissolves the union in the eyes of the community, but only in the eyes of the community. God’s disapproval is embedded in His Torah for all time to come.

In any case, the divorcer in 24:1 is a hard-hearted husband because her second husband divorced her because he hated her. Now hate is of the evil one. Yahweh records the ‘dissolution’ of her marriages to both husbands using exactly the same formula of words. But it might be objected that until she marries another man (or woman) she is not defiled; she is still clean. She is still clean, but her status is that she is a divorced woman, and no priest can marry a divorced woman. From God’s point of view, the divorced woman is still one-flesh with her ex-husband, but the bill of divorce is not ignored by Him. He takes account of the husband’s actions and these are determinative for the status of the marriage. Her husband has sent her out to marry whoever she wants to marry. In his mind she is free of him, as much as he is free of her. He feels free. Something

Where a Christian is married to an un-Christian, the children are ‘clean’ due to the Christian parent. They are reckoned as ‘holy’ in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, and so they will be with Him should they die in infancy (1 Corinthians 7:14). The children of two non-Christian parents are ‘unclean’ and so they have no relationship with the Lord Jesus. They share the destiny of their ‘unclean’ parents.
significant happened when he handed to her a bill of divorce. A burden was lifted from his mind, be he an abusive or a righteous husband.

Divorce *per se* is a sin, followed by the sin of remarriage. So there are two sins involved here. If the divorced partners never remarry they are still in a sinful state in the eyes of God, but maybe not in the eyes of Moses’s ‘complete legal system.’ Under Moses’ system, the two are no longer ‘one flesh’ but two. Man has separated them. They cannot be rejoined *under Moses’ system*, is the ruling Yahweh stepped in to impose on Moses’ system.

Of course, if one or other remarries, which is the likely next stage, this makes the reunion/reconciliation even less likely, because the wife moves into a ‘defiled’ state. If a defender of Moses’s system wants to argue that they can be reconciled before she moves into that ‘defiled’ state, then he would need another law requiring another wedding, as if they were two singles marrying for the first time, because under the complete Mosaic system, they are two singles.

I don’t think a reconciliation through a second marriage ceremony happened in real life. It is an arm-chair discussion point.

The inbuilt discrimination against women, as the description of what happens during a divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 reveals, does not, and did not, give the wife the right to divorce her husband for infidelity, cruelty, hate, ‘*eruvat dâbâr*, etc. etc. This should not surprise us, because if hard-hearted husbands are in the driving seat and determining the traditions, they are not going to give their wives the right to divorce them, are they? Hence the unjust nature of the traditions governing divorce in Israel, as described in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, is sufficient to show that divorce did not originate with Yahweh, but with man. This is something that Jesus recognised and which embarrassed the Pharisees who asked Him their question in Matthew 19:3 whether it was *lawful* to divorce their wives. The plain answer was that it was not lawful, because Deuteronomy 24:1 is only a *description* of the evil tradition that they had been practicing in Egypt.

### 5.7. GOD’S ABHORRENCE IS THE DEFILED WOMAN AND NOT THE RECONCILIATION

It is sometimes said that God never showed any disapproval of the practice of divorce in Israel, which very likely started in Egypt hundreds of years before Moses was born. But God showed what He thought of Moses’s permission to allow divorce among His people in two ways.

First, after a wife was divorced by her hard-hearted husband, it was assumed (as it is today) that the wife was free to remarry whoever she wanted. She is not considered to be an adulteress. She is ‘clean,’ ‘undefiled,’ or so one would think. But as soon as a second man has intercourse with her, at that moment she becomes an ‘unclean,’ ‘defiled’ woman in the eyes of God. The only way this can happen is if God ignores the divorce and considers her as still married to her first husband. Only this will explain how He could regard her as an unclean woman, whom He calls an abomination. The term ‘defiled (unclean)’ is used in Numbers 5:13-14 of the defilement of adultery. The same term, when used in Deuteronomy 24:4, means that remarriage following a divorce is on a par with adultery. This is totally consistent with Jesus’ teaching in Mark 10:11-12, where remarriage by either partner is regarded as an adulterous relationship.

The principle that God is applying to this situation is contained in Genesis 2:24, which was also the view of the Lord Jesus. Both the Father and the Son are consistent in viewing the divorce procedure as invalid, and the woman who remarries after getting such a divorce is an unclean woman and an adulteress. If God had not pronounced the remarried wife an abomination in His sight, then He would have sanctioned divorce in Israel. The term ‘abomination’ certainly applies to the remarried wife, but it must also apply to the means that got her into that position and condition, namely, divorce itself. Divorce was the gateway that led to her abomination status that would stick to her for the rest of her life. Divorce and spiritual death go hand in hand. It was no wonder, then, that God said He hated divorce.
Secondly, I see God’s abhorrence as relating to her intercourse with a second living man, rather than relating to the reconciliation with her first husband. If reconciliation was an abomination to God under the Law, then it must still be so under Grace. But under Grace reconciliation is encouraged and desired by God. He cannot be inconsistent, therefore it is the defiled wife who is the abomination under Law and under Grace.

The line that Jesus took shows that He is in agreement with what constituted His Father’s abhorrence. If God’s abhorrence related to the reconciliation then He has changed His value-system, because Paul held that reconciliation was no longer an abhorrence to God under Grace.

If homosexuality is an abhorrence to God under Law, is it no longer an abhorrence to Him under Grace? Of course it is! Paul believed that what is an abhorrence in God’s eyes under the Law, is also an abhorrence to Him under Grace. We would expect consistency within the Trinity over what constitutes unrighteous behaviour throughout human history and across all dispensations.

This means that reconciliation cannot be an abhorrent idea to God in Deuteronomy 24:4, and this leaves only her remarriage. Given Jesus’ confirmation that a remarriage defiles a divorced wife, and a reconciliation does not defile a divorced woman, we must rule out reconciliation as being an abhorrent idea in the mind of God. This leaves only the remarriage itself. Grammar, theology, and Jesus’ insight, suggest that God’s abhorrence is the defiled woman herself.

It is clear from the Torah that a woman should not have any seed from another man. Numbers 5:20-22 reads, “And the priest has caused her to swear, and has said to the woman, ‘If no man has lain with you, and if you have not turned aside to uncleanness under your husband, be free from these bitter waters which cause the curse. And you, if you have turned aside under your husband, and if you have been defiled, and any man gives his copulation to you besides (παραστήσεις) your husband . . . .’ Then the priest has caused the woman to swear with an oath of execration, and the priest has said to the woman, ‘Yahweh gives you for an execration, and for a curse, in the midst of your people, in Yahweh’s giving your thigh to fall, and your belly to swell, and these waters which cause the curse have gone into your bowels, to cause the belly to swell, and the thigh to fall.’ And the woman has said, ‘Amen, Amen.’”

Verse 20 makes it clear that the woman is defiled if she has sex with another man, and Leviticus 18:20 makes it clear that the man is defiled if he has sex with another woman. “And unto the wife of your neighbour you do not give your seed of copulation, to be defiled through her.” A defiled wife is an abomination in God’s sight (Deut 24:4). Fornication defiles the fornicator and strikes at the very heart of the ‘one flesh’ union.

It is unnecessary to go into all the rabbinical attempts to justify the ban on reconciliation. Those who argue that it was to protect the second marriage in case the first husband tried to get her back again, do so by imposition. In any case, this overlooks the point that even if her second husband dies, he still cannot have her back again.

Gordon Wenham tried a different tack. Once a marriage has formed and then dissolved, he argued that to remarry the first husband after a remarriage was incest. There are three problems with this solution. First, it assumes that divorce dissolves the first marriage, otherwise getting back together would not be incest. Second, it ignores the fact that the man in 1 Corinthians 6:16 was ‘one flesh’ with his wife and with a prostitute at the same time. He is told to cease being ‘one flesh’ with the prostitute, and to return to his lawful wife.

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The sexual encounter with the prostitute did not dissolve his ‘one flesh’ union with his wife, so no incest was incurred by getting back to his first wife, even though he had sexual relations with another woman in the meantime, which amounted to a ‘one flesh’ union. Note that the same term is used of the sexual union with the prostitute as with his wife. He was in a ‘one flesh’ union with both at the same time. If we attribute consistency to God then after the man had become ‘one flesh’ with the prostitute, he should not have been allowed to return to his first wife, because he was a defiled husband. The era of Grace explains the change in God’s attitude.

Third, if an Israelite husband remarried his first wife, after a divorce, and this was considered a ‘type of incest,’ and so prohibited by Yahweh, then, since the laws of incest must necessarily carry over into the New Covenant, and God does not change His value-system, there can be no remarriage to the first wife, under the New Covenant, if divorce dissolves a marriage.

The solution to Deuteronomy 24:4 is that there was no moral objection to a reunion with the first husband, after a remarriage, just as there was no moral objection to the Corinthian man returning to his wife. We must look elsewhere for the reason behind the ban on reconciliation under the Law, and it is in God’s unwillingness to forgive such a heinous crime as divorce. We need look no further for an explanation.

5.8. HOW FAR CAN OLD TESTAMENT LAWS BE IMPOSED ON THE CHURCH?

This is not the place to write a thesis on the relationship between the Old and the New Covenants. The focus here is solely on the importance of knowing how to use the obsolete Torah material in relation to the issue of Christian marriage. There is a real danger of mixing old wine with the new wine that Jesus has given to the world to enjoy. At the conclusion of this section we shall state how the ‘old wine’ can be extremely useful to the Christian, provided it is used aright. The twin dangers are putting the ‘new wine’ into the ‘old wine skins,’ and putting the ‘old wine’ into the ‘new wine skins.’ The former is the danger facing Messianic Christianity; the latter is the danger of Western Christianity trying to make use of the Old Covenant scriptures, which were written, as Paul noted, for the benefit of Christ’s Church.

For example, some Christian teachers (Messianic and Western) believe that the law on virginity should be carried over into Christian marriages. They believe that a Christian man (Jew and Gentile) is entitled to marry a Christian virgin, and if she is not a virgin on her wedding night then the newly wed husband is entitled to divorce her immediately, but not if he delays to do so. He has a very narrow window of opportunity, as regards time, to make that decision. If he sleeps with her again, then it is assumed that he has forfeited his right to divorce her. God sanctioned that a non-virgin bride be killed, and not allowed to bear children to Him. These teachers believe that since they cannot kill their Christian non-virgin brides, the next best thing is to divorce them, and consider them ‘dead’ so that they are free to marry another bride.

The problem with this solution is that if the non-virgin bride (who is a Christian) is not killed, she is not ‘dead!’ And she will go off and marry another Christian man, and have children by the next Christian husband. Is the next Christian man who married this ‘dead’ Christian woman in the same category as the man who married a woman divorced for a non-capital offence?

Another Christian leader insists that if his newly-wed wife reveals a perverted inclination to perform unnatural sex in the honeymoon period or slightly beyond that period, that this, too, is a cause for divorce, because he has taken the private interpretation that the term ‘eruot dābār in Deuteronomy 24:1 refers specifically to sexual perversion, at the ‘dirty talk’ level only.

These two interpretations claim to have biblical sanction behind them. I am not here dealing with those who take the prescriptive (or directive) interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. They

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believe that God sanctions divorce for any number of unspecified ‘erat dābār causes. Rather, the focus is on those causes that could not have been foreseen or discovered before the Christian entered into matrimony. From the Christian bridegroom’s point of view he hoped that he was marrying a Christian woman, but she turned out to be anything but that in private, demanding unnatural sex with him, and other disturbing requests, which deeply upset him. He is counselled that causes for divorce, immediately on marrying her, are her non-acceptance of her husband’s headship over her, or not fulfilling her responsibilities at home, as mistress of the house, or bringing her husband into dispute through disorderly behaviour in public, bordering on lewdness and nudity. These traits were unexpected in the Christian bride, he had thought God had directed him to marry, after much prayer, and come as a complete surprise.

Some teachers feel that these deeply disturbing manifestations of unspirituality warrant a divorce if they are not overcome in the first few weeks of marriage, because they bind the Christian husband to a wife who is Christian only in name, and that is not what he thought he was marrying, and vice versa.

From the Christian bride’s point of view, she hoped that she was marrying a Christian man, but he turned out to be anything but that in private, demanding unnatural sex with her, and other disturbing requests, which deeply upset her. If these traits appeared in the honeymoon period or slightly later, some marriage advisers, pastors and Christian counsellors among them, recommend that she do not bind herself for the rest of her life to her perverted husband, and advise an immediate divorce. She is mindful that her perverted husband is her head and that she should obey him in everything, as the Scriptures reveal. The prospect of being locked into a relationship that deeply disturbs her Christian faith is absolutely appalling and fills her with revulsion. What is she to do?

Then there is the case where a Christian girl is determined not to marry a young man who had sex outside marriage, because she believes she is entitled to marry a virgin husband since she has kept herself pure for her marriage. The same goes for a virgin young man. But in both cases they fall for a partner of the opposite sex who deceives them into believing that they fit the standard they have been looking for, and marry, only to find out that they have been deceived. The betrayal of trust can be deeply unsettling for the stability of their marriage. The betrayal could extend to other issues, such as the ‘Christian’ spouse only ‘became’ a Christian in order to capture a partner, but in real life they were of a different religion. They could have a criminal past, or have or had sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

Many advisers sense that the long-term chances of these marriages being successful are too slim to carry on with, and advise a quick divorce, because they are going to end up divorcing each other anyway, when the blazing rows start up, as they will, as surely as night follows day. Better to cut your losses early and raise your children with someone you can trust, is often the counsel being given, even to Christian couples.

Personally, I do not think it wise to demand, as of right, that the sexual history of a bride or bridegroom be confessed to each other before the marriage takes place. This would do great damage to their self-esteem, and would form the hairline crack for an inevitable divorce, for every marriage must go through at least one huge bust-up, and Satan will exploit their past sins to his advantage when the arguments are flying thick and fast. “Forgetting those things that are past let us reach forward to the things that lie ahead,” is good advice to newly married couples provided both show clear evidence of having been ‘born from above,’ and bear fruit of that change. The best advice is: Let the past remain in the past, and do not enquire into the other’s sexual history. Let their present walk with Christ Jesus be their new life, and put their old life with its un-Christian habits and values into the dustbin of history, never to be resurrected again.

5.8.1. Taking advantage of the ‘old wine’ requires becoming a Jew
If a Christian man wanted to take advantage of some Old Testament law, such as the expectation that he is entitled to marry a virgin, and she turns out not to be a virgin, and as a consequence he feels entitled to divorce her, then I would argue that he cannot pick and choose which laws to carry over into the Christian Church and which to ignore. Let such a Christian husband become a Jew in all but name, and live as a Jew, and live under Jewish law and among a Jewish-Christian community from which he is resolved to take a bride, then he can apply the law of virginity to his proposed bride. But Gentiles cannot stand on the outside and pick and choose some Jewish laws and apply them to the New Covenant Church, and reject the other Mosaic laws.

Contact between prospective wife and husband in Ancient Near Eastern cultures did not permit any intimacy between the couple, but he (through his father) could obtain the assurance and evidence (e.g., a menstruous cloth) that his bride to be was certainly a virgin, and would be guarded in that condition right up to the marriage itself. She would be chaperoned at all times to ensure this. The bride-to-be had a vested interest in staying a virgin, because in Hebrew culture she would be stoned to death if she was not.

Obviously, Western culture is the opposite, and very little care is taken of daughters to see that they enter marriage as virgins. But in compensation the prospective husband can soon find out if his bride-to-be has had many boyfriends, or was raped in the past, to find out her virgin status. If she is not a virgin, but he is deeply in love with her, he can marry her. He is not under Torah.

Gentiles are not under any obligation to marry virgins, but Hebrew/Jewish young men were, under the old Mosaic dispensation.

Provisional wives were not a feature of Hebrew culture. The only requirement demanded of a future wife was that she was a virgin. It was a physical condition. It could be verified. This verification took place before the couple were married to ensure that the resulting marriage was lawful. The long betrothal period also ensured that she was not carrying someone else’s child. So every effort was made to ensure that a man married a virgin.

Westerners would like to apply Hebrew culture to their marriages, but they are working out of an entirely different cultural background, so that it is not possible to make the same demands as the Hebrews did. We are Gentiles, not Jews. Only those who live as Jews, keeping all the laws of the Torah, can expect to marry virgins.

5.8.2. The backdoor introduction of the Mosaic laws into Christ’s Church

Some have tried to see Christ’s Church as the natural successor to the nation of Israel. Israel was a physical nation. It was also a theocracy. The Church is a theocracy, but not a physical nation. Israel had the physical authority from God to carry through the death penalty for over seventy named crimes, including women who lost their virginity, and for adultery.

Now if the Church wants to imitate the state of ancient Israel, in the case of non-virgins and adulteresses, it has no authority from God to subject these women to the death penalty. The death penalty for non-virgins has been done away with by God, and for good reason. They are free to marry if they are repentant of their past sins. They can accept the Lord’s directive, “Go, and sin no more.” The crowd wanted the death penalty applied to the woman taken in adultery (a capital offence), but Jesus let her live.

From this we learn that Christians who want to see the Church as the new ‘Israel of God’ are mistaken if they try to bring into the Church laws and regulations that applied only to the physical people of Israel, as a distinct nation. That national stage is obsolete. It no longer exists, but some try to make it exist in the Church, in order to take advantage of its lower standard of righteousness.

Only if the Church became a national state in its own right and had supreme power over its citizens (the papacy of the Middle Ages being a good example) would it be able to imitate the old Israel of God, and kill off all non-virgins and adulteresses. By imparting His spirit to all His followers, Jesus ensured that Jews and non-Jews could live out His teaching and show compassion to all nations.
We need to be aware of double standards. If a marriage does not become binding until ‘the man has satisfied himself that the woman is sexually pure in her spirit as well as in her body’ then she is entitled to expect the same standards of him! What if the guy had sex (i.e., one night stands) before marriage? Does this disqualify him from marrying a virgin? If a Western woman is repeatedly rejected after each marriage she goes through, because she was not a virgin, how can she ever be married? If she is made pregnant with each marriage by different grooms, who then reject her the next morning, who is responsible for these children?

Post-coitus knowledge of the sexual history of one’s partner is never a ground to dissolve a lawfully entered into marriage contract. I do not regard a past history of lesbianism or the non-virgin status of the bride to be a ground to dissolve a lawfully entered into marriage.

In the Christian world, as opposed to the non-Christian world, every effort to make sure of the character of who you are about to marry is your responsibility. You are responsible for your choices, and if you make a bad choice you must live with it. It is a case of what-you-see-is-what-you-get (WYSIWYG). If in doubt, do not marry. In any case single persons are of more value to the Lord than married persons, whose interests are divided. Remain in the marriage status in which you were called to be Christ’s disciple. If you were single, remain single. Even a perfect marriage can be a yoke round your neck, and that yoke is there ‘until death do you part.’

5.8.3. Did Jesus carry over divorce from the ‘old wine’ into His ‘new wine’?

It is not unusual to find Christian writers who have accepted the (N)KJV translation of Matthew 19:9. ‘except for fornication’ as Jesus’ words to state that they believe Jesus based His teaching on the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 that was current in His day, and that He allowed divorce for adultery. If so, this would make Him a supporter of Hillel and Shammai’s interpretation that the term ‘erovat dãbir refers to fornication (and adultery). This is a degrading view of the Lord Jesus.

First, it brings Jesus down to the level of another human rabbi groping for the truth. It denies that He is the Truth; and that He received His teaching directly from His Father.

Secondly, it means that Jesus cannot be infallible in His teaching if that teaching is based on current interpretation, which has been shown to be wrong. We just need to do some joined up theology to see the fallacy of this position.

It is evident that if God instituted the death penalty for adultery, how can He also institute divorce for adultery in the same book, at the same time? There is a contradiction here. Refuge is sometimes sought to justify this contradiction by pointing to ‘developments’ within the unfolding revelation of Scripture. But this misses the point that the contradiction is contained in the same book, and written at the same time. From this we see that no effort is spared by these so-called evangelical writers to get Jesus to agree to divorce for adultery, even if that means that God must be viewed as being inconsistent, confused and ambivalent in His attitude toward divorce for adultery. And the same goes for His Son.

5.8.4. What is Jesus’ punishment for fornication and adultery?

Has the death penalty been commuted to excommunication from the Body of Christ—the Church? The answer is Yes. We can no longer inflict the death penalty for adultery in the Church. In 1 Corinthians 5 the Christian man who committed incest would have been put to death under the Mosaic Law, but here Paul tells the Church to excommunicate the man. In this test case we see how the physical penalties of the Law have been transmuted into spiritual penalties, and the greatest of these is excommunication by the righteous Church of God.

If the Church is a true Church of God, and living as a community in accordance with Christ’s spiritual laws, walking by faith, and not by human reasoning, then God will endorse the actions of that Christian community when they discipline their members in love. But if a church goes astray from Christ’s teaching (such as abolishing the headship of man, or redefining it to permit
women to be bishops and pastors over men, and the men indulge in all kinds of syncretistic practices), then the righteous in those straying churches will be excommunicated or ostracised. In which case I do not think God will endorse the actions of these compromised churches, and the Elect should not feel they have been excommunicated from the Body of Christ.

So if Christians have remarried, and so are in a state of living an adulterous life, they must be excommunicated if they are not willing to separate from their adulterous partner, or try to argue that it is a righteous manner of living the Christian life. But once remarriage is not only accepted as legitimate, but the church actually marries divorced persons, then you can have no doubt but that that church is not following Christ, but is following the world. It is a pseudo-church.

5.8.5. The misapplication of Deuteronomy 24:4 to Christian marriages

Confusion over the relationship between Law and Grace has led many writers and bloggers to teach that Christians are prohibited from remarrying their first partner, because they hold that Deuteronomy 24:4 still applies under Grace. One author wrote, “According to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, a man may not remarry his divorced wife if she has in the meantime been married to another man.”189 The implication of this statement is that the author believes divorce does dissolve the first marriage union; so that he assumes that he can live under the Law, as well as under Grace. The other implication is that this author believes it is the reconciliation that is the abomination in God’s eyes, and not the defiled woman.190

Christians are banned from taking other Christians before the law courts of this world (1 Cor. 6:1), which belong to Satan. Yet the only way to obtain a divorce is to go to Satan to obtain it, which he will be only too ready to hand out. Note also the clear teaching of Romans 7:2-3, and 1 Corinthians 7:39: “For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but when the husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband is dead, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man. . . . The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.” These Scriptures show clearly that only death can dissolve the marriage bond. If otherwise, the marriage illustration used by God in Romans 7 would be inappropriate, which is impossible, because Scripture cannot be broken.

5.8.6. Jesus threw out the ‘old wine’ of the obsolete Mosaic dispensation

The shift from Deuteronomy 24 back to Genesis 2 constituted the foundation of Jesus’ new theology of marriage. His teaching came as ‘new wine,’ which required new wineskins to contain it (i.e., a born from above transformation). Genesis 2:24 was the stone that the builders had ignored, that became the chief cornerstone of Jesus’ revolutionary teaching. Jesus’ abandonment of Deuteronomy 24:4 meant that He was no longer arguing on the same plane as the Jewish lawyers. They were now like ships passing each other in the dark, because the Sanhedrin were on a lower level of understanding the mind of God, which only Jesus could convey to the world in all its pristine exactness and clarity.

The entire population of Israel was descended from a fallen, defective, human being, namely Adam, because they were all, without exception, direct descendants of Adam and Eve, and all inherited a nature with a natural inclination to be perverse, and reject the headship of God over their lives. All are born in sin, to sin, without a single exception.

190 See §5.5.5. for God’s ban on reconciliation during the Mosaic dispensation.
Jesus was also a human being, but not a descendant of Adam’s fallen nature. He joined the human race through a woman. He was a second Adam, not defective, and not fallen. He came into this world with a sinless nature and it is this sinless nature that He imparts to each of His followers. This new nature cannot sin. A Christian is committed to following his new nature and not his old nature which lies in a dormant position but in subjection to the new nature.

Genesis 2:24 represented the pre-Fall marriage union that the first Adam and Eve entered into while in their sinless nature, and before they fell and lost their perfect nature and inherited a defective nature that was doomed never to be restored to its original, pristine condition.

Jesus did not come to repair the fallen nature that all men inherit directly from Adam, which is the goal of every world religion. Nor did Jesus come to restore to us the sinless nature that Adam had before he fell. As far as Jesus was concerned, the old nature could not be repaired or restored; it had to be replaced. This is the unbridgeable gulf that separated the Jews from Jesus. He was speaking out of His new, perfect nature; they were speaking out of their old, defective nature. Sin and divorce belong to the old, defective nature.

The replacement nature that Jesus was offering to all mankind was His own nature. He promised to abide in every one of His followers and guide them into all truth. What an incredible offer to extend to every human being on the Earth! Each man has been given the possibility to escape from his natural Adamic nature and become sons of God by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. This crossover point is called the ‘born from above’ experience by the Lord Jesus Himself, and without it no man will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

It now becomes clear why Jesus took His theology from Genesis and not from the Torah. Both He and Adam were sinless. Adam married while in a sinless state. God brought Eve to Adam in her sinless state. There were united by Him in their sinless states, and that union was to be a permanent, lifelong union. Divorce was an impossibility due to the sinless natures that they had. Jesus restored this original marriage union to all His followers. This was the new ethic by which they were to live.

Jesus did not just take us back to the sinless state that Adam and Eve were in when they were married by God. Jesus takes us back to His nature, a nature which cannot sin. That is the difference. God left a backdoor open to Adam to sin if he wanted to; there was no such backdoor in Jesus’ nature. It was impossible for Him to sin, because He is the only begotten Son of God. We, by contrast, are sons and daughters by adoption.

When we understand where Jesus was coming from, and that He was a sinless, human being, it becomes instantly obvious why He could not accept divorce among His followers; because it would be a violation of the new nature that He has imparted to each of His followers. Paul could say, ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me’ (Gal 2:2). If Christ truly lives in every professing Christian then they will see instinctively (if the Spirit dwells in them) that deliberately breaking up a marriage is incompatible with that claim. And the claim can be tested by their fruits.

If God could forgive Israel her utter contempt for Him (viewed as her ‘husband’ by the prophets) and put up with centuries of abuse, lying, stealing from Him, and deserting Him for other religions, and committing spiritual adultery and fornication, if after all this despicable behaviour God could forgive her, then so can every Christian who has a similar spouse. That is the miracle of being ‘born from above,’ and without it divorce is the only course open to the backsliding Christian. The resort to divorce by a professing Christian is the sure evidence that the spirit of God does not dwell in them.

If the devil can come in the guise of an angel of light, then so can Christian pastors come in the same guise, and deceive the Elect. The only way to distinguish the true from the false pastor is by their fruits or ethics. A pastor who is divorced and remarried subsequent to becoming a Christian is either one of the Elect who has been deceived by a false teacher, or is a false teacher in his own right.

The teaching of Jesus on marriage and divorce does not hinge on a single Greek word here and there, or on complicated semantics, or grammatical constructions, though these are all helpful on occasions. It rests on the nature of the ‘born from above’ experience, which imparts to every son
and daughter of God the very nature of Christ Himself. It is this nature that will forgive one’s murderer; that will forgive adultery; and that will astound the world in the breath of its Christ-like reactions to all manner of evil perpetrated against it.

Because Jesus went back to the pre-Fall state of marriage where God united Adam and Eve in a ‘one-flesh’ union, while they were in their unfallen state, to form a permanent, lifelong union, that is the position that Jesus places all His followers in. Consequently, just as Adam and Eve, in their unfallen state, were in a permanent, lifelong union, incapable of a breakdown, because they were sinless at this stage, so the Christian is in an identical position if they remain in Christ. Divorce is not an option because the marriage union is permanent and for life. The unbelieving spouse may walk out on a marriage, but the bond is still there, even if the bind is severed. For there is a difference between the ‘bond’ and the ‘bind’ of marriage.\footnote{191}

For a Christian, who has been placed by Christ in the pre-Fall situation, to break up his marriage would be akin to Adam divorcing his wife before he fell. For a Christian to divorce after receiving the nature of Christ it would be a deliberate sin against Christ, which would require Christ to go to the cross for a second time to remove it (Heb 6:6).

Every aspect of Jesus’ teaching on marriage can be explained if we go back with Him and stand alongside Him in the Garden of Eden as the guests of the first married couple.

Deuteronomy 24 could play no part in Jesus’ thinking because divorce belonged to an age that He has superseded. It is obsolete.

Any attempt to bring back divorce into the life of Jesus’ followers would be to turn the clock back and totally ignore the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the new way that He brought with Him by which all men must come to God. Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, fulfilled the law on behalf of all men, but once fulfilled, the law passed away into oblivion. It served its purpose well, but it has no place in the new era that Jesus inaugurated.

The law was not designed or written for Adam in his sinless state. It was designed for the state he fell into and into which he brought all men. Therefore, the Law was not written for the Lord Jesus, or for His descendants, but He took the place of all men by voluntarily keeping the law on behalf of all Adam’s descendants, so that the righteousness that comes from keeping it perfectly could become the possession of all those who abide in Christ. We need to keep reminding ourselves that the law was written for Adam’s lawless descendants, not for the righteous man: “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Tim 1:9-10).

Ordinary Christians are faced with two problems. First, they respect the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God and would not take kindly to anyone who regarded it as obsolete and not worth incorporating its moral provisions into the life of the Church. They feel the Old Covenant Scriptures can be relevant for extracting principles that can be carried over into the New Covenant Church of Christ.

Second, they see a law like the ban on reconciliation after a remarriage has taken place, in Deuteronomy 24:4, and they do not see why this law cannot be carried over into the Church.

These two problems are mirrored in the task that Jesus was set by God to fulfil. He was sent into this world with two clear aims. First, He was set the task of placing Himself under the obligation to keep the entire Law of Moses, hence He was born a Jew, and emerged out of the family of David, through Joseph’s genetic genealogy going back in a pure, male,\footnote{192} blood-line to David and

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\footnote{191}{See §7.9. Did Paul believe that divorce dissolved a marriage bond?}

\footnote{192}{No female could form a link in the chain from Adam to Joseph, Jesus’s putative father, otherwise the prophecies relating to the coming of a male Messiah could not be fulfilled. Such a}
Then back to Abraham and finally to Adam. The task set by God was for Jesus, as a Jew, and on behalf of all the descendants of Jacob to be the one and only person to keep the entire Law of Moses without a single mistake, to the very last jot and tittle. He was infallible. He was unique.

By completing the task that was set for Him, Jesus acquired the full praise of God, but more than this, the purpose behind the task of Jesus, being the first and only Israelite to keep the Law infallibly, was that His achievement in living a flawless life (the ‘righteousness’ that God demanded of every man) could be passed on to anyone who accepted Him as the Messiah-figure that Moses prophesied would be born one day, and to whom the entire nation of Israel were to turn to, and come under His rule in a New Covenant arrangement. 193

The second task that God set for the Lord Jesus was to be a transition figure, or mediator, between God and man. The task God set for Jesus was to bring the Mosaic era to an end, and introduce a New Covenant on a different set of principles. The termination of the Old Covenant era was the determination of God, because He had a better offer to make, not just to the Jews, but to the whole world. That determination resulted in the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world to invite all men to forsake their past history, and their traditional way of life, and trash the lot as of no value and as having no part in the completely new ‘life’ that could only be had by submitting to the will of the Lord Jesus. This was a revolutionary break with the past that every Jew had to face up. They were given a hard choice: turn your back on Moses and all that he stood for, and submit to the new teaching of Jesus in a wholehearted manner.

But the new teaching was not just a clearing out of the old knowledge that filled the brains of the Jews, due to their past, ingrained, way of life, and replacing it with new knowledge, even though this was something new going to happen on the Earth that would divide all men into two, distinct camps, resulting in two distinct sets of human beings. That ‘something’ was the promise that all who abandoned Moses and submitted to the rule of the Messiah would receive the spirit of the Messiah in their own bodies.

This gift of an internal spirit through whom all God’s new people would know instinctively the teaching of the Lord Jesus was a vast improvement over the Old Covenant. Only in a few, specially chosen, men and women did God put His Spirit to speak directly to His physically Elect people to guide them. What was exceptionally rare under the Old Covenant would become commonplace under the New Covenant. God promised to put His Spirit in every single member of the New Covenant church. Indeed, His Spirit would become the supreme identification mark of

female link would have broken the chain. Joseph could not have been Jesus’ father unless he received a specific instruction from God to accept Jesus as his own son, which he did with alacrity, being a righteous man. To enter David’s line, but not to have been carried in his loins, required a virgin birth for Jesus, who was not a blood descendant of David or Adam. He was a second Adam. Being the last link in the chain, Jesus brought all interest in a continuing genealogy to an end.

Modern Jewry broke the male line of descent when it accepted any male born of a Jewish mother as a Jew irrespective of the nationality of the father. This is the exact opposite that pertained from Adam to Joseph. Consequently, no male Jew today can be sure he is ‘of the seed of Abraham,’ unless he can trace his maleness directly to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. In any case, as Paul pointed out, such a genealogy would be of no benefit if they are not baptised into Christ. Circumcision has been replaced with baptism.

193 On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses appeared in the presence of Jesus, talking with Him, but God, in that moment, transferred the focus of Israel away from Moses to Jesus, when He said, “This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I delighted, listen to him” (Mt 17:5). The call to listen to Jesus took precedent over listening to Moses, and Moses, hearing these words, would have bowed to the superiority of Jesus and His new teaching, including the abolition of his introduction of his own Bill of Divorce, which he introduced on his own authority to prevent accidental adultery occurring when his people mercilessly divorced their wives for ‘anything objectionable’ (‘ervat dábár) that they found in them.
membership of the Body of Christ. Without the presence of the Spirit there could be no valid claim to be a Christian.

So Jesus had to complete two tasks at the same time. He had to take away the Mosaic Law, and He had to invite the entire nation of Israel to join Him as the new Moses, who would lead them out of the bondage of the Law, in a second Exodus, but an exodus that constituted them a new people, with a new nature, and the possessors of His Spirit to guide them into all truth.

In effect what Jesus revealed was that the Law could not change the nature of the Israelites who came out of Egypt under Moses and all their descendants. They could strive to keep the Law without the new nature that He was offering them, but all their striving had to end in failure. The very exercise of trying to keep the Law of Moses was to show up the need that they had to have their natures changed in order to keep the Law.

God knew from the moment He put His people under the obligation to keep His Law that they were incapable of keeping the spirit of the Law, and the best that they could do with a defective nature was strive to keep the letter of the Law.

God could have retained the Mosaic Law in its entirety and given the Jews the nature of Jesus to enable them to keep the Law as fully and as infallibly pure as Jesus had kept it. But that would have meant retaining the whole sacrificial system, and it would not allow the whole world to participate in the worship of God. It would also have meant that each Spirit-filled Jew would be able to acquire his own righteousness in his own right, and so meet the standard of righteousness that God required of every man, independently of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. This would make the righteousness of Christ redundant.

But even if a Spirit-filled Jew could keep the standard required by the Law, after he received the Spirit of Christ, he could not keep it infallibly, because, unlike the Lord Jesus, he still has the bedrock of his old, unregenerate, nature still in his psyche, which can surface at any moment and reclaim control of that individual, due to a prolonged distance from walking close to his Lord. Lapses, and catastrophic collapses, can and do occur, among the most spiritual of Christian leaders, and 'blindness' can occur, and Christians can be deceived, and some can fall away completely from the truth, and walk in darkness, and still retain their position of leadership in Christ’s Church.

Jesus had the private task of personally fulfilling the entire Law of Moses down to the last jot and title, as an individual. And this He did.

However, when it came to other Jews, also in bondage to keep the entire Law, Jesus could exploit the difference between their natures and His. This He did when unregenerate Jews sought to impose the just penalty laid down by God for the sin of adultery in John 8. These Jews were themselves breakers of the Law, which Jesus was not. As law-breakers they were seeking to apply the law to another law-breaker, the woman taken in adultery. Jesus used the incident to bring home to these would-be judges and executioners that if they carried out their intent, and show no mercy toward the adulteress, then they should not expect mercy when God came to punish them for their law-breaking.

If Jesus had encouraged the woman’s stoners to go ahead with the application of God’s punishment, He would have become one with them. He would have come down to their unregenerate level. He would have identified Himself with them. Jesus, however, distanced Himself from them by challenging them to become one with Him, saying, “He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone.” Only He was without sin, so only He could apply the Law in this case.

That Jesus did not apply God’s law to the woman may have puzzled some Christian scribes who were copying out John’s Gospel, because the exemplar behind Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus removed the pericope relating to the woman taken in adultery. On the face of it they seem to have a good case for removing it, because the story presents Jesus as a moral coward, afraid to apply the death penalty that God had laid down for this particular sin, which had eye-witnesses that
it took place. If Jesus was God, then He should have had her stoned to death, irrespective of the nature or motive of those who had been eye-witnesses to her crime.\textsuperscript{194}

That Jesus chose not to stone the woman on his own authority fits in with his second allotted task, namely, to replace the physical law with His spiritual, replacement theology. Repeatedly, while carrying out His first allotted task of keeping the Law flawlessly, Jesus embarked on His ‘replacement theology’ task in the formula, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, . . . now I—I say to you . . . .” Jesus quotes the 6th and the 7th commandments, but He does not replace them with άλλα, by way of contrast, rather, Jesus uses the milder form of ‘but,’ which is δε, which means, ‘now I—I say to you . . . .’ In other words Jesus was bringing out another level of meaning that was inherent in those same words from the moment they were uttered by God on Mount Sinai.

The Hebrews looked on the outside, Jesus looked on the inside, of the same words. When the young man was confronted by Jesus with keeping the Ten Commandments, he was able to truthfully claim that he had kept all of them from his youth (Mt 19:20). Yes, he had kept the outward meaning, but not the inward meaning, for whoever looks on a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts, and so broken the 7th Commandment.

God made it possible for man to keep the outward letter of the Law, but to keep the inward meaning was impossible for any man. Man’s inability to keep the inner meaning came about when Adam sinned. Adam’s nature was changed and it was an irreversible change. The truth that Jesus brought to light was that no religion can reverse the change of nature that Adam’s sin brought about. This lies at the core of Jesus’ teaching. He held out the prospect that this old, Adamic nature, can be overlaid by a new nature—His nature—if men would come to Him and ask for it in an attitude of full, unconditional surrender of themselves to the Lord Jesus, and led by the Holy Spirit into that position; then, and only then, would they become empowered to live out their lives exactly as Jesus lived out His life on this Earth, immune from breaking the inner meaning of every command of God.

There was no inner conflict in Jesus’ experience between a ‘crucified’ old nature and His own pure, sinless, nature. However, there is a constant battle going on in every one of His followers who have been given His new nature. And the battle is relentless. The new nature imparted by the Spirit cannot sin, but the old nature can go on sinning, if given the opportunity, if the Christian lets down his or her guard.

Paul discovered, through his own experiences that the only way to prevent the old nature asserting itself was to ‘crucify’ his old, sinful desires daily and hourly. He saw no way whereby the old nature could be killed off permanently, leaving only the new nature to be fully in control as it was in the case of the Lord Jesus when He lived on the Earth. If the Christian sins, it is not his new nature that is doing the evil deed, but his old nature.

When a Christian entertains the idea of divorce this thought comes directly from his or her old nature, not from their new nature. This idea is of the Devil. Whoever is not ‘born from above’ is

\textsuperscript{194} Textual researchers have never found an adequate explanation for the omission of the PA (Pericope Adultery), but I suspect it was on moral grounds (and not as a clerical mistake) that the PA was omitted. The same two codices omit John 5:3b-4, which involves a mysterious angel who only heals the first person who enters the waters of the pool of Bethesda after they have been mysteriously disturbed. This miserly exercise of this angel’s supernatural powers is in total contrast to Jesus who healed everybody who came to Him. Again, I suspect it was on moral grounds (and not as a clerical mistake) that 5:3b-4 was omitted. The first scribe to omit 5:3b-4 forgot to omit 5:7! This verse requires that 5:3b-4 be present as the background to v. 7. That the omission entered the local Egyptian text very early on can be seen in the omission of 5:3b-4 in Ψ\textsuperscript{70} and Ψ\textsuperscript{75}. However, it was not omitted in the Caesarean exemplar behind ƒ\textsuperscript{1} and ƒ\textsuperscript{13} nor in the Byzantine text-type, despite the apocryphal nature of the account. Jesus’ action may have been viewed as a rebuke to the stinginess of this supernatural angel who showed no compassion for probably 38 years toward the man Jesus healed.
under the control of their old natures, and under the control of Satan. All sin comes through the old nature, never through the new nature.

Divorce, in the sense of believing that the bond of marriage can be dissolved, can only come about in the Christian when they turn to their old nature for a solution to their marital problems, and all marital problems begin by ignoring the biblical teaching on headship. Love-headship is the key that alone can result in a sustained, harmonious marriage. There is no alternative to headship. The absence of this single doctrine in the teaching of the Church is the root cause of every divorce among Christians. This core doctrine is the perfect antidote to defeat feminism.

The term ‘Christian feminist’ is a contradiction because the terms ‘Christian’ and ‘feminism’ are incompatible. The same applies to ‘Gay Christian,’ and other attempts to ‘marry’ Christ to obscene ethical behaviour. By its very nature, all human marriages disintegrate. There is a Second Law of Thermodynamics that applies to all marriage as it does to other matters.

When two selfish individuals come together in marriage, then the only movement is toward separation unless they can control their selfish natures sufficiently to get what each wants out of their togetherness. It should, therefore, be taken for granted by Christians, that all non-Christian marriages ‘tend toward disintegration’ unless opposed by a selfless love for each other. But the seed of divorce is present in every non-Christian marriage. It just so happens that in a few marriages this seed never germinates into open hatred leading to divorce.

The battle between the old nature and the new nature in the life of every Christian man and woman is relentless, and only constant vigilance can keep the weed of the old nature from springing up in the garden of the Christian’s life. For just as weeds are present in every perfect garden, and can come in all sorts of forms, so is the old nature present in every ‘perfect’ Christian, and it, like the weeds, can take many forms and manifestations; one such perennial spiritual weed being divorce, which can spring up under many guises. No matter what guise it comes in, it is a spiritual weed, and must be removed from the Christian’s garden. It has no right to grow in God’s garden, which the Church is.

5.8.7. How is the Christian to use the Old Testament?

The Old Covenant scriptures reveal the character of God. Just as every word that comes out of a person’s mouth reveals who they are and what value system they are living by, so it is with God. All His likes and dislikes are revealed in the words that proceed out of His mouth. Consequently, even though the Mosaic dispensation has been superseded by a superior dispensation, if God states that he hates divorce, then this hatred continues into the New Covenant dispensation. If God states that homosexuality is an abomination in His sight, then, this too, continues into the New Covenant dispensation. So when the Christian reads the Old Testament, anything that reveals the character of God, can be judged to be eternal.

However, there is a fundamental difference between how God related to His Church under the Mosaic dispensation, and how He relates to His Church under Christ’s dispensation. The former was direct, the latter is indirect. Jesus stands as the Mediator between God and man. God has handed over all discipline of His Church to His Son, so that He no longer acts directly to punish His people or the nations for their sins.

195 It is harder for a Christian feminist to enter the Kingdom of God than it is for a rich man, given what each has to give up. When the history of Christendom comes to be written up for the late 20th century onwards, it will be found that hardly a single woman from the Western world will be saved, because of the vice-like grip that they allowed themselves to be held in by feminist doctrines, which destroyed the biblical doctrine of love-headships, and is another, competing Gospel. See my ebook on ‘Good Order in the Church,’ which sets out the doctrine of love-headships in a comprehensive study of the topic.
The second thing the Christian needs to be aware of is that the Old Covenant Church was made up of physical descendants of Abraham, whereas the New Covenant Church is made up of the spiritual descendants of Abraham. This means that when God was issuing His laws to suppress the spread of sin among His physical church members, all of these laws are totally inappropriate to the spiritual members of His New Covenant Church. So all of these laws cannot be carried forward into Christ’s Church.

So, for instance, when female captives were brought home by the Israelites, these Israelites were unregenerate sinners, who would exploit these females. God stepped in, however, and told them how to behave themselves toward these vulnerable women. Here we see God interacting with unregenerate members of His physical Church, and curbing their innate inclination to exploit anything they found to their advantage. Such laws are inappropriate to issue to Jesus, or to those who have been ‘born from above,’ and who are living out the nature of Jesus, who lives in them. God is addressing two, totally different sets of people.

Not only does God step in to protect the vulnerable, such as orphans, widows, and captives, but He also gets right down to the level of their culture and their traditions, and issues instructions which are peculiar to those times, modifying their ethical behaviour in such a way that exploitation is reduced to a minimum.

The Church members of the Old Covenant were born into the Church, or if proselytes, they could have themselves circumcised. We have a history of how they behaved themselves as members of God’s Church under Torah instruction. They were thieves, so God had to issue commands regarding the restitution they must make. There can be no thieves in Christ’s Church, because all His members are ‘born from above,’ and have His nature.

This is not to rule out the possibility that thieves can attach themselves to Christ’s Church, and even gain physical membership, or even be Christian bishops, for do we not have the case of Judas, who was a thief, yet he was in the inner circle of Jesus’ apostles? But we must draw a sharp distinction between true and false members, and since true members cannot, by definition, be thieves, for Christ is not a thief, then all the laws dealing with thieves as members of the physical Church of God, living under the Mosaic dispensation, are inappropriate if they are applied to Christ and Christians. Only lapsed Christians, who fall away, can return to their thieving ways. What is said of thieves applies also to divorcers, to rapists, to gays and lesbians, and to all who have never experienced the full power of being ‘born from above.’ God, in His condescension, gave instructions about such evils which the members of His Church committed naturally.

But note, God was, throughout the Old Testament, modifying the behaviour of unregenerate sinners, who constituted His Church through natural birth. Hence such laws are inappropriate to apply to Jesus or to His followers. Only laws that are spiritual and can be applied to Christ and Christians can be deemed appropriate to be learned as guidelines to walking in the light. The vast majority of these spiritual laws will be found in the negation of evil thoughts and deeds, such as set out in the Ten Commandments.

The topic of this section is vitally important to the Christian who is told that they can bring forward bits and pieces of the Sinai laws and incorporate them into Christ’s teaching, even though the Lord Jesus abolished the Sinai laws as a system to live by. The Sinai Law became redundant, obsolete, abolished forever, left behind, irrelevant for Jew and non-Jew, once Christ fulfilled it to the letter. To go back to live by any provision of the Sinai Law is like a grown man going back to wearing nappies. He has outgrown nappies; they belong to the distant past; so it is with the whole Mosaic system that Israel lived by.

Many believe that the Sinai laws were good, because they came from God, and so there is a semblance of truth in the suggestion that bits and pieces of the Old Testament cloth can be cut out and sewn into the New Testament cloth without doing any damage to it. The way in which the Christian is deceived into going down this route is by someone claiming to extract ‘principles’ from the system of laws that God placed Israel under, and then incorporating these carefully selected ‘principles’ into Jesus’ teaching.
What is overlooked in this procedure is the context. The context that gave rise to the whole Mosaic system of living is based on the fact that the entire people of God are unregenerate to the core of their being. From the moment they left Egypt to the moment they crucified their Messiah in Jerusalem they were uncircumcised in their hearts. They were a perverse, adulterous and an evil nation from the start. They had no love for God from the start. They were wayward from the start. There was never a time when they were loyal to Him, or showed Him the respect that was due to Him. There was never a period in the nation’s life when they pleased God.

God had a dysfunctional family from the start. His sons and daughters were delinquents from birth. God had no chance of producing a righteous nation out of the descendants of Abraham. But He was committed to be their God because of His promise to Abraham. It is to His credit that He did not from time to time exterminate the lot and rescue the infinitesimal few who were walking by faith, and pleasing Him, and rebuild the nation from these few. But He stuck with the majority, who were an utterly depraved people, incapable of obeying Him from the heart. Only by subjecting this hard, criminal, putrid, mass of humanity, to repeated bouts of punishments, famines, and disasters, could God keep them in some kind of relationship with Him, but it was hard work, and an unrewarding one at that. God put with this loveless, selfish, carping, nagging, disrespectful, behaviour for over 1,500 years. He had nothing to show for all His patience, for all the abuse, verbal and physical, that they displayed toward Him and His prophets, whom they stoned and murdered.

We cannot exaggerate enough the depravity that Israel sunk to when it came to the institution of marriage. God describes in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 the arbitrary way in which they got rid of their wives. First, God informs us that every husband claimed the private right to divorce his wife at a moment’s notice. Second, the husband did not need to gain permission from anyone to divorce her; it was a domestic matter. Third, the divorced wife had no right to have the divorce overturned, or declared unlawful. Nor could she reclaim her dowry. She lost everything, and was put out in the street in the clothes she was wearing. Fourth, the husband would naturally claim the children for himself. The only obligation that Moses imposed on this private, domestic tradition of divorce, using his own authority, was that when the husband divorced his wife he should put the verbal statement of divorce in writing, which was no hardship on him. He would tell Moses that he would be delighted to hand his wife a piece of papyrus converting his verbal dismissal into a written form. ‘No problem,’ he would add.

What God reveals in His description of this evil practice is that Moses could not interfere with the private right of every husband to divorce his wife in private on any grounds that he chose to nominate (this is what eradav davar refers to). Moses could not, and dared not, interfere with the current practice of private divorce that he grew up with in Egypt. Every husband claimed the right to be judge and jury in all matters relating to his ‘house.’ No one could interfere or tell him what to do, or what not to do. He was autonomous, and a dictator over his own house. That is the picture that God presents to us in Deuteronomy 24:1-3.

We can illustrate the perverse exegesis employed by the rabbis to retain divorce in the face of the prior revelation given in Genesis 2:24 that divorce has no place in the life of the righteous.

Imagine a scene in an English public school for boys who have proper toilet facilities. One day the majority of the boys decided that they would not use the facilities but instead decided to daub their bodies with their own excrement. The Headmaster is naturally alarmed, not to say disgusted, with this departure from normal behaviour. He is powerless to stop the practice. How can he? He is in a powerless position. In desperation he issues an order that on no account must the boys eat their own excrement. That is going too far and would be highly dangerous for the boys’ health. Daubing themselves, while a smelly and disgusting thing, is not going to kill them, but eating the stuff would kill them. He sees the danger of both actions but he feels he has to issue an excommunication order that if they eat the stuff they will definitely be expelled instantly, because that is a bridge too far.

This is just the kind of scenario that Moses inherited when God made him leader of His people. Moses saw the disgusting habit of a ‘free for all’ culture of divorce. He could not prevent it
from happening, any more than God could prevent it from happening (or the Headmaster prevent the boys from daubing their bodies with their own excrement). But just as the Headmaster intervened to issue a command not to eat their own excrement, which was a possible extension of their daubing, but said nothing about not daubing themselves with excrement, the boys might have concluded that as there was no command not to daub their bodies, but only a command not to eat the stuff, that daubing was alright.

We would call this a bizarre way for the boys to interpret the Headmaster’s single command, and his omission to issue a second command not to daub themselves (which all recognised to be a wrong action in its own right anyway).

In the above scenario we have only the Headmaster’s deep concern for the extension (eating) but not for the initial act of daubing. It would be bizarre to argue that since the Headmaster only condemned the eating but not the daubing, then daubing was not unlawful.

But exactly the same logic was applied by the rabbis to Moses’s command to issue a Bill of Divorce. Divorce was wrong (just as daubing was wrong) but the only command Moses issued was one that was aimed at preventing an extension to the first wrong action. Because Moses only issued a command preventing the extension (adultery) from happening, the Jewish lawyers wrongly concluded that Moses supported the practice of divorce.

This perverse kind of exegesis is evident in the question the Pharisees asked Jesus, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, . . . ?” They understood that because Moses failed to issue a command not to divorce, but only a command to prevent a consequent sin from happening, that, therefore, Moses did not condemn divorce as such. This is on a par with the justification for daubing themselves that the boys could have used when they appeared before the School Governors, and asked, “Why then did the Headmaster command to stop eating the excrement, but said nothing about daubing ourselves?” The absence of a command forbidding ‘daubing’ and ‘divorce’ does not mean that these actions are approved, respectively, by the Headmaster or by Moses.

Later on, this ‘free for all’ life style was recognised even by the unregenerate rabbis and Jewish lawyers themselves as open to abuse, and so they took away from the husband his right, given to him by none other than Moses himself, to write out his own bill of divorce. This was a rabbinic innovation, like Moses’s innovation, to seek to curb the ‘free for all’ culture surrounding divorce that a degenerate society will naturally sink into.

The new law, which did not come from God or Moses, required every husband to obtain his bill of divorce from a local court. Neither Moses, nor these new-fangled courts, could stop divorce, any more than God could. These courts could only introduce another minor hurdle (besides the small one that Moses introduced) to shame the husband into having to answer for his action before a group of men in a public setting.

The new law, requiring all husbands to forego their Mosaic right to issue their own bills of divorce, had, of course, no basis in God’s law; it was unlawful. But at some stage in Israel’s life, possibly during the Intertestamental Period, a collective decision must have been made by the community to regularise the wording of the Bill of Divorce, because lawyers came on the scene. So, the whole system of divorce courts arose independently of God. It was a unilateral decision, ignoring God completely, to deprive every husband of his private, domestic right to conduct the entire procedure of his divorce from start to finish in his own house, which constituted his own ‘court.’ We must bear this in mind when we come to read the New Testament.

Jesus had no time for these hundreds of imposed ‘traditions of the elders’ which made the Word of God of no effect, because these ‘traditions’ took precedence over anything that God said or commanded. Their traditions, and their manmade institutions and courts, were put on a higher level of authority than the Torah.

Jesus was naturally furious over this side-lining of God’s Word. He reserved some of His harshest and most damming curses on the lawyers who were behind these layers of rules and ‘burdens’ that they imposed on the people. All divorce courts come under Jesus’ curse, because they
were not set up by God, but by man. The lawyers gave credibility to the dissolution of unions that God intended should be permanent.

Even if God banned divorce, it would have been a futile command, because it could not be kept, because of the unregenerate, depraved nature of all men. God knew, as we now know, that the unregenerate nature of man cannot be changed by issuing commands. God knew, as we now know, that the only way He could remove divorce from the hearts of men was to ‘crucify’ the old nature and implant a new heart in every man. That was the only way round the problem. God saw this from the beginning, when He chose Abraham’s seed as His elect people. It was left to the prophets to reveal that one day God would change the heart of all His followers by means of an new implant, involving a new heart of flesh to replace the heart of stone and hate, and a new spirit, His own Spirit, being implanted in the soul of each and every man and woman who reached out to Him to save them from themselves, from their old natures.

We noted above that man’s nature cannot be changed by issuing commands, therefore God does not issue commands that are outside the degenerate nature of man to attain as he is presently constituted. God is not that stupid to issue such a command. You can dress up a thief in a bishop’s robe and mitre, and outwardly one could assume that the outward is a reflection of the character of the one wearing these ‘holy’ investments, but you would be wrong. The diagram above shows that anyone can appear to be ‘Christian’ by imitating the genuine article, but if the old nature is the dominant force then sooner or later it will make itself visible in some actions or words.

You can securely bind a sheep’s skin to a pig, and from a distance it might not be possible to discern it is a pig, but wait until it reaches a muddy pond and starts wallowing in the mud, and then his pig-nature will be revealed. Every creature of God has its own unique nature. In the Middle East the difference between sheep and goats is barely distinguishable in some breeds, that it takes a practised eye to spot the difference, Jesus used this observation as an analogy of what will happen on the Day of Judgement, when every human being will appear before Him in the form of sheep and goats. He will infallibly separate them according to their natures. In like manner, He will separate all human beings on the sole criteria of whether He ‘knows’ them, or does not ‘know’ them. By this He means that He will recognise Himself in some human beings, but not in others. The ‘sheep’ He will keep, but the ‘goats’ will be rejected. But all men start off as ‘goats’ and at some point in their lives they undergo the miraculous change of nature and become Christ’s ‘sheep.’

However, plausibility is a very dangerous path to tread if one ignores the guidance that comes with Christ being in control of one’s behaviour, and system of values, and outlook on life. Deception comes in many guises. Deceptive values, and deceptive advice are directed at every Christian and bombard him and her every minute of their lives, and at every turn, and every decision they make.

The Lord Jesus could never be deceived. This was an impossibility. The Father did not need to continually remind Him to beware of being deceived. It is not so with His followers, hence Jesus issued warnings to His followers to ‘stay awake (spiritually),’ and to ‘watch and pray,’ and many similar warnings not to follow false teachers or philosophies, or go back to following Moses. The reason why Christians need warnings but Jesus did not, is that when He promised to enter into the soul of each of His followers, the old nature could not be killed off completely. To a greater or lesser extent influence of the old nature in the form of its old values and habits will still be alive even after Christ’s spirit enters the soul of the new convert, albeit no longer dominant or controlling the Christian’s new allegiance to Christ.

In Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats, He likened the birth of all men born of Adam after he fell to having the nature of a goat, but if they wanted to go to heaven then they must change their nature to that of a sheep. As a goat they would never enter the Kingdom of God. The goal of every man and woman born of Adam and Eve is that they must make the transition from being a goat to being a sheep before they die. If they die before that transition is made then they automatically go to hell. If they make the transition before they die then they automatically go to heaven. So the default situation is that all humans being are born with hell as their destiny. They
must do something to get off the conveyor belt that is inexorably conveying them to the precipice of death. Each human being has been finite amount of time, maybe threescore and ten years, in which to get out of their destined hell. If they do not step off this conveyor belt in time, then they cannot enter into eternal life beyond the grave. They will end up in the company of the Devil and his myriads of evil angels, and the most vile men that ever walked this earth. And that will be their destiny for ever, without any hope of parole, or a second chance. It is a permanent destiny, which makes Jesus’ warnings more terrifying and alarming, and increases our awareness of how awesome it is to hear Jesus offer a free salvation and for that offer to be spurned and belittled and despised. Jesus repeatedly warned those who heard His teaching and rejected it and rejected Him that a fate worse than Sodom and Gomorrah awaits them in the afterlife, when every man and woman will have to voice their feeble excuse why they turned down the offer of a free salvation. The realisation that there is no second chance beyond the grave is a sobering thought. The destiny of every man and woman is fixed in this life before they die.

Jesus knew full well that this conveyor belt existed and that every single human being is on it at birth. He also knew that, unfortunately, every human being is also born blind and so cannot see where the conveyor belt is taking him or her. He knew that no philosophy in the world, and no world religion, could open the eyes of one born spiritually blind. He alone could open the eyes of Adam’s offspring. He knew that when all men heard His teaching their eyes would be opened for the first time to realise where the conveyor belt was taking them. But opening the eyes of the blind does not save them from their destiny. They have got to get off the moving conveyor belt before it reaches the precipice where all fall over the edge into hell.

When Jesus pronounced that He alone of all religious leaders who have ever lived or will live on this planet, is the only one who can lift them off the conveyor belt of death, he was speaking the truth. He alone is the way, the truth and the life. All men must come back into fellowship with their Creator God through Jesus, not through His mother, not through Buddha, or Mohammed, or Confucius, or any other man-originated philosophy. The exclusive manner in which Jesus pointed to Himself as the only way back to God is naturally rejected by every single person on the conveyor belt of life. They are all severely handicapped from the moment they are born, for every human infant born into this world is born spiritually blind, and spiritually deaf, and they are on a moving conveyor belt that is heading straight for a precipice. The odds of stepping off that belt before they physically die, is virtually nil. To add insult to injury it is as if they are also in a coma. The chances of any human being overcoming their ‘natural’ handicaps and huge disabilities which they have from the womb was recognised by Jesus. Jesus recognised that no amount of keeping the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai, even if one could keep the letter of the Law perfectly would not get anyone off the conveyor belt leading to death. For this was like someone reading an instruction manual of how to live like Him, but not have His Spirit to be able to live like Him.

The Law of Moses could not save any of Moses’s followers. It could only make them aware of their genetic handicaps to keep that Law from the heart. But there was another way to God that bypassed the Law, and that was to live by faith in God. This was the path that all those who were saved before the time that God gave Israel His Law on Mount Sinai used to overcome their old natures, and that by-pass was still available to all Abraham’s descendants even after God imposed the Law of Moses on His blind, deaf, and comatosed nation. It was God’s intention from the moment that Adam sinned that all his offspring would live by faith in His existence and willingly abide by any instructions and commands that He gave them and accept His headship and control of their behaviour. God never abandoned this ‘salvation by faith’ (or salvation through faith) even after He introduced the Law of Moses. It is as if the Law of Moses was just another temporary layer of commands and instructions that was imposed on all those who were being ‘saved by faith.’

It was ‘temporary’ because it was to be removed once His Messiah had been born. It was to be removed because its design was only to hold the comatosed descendants of Abraham together as a distinct, physical nation, so that the line of descent from Abraham to Jesus could be secured, established, and made public before the eyes of all the world, and prove to all men everywhere that
when God makes a promise in the form of repeated prophecies, that He will keep His promises. Now that all God’s promises and prophecies relating to Jesus have come to pass historically, no man has any excuse to reject Jesus’ claim to be the one whom God has ordained to be the sole Judge of all men who have ever lived on this planet, irrespective of what religion they or their ancestors worshipped. Jesus will decide the fate of every man and woman and child; and His judgment is final. There is no Appeal Court.

With the coming of Jesus, God alone has the ‘light’ that reveals who He is, and He has given this ‘light’ to His Son; and by this ‘light’ all men who desire to find God will ‘discover’ Him. Jesus, exclusively, is the only ‘light’ that gives light to every man born into this world (Jn 1:9). There are many false lights in the world, but there is only one true ‘light’ and that ‘light’ shines exclusively through the personality of Jesus.

We come now to the understanding of what Jesus meant when He said that unless a man is born from above he cannot get off the conveyor belt of death during his brief time on this earth. Just as an embryo grows in the dark recesses of the womb and will die there unless it is born into the daylight of this physical world, so Jesus likened the spiritual birth that all men and women must undergo if they are to emerge into the daylight of His spiritual world. The analogy is so fitting that it cannot be bettered or substituted. Being ‘born from above’ means having Christ enter the soul of each human being who will escape the eternal death that awaits all who remain at the unborn state. These will die in the womb of their fallen humanity. These will never emerge into the daylight of the world in which Jesus lived and moved and had His being. These are ‘once born’ humans, but unless they are ‘twice born’ they will remain in their comatose state and fall over the precipice as ‘rejects’ and of no use to God. As Jesus once said they are like salt that has lost its savour and is fit for nothing but to be thrown out, or discarded, as totally useless.

An extremely small number of human beings will undergo the ‘born from above’ experience, out of the billions upon billions of human beings that have walked on this planet. Yet out of this tiny, minuscule number, only a fraction will go on to be revealed to have been truly ‘born again,’ the rest of the so-called ‘born-again’ were only claiming to be ‘born from above,’ but by their works they revealed that they had never really been ‘born from above,’ because if they had they would have produced righteous works. These were intellectually ‘born again’ Christians, but the Spirit of Christ had not entered into their souls. These intellectual Christians could ape the life of the truly born again, talk like them, sing like them, and even imitate them, but it is all contrived. There is no real relationship of faith between them and Jesus, whom they claim to be submissive to.

Because the number of the truly ‘born from above’ is so infinitesimally small, and they live in an environment that is totally inappropriate to keeping their faith alive, the vast majority of this tiny number will succumb to the extreme pressure to conform to the standards of the world, unless, and this is absolutely important to note, unless they stick as close to Jesus as they can, through reminding themselves often of His teaching, and so reinforcing the gulf that should separate their ethical behaviour from that the world around them, and that they be continually in prayer at all times to strengthen the bond that they have with Him and for all that He values; and then, finally, through fellowship with like-minded ‘born from above’ Christians, whom they can trust to be honest preachers of truthful doctrines.

Mentally, these truly ‘born from above’ Christians will turn their backs on the world, and its value system, and its flesh-orientated pursuits, knowing that no one in the world can live a life pleasing to God, even all their charity works are tainted with sin. God detests the whole civilisation of humanity. It stinks in His nostrils. No one in the flesh can please God.

Only a handful of the ‘born from above’ will be salvaged from this earth and go on into the next world to a glorious future because they despised this world and the works of the flesh that they were once enslaved in. The sheer gratitude of this handful of the Elect will only be fully appreciated when they get to the other side, and can look back and see what they were rescued from. Some of the Elect can experience a glimpse of just how fortunate they have been this side of death to have been chosen by God to experience His salvation, and it is this glimpse that inspired Christians to go
to their deaths with such strong fortitude and bravery, from the Coliseum of Rome to the gas chambers of Belsen and Auschwitz.

The attack on the Elect few is relentless and subtle, and can come from so-called ‘born again’ Christians, or even through ignorant pastors. This is when it is so subtle that many of the Elect are led astray, because the enemy can get into the church ‘under the radar’ and sow the seeds of doubt over what Jesus really taught on the issue of divorce and remarriage. Satan can steal some of the weaker, babes in Christ, from under the nose of the most alert, truly ‘born from above’ pastors, because false knowledge is the leaven of Satan, and this leaven, once it is absorbed into the mind of the Elect, will destroy the unleavened bread of Christ’s teaching. Guarding the mind of the Elect from subtle and ignorant, self-appointed teachers of Christ’s doctrines, requires diligence and watchfulness at all times.

There is another very important doctrine that needs to be clearly understood by new converts to the Lord Jesus is the after-effect of being ‘born from above’ on the old, Adamic nature. John made it clear that a ‘born from above’ convert cannot sin, by this he was referring to the new nature itself. This new nature cannot be the origin of any sin, because this new nature is none other than the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the body of the believer. If a believer sins, it is because he or she has reverted to the desires of the remnant of the old nature that is always in the background, seeking to regain possession of the Christian’s mind and affections. Jesus never had this inner struggle that all His followers experience, because He never had Adam’s nature. He was a second Adam. Like the first Adam, who was born with a sinless nature, and capable of not sinning, Jesus was a second Adam, who was born with a sinless nature, but He was not capable of sinning, because He was God come in the flesh. When the Spirit of Jesus takes up residence in the soul of the believer, He cannot sin. When the Spirit of Christ is quenched, then the ‘believer’ is wide open to sin once again, because he/she comes under the dominion of their old natures.

This insult to the presence of Christ in the believer, by one who claims to be a ‘Christian,’ can result in the loss of Christ, and the consequent falling away becoming a permanent state, if the situation is not restored immediately on conviction, when a warning signal is sent to the mind.

We might illustrate the spiritual truth in the following diagram.

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The vast majority, almost to a man, lived through the period of the Mosaic Covenant without a saving faith in God. They attempted to keep the letter of the Law of Sinai without any

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196 The two Latin quotes that summed up the natures of these two Adams were: posse non peccare, and non posse peccare; ‘possible not to sin,’ and ‘not possible to sin.’
interest in keeping the spirit behind those laws. The Mosaic Law was not given for the benefit of the small number of Hebrews and Jews who were walking by faith (as all New Covenant believers must do). These are the righteous Elect, and they were few in number. Rather, the Law was written to suppress sin and hold down the unrighteous man under a heavy yoke, that covered every aspect of his life, from the cradle to the grave.


Some Christian writers believe that non-Jewish Christians can dip into Jewish law to get what they want from it in order to get a divorce on ‘biblical grounds,’ and ignore the rest of the Torah. It seems to me that if one is going to go down the Jewish route to find ‘biblical’ grounds, he must be thorough in his adoption of their customs and their penalty system. He must become a Jew in all but circumcision.

If we take Mary’s case, and she had been guilty of unfaithfulness between the time she was officially engaged and officially ‘married’ to Joseph, then she should have been stoned as an adultereress (not as a fornicator), because under Jewish law she was considered ‘married.’ To get out of an engagement involved getting a divorce (’git’) as though the marriage had been consummated, that is how serious Jewish custom regarded the engaged state.

I have no problem with Jews who become Christians and want to live according to their traditional Hebrew/Jewish customs with respect to the engagement period, and the expectation that both parties should be virgins when they enter the married state, but that is as far as such customs can go. Jesus’ teaching, that all consummated marriages are for life, applies to both Jew and non-Jew alike. There can be no divorce (or separation) for fornication, before, during, or after, a marriage has been consummated. One law applies to Jew and Gentile alike.

But if a Christian Jew wants to apply Jewish law to his marriage then he must be prepared to live by his Jewish customs. I refer to the proof that he demands, that his wife is a virgin on the night he first sleeps with her. If that proof is not forthcoming in the form of the parents bringing out the blood-stained sheet, or the evidence of menstruation before their daughter slept with her new husband, then he cannot use the internal courts of the Jews to get a divorce (’git’). He cannot be a Christian Jew in just one area of his life, and take advantage of his Jewish customs to divorce his wife. Indeed, whatever Jewish traditions exist they are now subject to the new law of Christ. All Jewish law is non-binding on the Christian Jew. He comes under grace, and comes out from under the law of Moses, which was only a temporary provision until the Messiah arrived.

If a Christian Jew is guilty of adultery after consummation, there are no grounds for divorce. Jesus’ law supersedes all Jewish law in this area of married life. All Christians, Jew and non-Jew, come under the law of Christ which forbids divorce on any grounds, once the point of consummation has been passed. At consummation, and not before it, do the two become ‘one flesh.’ Up until that point they are not ‘one flesh,’ but two. In the eyes of Jesus the espousal period is not a ‘one flesh’ situation. The two are still two. Consequently, I have a problem with non-Jewish Christians trying to take advantage of Jewish traditions in one area only—marriage customs—to get a divorce.

The statement is made that porneia refers only to pre-marital sex, and it is claimed that there is no text in the New Testament where it can refer to post-marital sex. If this narrow definition of porneia is correct (which it is not) then it can be used, say its proponents, to show that Jesus was referring to divorce at the espousal stage, and only at that stage.

The Betrothal solution depends, and hangs on, this narrow definition of porneia being true. If this narrow definition of porneia is shown not to stand up in Greek literature and in every context, then it is undermined.197

197 For a thorough critique of the Betrothal solution see §6.6.
Jesus stated clearly in Matthew 5:32 that if a man divorced his wife (who had not had sex with any other man up to the point he divorced her), and she is forced out on to the street, where, out of necessity, she had to join herself to another household, and she committed adultery as a result of her vulnerability and poverty, the husband who sent her away is responsible for her post-divorce adultery through a remarriage. By divorcing her, he is putting pressure on her to join herself to another man to look after her, because in New Testament times women did not have personal assets to live independently of their husbands. The husband owned everything. The Lord rules that she is committing ‘adultery,’ but her husband will be held accountable for her sexual activity.

The Betrothal solution imposes restrictions on the text, which relate to (a) time, and (b) opportunity. These have been analysed in the following two sections (cf. §6.6.).

5.8.9. The restriction on time in the Betrothal Interpretation

On the betrothal view Jesus’ focus is restricted to the few months between the betrothal and the actual wedding. The marriage starts with an engagement to marry. Once this Jewish ceremony has been completed a divorce certificate (‘get’) is required to break off the engagement. Now, according to the betrothal view, from the moment the engagement is concluded Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:32 start to apply to this situation. Jesus is said to have this situation firmly in mind when He makes the statement (and I paraphrase part of it to bring out the sense): “But I—I say to you, that who, for instance, may divorce his [‘one flesh’] wife, except if she committed fornication before the marriage was consummated, makes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a [‘one flesh’] woman so put away, commits adultery.”

This would mean that if a Jew divorced his wife before his marriage was consummated, anyone who married his divorced ‘wife’ commits adultery if they marry her. Is this really what Jesus intended to say? Let us see how this would work out in practice. In the case of His mother Mary, if Joseph had gone ahead and divorced her, then (according to the above translation) any man marrying Mary—a divorced woman—would be guilty of committing adultery with her. But how can this be, if she is not married? Surely they would be committing fornication, not adultery, with her.

One could argue that after Jesus had taken care of the obvious exception to obtain a divorce, that His mind went back to the divorce of a married woman and He spelled out the danger to her sexual fidelity, and the blame that would attach to her husband who put her in a position of danger—physical, sexual, mental, and spiritual.

5.8.10. The restriction of divorce to Jewish Christians

On the betrothal view, the exception clause only applies to engaged Jewish couples. This is because the meaning of porneia is severely, and artificially restricted, by its supporters, to mean pre-marital sex. In which case the translation would read: “But I—I say to you, that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—apart from the case where she committed fornication while espoused to him—makes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a [‘one flesh’] woman so put away, commits adultery.” But if it can be shown that ‘fornication’ (porneia) cannot be limited in this way then the case collapses (see §6.6.).

Is it possible that Jesus’ use of the term ‘fornication’ here, rather than ‘adultery’ was deliberately chosen? Not all fornicators are adulterers, but all adulterers are fornicators. Fornication includes all forms of deviant sexual behaviour, inside and outside marriage.

Adultery is a narrower term, restricted to married persons having sex outside the marriage bond. The term ‘adultery’ assumes knowledge of the marital status of the offenders; whereas ‘fornicators’ can describe any persons indulging in illicit sex. If a single girl has illicit sex with a married man, both would be called fornicators (1 Cor 5:1). If a single man has sex with a married woman, or if he married a divorced wife, he is called an adulterer by the Lord Jesus (Mt 19:9). If the
status of the person was not known, they would be classed as a fornicator. It would be unusual to find a broad term such as ‘fornication/fornicator’ so carefully used by all Greek writers over many centuries that it was never used of unfaithfulness within a marriage, or that it was only used of pre-marital sex, or that it was always restricted to singles. That is being a hostage to fortune. It just takes a number of cases to collapse it. The rule of thumb is: Not all fornicators are adulterers, but all adulterers are fornicators (see 6.1.3.).

It might appear that Jesus permits divorce for infidelity in Matthew 5:32, and only for fornication, but this is not the case. Jesus’ mind is focused on blame, not on the creation of loopholes in God’s legislation, but on culpability. He takes the situation that He finds in front of Him, where divorce is a reality, and it is commonplace among God’s people, and He destroys it by pointing out that where a man divorces a sexually faithful wife, the husband will be held responsible for his wife having sex with any other man once he has put her out on the street.

The only exception to his culpability for her marital infidelity is when she committed fornication without any compulsion from him, while still married to him. Why should he be blamed for her infidelity before he put her out in the street? And in truth, said Jesus, he will not be held culpable for any illicit sexual acts she committed before he divorced her; but the charge still stands, that once he divorces her then all her future illicit sexual acts will be laid at his door, because he is still married to her, even though he thought that his Mosaic divorce dissolved the marriage. The exemption from culpability would also extend to the situation where, after a wife was divorced, she deliberately did not remarry but lived the life of a prostitute. She knows this choice is her choice, and she also knows it is an immoral choice.

It makes perfectly good sense that Jesus would draw a moral line in the sand showing what a husband would be held accountable for, and what he would not be held accountable for. In this He is seen to be a just Judge. He does not exaggerate the husband’s culpability. Moses and the rabbis drew their line of culpability at the point at which the husband handed the wife her bill of separation. Jesus rubbed out their line, making the husband culpable for his wife’s remarriage, because He reintroduced the original standard for marriage (Gen 2:24), which all who would seek to enter into His Kingdom must adopt if they would be saved.

The majority of commentators treat Matthew 5:32 and 19:9f. as Jesus’ new legislation on the circumstances under which divorce can be obtained in the Kingdom of God. However, Jesus is not saying the same thing in both places. This view does an injustice to what is inherent in the “born from above’ experience. It is a misunderstanding of Jesus’ teaching.

In Matthew 5:32 Jesus puts the spotlight on blame for the consequences of divorcing one’s spouse; and the blame is laid at the door of the one suing for divorce. In Matthew 19:9 He puts the spotlight on the abolition of divorce per se. It cannot exist in the new Kingdom of God He had come to establish on the earth.

It should always be borne in mind that the term ‘except’ was not used by Jesus in Matthew 19:9. It was Erasmus who added the word ‘except’ in 1516 because he thought Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 were saying the same thing in different words, and that both were permitting divorce in the case of ‘fornication,’ which he understood in its wider meaning of all forms of deviant sexual behaviour, inside and outside marriage, and anything else that caused shame to her husband’s self-image.

The betrothal solution is not the answer. It has been popularised by modern writers to shield Jesus from granting divorce for fornication, but not for any other cause. But once it is realised that Matthew 5:32 is not talking about establishing the legal grounds for divorce, but on culpability following divorce, and that Matthew 19:9 bans divorce completely for all non-fornication offences, then the need for the betrothal solution loses its primary purpose, which was to safeguard Jesus’ teaching on no divorce on any grounds.

In addition, we now know what the original Greek text read in Matthew 19:9, and it never had the word ‘except’ in it. That was put there by a humanist (Erasmus) who had a distrust of the Roman Catholic doctrine of marriage. Jesus was not making any exceptions for divorce. The only
exception He made was in the case where a wife committed fornication before she was divorced by an irate husband (Mt 5:32). Her sin is her sin, and she, not her husband, will be held responsible for it. But after she has been divorced, her further sins are laid at the feet of her husband, and if he remarries while she is still alive, he will be committing adultery against her. Obviously, if a divorced wife decided not to remarry but become a prostitute, this was her moral decision, and so she, not her divorced husband, would be held accountable for these sexual sins.

5.9. THE USE OF DIVORCE AS A METAPHOR

Some Christian writers fail to understand that a word can be used in a metaphorical sense as in the sentence, ‘As belief in Jesus was divorced from its Jewish origins, gentile believers increasingly adopted anti-Semitic biases.’ The writer has used the metaphor of divorce to imagine that there was a marriage between Jesus and Judaism in the early days of the Church, not that there was an actual marriage between them.

Many pro-divorce writers make the mistake of lifting the word ‘divorce’ out of its metaphorical context in the Bible and claiming that God literally divorced the Ten Tribes!

Some Christian writers justify divorce on the grounds that Yahweh divorced the Ten Tribes of Israel. It is argued that if God divorced His people then the act of divorce cannot, in itself, be an evil thing. This howler of a misunderstanding of the use of words is frequently found in academic commentaries and books by those who are intent on imposing a doctrine of divorce on Jesus.

If God can take up any metaphor to convey His mind then it is not legitimate to turn that metaphor into a historical reality. God can come like a thief in the night, but it would be wrong to say that He is a thief. Similarly, He presents Himself as a husband in order to convey His feelings toward Israel and Judah (the two sisters whom He portrays as His two wives). He hates divorce, but Moses consolidated the nation’s divorce culture in order to regulate and alleviate the hardship that this brought about for divorced wives. This does not mean that God (a) stood in a husband relationship to his wife Israel, or (b) that He approves of divorce, but when such a custom (along with stealing) becomes a normal experience, and an integral part of the nation’s daily life, then it can be taken up by God as a metaphor, but only as a metaphor. Where others have gone wrong (in my opinion) is that they have pressed the metaphor to the point that they see it as an actual, historical marriage, which they must know never took place. What did take place was a Covenant ceremony in which Israel participated physically, but there was never a marriage between Yahweh and His people at Mount Sinai or anywhere else.

Hebrew can be very bold and daring in its use of metaphors and anthropomorphisms to describe Yahweh’s character and His various relationships, and I think some have allowed themselves to transform an analogy into a reality in the case of the word ‘divorce.’ They need to stand back and see how the analogy works in terms of conveying God’s feelings. He is a master communicator, and will use the most appropriate words, analogies, metaphors and anthropomorphisms, in the most effective way, to ensure that He gets His message across clearly.

God can tell lies to deceive His enemies. When He wanted to kill Ahab at Ramoth Gilead, He put a lie into the mouths of Ahab’s four hundred prophets counselling him to go war, with only one prophet dissenting from this advice, namely, Micaiah. Micaiah was so convinced that he alone spoke the truth that he related a vision in which God sent lying spirits into all the prophets of Ahab to deceive him into going to war against the king of Syria. Micaiah followed this up with the statement, ‘The Lord has put a lying spirit into the mouths of all these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you’ (1 Kgs 22:22). Where does the vision end and reality take over in this scenario? A good angel of God offers to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab’s prophets (how moral is this?), and God approves of this cunning, devious plan, to trick Ahab to go to war so that He can kill him.

Yahweh’s use of the metaphor of marriage and divorce turns out to be a good choice, because His Church, like an unfaithful wife, had prostituted herself (another analogy) with Assyria.
and Babylon. He determined to reject the Ten Tribes, and continue with the Two Tribes, so what better analogy to draw on than the divorce one? After all it was endemic in their culture, so if He used it, it would impact enormously on them, what He was about to do in ‘rejecting’ them. He was ‘rejecting’ His ‘wife’—Aholah (the Ten Tribes). They knew what was involved in such a rejection if it was allied to the concept of divorce, as they understood it, which meant that once they were divorced Yahweh would not take them back again, if He continued with the analogy. He could not take them back again, because He, Himself, had added the crucial caveat in Deuteronomy 24:4, that if they used Moses’s ‘bill of divorce’ law, then they must accept the consequence that went with that decision, namely, there was no possibility of reconciliation. How appropriate in the case of ‘divorcing’ the Ten Tribes!

What I think these writers should do is throw out the idea that Yahweh married two sisters as an historical reality, and look carefully at the appropriateness of using something that God hated, namely divorce, as a metaphor of the coming ‘rejection’ of the majority of His people because they did not keep the terms of His Covenant with them. The Covenant vows and the Covenant Ceremony did happen in history. That is the real event. They should keep their eye on that event, because it is that relationship that is about to be annulled. Then they will see that ‘marriage’ and ‘divorce’ are brilliant metaphors to use to illustrate the coming annulment and final rejection of His ‘spouse.’

The New Testament Church is likened to a Betrothed Bride and the future is likened to the Marriage of the Bride. Again, the metaphor is so appropriate, because it conveys a lot of beautiful images and conjures up a very pleasant situation, but we cannot press it to expect a huge wedding cake and the best food and drink, followed by exciting entertainment into the night! But I fear this is what some have done with the metaphor of Israel as one of Yahweh’s wives. The danger of pressing the marriage analogy is that these writers end up saying that Aholah only became a prostitute in the eighth-century, whereas Yahweh says elsewhere that she was unfaithful from the moment she left Egypt. The analogy is only a means to get across the idea that the coming rejection of the Ten Tribes is as final as divorce, a concept which they were very familiar with.

Yahweh waited from 1446 to 605 BC before He finally ‘divorced’ (in the metaphorical sense) His wife, Aholah. But it was a Covenant, not a marriage, that He terminated, because the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional Covenant.

Neither Ezekiel nor Jeremiah went beyond the language of metaphor, because only in a parable or simile can God and Israel be viewed as ‘married.’ In reality, no marriage relationship existed. Similarly, in reality no ‘divorce’ existed except in a parable or simile. It is not beyond God to use the sub-human, degenerate state that marriage had descended into, in the Exilic period, for Him to latch onto that debased level and use it as a metaphor, to bring it home to them that ‘divorce’ (on their understanding of that word) is on the cards for them unless they repent immediately. No one can outdo God to find the best means of communicating His mind, and I find the ‘divorce’ metaphor very appropriate under the circumstances.

The idea that divorce is an immoral thing to do has been strongly condemned by those who have attributed the necessity of divorce to Jesus. The fact that Yahweh divorced the Ten Tribes is seen as proof that it cannot be an immoral act.

These supporters are going beyond the metaphor to establish divorce as a moral act. Divorce on the ground is always a sinful action because it negates God’s will for every marriage. God can break His Covenant relationship with Israel on the strength of its conditionality which He spelt out clearly to them. He is not breaking any ‘marriage’ vow which He gave to them promising to stay in a permanent ‘one flesh’ relationship with Israel, because such a relationship never existed on the ground.

The Covenant was broken by Israel, so God drew upon their own evil practice of divorcing their wives, to say, ‘This is how I am now going to break my Covenant relationship with you.’ It is a perfectly valid use of something that they could immediately appreciate, without validating the practice as such. Thieves existed, and God can use the metaphor of a thief to convey one aspect of a
thief about a proposed action He planned to take, but because He used the thief-metaphor does not mean He approves of thieves, or that He is a thief, any more than He approves of Moses’s consolidation of the institution of divorce for hard-hearted husbands.

God hates divorce as much as He hates theft. Both actions are inherently immoral. But God, being God, can use any metaphor He likes to convey His meaning in the clearest manner possible. God used the witch of Endor to speak to Saul. But God commanded Saul to exterminate all witches. He is sovereign in all His ways. He uses what He condemned to extermination. But we are not to conclude from this incident that because God used witches to mediate His will, then witches should be incorporated into the Church as another office, to stand alongside women deaconesses.

In reading the Old Testament prophets and their use of terminology relating to marriage there is the danger, which many fall into, of using a simile to establish a biblical institution for divorce. God can take up any simile or metaphor to describe His feelings or His relationship, and apply it to Himself and to Israel. He describes Himself as a shepherd, so why not a husband?

Now no marriage ever took place between God and Israel, so there was no permanent, one-flesh union established between the two. Rather, the reality was a conditional Covenant which was entered into between God and His people. There were only Covenant vows to be broken. There were no marriage vows to be broken. The relationship was conditional on Israel keeping the terms of that Covenant. A marriage is not conditional.

Israel did not keep the terms of the Covenant, therefore, to use a metaphor they could understand, Yahweh ‘divorced’ them. But the use of ‘divorce’ does not mean there was a ‘marriage.’ I can use ‘divorce’ in the sentence, ‘I would not like to be divorced from my car,’ but it does not imply that I went through a marriage ceremony with my car! I am using ‘divorce’ as a striking metaphor. And when I scrap my car, I can talk of ‘divorcing’ it, meaning I am well and truly parted from it.

A nun might say, ‘I am married to the Church.’ We know exactly what she means to convey when she uses that simile. But it would be stupid to infer that she went through a marriage ceremony! In this sense Yahweh ‘divorced’ Israel, even though they were never married. The metaphor aptly conveys precisely what Yahweh wanted it to convey between Him and the Ten Tribes. Judah was still ‘married’ to Him. Again, the metaphor conveys the love-relationship that Yahweh wished for between Himself and His people. But it would be wrong to take the metaphor literally. Yahweh sometimes describes Himself as a thief, or an eagle, a lion, a rock, etc. Yahweh was not literally married to two sisters (Aholah and Aholibamah), was He?

Note the use of the marriage metaphor to show up the heinousness of worshipping foreign gods in Malachi 2:10-16. Being unfaithful to God is like being unfaithful in a marriage relationship. The metaphor increases and deepens our understanding. We should not confuse the metaphor with the reality on the ground, which was a Covenant relationship, not a marriage relationship.

5.10. VOCABULARY RELATING TO DIVORCE
THE FOLLOWING SECTION HAS NOT BEEN EDITED YET.

5.11. SINS REQUIRING THE DEATH PENALTY

God demanded holiness, and the standard was a perfect one, fixed according to His own nature: “Be you holy as I am holy” (Lev 11:44; 18:1-5), which compares favourably with Matthew 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” The standard was high and it was permanent. There was no compromise built into it; no allowance was made for the hard-heartedness of men.

The standard meant that whoever looked at the wife of another man and wished he could sleep with her, has already committed adultery with her. The young man who dreams of sleeping
with single women is guilty of committing fornication in God’s eyes (cf. Job 31:1, 9). Holiness begins with the thoughts we entertain in our minds.

Paul, with good theological insight, looks upon the establishment of his churches as a betrothal relationship with Christ. “I betrothed you to one husband, a pure virgin, to present to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2). He likens the Gospel message to something very pure and very precious, like virginity. He likens the false Gospel to something that will remove or pollute that precious and valuable possession. The individual Christian and each local church is in a betrothal relationship to Christ. Will each hold to the virgin Gospel during that betrothal period, or will some prostitute that pure knowledge by cavorting with and entertaining strange new doctrines that will, like leaven, alter its shape completely into another gospel? He has a fear that the church in Corinth is in real danger of being diverted away from the simple faith that they showed at first in Christ, the Saviour of the world. The idea of the Church moving through the betrothal period as it moves through time, with the Marriage of the Lamb set at the end of time, leaves room for the doctrine of Election (betrothed to Christ) and Preservation and Perseverance (through faith) to weed out the good from the bad, the sheep from the goats, the sons of God from the sons of Satan, who are mixed together in the invisible Church. The Gospel they follow will determine if their engagement relationship is still viable or whether they have been divorced by Christ. The Marriage is in the next life and whoever is married to Christ then can never be divorced. The challenge facing every Christian who is still in the flesh—in the engagement period—is not to lose their virgin faith in Christ. If they do they will be divorced for spiritual fornication. Many are engaged to Christ who will be divorced before the marriage is consummated in heaven. Many are called but few chosen.

The following sins were punishable by death.

A. **Breaking the terms of the Covenant**
   1. Failure to perform Covenant circumcision (Gen 17:14; Ex 4:24-25)—“cut off”

B. **Taking the life of someone.**
   3. A hired murderer (Dt 27:25 “cursed”)
   4. Punishment leading to the death of a male or female slave who dies the same day (Ex 21:20)—“certainly avenged”
   5. Death of a pregnant woman’s child—life for life (Ex 21:23)
   6. Neglect with respect to animals that kill (Ex 21:28-29). Owner is “put to death” if warned about the animal.

C. **Respect for authority**
   7. Parents—harming (Ex 21:15) or cursing (Ex 21:17; Lev 20:9; cf. Dt 27:16 “cursed”)—“put to death”
   8. Uncontrollable and rebellious sons (Dt 21:18-23)—stoned
   9. Law courts: Israelites refusing the judgment of Yahweh’s law courts (priests and Levites are the judges) (Dt 17:8-13)—“he has died”
   10. Law courts: (priests and Levites are the judges) showing partiality against widows, orphans, and strangers (Dt 27:19 “cursed”)

D. **Dabbling in the occult**
   11. Occult (Ex 22:18; Lev 20:6, 27)—consulting witches and wizards—stoned

E. **Apostasy**
12. Presumptuous or deliberate sins—as these revile Yahweh (Num 15:30-31; Dt 17:12-13; Lev 4:24-27)—”cut off.” Deliberate sins not involving the death penalty are dealt with in Lev 6 (cf. also Num 5 and 15)

13. False prophets, false dreamers and visionaries, and those among one’s relatives encouraging others to move away from serving God (Dt 18:6-11, 20)—”put to death”

14. Apostasy: a whole city which encourages apostasy (Dt 13:12-18)—”devoted to the sword”

15. Apostasy: man or woman worshipping another god (celestial) (Dt 17:2-7; 19:16-21; 21:20)—stoned

16. Worshipping other gods (idols), (Ex 22:20; Dt 7:25; Num 25:1-9)—”devoted”

17. Manufacturing idols (Dt 27:15 “cursed”)

18. Offering child-sacrifice to false gods (Lev 20:1-5)—stoned

19. Anyone raising seed to Molech (Lev 20:1)—stoned

20. Blasphemy (Lev 24:11-16) or one who reviles God—stoned

F. Violations of the stipulations of the Law

21. One who refuses to establish the Law (Dt 27:26 “cursed”)

22. Anyone who profanes the Sabbath Day (Ex 31:14)—”put to death”

23. Gathering firewood on the Sabbath Day (Num 15:32-36)—stoned

24. Working on the Sabbath Day (Ex 35:2 [lighting a fire]; 31:14-15; Num 15:32-36)—stoned

25. Working on the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:30)—”destroyed”

26. Failure to keep the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:29)—”cut off”

27. Failure to keep the Passover Feast (Num 9:13)—”cut off”

28. Eating leavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex 12:15, 19)—”cut off”

29. Eating the fat of sacrifices (Lev 7:25)—”cut off”

30. Eating blood (Lev 17:10, 14; 7:27)—”cut off”

31. Eating the Peace Offering at the wrong time (Lev 19:5-8)—”cut off”

32. Eating the meat of the Peace Offering in an unclean state (Lev 7:20-21)—”cut off”

G. Sanctity of the Tabernacle: violations of the Law

33. Strangers who officiate as priests in the Tabernacle (Num 1:51; 3:10, 38; 16:40; 17:13; 18:7)—”put to death”

34. Anointing non-priests (strangers) with holy oil (Ex 30:33)—”cut off”

35. Manufacturing identical holy anointing oil (Ex 30:33)—”cut off”

36. Manufacturing identical holy incense (Ex 30:38)—”cut off”


38. Levites who pollute the offerings (Num 18:32)—”(warning) die not”

39. Kohath priests who touch holy things in the Tabernacle (Num 4:15, 17-24)—”have died”

40. Priests must remain seven days in the Tabernacle (Lev 8:35)—”(warning) die not”

41. Priests must not uncover their heads or tear their garments (Lev 10:6)—”(warning) die not”

42. Priests with anointing oil on them must not leave the Tabernacle (Lev 10:7)—”lest you die”

43. Priests must not be drunk while officiating (Lev 10:9)—”(warning) die not”

44. Priest officiating with unclean hands or feet (Ex 30:17-21; Lev 22:3, 9)—”cut off”

45. Priests must keep to their designated duties (Num 18:3)—”(warning) die not”

46. Priests officiating while naked (Ex 28:42-43)—”(warning) they die”

47. High Priest must not enter the Tabernacle at undesignated times (Lev 16:2; Ex 28:35)—”(warning) dies not”

48. High Priest must keep to designated procedures (Lev 16:13)—”(warning) dies not”

49. Unclean Israelites defiling the Tabernacle (Lev 15:31; Num 19:13)—”(warning) dies not”

50. Israelites barred from priestly functions (Num 18:22)—”(warning) dies”

51. Israelites sacrificing other than at the door of the Tabernacle (Lev 17:4, 8)—”cut off”

52. Anyone who does not cleanse himself defiles the Sanctuary (Num 19:20)—”cut off”
53. Israelite who fails to purify himself before worship (Num 19:13, 20) — “cut off”

H. The sanctity of marriage and sexual relationships
54. Homosexuality (Lev 18:22; 20:13; cf. 18:18; Dt 23:17) — both partners “put to death”
55. Having sex with animals (Ex 22:19; Lev 18:23-29 [a Canaanite practice which defiled the land]; 20:15-16), done by men and women (cf. Dt 27:21 “cursed”) — both animals and humans are “put to death”
56. Having sex with near relations (incest), (Lev 18:6-29; 20:11-22)
57. Having sex with one’s step-mother (Lev 20:11; Dt 27:20 “cursed”) — “put to death”
58. Having sex with a daughter-in-law (Lev 20:12) — both “put to death”
59. Having sex with a woman and her daughter (or a woman and her mother) (Lev 20:14) — all three to be burned
60. Having sex with a sister or a half-sister (Lev 20:17; Dt 27:22 “cursed”)
61. Having sex with one’s mother-in-law (Dt 27:23 “cursed”)
62. Having sex with a menstruous woman (Lev 20:18; cf. 15:24) — both “cut off”
63. Uncovering one’s father’s nakedness (Dt 27:20 “cursed”)
64. Betrothed virgin and lover (in a city) — both stoned (Dt 23:23-24)
65. Betrothed virgin and lover (in a field) — only the lover stoned (Dt 23:25)
66. Adultery (Lev 20:10; Dt 22:22-30; cf. Lev 18:20) — both partners “are surely put to death” (see the ‘Suspicion Ordeal’ in Num 5:11-31)
67. Fornication by a priest’s daughter (Lev 21:9) — burned
68. Fornication by a non-priest’s daughter (Dt 22:20-21) — stoned

I. The death penalty for other cases
69. Causing the blind to fall (Dt 27:18 “cursed”)
70. Kidnapping a man (Ex 21:16; Dt 24:7) — “put to death”
71. Removing a neighbour’s boundary stone (Dt 27:15 “cursed”)
72. Israelites trespassing Mt Sinai at the giving of the Law (Ex 19:12) — “put to death”
73. Murmuring against Yahweh (Num 17:10; 21:4-9; etc.)

This is not an exhaustive list of capital offences, but it does bring out the precarious environment in which God’s people were expected to live and move and have their being. They had to tread very carefully on a daily basis. Take, for instance, the everyday occurrence of becoming ceremonially defiled. There are scores of ways of becoming unclean, such as walking through a market and brushing against a woman who was in an unclean state. Every child-bearing woman was in an unclean state for between ten and fourteen days every month. Everything she touched or sat on became unclean and could contaminate anyone who touched it. If an Israelite touched a dead body he was unclean for a week. If he touched an unclean animal he was unclean until nightfall (Lev 11:24). Staying in a clean state required vigilance at all times. The whole of one’s life was dominated by the polarised categories of “clean and unclean,” and “holy and common.” Every Israelite had to be aware of these differences (Lev 11:47). The Law created its own national culture which must have been a heavy yoke to those who did not love God with all their heart and soul.

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198 There is a long list of incestuous sexual sins that involve the death penalty in Lev 18. It would appear that just the unwarranted uncovering of the sexual organs is sufficient to warrant the death penalty: “he has seen her nakedness, and she has seen his nakedness; it is a shame” (Lev 20:17). Both are “cut off” from the people of God.

199 Some regard this as adultery with the husband’s consent to raise up children, and so the sin is known only to God.
To worship God by bringing along sacrifices while in an unclean state risked the death penalty. Certain types of defilement were permitted, such as touching dead relatives in mourning, but while in a defiled state it was not permitted to carry on a normal life, and certainly not to officiate or participate in Yahweh’s worship (see Lev 21).

Of particular concern was sexual purity. Yahweh exterminated the inhabitants of Canaan because of their sexual excesses, which He warned the Israelites not to imitate, otherwise they, too, would be thrown off the land.

For adultery, Yahweh decreed that both offending partners must die (no. 66 in the above list). Therefore, there was no need for a divorce certificate. The defiled spouses were physically put to death, so that the innocent partners were free to remarry. Proverbs 6:32-35 reveals the depths of passion that adultery arouses in an offended husband. No amount of payment will save the adulterer. He cannot escape the vengeance or appease the aroused husband.²⁰⁰

The three ‘wife-sister’ stories (Gen 12:10-20; 20:26:1-11) reveal that adultery is a sin against Yahweh. He punished Pharaoh (Gen 12:9) and terrified Abimelech (Gen 20:3-7). David committed adultery with the wife of Uriah but because David confesses his sin he is forgiven. However, he does not escape punishment. The double penalty is that his own wives will be ravaged (cf. Job 31:9-11) and his child will die. In Hosea 1:2 the marriage of Hosea to Gomer, the ‘wife of prostitution’, serves as an example of Israel’s relationship with Yahweh. Using Gomer, Israel is metaphorically threatened with repudiation, stripping and removing of bed and board, but the marriage is never dissolved. Ezekiel uses the same metaphor of Jerusalem and Yahweh (Ezek 16:23).

For fornication before marriage, described as ἐκπορνεύσαι (ekporneusai) (Dt 22:21; and within marriage see Jer 3:1 [ἐκπορνεύσας]), Yahweh decreed that if the bride was not a virgin on her wedding night, she was to be stoned (see nos. 67 & 68). Her parents needed to be vigilant if the tokens of her virginity were to be accepted in a legal challenge (Dt 22:13-19.).²⁰¹ Again, there was no need for a divorce certificate if the bride was not a virgin. The innocent bridegroom could remarry because she was physically put to death by stoning. If his challenge was not upheld by God then he could never divorce her and the parents are to receive double the (fixed) price of the bride-price (Dt 22:19). Also, where a man raped a girl he was obliged to marry her (should her father consent) and he could never divorce her (Dt 22:29). In these two cases God prevents divorce which is proof of its existence before He gave the full Covenant Law on Mount Sinai.

It might seem harsh on the women concerned here that they could not get a divorce from men they may very well hate as a result of their actions. But the ‘no divorce’ provision is looked upon by Yahweh as a deterrent to other men, because the offender had to support her financially all his days. The law ignores the girl’s wishes in its concern to ensure that pre-marital sex is not treated as casual sex, such as a man may have with a prostitute, and get away with any responsibility for a subsequent birth. The lesson for the men is that they must exercise self-control or there will be a penalty involved in sowing their “wild oats.”

For suspected fornication, Yahweh decreed that the wife should undergo a test in His presence. If she was innocent she went out free. If she was guilty then He punished her with a disease and illness that would prevent her from having any further children (Num 5:11-31). Again, there was no need for a divorce certificate. Provision was made for the innocent husband to have a second wife (Ex 21:10).

²⁰⁰ Some see a discrepancy between the way adultery is handled in Hos 2:4-5; Jer 3:8; Isa 50:1 and Prov 6:32-35, and explain it in terms of the difference between practice and ideal. The laws stress the utter seriousness of the offence, and that is its main function.

²⁰¹ The morning after a daughter’s wedding, the sheet of the nuptial bed that was stained with hymenal blood was handed to her parents as proof of their daughter’s virginity. This insured that the bride price would remain theirs. Gordon J. Wenham (“‘Bethûlāh’ A Girl of Marriageable Age,” VT 22 1972] 326-48) assumes betûlîm refers to menstrual blood as the tokens of the bride’s virginity.
The standard for all priests and high-priests was that they could only marry a virgin. They were forbidden to marry a divorced woman or a prostitute, and so a defiled woman, because “he is holy to his God” (Lev 21:7) and because he is not to “pollute his seed among his people” (Lev 21:15). The two types of women mentioned here would have “polluted” his seed. There is a concern here to see that the seed of ceremonially holy men should be deposited in a holy womb (Ex 22:31). Sowing “wild oats” was not an option for priests.

Yahweh also made provision for cases of rape of betrothed and unbetrothed virgins (Ex 22:16; Dt 23:28-29) and when a slave acquires a wife from his master (Ex 21:3), or when, through economic hardship, a father has to sell his daughter (Ex 21:7), but she cannot be sold to be a prostitute (Lev 19:29). He covered sexual relationships between masters and female slaves (Lev 19:20-22), and captured females (Dt 21:11-14; 32,000 Midianite virgins were incorporated into Israel, Num 31:35). He thus had a comprehensive coverage of a wide range of common situations. All difficult or unlegislated for situations were to be brought to the priests and Levites, who would receive His further judgments (mishpatim)(Dt 17:8-13) which had to be obeyed (see no. 9).

Yahweh used death, not a divorce certificate, to terminate broken marriages. He hated the divorce certificate which Moses was forced to introduce because the people would not live according to the Law that He had given to the nation until the coming of the Messiah. Moses compromised Yahweh’s stated position. If men want to live out their lives at a sub-standard level, then sub-standard rules will govern their existence on earth. Hence, Yahweh, put various riders or qualifications around the issuing of divorce certificates to prevent the morals of His people from sliding into the Canaanite excesses. One of these riders is recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

Without condoning Moses’ compromise of issuing divorce certificates instead of death certificates, Yahweh states that if a man divorces his wife over an issue that would have led to the death penalty — in this case “an obscene act” — then she cannot return to her first husband. It is as if He has treated her as having been already “cut off from her people.” She has “died” as far as her union to her first husband is concerned, in Yahweh’s eyes, but her punishment has been transmuted by Moses into a divorced state.

When a man married a woman he became related to all her close female relatives, and should his wife die or he divorce her, he could not marry any of them. Does this throw any light on the divorced woman’s status as though she had become a close female relative, and therefore illegible to marry?

It should also be noted that adultery or fornication was not just a private affair. The sin was against good order in the community. This is indicated by the constant refrain, “and you have put away the evil thing from your midst” (Dt 22:21, 22, 24, etc.) in order to restore the community’s purity. Paul applies this in the case of the man who married his mother-in-law (1 Cor 5:6; cf. 2 Cor 2:5-11), a sin which involved the death penalty (see no. 61 in the list above). The physical death

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202 In addition, the high-priest could not marry a widow, and the virgin must be an Israelite, Lev 21:13. These stipulations made the keeping of female genealogies imperative, although none have survived in the OT. A high-priest needed to know the last five-member genealogy of his bride, according to rabbinic tradition.

203 Yahweh assumes divorce is a tradition because some of His laws presuppose its existence soon after they left Egypt. It may be that Moses only ratified what was the practice in Egypt, rather than that he set it up for the first time. Reason for its introduction was “hardness of heart,” which suggests that divorce was a very early institution in human society.

204 Pollentius, writing to Augustine (354-430), in order to justify divorce and remarriage, suggested that the adulterous partner should be considered as dead and then, using 1 Cor 7:39, argued that he should be permitted to remarry (see Wenham & Heth, p. 42).

penalty is metamorphosed into excommunication from the people of God, “he is to be removed out of the midst of you.” To be put outside the Church was a spiritual death penalty. This method of dealing with sins involving the death penalty enables the Church to apply it in the case of all the others sins listed above, including adultery and fornication. All adulterers (i.e., those involved in a second marriage while both partners are still alive) are to be excommunicated from the Church because they are excommunicated from heaven (Gal 5:19-21).

The administration of discipline is a communal one both in Deuteronomy and in Paul. It shows that all members of Israel (Deuteronomy) and all members of the ‘new Israel of God’ are responsible for actualizing God’s blessing by obeying the law. An individual may pollute a church, and a polluted church may pollute the whole Body Church. The Church is one body, made up of member churches, therefore, to maintain purity, it is essential that all communicating churches are obeying the law of Christ, otherwise one bad apple will pollute them all. A church without eyes to exclude any member who is polluted is blind and soon pollutes itself. To embrace a polluted member is to embrace pollution itself. Paul cannot shout it loud enough, “FLEE FORNICATION,” because he knows how deadly a sin it is in the body of Christ, be that at the individual or church level.

What exactly does Deuteronomy 24:1-4 teach and was it in Jesus’ mind when he stated His position on divorce in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9?

5.12. MODERN GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The five basic grounds for divorce are the same throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland:206

1. Adultery
2. Unreasonable behaviour
3. Desertion
4. The parties to the marriage have lived apart for at least two years and both consent to the divorce
5. The parties have lived apart for at least five years

The first three grounds are ‘faults’ that can be committed by one spouse against the other, allowing the ‘innocent’ spouse to apply for a divorce. Grounds 4 and 5 are ‘no-fault’ grounds requiring evidence of separation.

Divorce was only legalised in 1857. Prior to that an Act of Parliament was needed to obtain a divorce. The 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act permitted divorce for the innocent party where their spouse had committed adultery. The grounds for divorce were widened in 1937 to include desertion, cruelty and incurable insanity.

The 1969 Divorce Reform Act restated the three existing fault grounds of adultery, desertion and cruelty (widened to ‘unreasonable behaviour’) and added the two ‘no-fault’ separation grounds. Scotland and Northern Ireland subsequently adopted the same five grounds.

The so-called ‘special procedure’ introduced in England and Wales in 1973 means a divorce can be conducted by post. In Northern Ireland the divorce rate is only a quarter of that in England and Wales. There must be a proper hearing before a judge where the reasons are explained. There is

206 The following information has been taken from:
no special procedure where divorce is obtainable by post. The 1996 Family Law Act replaced the 1969 Divorce Reform Act with no-fault divorce in England and Wales.

The Family Law (Scotland) Act 2005 dramatically reduces the amount of time required for a divorce on the grounds of separation in Scotland. The five year period where one party does not consent has been reduced to two years. Where both parties consent the time period has been reduced from two years to one. The Act also abolishes desertion as a ground for divorce; though adultery and unreasonable behaviour remain.

Historically, for centuries the tendency was for churches of all denominations in the UK not to permit any divorce at all. They only allowed legal separation (i.e. non-cohabitation) of spouses and even then only where one spouse had committed a serious sin against the other, such as adultery. Both parties remained legally married and therefore could not remarry.

Outside the UK the reformers permitted remarriage after divorce for the innocent party. But despite the theoretical possibility of divorce and re-marriage, after a detailed study of court records in Reformation Germany, it was found that divorce was a relatively little exercised option. The possibility of collusion in order to obtain a divorce was considered so great by Protestant authorities that they would not even consider allowing re-marriage unless the innocent spouse was free from any suspicion and willing to endure a series of legal and financial obstacles intended to dissuade him or her from such a course.

The Church of England teaches that marriage is for life. Its long-standing position until very recently has been to permit divorce but not remarriage since it is argued that in God’s sight the couple are still married. However, in 2002 the synod of the Church passed a motion stating that in exceptional circumstances, a divorced person may marry again in church during the lifetime of a former spouse.

The Roman Catholic Church believes divorce is immoral and a grave offence against the natural law. It therefore considers re-marriage while both husband and wife are alive as adultery. The Roman Catholic Church has said, “It can happen when one of the spouses is the innocent victim of a divorce decreed by civil law; this spouse therefore has not contravened the moral law. There is a considerable difference between a spouse who has sincerely tried to be faithful to the sacrament of marriage and is unjustly abandoned, and one who through his own grave fault destroys a canonically valid marriage.”

The Westminster Confession (1647) associated with Presbyterian Churches permits divorce and re-marriage for the innocent party in the case of adultery.
PART 6. JESUS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

6.1. HOW SHOULD THE DIVORCE TEXTS BE TRANSLATED?

The following texts are a translation of the Majority (Universal) Greek text based on the author’s unpublished Greek-English Harmony of the four Gospels. Words in italics are needed in English to bring out the meaning of the Greek. Where an explanation is required even after supplying words in italics, to avoid misunderstanding, footnotes are used. Words in italics have no direct Greek behind them, but they are required for translation into understandable English.

6.1.1. Luke 16:18: Jesus’ absolutist position

Luke 16:18 reads: “Every husband divorcing his wife, and marrying another woman, commits adultery. And every man marrying a divorced wife, he commits adultery.”

This stark statement leaves no wriggle room to avoid the evil consequences of attempting to dissolve what only death can dissolve.

There can be no doubt about the mind of the Lord Jesus on the issue of divorce, namely, there are no grounds whatsoever to divorce a wife or a husband. God handed over to His Son the governance of all men on the earth. All men are now under an obligation to listen to, and obey, the new teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on divorce and remarriage, and apply it to their lives. Jesus’ teaching, which abolished the man-made institution of divorce for all time to come, is the new standard of righteousness that is required of all men everywhere if they are to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ teaching on divorce is a fully integrated element of what constitutes the Gospel. A Gospel missing His teaching on divorce is another gospel, and a false test every man’s claim to be a Christian and a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus by his endorsement, or otherwise, of Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce, and, following Paul’s example, apply 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 to the situation if required.

6.1.2. Matthew 5:31-32: the exemption refers to culpability, not to a cause for divorce

There is no dispute between the majority Byzantine (Universal) Greek text and the minority Egyptian Greek text over this verse. Because Jesus has the evil consequences of divorce uppermost in His mind, the Greek can be translated as follows:

“Now it was said, ‘Who, say, may have divorced his wife, let him give to her a departure document.’ But I—I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife he makes her to become adulterous—apart from a matter of fornication [by her, in which case she will be blamed, but she will not be blamed for the adultery of a remarriage: her husband will be blamed for that]. And who if, say, may have married a divorced wife he becomes adulterous [by marrying her].”

Luke states Jesus’ teaching using the indicative mood, His text reads: “all [collectively/sg masc]—the man putting away (pres act ptc) his woman, and marrying a different woman—he commits adultery against her [‘against’ his first wife; cf. Mark 10:11]. And all [collectively/sg masc]—the man marrying her having been previously put away (perf pass ptc acc fem sg) from a man—he commits adultery with her [i.e., with another man’s wife].” See also under Appx. B.

The small Greek particle ἄν (an) means, ‘suppose,’ ‘let us say,’ ‘for example,’ ‘for instance.’ It introduces a hypothetical situation when used with the subjunctive mood, especially for teaching/didactic purposes.

Jesus puts the responsibility on the husband for what happens to a man’s wife after he divorces her. The exemption from blame is when she commits fornication before her husband...
There are two separate statements here:

“But I—I say to you that who, say, may have divorced . . .”

“And who if, say, may have married . . .”

The exemption clause is located in the first statement. This means that there are no exemptions in the second statement: *all who remarry a divorced person are committing adultery*. In this verse we have a clear application of Jesus’ blame theology.

The crucial verb here is ‘makes’ or forces, or compels, the divorced wife to commit adultery. The exemption goes with the verb ‘makes’ and not with the verb ‘divorces.’ Never had a rabbi in the whole course of Israel’s divorce history made this connection between divorce and committing adultery. This was a totally preposterous idea. The rabbinical ‘roll of divorce’ specifically stated that the divorced woman was free to marry whoever she wished, without the slightest hint that she was committing adultery if she remarried. Jesus said the exact opposite, thereby declaring the rabbinical and Mosaic permission to be unlawful.

Once again we have Jesus using His authoritative style, ‘but I—I say to you,’ to demolish an edifice that had stood for 1,500 years. To tell half the male population of His country that they would be held responsible for forcing their wives into committing adultery through their second marriages was certain to lead to His death, but Jesus didn’t care for the consequences. He told the truth.

An amplified version would read:

“But I—I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife—discounting an act of fornication [by her]—forces her to commit adultery [through a remarriage]. And who, for instance, may have married a divorced wife he becomes adulterous [by marrying her].”

Here the Greek particle παρεκτός is given its meaning of ‘discounting, apart from, not including’ (see 5.10.).

A modern paraphrase would read, “But I—I say to you, that who, for instance, divorced his sexually-faithful wife over a non-sexual issue, he is responsible for forcing her to commit unlawful sex through a remarriage. And who, for instance, married any woman who has been divorced commits adultery against her.”

Jesus is not creating a lawful cause to divorce a wife. *He is creating a lawful case to be exempt from the blame of her losing her clean status.* This lawful case is independent of the last statement, which states that any marriage with a divorced person, male or female, is an adulterous relationship. This new law is not open to a single exception. No class is exempt from its reach. It reaches from the throne to the shanty-shack.

*All remarriages after the death of a spouse are lawful.*

*All remarriages after the divorce of a spouse are unlawful.*

On these two statements hang the entirety of Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage.
The circled couple is intended to convey the ‘one flesh’ status that is formed at the union of one male and one female.

There can be no doubt about the mind of the Lord Jesus over the man who divorces his wife for a non-fornication (non-capital punishment) reason. The Lord will hold him responsible if his wife sleeps with another man, because, by divorcing her, he forces her into a second marriage, and forces her to commit fornication/adultery against himself.

Being an astute lawyer in His own right, Jesus exempts the husband if his wife commits adultery or fornication while still married to him. She will be held responsible for committing fornication/adultery (cf. Ecclus 23:23) while she was still married to him, not her husband, and that is only fair. This is the only exemption that Jesus is referring to in Matthew 5:32. The exemption refers to culpability. It is not an exemption from Jesus’ total ban on all divorces.

It is not uncommon to find ignorance among commentators over what the exemption in Matthew 5:32 refers to, and this applies increasingly to so-called evangelical writers, who regard Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 as referring to the same thing, namely, an exception to divorce on the grounds of infidelity.

This ignorance is generally found in those pro-divorce writers who are determined to make Jesus a teacher of divorce, and who take Christians back to Deuteronomy 24 and Exodus 21 for their understanding of how the born-again Christian should regard the bond of marriage. This ‘back to Moses’ drive among some evangelicals can only lead to a rabbinic-Christianity, which is not the pure, unadulterated Gospel that Paul preached. We might paraphrase Paul in his warning, ‘cleanse out, therefore, the old leaven of Moses’ teaching, that you may be a new lump, according as you are unleavened, . . . so that we may keep the doctrine, not mixed with the old leaven of Moses’ teaching, . . . but with the unleavened food of sincerity and truth’ (1 Cor 5:7-8). Any attempt to mix the commands of Moses with the commands of Christ, is like mixing leaven in the dough and expecting unleavened bread to emerge from the oven. The Elect need to be on their guard not to import the leaven of Old Testament teaching on divorce and remarriage into the life of Christ’s Church, otherwise they will destroy the unleavened teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels is fully sufficient, in and of itself, to understand His revolutionary new teaching on marriage, without any recourse to the Old Testament writings, and
without any recourse to rabbinic folklore which was not written down until centuries after Christ established His Church on earth.

Moses is dead, long live the Lord Jesus!
Moses is dead. Hallelujah!

Let us keep it that way in doctrine and practice! Let none of Moses’s sub-standards be resurrected and imposed on the Elect of God. Moses has been resurrected again (Moses redvidus) by all those so-called evangelicals who, out of ignorance of the supernatural nature of new birth, put Moses’ teaching (or Shammai’s) into the mouth of the Lord Jesus, and mislead the Elect. The standard Moses settled for belongs to the old man. Paul urges the Elect to put to death the old man, and to be renewed in true knowledge and in the image of the Lord Jesus (not in the image of Moses)(cf. Col 3:10), and allow the true life of Christ to manifest itself through their lives.

Jesus fulfilled the Law during His lifetime and when He called out on the cross, ‘It is finished,’ this applied to the practice of divorce as much as to all the other institutions that constituted the sub-standard Mosaic religion.

Divorce died on the cross, along with our old man. All Christians identify themselves with the resurrection of Christ, for they rise with Christ’s new nature resident within them, and they have renounced and cast off their past manner of life. But that past manner of life will continue in the life of all who do not love the Lord Jesus, and for this unregenerate class of human beings, divorce will continue to form part and parcel of their sub-standard existence, walking in darkness, and governed by the will of Satan.

Once it is realised that Jesus is sitting in judgment on anyone who divorces his wife then this should put the spotlight on culpability, not on looking to see if Jesus’ words can be manipulated to get an excuse to divorce one’s wife. Jesus is issuing a dire warning of eternal damnation to anyone who divorces his wife. When the whole verse is put in this setting, then the exemption clause makes sense, but only if it is an exemption from blame. It would detract from this focus if Jesus is trying to cover two topics at the same time. If this is the case, then in the one He puts the blame for a divorced wife’s adultery fully and squarely on the husband who divorced her; and at the same time He is creating a loophole to get a just divorce from another kind of wife. The greatest clarity comes when we view Jesus as taking a typical couple. The focus is on a single man. That man is responsible for his wife’s sexual fidelity toward him. Jesus informs him that if he divorces his wife, all of her subsequent adultery is his responsibility, not counting the case where she did not remarry, but lived the life of a prostitute. When one husband, and one wife are the twin subjects of all that Jesus says on who is to blame for what in a post-divorce situation in Matthew 5:32, then all the pieces fall easily into place.

It is sometimes overlooked in the debate that Jesus has a word of comfort for divorced wives. They will have heard that the rabbi from Galilee abolished divorce on any grounds, and that all remarriages are adulterous affairs. These divorced and remarried wives, thinking they had done the right thing in remarrying, would have been made to feel guilty, and believe that they are guilty of the death penalty. What a comfort it would have been for these wives to realise that God would not hold them responsible for their post-divorce remarriages, that God would transfer their sin to their husbands, who divorced them, and they would not be condemned for their adultery in marrying again. Jesus would be seen to be a just judge, and to know that He had exempted them from the sin of their remarriage would have been a huge relief to half the population of Israel.

The shift of blame was, indeed, a new thing in the earth, but now that Jesus had revealed the new standard of morality that all men and women will be judged by on the Day of Judgment, it is now for all husbands and wives to think very carefully about using Satan’s divorce courts to try to dissolve the indissoluble. The one who initiates the divorce, husband or wife, against the express wish of the other, will be the one to bear the brunt of God’s wrath on the Day of Judgment. That is a sobering thought, and that was Jesus’ intended purpose.

Jesus is presenting the divorcer with the strongest possible disincentive to divorce. The exemption from blame is where the divorced wife does not remarry but commits fornication after she
has been divorced. In other words, she has taken the decision to live an immoral life, which she knows to be wrong. She is comparable to Yahweh’s two wives in Ezekiel 16 and 23, who are said to commit fornication, while still married to Him. In this case, the Judge—the Lord Jesus Christ—on the Judgment Day will not blame her husband for the deliberate prostitution of herself. And if the divorced wife immediately entered into a life of prostitution, then he will not have caused her to commit adultery, so he will not be charged with her post-divorce sexual activity. This is captured in Jesus’ use of the word *parektos*, ‘apart from/besides/not counting.’ This word is not the same as *ei μη* ‘except.’ (See §5.10)

*Should Matthew 5:32 be read as an ‘exception to permit divorce,’ or an ‘exemption from blame’ for his wife’s extramarital fornication?*

The only version to come closest to the meaning of the very rare word παρεκτός is the paraphrase of *The Message*:

If you divorce your wife, you’re responsible for making her an adulteress (unless she has already made herself that by sexual promiscuity). And if you marry such a divorced adulteress, you’re automatically an adulterer yourself. MSG (1993-2002).

An analysis of English translations of Matthew 5:32 shows that the vast majority present Jesus as teaching two things:

First, that anyone who divorces his wife for a non-fornication matter and remarries, he is committing adultery against his first wife, who is still regarded as married to him, despite getting a rabbinic divorce certificate.

Second, if a husband divorces his wife on account of her fornication while she still married to him, then he is entitled to divorce her, and if he remarries he is not committing adultery against his first wife.

This is how the Greek words παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας are interpreted by the vast majority of ETs. A typical example would be *The English Standard Version*:

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (ESV, 2001)

The following ETs also use the term ‘except’ to translate παρεκτός: KJV (1994); ASV (1901); AMP (1954); CEB (2011); CJB (1998); CEV (1995) (‘unless’); DARBY (pb); DRA (1899); ERV (2006); ESV (2001); EXB (2011) (paraphrase); GENEVA (GNV, 1599); GW (1995) (paraphrase); GNT (1992) (paraphrase); PHILLIPS (1962); JUB (2000-2010); KJV (1611) (‘saving’); TLB (1971); MOUNCE (2011); NOG (2011) (paraphrase); NASB (1960-1995); NCV (2005) (paraphrase); NET (1996-2006); NIV (1973-2011); NKEV (1982); OJB (2002-2011); RSV (1946-1971); VOICE (2012) (‘unless’); WEB (pb); WE (1969-1998); WYC (2001); John Worsley (N.T. 1770); Noyes (1869) (‘unless’); Apostolic Bible Polyglot (1996, 2013); NHEB (2010); OJBC (1997); Joseph Smith Translation (2013); and The Emphatic Diglot (1864).

It is clear from these ETs that the exception is an exception to permit divorce for fornication. The following small number of ETs are ambiguous, and it is possible (but not probable) that the exception could refer to an exemption from blame: ASV (1901) ‘saving for the cause’; HCSB (1999-2009) ‘everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery’; LEB (2012) ‘everyone who divorces his wife, except for a matter of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery’; NLV (1969) ‘whoever divorces his wife except if she has not been faithful to him, makes her guilty of a sex sin’; NLT (1996-2007); NRSV (1989) ‘anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery’; and YLT (1862) ‘whoever may put away his wife, save for the matter of whoredom, doth make her to commit adultery.’ CV (2012) ‘whoever may divorce his wife apart from a matter of fornication, disposes her
to commit adultery; Wm Baxter Godbey (1902) ‘whoever may divorce his wife apart from a matter of fornication, disposes her to commit adultery’; and RNKJB, ‘saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery’;

6.1.2.1. Are incestuous marriages the target of the exception clauses?

When the Betrothal interpretation was found wanting among conservative-evangelical scholars, the focus shifted to incestuous marriages as the target for Jesus’ so-called exceptive clauses in both Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. Because the term porneia has such a wide application it was not hard to find cases where it referred to incestuous marriages or sexual cohabitation. It is proposed that both exception clauses are interpreting Matthew’s ‘except for fornication’ to refer to marriages within the prohibited degrees of marriage as set out in Leviticus 18:6-18. The phrase used repeatedly in this passage, ‘to uncover the nakedness of,’ is a Hebrew euphemism for sexual intercourse (Deut 22:30), and presumably refers to marriage (Lev 18:18). In order to safeguard Jesus’ teaching of no divorce and no remarriage, and rule any real exceptions, the new explanation of the exceptive clause in Matthew 19:9 states that Christ’s abolition of divorce does not apply in the case of an illegal, incestuous marriage, which should never have been allowed to progress to consummation. On this new insight, Jesus permits divorce in the exceptional situation where a marriage has taken place within the prohibited degrees of marriage.

Support for this view is said to come from (1) the lexical meaning of porneia which can refer to incest (1 Cor 5:1). (2) Jewish literature, in the shape of the Dead Sea Scrolls,\(^{210}\) appears to use z’nnôt, which is most often translated by porneia in the LXX (see LXX Jer 3:2, 9), to refer to incest in the Testament of Judah 13:6; and the Testament of Reuben 1:6. (3) The Jewish context is firm in that the exceptive clauses are only found in Matthew’s Gospel, written by and for the Jews. The readers would link the exceptions to cases of incest (we are assured). (4) The historical background was probably the incestuous marriage of the Herods—Archelaus, Antipas, and Agrippa II, as reported by Josephus (Antiq. 18. 109-119 [5.4.]; 20. 145-147; Wars 2. 114-116). Herod Antipas married his niece, the former wife of his brother. Archelaus (4 BC–AD 6) divorced his wife and married Glaphyra, the former wife of his half brother, Alexander. Herod Agrippa II (AD 50-100) was reputedly involved in an incestuous relationship with his sister, Berniece.

Jesus was in the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas when He was ‘ambushed’ by the Pharisees’ leading question, hoping that Herod would arrest Jesus for condemning his marriage. (5) Lastly, the immediate context is said to support the specialised use of porneia to indicate incestuous marriages, because God’s plan for every lawful marriage does not include the possibility of divorce, except in the case of unlawful marriages, which should never have taken place in the first place. This narrow view of porneia would also explain the incredulous reaction of the disciples. Had Jesus permitted divorce for fornication, His teaching would not have risen above that of rabbi Shammai, and would not have provoked such a response.

This alternative to the Betrothal view has all the marks of being contrived and forced, and begs the question many times. In a nutshell, the solution states that while porneia is used in a broad sense in the New Testament, the requirements of the context indicate that Jesus must have been using the term ‘fornication’ in a specialised sense to refer exclusively to incestuous marriages. Matthew 19:9 must now be translated as: “But I—I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife—not for incestuous marriages—forces her to commit adultery [through a remarriage]. And who, for instance, may have married a divorced wife he becomes adulterous [by marrying her].”

One can appreciate that conservative-evangelical scholars will stop at nothing until they arrive at a solution that protects Jesus’ ‘no divorce and no remarriage’ teaching at all costs. Almost any interpretation will do so long as the end result that they desperately need is guaranteed. The

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incestuous marriage solution was born out of the necessity to ensure that Matthew 19:9 must refer to some invalid marriage since there cannot be an exception to permit divorce for a lawful marriage. It is this last point that is behind the search to find other invalid marriages that will safeguard Jesus’ core doctrine of no divorce and no remarriage.

The most decisive objection to the incestuous-marriage solution is that these unions are an abomination in God’s sight, and therefore they come under the same condemnation that the Ezra 9 & 10 unions come under, namely, they must be annulled, not divorced. Consequently, the exception to divorce is not an exception, and so the case collapses.

Since incestuous marriages were as common among Romans and Greeks, why were the exception clauses omitted in Mark and Luke?

6.1.3. Matthew 19:3-12: a reminder/remainder phrase

God made a sharp distinction between capital punishment and non-capital punishment with regard to certain sins. In respect of sexual sins, this distinction was unique to the Hebrew nation. God made male and female, and pairing was to be a life-long relationship. This was God’s intention from the very beginning.

God banned divorce for adultery and betrothal fornication, and demanded the death penalty for such sexual defilement. This left a loophole for Israel to continue their post-Exodus practice of divorcing their wives for non-capital offences. Consequently, divorce in Israel could only be obtained for non-fornication offences, and this was the practice right up to Jesus’ day.

The solution to the translation of Matthew 19:9 is incredibly simple. The reason for this is that Jesus could have said: “Who, for instance, should divorce his wife for fornication and marry another commits adultery.” However, to divorce for fornication would have been against God’s explicit command. The situation never arose in Israel. It was only a theoretical possibility. What Jesus did say, however, was, “Who, for instance, should divorce his wife not for fornication and marry another commits adultery.” How simple is the solution to Matthew 19:9. The rest of this section fills out, and reinforces, the implication of this simple solution.

The following table sets out the punishment that would follow any disobedience shown toward God’s Torah as it relates to marriage:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPITAL PUNISHMENT</th>
<th>NON-CAPITAL PUNISHMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“FOR FORNICATION”</td>
<td>“NOT FOR FORNICATION”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theoretically, Jesus could have said:

“Who, say, may have divorced his wife:
FOR FORNICATION (EPI PORNEIA) . . .”

But this was not a lawful option. It was an act of disobedience to change the punishment for fornication from the death penalty to divorce. In any case, it is unlikely that Jesus would have set up a theoretical possibility that was in direct conflict with His Father’s stated will and command, and which the Jewish lawyers would not have entertained as a lawful possibility anyway.

If, however, the Jews ignored the law and replaced the death penalty with divorce (for instance, after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70), Jesus’ teaching would still apply, namely,

211 This solution brings Matthew’s Gospel into full agreement with the comprehensive coverage that is stated in Mark 10 and Luke 16. Mark and Luke both ban divorce outright, making no distinction between ‘for fornication,’ and ‘not for fornication,’ which obtained only in Israel. All three Gospels proclaim the same truth, there is no divorce on any grounds, sexual or non-sexual.
that all such divorced persons could not remarry, and no one could marry a divorced person (innocent or guilty) without committing adultery, which carried the death penalty.

Jesus, as the Prophet foretold by Moses, replaced Moses, and here His teaching takes precedence over anything that Moses commanded the people in the past to do on his own authority. Jesus, the new Moses, did away with divorce ‘for any cause.’ A new era had commenced with the fulfilment of Moses’s prophecy in the person of Jesus. There was no going back to Moses. The people were committed to going forward with the new Moses.

Even though the Hebrews knew that it was impossible to get a divorce for fornication, they were a stubborn people, and you would expect to find them disobeying what God commanded. Yet, surprisingly, there is no recorded example before the time of Christ where the Jews, living in their own land, reduced a death penalty case to divorce for adultery or for betrothal fornication.\(^{212}\)

The only option open to the Pharisees to justify divorce in their culture was to subtract the causes that required the death penalty and apply divorce to the remainder of the causes that did not qualify for the death penalty.\(^{213}\) In this way they were able to retain their pre-Torah culture of divorce but only for non-fornication causes.

In this division between fornication and non-fornication issues the Hebrew religion differed from all other comparable cultures. Consequently, when Jesus referred to the traditional category of causes, which, by definition, had to be non-death penalty causes, He rightly encompassed all the remainder causes as non-fornication causes. Referring directly to these non-fornication causes He said:

> “Who, say, may have divorced his wife: NOT FOR FORNICATION (MH EPI PORNEIA) . . .”

Such a divorce, obtained under a ‘not for fornication’ cause, would avoid the death penalty. It was the fact that the Torah did not directly rule out divorce for non-fornication causes that the lawyers could justify divorce.

The lawyers were well aware that Jesus had been preaching the abolition of divorce for every cause for some time now. They also knew that Jesus could not use Moses to establish His abolition of divorce, and Jesus knew that He could not use the law of Moses to justify His ‘no divorce’ position.

However, Jesus wrong-footed the Jewish lawyers by by-passing Deuteronomy 24:1-3, and taking them back to the earlier revelation of God in Genesis 2:24, to the pre-Fall standard for marriage. This was a counter-argument that the lawyers had not anticipated, or foreseen. Jesus moved the goalposts away from Deuteronomy to Genesis. The Jewish lawyers were outmanoeuvred and left flatfooted with this shift back to Genesis.

The shift from Deuteronomy (1406 BC) to Genesis (to the creation of Adam and Eve) was not just a shift in chronology, but a shift in theology. Jesus had inaugurated a new era on the Earth.

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\(^{212}\) Joseph, the putative father of Jesus, could not bring himself to seek the death penalty for Mary, his betrothed wife. However, what he planned to do, namely, to secretly disengage himself from his contract to marry Mary was not in accord with (later?) rabbinic tradition that such contracts had to be terminated via a divorce certificate. If Joseph had sought to divorce Mary, he would not have been a ‘righteous’ man. He could postpone the death penalty, but he could not replace it. See section 6.6.8. *Should Mary have been executed?*

\(^{213}\) Grammatically, to negate the words ‘for fornication’ it is sufficient to place a negative particle in front of them, which Matthew does. Mt 19:9 should not be read as a negative clause (supplying the ellipsis verb), such as, ‘he can not divorce her for fornication,’ or, ‘except for fornication,’ which is how the phrase has been traditionally translated, on the assumption that Erasmus had given the Reformation churches the original wording of Mt 19:9.
Entrance into it was via a ‘born from above’ experience. It was a new thing on the Earth. It was out of this world. When Jesus completed the task set for Him to fulfil the demands of the law on behalf of Israel, the law became obsolete because the reason for its introduction had run its course. The law was replaced with Jesus; Jesus replaced the law. From the moment of His ascension God redirected all peoples of the Earth to come to Him through Jesus, and through Him alone. Jesus became the exclusive way to come into the presence of God.

The Pharisees who stood in front of Jesus had no inkling that they were standing in the presence of the Second Person of the Trinity. They had no inkling that Moses was, at that precise moment, being gradually displaced by Jesus, as He completed the task of fulfilling the Mosaic Law to the last jot and tittle. The law was passing away before their very eyes, but they were unaware of it.

The Pharisees in Matthew 19 asked Jesus a very pertinent question; pertinent because it was a question of law. His enemies set out to tempt Him to say something that would trap Him, and Jesus had given them the perfect opportunity they were looking for. Some weeks or months earlier, Jesus had said, “Everyone divorcing his wife and marrying another commits adultery; and everyone marrying one divorced from a husband commits adultery” (Lk 16:18). This was said to the Jewish nation, not to any visiting Greeks or Romans. It did not contain any exceptions for a lawful divorce among His own people. He stated His teaching in its absolute form to His fellow-countrymen. It is sometimes said that Mark wrote his gospel for the Romans and Luke for the Greeks. While this may be so, the immediate audience who heard what Mark and Luke wrote on the issue of divorce were the Jews, not the Romans, and not the Greeks. It is unlikely that Jesus would say something different to the Jews in Matthew’s Gospel.

Word of Jesus’ outrageous new teaching on divorce was, no doubt, quickly conveyed to Jesus’ enemies, who had, on eight different occasions, tried to kill him. As His new teaching stood, it clearly made a fool of Moses, who had given them permission to write out a bill of divorce for any cause they chose to nominate, provided it did not clash with Moses’s other, death penalty laws.

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\[214\] See J. Carl Laney’s contribution in H. Wayne House (ed.), *Divorce & Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, ENG.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), pp. 31-32, who suggests that the Pharisees may have wanted to lure Jesus into condemning the marriage of Herod Antipas to his brother’s wife (also Antipas’s niece), which was an incestuous marriage (cf. Lev 18:16; 20:12). John the Baptist’s condemnation cost him his life.


\[216\] Luke 16:14 informs us that the Pharisees heard what Jesus said, and a little earlier, the Scribes were in His presence (15:2), and also the lawyers, whom He tackled on a question of law (14:3).

\[217\] 1st year: Lk 4:29; 2nd year: Mt 12:14 (= Mk 3:6); 2nd year: Jn 5:16; 4th year for: Jn 7:19; 8:59; 10:31; 11:53; 12:10. 4th year: Mt 26: 4 (= Mk 14:1 = Lk 22:1). Cf. Mt 2:16 (King Herod). In Jesus’ 1st year, just after Passover, the members of His home synagogue in Nazareth attempted to hurl him down a cliff (Lk 4:29). At the start of His 2nd year, just after Passover, the Pharisees, with the Herodians, “took counsel” (in the Sanhedrin?) to destroy Jesus (Mt 12:14). In His 2nd year Jerusalem Jews tried to kill Him for Sabbath-breaking (Jn 5:16). In His 4th year, just after Passover, Jesus accused the Jerusalem Jews of trying to kill Him (Jn 7:19). In His 4th year, at the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri), the Jerusalem Jews tried to kill Him for blasphemy (Jn 8:59). In His 4th year at the Feast of Dedication (winter) the Jerusalem Jews tried to kill Him again for blasphemy (Jn 10:31). In His 4th year, just before His death, the full Sanhedrin met under the leadership of the high priest, Caiaphas, and deliberated how they might kill Jesus (Jn 11:53) and also Lazarus (Jn 12:10). The last dated attempt on Jesus’ life is recorded by Matthew (26:4) two days before Jesus’ death when the chief priests were directly involved in the attempt to assassinate Him. These attempts to kill Jesus were justified on moral and religious grounds, and Paul had the same mindset when he set out to persecute the early Christians. It is assumed that the High Priest was not acting illegally when he attempted to implement the death penalty for blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking.

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The stage was set to trap Jesus over His distinctive teaching on divorce. Here is the biblical record of what Jesus said on that occasion. Matthew 19:3-12 reads (my ET of the Majority Greek text):

“And the Pharisees came near to him, tempting him, and saying to him if it is lawful for a husband to divorce his wife for every accusation. 4 But he, having given answer, said to them, ‘Did you not read, that at the beginning the One having made them, a male and a female he made them? 5 And God said, On account of this a man shall leave behind father and mother, and he shall be fused to his wife, and they shall be—the two—for one flesh? 6 So that no longer are they two flesh, but rather, one flesh. Therefore, what God joined together, let man not put asunder.’ 7 They say to him, ‘Why, therefore, did Moses command to give a scroll of departure, and to divorce her?’ 8 He says to them, ‘Moses, on account of your hard-heartedness, permitted you to divorce your wives, but it did not exist like this from the beginning. 9 Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.’

10 His disciples say to him, ‘If it is like this—namely, the case of the husband with the wife—it is not advantageous to marry.’ 11 But he—he said to them, ‘Not all men do receive this word, but to whom it has already been given. 12 For they are eunuchs, which out of a mother’s womb were born like this; and they are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs by men; and they are eunuchs, which eunuched themselves on account of the reign of the heavens. The one being able to receive it—let him receive it.’

Eusebius records a case of a man born a eunuch:

During Cyril’s episcopate we came to know Dorotheus, a learned man, who had been deemed worthy of the presbyterate at Antioch. In his zeal for all that is beautiful in divine things, he made so careful a study of the Hebrew tongue that he read with understanding the original Hebrew Scriptures. And he was by no means unacquainted with the most liberal studies and Greek primary education; but withal he was by nature [τὴν φύσιν] a eunuch, having been so from his very birth, so that even the emperor, accounting this as a sort of miracle, took him into his friendship and honoured him with the charge of the purple dye-works at Tyre. We heard him giving a measured exposition of the Scriptures in the church.

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216 The Pharisees’ question is not recorded, only the report, or content, of their question is given. The same applies at Mark 10:2.

219 Man can ‘separate’ but he cannot ‘dissolve.’ Jesus was fully aware of this truth, hence He chose to use the verb χωρίζω and not ἀπολύω, to deny man what was within man’s capacity to achieve. It was not within man’s capacity to ‘dissolve’ what God had achieved. Only one stronger than God can undo His work.

220 The implication behind their question is that if Moses did not explicitly condemn divorce, but actually regulated it, then it could not be unlawful.

221 Jesus’ comment relates to the expostulation of the disciples, and not to His teaching on divorce. See Joseph A. Webb, Till Death Do Us Part? (Webb Ministries Inc.: Longwood, Florida, 2003 [1983]), pp. 230-32. Others suggest that the one who ‘makes himself a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom’ is a divorced person who chooses the single life, not remarriage, for the sake of Christ’s Kingdom; see J. Carl Laney’s contribution in H. Wayne House (ed.), Divorce & Remarriage: Four Christian Views (Downers Grove, ENGLAND: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), p. 38.

Support for the translation of ἐπὶ πορνεία as ‘over fornication,’ comes from Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD) whose text reads: τῷοτῷ γάρ ὁ πορνευόμενοι μαθεῖν προλήψεις, εἰ συγχωρεῖ καταγγείλθησιν ἐπὶ πορνεία γυναικός καὶ ἱερατεύωσις 223 ἔτεραν γῆσαι. “For this thing the questioners wished to learn, if he [Jesus] grants—a wife having been condemned over fornication [ἐπὶ πορνεία] and having been expelled—to marry another woman.” (my ET 224). Now Clement wrote this shortly after the death of Commodus, the Roman emperor, in A.D. 192, 225 when the Jews were compelled to punish fornication with divorce, because they had been dispersed abroad and were unable to punish fornication with the death penalty in accordance with the law of Moses, God having deprived them of nationhood.

It is important to note that in Matthew 19 the Pharisees had turned the setting into a court of law. They were the prosecutors; Jesus was in the dock. He was asked His position on a question of law: Was it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife for every accusation? The expected answer was, ‘Yes, it is lawful to divorce because no less a person than Moses commanded us to write out a bill of divorce when doing so.’ But what they got from Jesus was a comprehensive ‘No, it is not lawful to divorce your wives for any reason.’ Jesus, a supreme lawyer in His own right, gave a lawyer’s reply. He said, ‘I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

In His skilful and very precise reply Jesus conveyed two messages to the Jewish lawyers. There was a negative aspect, and a positive aspect in His carefully crafted reply. He told them what sins they could not get a divorce for (a reminder); and He told them what sins they were currently getting a divorce for (the remainder). And all of this was conveyed in just three words: ‘not over fornication.’

These three words were a reminder to the lawyers that Moses had left them a law which forbade them getting a divorce for adultery and fornication (which would have included all deviant sexual behaviour). As lawyers, they would have had to agree with Jesus that He was right. So Jesus got through that round easily. They could not find fault with Him over His stand against divorce for fornication/adultery. But what about the other causes—the remainder, the non-fornication sins?

Jesus had already, and cleverly, given His answer to the ‘remainder’ of the causes by presenting the lawyers with a hypothetical situation, “Suppose a husband may have divorced his wife—not over fornication—and may have married another woman, . . . .” The fact that Jesus reminded them that the Law did not give them permission to divorce for fornication, automatically meant that His hypothetical husband must have got his divorce for a non-fornication charge. And it is these—what is left over when you subtract the sin of fornication, that Jesus then goes on to reject as grounds for divorce.

223 From ἱκβαλλω, ‘to throw out.’
224 Note that the official translations omit the words καὶ ἱερατεύωσις, “and having been expelled,” which is in every printed Greek text. The quotation is from Stromata Bk. III. Chap. VI. 50. Note that Clement sees Jesus speaking of the same woman throughout His reply. This would rule out the Betrothal View. It also means that the crime that the married woman committed was fornication, not adultery (though it was that also), which is exactly the case we see in Prov. 7:10-23.

225 Clement lived in the time of emperor Commodus (A.D. 176–192 [who died on 31 December]), and he used the death of Commodus ten times as his terminus date when calculating the time from Adam (§144.3. 5,784 years, 2 months, 12 days); Moses (§147.4. 1,842 years); the founding of Rome (§144.5. 953 years); Julius Caesar (§144.5. 236 years, 6 months); from the death of Antony (§140.6. 222 years); from Augustus’s sole rule (§144.3. 222 years); from the birth of Jesus (§145.5. 194 years, 1 month, 13 days, in the 28th year of Augustus); from the destruction of Jerusalem in July AD 70 (§145.5. 122 years, 10 months, 13 days); from Vespasian’s capture of Jerusalem in AD 70 (§140.7. 121 years, 6 months, 24 days); and from Domitian (§139.2. 111 years).
By using the simple negative, ‘not over fornication,’ Jesus identified the positive grounds that His lawyers had been using to obtain their divorces from the time of Moses. By a simple, arithmetical sum, Jesus identified the ‘remainder’ causes, which had to be non-sexual in nature. This was an astute way to identify the hundreds of non-fornication causes that the Jews had been using to get a divorce since the time of Moses. By using the ‘remainder’ device He did not have to give a long list of non-fornication ‘accusations’ (πᾶσαν ἁμαρτίαν). The use of a reminder/remainder phrase that brought together in a single phrase all that Jesus wanted to convey in the fewest possible words is truly astonishing when it is unpacked.

The ‘reminder’ element ruled out divorce for all sins of an unlawful sexual nature committed by married persons, and the ‘remainder’ element ruled out divorce for all non-fornication faults committed by married persons. Taken together, this left the lawyers with no foundation in law to obtain a divorce on any grounds. We can now unpack the reminder/remainder aspects of what Jesus condensed into three words, by separating them out, and giving each of them a separate translation.

Jesus’ use of the negative to state the positive has a parallel in the thought, ‘Whoever seeks for justice—not for the death penalty—will feel that justice has been done.’ The death penalty is discounted as the correct judicial outcome, but something short of it would satisfy the one who has been wronged. ‘Whoever seeks a punishment—not the death penalty—will feel that justice has been done.’

6.1.3.1. The Erasmian exceptive clause with the ellipsis supplied

The traditional, or Erasmian, translation of Matthew 19:9 reads as follows: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.” Now if we supply the ellipsis of the omitted verb (in italic script) we get the full sense of the grammar, which now reads: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except he puts her away for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.” Jesus, clearly, according to this translation, made an exception for fornication, and if fornication is a general term to embrace all deviant, unlawful sexual intercourse, then it includes adultery in some contexts.

This is how Erasmus intended his new Greek text to be translated across Europe, and this is how he duped the Protestant Reformers to adopt his personal belief in divorce, and by putting his doctrine on the lips of Jesus Himself, he could be assured that it would be swallowed by the Reformers. It was a devious move on his part, but he succeeded, and today there are evangelical scholars who defend Erasmus and applaud his ‘clarification’ to bring back divorce for adultery into Christ’s Church.

However, once we have removed Erasmus’s addition of ἐκτὸς before ἐκτὸς, the ‘exception clause’ becomes a ‘reminder clause,’ and would translate 19:9 as: “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—not he may have divorced over fornication which is punished by death—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

In this rendition Jesus reminds the Pharisees what the law is regarding God’s death penalty for fornication (Deut 22:20-21; Lev 20:10). The term fornication will cover all of the following (1) death for adultery (Exod 20:14; Lev 20:10), (2) death for incest; a man lying with his father’s wife; (3) death for incest; a man lying with his daughter-in-law (Lev 18:8, 15; 20:11; Deut 22:30); (4) death for incest; where a man marries a daughter and her mother at the same time (Lev 18:17; 20:14); (5) death for incest; if a man takes his father’s daughter, or his mother’s daughter (Lev 18:9; 20:17); (6) death for incest; if a man uncovers his aunt’s nakedness (Lev 18:12-14; 20:19); (7) death for incest; if a man sleeps with his uncle’s wife (Lev 20:20); death for incest; if a man takes his brother’s wife (while his
brother is still alive)(Lev 20:21). This was Herod Antipas’s sin;\(^{226}\) (8) intercourse with one’s wife when she is in a menstrous condition (Lev 18:19; 20:18); (9) death for bestiality; where a man or a woman lies with an animal (Exod 22:19; Lev 20:15-16; (10) death for homosexuality; when a man lies with a man as he lies with a woman (Lev 18:22; 20:13).\(^{227}\)

There are some disgusting, deviant, sexual perversions that married persons can and do indulge in. If they were lawfully married and one partner descends to this disgusting level, while the other partner becomes a Christian, this is no grounds for a divorce in Jesus’ Kingdom. Separation (or temporary ‘divorce,’ as some Early Church Fathers regarded it), to avoid AIDS, or other sexually transmitted diseases, may be the only way to preserve one’s life for the service of Christ, but divorce (the dissolution of the marriage bond) is never an option, under any circumstances.

6.1.3.2. The ‘remainder clause’: “not over fornication but over some other cause”

The ‘remainder clause’ would read: “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife— not over fornication but over some other non-fornication cause—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

The solution to the content-identity phrase in Matthew 19:9 is a case of simple subtraction. God had stipulated that men cannot divorce their wives ‘for fornication’; but He did not positively stipulate that they could divorce their wives ‘for non-fornication’ issues, and this is precisely what they had been doing for the past 1,500 years and more. The phrase Jesus used, ‘not over fornication,’ was His way of saying, “excluding fornication, because those sins are not lawful to obtain a divorce, but if you get a divorce apart from that category, I am now telling you that all such divorces are unlawful.”

The traditional teaching at the time gave the Jews permission to divorce their wives for non-fornication offences. Along came the prophet from Galilee and He abolished all these non-fornication causes, on His own authority, and declared all of these causes to be unlawful in the eyes of God. This was asking for trouble, because He was accusing every man in Israel who got a divorce over a non-fornication issue (which was the only way that Moses permitted them to get a divorce\(^{228}\)), and who had remarried, to be living in an adulterous, second marriage. One can imagine the consternation that this accusation created in the minds of the male population of the land. Not only that, but all the virgins and divorced women who had married these divorced husbands were now deemed to be committing adultery.

Every effort, one would imagine, would have been made to question Jesus again and again as He went about Judea, Galilee and Samaria, to ascertain the certainty of His position over their remarriages. He could not have been a very popular figure. He was too revolutionary; too extreme;

\(^{226}\) The son of Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, had an affair with his half-brother Philip’s wife, Herodias. Together, Herod (married to the daughter of the king of Petra) and Herodias (married to Philip) divorced their covenant partners in order to marry each other Josephus, Antiq. 18. 5.4.).

\(^{227}\) For a fuller list of twenty commands relating to incest, see Finis Jennings Dake, Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible (Atlanta, Georgia: Dake Bible Sales [1961]), under Lev 18 (col. 4. c.)

\(^{228}\) The two groups of offences can be summed up as ‘for fornication’ (capital offences), and, ‘not over fornication’ (non-capital offences). Moses’ action in commanding hard-hearted, unforgiving, Hebrews to write out a bill of divorce, implicated him in endorsing divorces for non-fornication offences, but only for non-fornication offences. So if Moses did reluctantly give them the right to divorce their wives it could only have been for non-sexual causes. He was bound by the law to punish fornication with the death penalty, not divorce.
too hard; too upsetting; too uncomfortable to be around with, but most of all, too anti-establishment. He had no hope of being elected to the Sanhedrin.

Jesus was a realist, and He knew that the crowds that followed Him did so only to get what they wanted out of Him, which was physical healing, not spiritual healing. Without His phenomenal powers to heal every disease and to heal every single individual who came to Him, He would have been totally ignored. It was through these powers that He could get the attention of the crowds and become a popular figure in His generation, but later on, the same crowds bayed for His blood because He upset the religious establishment and devout men like the Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus.

The apostles fully understood the unlimited range of non-capital causes encapsulated in the phrase ‘not over fornication,’ that from their day onwards the Apostolic and the early Church never endorsed divorce, or agreed to the dissolution of any lawful marriage. They agreed with the thirteenth apostle, Paul, that there could be separation without dissolution of the marriage bond, and that was as far as they were prepared to go. This set the Christian Church apart from every other religion and culture in the world at that time.

Every effort is being made today, within evangelical circles, to pull the Church into line with the practices of all other religions of the world, and to lose its distinctive mark of genuineness, coming, as it does, from God the creator of all men. They want to avoid the image of being too revolutionary; too extreme; too hard; too upsetting; too uncomfortable to be around with, and prefer to be seen shaking hands with world leaders and posing for photographs with non-Christian religious leaders. For a teacher like Jesus, appeasement and compromise were paths that led away from the truth, not toward the truth.

It follows that if Jesus banned divorce for all non-capital offences, and God banned divorce for all capital offences, then this left the Pharisees with no grounds for divorce. He answered their question fully; ‘It is not lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause.’

They were stunned, as people are today, when they discover what exactly Jesus taught on divorce and remarriage. It was new doctrines, such as Jesus taught on the abolition of divorce, that cost Him His life in the end; and anyone who follows Him should expect the same persecution, and possibly the same premature end to their ministry. There is no teaching of Jesus that engenders greater hatred in a nominal Christian than to learn that his or her divorce was unlawful in the eyes of God, and that his or her second marriage is an adulterous relationship. The minister of religion who repeats Jesus’ teaching will very soon have no congregation, and no salary or pension to look forward to.

Lawyers questioned Jesus on a matter of law: ‘Is it lawful . . . for every cause?’ Jesus, the lawyer, answered them according to the Law, and He could not have made it clearer when He stated that whoever used any non-capital offence to get a divorce, and married another woman, he was committing adultery, which was a capital offence in the eyes of God and the Lord Jesus. No wonder the Apostolic Church and the Early Church Fathers would have nothing to do with remarriages. Those who entered into a remarriage while their spouses were still alive were living in sin. The witness that the Early Church Fathers have left behind could not be clearer.

Conclusion

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229 This is the only solution that I am aware of that fully harmonises all of Jesus’ statements on divorce and remarriage. If Jews could get a divorce only for non-fornication issues, and Jesus takes away this category of causes, then this means they have no grounds for divorce. In Mark and Luke Jesus denies all non-Jewish nations the right to divorce their spouses. The abolition of divorce for any cause becomes a universal law of the Kingdom Jesus came to establish on the earth. Only those congregations and individuals who fully embrace Jesus’ teaching on divorce can enter the Kingdom of God.
On a Jewish understanding of Matthew’s text, it comes as no surprise that Matthew does not, and never did, contain an exception clause, once we remove Erasmus’s addition of εἰ before μη, and recover the original wording of Matthew’s text. The truth is, that Matthew contains a phrase that was specifically designed to answer the question put by the Pharisees to Jesus, whether divorce could be had ‘for any cause.’ Jesus replied that divorce could not be had for any cause, and He cleverly used a reminder/remainder construction that ruled out divorce on any grounds, sexual or non-sexual, fornication or non-fornication, capital offences or non-capital offences.

Jesus abolished the entire Mosaic dispensation by fulfilling the demands of the Law on behalf of the entire population of the world, past, present and future. Those who lived under the Law did not have the Spirit of Christ living in them. They were expected to walk by faith and keep the commandments of God.

Jesus introduced an entirely new dispensation into the world, in the form of a new Kingdom of God, in which Jesus would raise human beings to a new level of existence, on a completely new plane of living. It is as if the non-Jewish nations lived in the basement, without light, and without hope in the world; the Jews lived on the ground floor of the house, with special revelation on how to live and please God; while the new Kingdom of God occupied the first floor. To leave the Mosaic world behind and to enter into this new Kingdom would require a ‘born again’ experience. This ‘born again’ experience is akin to being lifted to a new level where Jesus lives, and to live with Him for ever. We are lifted up by Christ, out of the miry pit; we are raised with Christ to newness of life.

There are nominal Christians who claim to have entered the Kingdom of God, but the fact that they have got a Jewish divorce, on Jewish/rabbinical terms, shows that they have had to descend to the ground floor to get it. And such a divorce is a sin against the Lord Jesus’ direct teaching on the subject. If they remain in their divorce, they will remain in their sins.

A greater than Moses entered the ground floor and overcame the Devil, the owner of that floor. Moses had left the Jews a command to obey the Prophet that the Lord God would raise up to them in the distant future. The distant future had arrived, bearing the Messiah they were to obey in place of Moses. The time for the great changeover had come, and every Jew was challenged to follow Moses or to follow Christ Jesus. Most preferred to go on following Moses in Jesus’ day, therefore their leaders killed their Messiah, and the majority of Jews today still prefer to be disciples of Moses. But they are not alone. Joining them are a vast horde of Jesus’ followers belonging to every Protestant denomination in every nation on the Earth, much to the glee and delight of Satan and his angels.

6.14. Mark 10:2-12: Jesus’ absolutist position

There is no major dispute between the majority Byzantine (Universal) Greek text and the minority Egyptian Greek text for these verses. “And Pharisees having come near, questioned him if it is lawful for a husband to divorce a wife, tempting him. 3 But he, having given answer, said to them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ 4 Now they — they said, ‘Moses permitted a scroll of departure to write, and to divorce her.’ 5 And having given answer Jesus said to them, ‘On account of your hard-heartedness he wrote for you this command, 6 but from the beginning of creation, a male and a female God made them. 7 On account of this a man shall leave behind his father and mother, and he shall be fused to his wife, 8 and they shall be — the two — for one flesh. 8 So that no longer are they two flesh, but rather one flesh. 9 Therefore, what God joined together, let man not put asunder.”

230 Man can ‘separate’ but he cannot ‘dissolve.’ Jesus was fully aware of this truth, hence He chose to use the verb χωρίζω and not ἀπολύω, to deny man what was within his capacity to achieve. It was not within his capacity to ‘dissolve’ what God had achieved.
And in the house his disciples questioned him again concerning the same thing. And he says to them, ‘Who if, for example, may have divorced his wife, and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And if, say, a wife may have divorced her husband, and she may have been married to another man, she becomes adulterous by marrying him.’

It is clear in the mind of the Lord Jesus that there are no circumstances under which a husband or a wife can divorce their spouse and believe that their one flesh union has been dissolved. In the mind of the Lord Jesus a marriage union locks the two persons in a permanent, life-long union that only death can unlock.

Given, on the one hand, the full-time commitment that such a union entails, and given, on the other hand, the full-time commitment that following the Lord Jesus entails, a man’s full-time commitment to the work of the Lord Jesus should take priority over marriage, which can only lessen his commitment to the Lord. But there may be a ‘burning’ for marriage that will mean that some sons of God will, by force of nature and a charisma, have to divide their attention between their wives and their Master, the Lord Jesus. The advantage to the Lord in this situation was not lost on some over-zealous Christian teachers who, with good intentions, forbade Christians to marry, thinking that this would bring greater concentration on the missionary work entailed in the Great Commission to preach the Gospel to the whole world, in their own generation. But Paul saw this ban on marriage as an unwarranted imposition on the elect, and he rightly rejected it (1 Tim 4:3).

There will always be enemies of Christ (within His Church) who will accuse Him of despising marriage because He never married, and the same slur will be cast on anyone who promotes celibacy as the best status to aspire to in the interests of being totally devoted to serving the Lord Jesus. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Conclusion

Sins of fornication, such as adultery, were seldom, if ever, punished with the death penalty in Roman and Greek society. There were always exceptions, of course. Divorce could be had ‘for fornication,’ and also ‘not over fornication,’ as these cultures did not have any rigid or law-based distinction, such as governed the Hebrew people.

Consequently, when Mark wrote his Gospel for the Romans, and Luke wrote his Gospel for the Greeks, both of them recorded Jesus as abolishing divorce per se, with no exceptions of any kind, even if the Gentile nations did divorce for adultery.

However, in the case of Matthew, he wrote his Gospel for the Jews, who did observe a distinction between capital and non-capital offences when it came to marriage issues. Obviously, capital sins could not be commuted to some other punishment, such as divorce. This left only non-capital sins that could be the basis for divorce. Jesus called this basis a ‘not over fornication’ cause.

6.2. GREEK PAREKTOS AND GREEK EI MH ARE NOT INTERCHANGEABLE

The basic difference is that parektos refers to a total minus one, while ei mh refers to zero plus one. The former is used to denote an exemption to a total (‘all but one’), while the latter is used to denote an exception to zero (‘none but one’). One represents a minus, and the other represents a plus.

The Greek word parektos (used in Mt 5:32) meaning ‘apart from’ is used in situations where a statement of fact is qualified to allow one exemption to a comprehensive positive total count (‘all but

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231 Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150-215) wrote, “It follows that celibacy is not particularly praiseworthy unless (ei mh) it arises through love of God.” (Strom. III. VI. 51.1). ET by John Ferguson, Clement of Alexandria Stromateis Books One to Three (Fathers of the Church, vol. 85; Washington D.C.; The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), p. 288.
We have two further uses of parektos in the New Testament. At Acts 26:29: “Paul said, ‘I would have wished to God, both in a little, and in much, not only you, but also all [comprehensive positive] those hearing me to-day, would become such as I also am — apart from [parektos] these chains.’” Paul desires that all would become totally like him, apart from having his chains. This is his exemption clause.

THE SHADED PORTION REPRESENTS THE CHAINS THAT PAUL WAS HELD CAPTIVE IN

PAUL IN CHAINS

PAUL'S DESIRE

PAUL'S SITUATION AS HE SPOKE. THE CIRCLE REPRESENTS PAUL'S STATE AS A CHRISTIAN

PAUL'S HEARERS (WITHOUT HIS CHAINS)

Paul's use of parektos in this context is not to make an exception but to refer to something that was in the total but he declines to mention it as part of his list. In other words, out of a grand total he is subtracting part of what constitutes that full total.
On the other hand πλὴν is used to refer to something over and above a stated total, for example, 5,000 men ate of the five loaves and the two fishes, ‘apart from’ (πλὴν) women and children. Here πλὴν, used after the mention of 5,000 men, refers to other persons who did not constitute part of the total. The total was made up only of men; the women and children are in addition to (or separate from) the total, not a part of the total of 5,000. If the writer had used parektos instead of πλὴν, and referred to 5,000 persons (without gender distinction), then the total would have included women and children, so the number of men would have been considerably less than 5,000.

The difference between parektos, πλὴν, chôris, and ei mh can be illustrated as follows. Only statement C is found in the Gospels.

A. Jesus fed 5,000 men (πλὴν) besides that [apart from] of women and children.232
B. Jesus fed 5,000 men (parektos) discounting women and children.
C. Jesus fed 5,000 men (chôris) separate from233 women and children (Mt 14:21: 15:38).
D. Jesus fed 5,000 men (ei mh) except women and children.

In statement A Jesus fed 5,000 men and a host of women and children (grouped together), which would probably make a total of 10,000+ persons.

In statements B and C the total fed by Jesus in not any less than in statement A. However, B seems to making a deliberate point that women and children were excluded from the total, as though that fact, in itself, had some significance.

Statement C is significant. The reason why Matthew could give a fairly accurate count of the crowd was because in Jewish culture men sat literally apart from (chôris) women to avoid ritual uncleanness. The men sat in groups of fifty (Lk 9:14), which meant there were ten groups of fifty men in each meal-group (Mk 6:39). Here, chôris can be taken in its literal sense of ‘separate from.’

Statement D is grammatically inappropriate in this context.

The difference between πλὴν and ei mh comes out in: 1 Chr 3:9, ‘all [are] sons of David—apart from the sons of the concubines—and Tamar their sister.’ If I had used ‘except’ here, then the sons of the concubines would not have been considered to be sons of David, but they are his sons, but by his concubines.

To bring out the exceptive element in πλὴν you need a sentence like, “there is one God, and there is not another except [but, besides or only] Him” (Mk 12:32). This comes very close to ei mh.

Here, the meaning of ‘nevertheless’ would not be appropriate. The only case where ‘except’ is the natural meaning is in Acts 8:1, but here it could mean ‘besides, apart from,’ which would fit statement A above. If we give Acts 8:1 its more normal meaning of “be that as it may be, of the apostles,” it could mean that the scattering was with the approval of the apostles, but I have never seen that in any ET before. Or better, “all were scattered . . . besides that of the apostles,”

Acts 15:28 seems to demand “except” but, “besides that of the necessary things” fits the context also. Acts 20:22-23, “not knowing what shall befall me, besides this that the Holy Spirit . . . “ Acts 27:22, “there shall be no loss of life among you, besides that of the ship.” Phil 1:18, “For what [cause]?” Given this is so [or, Besides this] that in every place . . . Christ is proclaimed.” Phil 3:16, “this God also shall reveal to you, besides this into which we have reached in this [attainment] to walk.” Phil 4:14, “For all things I have strength in Christ’s strengthening me. Given this is so, you did well . . . .” Rev 2:25, “I will not put upon you another burden besides that which you have.”

The conclusion is that πλὴν means ‘besides that,’ or ‘be that as it may be,’ or, ‘given this is so’ ['besides']. One of these three will fit any context in the N.T. Rarely will ‘except’ fit the context, and when it does, one of the above will also fit. So I conclude that ‘except’ should not be listed as a

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232 Exod 12:37, “600,000 men on foot, apart from infants [LXX reads: ‘baggage’ here].” (Cf. Gen 14:24.) The term could mean ‘in addition to’ as in Lev 23:38 (3x).
233 The clearest meaning comes out in James 2:26, “for as the body separate from a spirit is dead, so also the faith separate from works is dead.”
primary meaning of this preposition. Preference should always be given to ‘besides that.’ Plên seems to convey the idea, ‘and here is more information,’ but seen as a something different but extra to what has just been said. It conveys supplementary information that should be taken into account with what has just been said, and which may qualify the preceding impression.

Plên in the LXX

Gen 14:24, “I will take nothing of yours . . . besides [= not counting/apart from] what things the young men have eaten and the portion of the men who have gone with me.’
Gen 39:6, ‘he knew nothing . . . besides [apart from] the bread he was eating.”
Gen 41:40, ‘only with respect to the throne I am greater than you.’ There clearly is an exemption here.
Pharaoh and Joseph are equal in all respects except the throne itself, which belongs to Pharaoh. It means, ‘apart from the throne we are equal.’ “this being said, only respecting the throne I am greater than you.” “[despite what I have just said,] only with respect to the throne am I greater than you.

Exod 8:5 is an exemption clause. Moses will completely remove all the frogs from the land of Egypt ‘only [= besides] in the River shall they be left’ (because that will bring things back to normal).
Exod 8:8, ‘there is not another [god] besides [= only] the Lord.
Exod 8:7, ‘they shall be left only in the River.’ In these cases plên means ‘exclusively’
Exod 10:24, Pharaoh sets a condition using plên, ‘only your flocks you leave behind.’
Exod 12:16 is an exemption clause, “you shall do no work, . . . apart from what thing shall be worked by every person; this alone shall be worked by you.”
Exod 21:19, ‘be that as it may be, [= despite this] he shall pay for his incapacity . . .”
Exod 22:19. ‘The one offering to gods, he shall be devoted to death, apart from [the one sacrificing] to God alone.” Here you need to supply the ellipsis verbs to retain ‘apart from.’

Lev 21:23, there is a caveat here. The holy bread the blemished priest may eat,besides which he shall not enter the Holy of Holies.
Lev 23:38, three times in the one verse, and here it means “apart from.” And it means ‘alongside’ (as in παρα) their normal festival times.
Num 5:20, ‘if you have . . . and given his copulation in you, apart from your husband.” A case could be made for ‘except’ but it would be very awkward.
Num 11:6, ‘[there is] nothing apart from this manna.’ It would be very easy to slip in ‘except’ in this case.

Num 26:65; 32:12 ‘except Caleb’ = ‘apart from Caleb.’
Num 32:12, ‘they do not see . . . apart from Caleb.’
Num 36:6, ‘but only out of the people of their father, let them be wives’ [Zelophehad].
The meaning ‘apart from’ does not suit the context. It translates ortion.
Deut 2:37 where ‘apart from’ = ‘except.’
Deut 3:5, ‘all these are fenced cities . . . apart from towns . . .’
Deut 3:11, ‘because, only Og . . . had ben left.’ (‘apart from’ does not fit here.)
Deut 3:19, ‘only [apart from] your wives . . . do dwell in your cities
Deut 28:29, “apart from the covenant . . . ” (‘except’ is not possible here).
Josh 1:17, ‘besides Yahweh your God is with you
Jud 4:9, ‘only,’ is best here.
Judg 16:9, ‘only just this one time,’ ‘only’ 19:10;
1 Sam 8:9, very difficult syntax.
1 Sam 12:20, 24, despite this
2 Sam 2:10, ‘despite this.’
1 Kgs 8:9, 2Chr 5:10 ‘there was nothing in the ark apart from the two tables of stone . . .
“The use of ‘apart from’ could suggest that the writer was aware of the contents and wanted to draw attention to the fact that there was nothing else in the ark. If he had used ‘except’ then the expectation was that the ark was empty, except it had two tablets of stone. The word ‘except’ puts content into the ark; the word ‘apart from’ gives the content and tells us that there was no addition to what was there.

1 Kgs 8:19, ‘despite this.’
1Kgs 8:25, 27 has to be ‘despite this,’ and not ‘except.’
2 Kgs 3:2, ‘And he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but [even so/be that as it may be] not as his father.’ The use of ‘but’ is found very often in the NT; this is a rare example in the OT. This case could be ‘beside this’ however.

2 Kgs 17:2, ‘only’
2 Kgs 24:14, none have been left apart from the poor of the land.
This example shows that plên, coming after a negative, can mean ‘except.’

1 Chr 3:9, ‘all [are] sons of David—apart from the sons of the concubines—and Tamar their sister.’ If I had used ‘except’ here, then the sons of the concubines would not have been considered to be sons of David, but they are his sons, but by his concubines. The use of ‘except’ would exclude them from being sons of David, whereas to say ‘apart from’ does not exclude them as sons, but only puts them in a different class.

2 Chr 6:9, ‘despite this, you are not to build the house.’ ‘except’ does not fit.
2 Chr 6:16, ‘given that, if say, your sons watch their way,’ ['provided' plên ean] 2 Chr 33:8.
2 Chr 9:14, only ‘apart from’ will suit here, espec. not ‘except.’
2 Chr 18:15, If the text read: ‘How many times am I adjuring you, that you speak to me plên only the truth,’ ‘only’ would fit but not ‘apart from’ or ‘except’. But this is not what the text says. There is a negative that I have left out. The text should read: “How many times am I adjuring you, that you do NOT speak to me plên apart from the truth.” If you left the negative out and left the ‘apart from’ in then you would get the opposite sense! for it would read: “How many times am I adjuring you, that you speak to me plên apart from the truth.” This would be expecting the person not to tell the truth.

2 Chr 33:17 (2x), ‘despite this, still the people are sacrificing on the high places, despite [= be that as it may be] it is to Yahweh their God.’ Here ‘except’ would be acceptable, meaning ‘but only’ to Yahweh their God, as מָזַר would convey.

Esth 4:11, ‘one law [of his [is]] to kill, apart from him to whom the king holds out the sceptre.’ The LXX adds the underlined words. It reads: “All the nations of the empire know that every man or woman who shall go to the king inside the inner court uninvited—there is no deliverance for him, apart from to whom he holds out the golden sceptre to someone, will that person be safe.”

Tob 1:20, ‘neither was there anything left with me, apart from Anna my wife and Tobias my son.’
English might use ‘except’ here, but the use of ‘with me’ may have determined the choice of plên and not מְנַחָה would convey.

1 Mac 4:6, ‘despite this.’
1 Mac 11:38, 70 this is the only(?) case where plên has been translated (in KJVA) by ‘except certain bands of strangers,’ which could be altered to, ‘despite this certain bands of strangers . . .’
Pss 17:32; 31:6, could easily be ‘except.’
Sir 36:4, ‘there is no God apart from you.’ ET might have had ‘except’ here; but this is the normal way of the Greek to convey this word. The expression ‘there is no God apart from (plên) You,’ occurs ten times this way, Deut 32:39; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Chr 17:20; Isa 44:6, 8; 45:5, 6, 14, 21; 46:9 (and cf. Dan 14:41; Joel 2:27), which translates Heb. זָלַת (zulathi). In ET we would slip easily
into, “there is no God except you.” The use of ‘except’ restores the content (‘God’) having denied its existence. The use of ‘apart from’ does not deny the existence of God, but only denies that there is another god alongside God. The use of ei μη would be inappropriate to use in these texts, because frequently it has to be translated as ‘if not’ rather than ‘except’: “there is no God if not you.”

Amos 9:8, ‘despite this, I will not destroy to the end the house of Jacob,’
Zeph 3:7, ‘despite this,’
Zech 1:6, ‘despite this,’

Isa 4:1, ‘given this is so, let your name be called over us.’ Men would be so scarce that seven women would be after one man as a husband. This use of plhn is different from ‘despite this,’ which usually points to a disaster in the background which is countered in some way with good news. Here the women are promising not to be an economic burden to their future husbands if only they would marry them. The use of ‘except’ is out of the question here.

Isa 64:3 ‘apart from’ you (‘except’ does not fit) in, “neither have our eyes seen a god, apart from you.

Jer 3:13, ‘given this [show of kindness] know your iniquity.’
Jer 3:20, ‘despite this,’
Jer 10:24, ‘apart from,’
Jer 12:1, ‘given this,’ (i.e. that you are righteous).
Jer 33:24 (LXX 26:24), ‘given this,’ (‘except’ is not appropriate).

This is the end of the 230 cases of plhn in the LXX OT, and 31 cases in the NT.

Conclusion. The following meanings in order of popularity are (1) apart from, (2) despite this, (3) given this, (4) nevertheless, (5) be that as it may be, (6)

THE EXPRESSION is non OCCURS 26 TIMES IN LXX AND NT.

THE FOLLOWING IS A STUDY OF ei μη WHERE IT DOES NOT MEAN ‘except’ BECAUSE THE LATIN TRANSLATION IS si non IN THE OT AND THE NT:

Gen 43:10 ; Exod 33:15 ; Num 5:19 (2x); 26:14; Judg 14:18; 2 Sam 13:26; 19:8, 14; 2 Kgs 3:14; 9:26; Judith 11:2; Job 31:20; 33:33; Ps 130:2; Sir 12:2; 25:26; Jer 15:11; 49:5 (LXX 42:5); 2 Mac 8:15; 2 Esdr 8:43; N.T. John 15:22; 18:30; Acts 26:32:. Total: 26x.

THE WORD nisi OCCURS 276 TIMES IN LXX AND NT. EVERY OCCURRENCE WAS EXAMINED.

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ei

Job 1:11; Amos 3:4;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ei δε μη

Dan 6:13; 14:8; 2 Mac 5:18;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ei μητι

Lk 9:13; 1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 13:5;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ei μη

Gen 31:42; 1 Sam 25:34; 1 Kgs 17:1; 2 Kgs 7:10; Neh 2:12; Judith 6:2; Esth 6:6; Ps 93:17; 105:23; 118:92; 123:1, 2; Eccl 3:12; 8:15; Wis 7:28; 9:17; 11:25; Isa 1:9; Ezek 5:11; 2 Mac 12:44;
THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ἐὰν μὴ
Gen 32:27; 43:3, 9; 44:23, 32; Exod 3:19; Lev 5:1; Dt 28:58; 1 Sam 26:10; 2 Chr 23:6; Esth 2:14; Ps 126:1 (2x); Prov 4:16; Wis 8:21; Jer 27:45 (2x); Bar 6:23; Dan 2:5; Amos 3:4, 7; 1 Mac 3:53; 6:27; 7:35; 2 Mac 14:33;
NT: Mt 5:20; 12:29; 18:3; 26:42; Mk 3:27; 7:3, 4; Lk 12:24; 15:4 (2x); 20:25; Acts 15:1; 1 Cor 14:6; 14:7; 1 Cor 14:9; 15:36; Gal 2:2; 2 Thess 2:3; 2 Tim 2:5; Rev 2:5, 22;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ὡς/ὡν
Gen 3:1; 30:15; Jud 11:25; Sir 34:6; Bar 6:45;
NT: Mt 19:9;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ὡς ὥστε
Gen 39:6; Num 35:33; Jud 7:14; 19:19; Sir 8:17;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ὡς ὃς ὃς
1 Sam 29:4;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES ὡς οὔκ
1 Sam 20:2;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES οὔκ ὡς οὔκ
Sir 7:6;

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE WHERE nisi TRANSLATES οὔκ ὡς ὡς
Num 26:65

NONE OF THE ABOVE GREEK COMBINATIONS.
Gen 28:17; Ex 33:16; Lev 16:3; Lev 21:2 (ἀλλὰς); Num 11:6 (πλην); Num 16:13 (οτί); 22:33; Deut 10:12 (ἀλλὰς); Josh 14:4; Ruth 3:18 (ἡμεῖς αὐξ); 1 Sam 18:8 (ἀλλὰς); 1 Sam 21:7 (ἀλλὰς); 1 Sam 30:17 (οτί ἀλλὰς); 2 Sam 3:9 (οτί); 2 Sam 5:6 (οτί); 2 Sam 7:19 (καί); 19:29 (ἀλλὰς); 1 Kgs 17:12; 19:2 (οτί); 22:16; 22:31 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 2 Kgs 4:2 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 5:15 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 5:17 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 2 Kgs 9:35; 13:7 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 14:4 (πλην); 17:18 (πλην); 1 Chr 15:2 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 2 Chr 5:7 (πλην); 18:15 πλην); 18:30 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 21:17 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); Esth 4:11 (πλην); Prov 18:2; Eccl 6:8 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); Song 7:2; Wis 17:12; Sir 7:6; 34:23 (ἡ); Sir 36:10); Isa 42:19 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); Isa 42:19 (2x); 66:2 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); Jer 30:14 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 44:25 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); Dan 6:8 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 10:21 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); Zech 9:17; Mal 2:15 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 1 Mac 9:6 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 10:38 (ἀλλὰς ἡ); 11:70 (πλην);
NT: Mk 9:8 (ἀλλὰς); Lk 2:26 (ἡ αὐξ, ἀλλὰς ἡ); Acts 17:21 and 24:21 (ἡ); Acts 20:23 (πλην); Heb 6:14 (οτί μὴ).
the cause of furthering the Gospel he, by this grammatical stratagem, only heightens his tally of things he could boast about, which would discomfort his critics, because they would not be able to come up to his grand total of endurances for the sake of the Gospel.

By using the very rare word parektos Paul means “a plus that I could have added; an item over and above the things I have just listed; in addition to those things I have just enumerated.” Parektos retains its core meaning of some additional matter that is put off to the side, or not included, or something being discounted for some reason. It does not mean an exception. Ei mh, on the other hand, is used to indicate an exception, and most often it refers to an exception from zero, not an exception to a total, as in the case of parektos. In short, where parektos means ‘add one to a unit’ (’,ei mh means ‘subtract one from zero’ (e.g., ‘no one knows except God’) Parektos is made up of παρα and ἐκτὸς

It is clear from this that in Greek parektos (‘apart from’), and ei mh (‘except’) are not interchangeable as their English forms are.

Jesus is saying something completely different in Mt 5:32 and 19:9, and this has been the problem from as early as Codex Vaticanus, which confused Jesus’ two distinct points. Jesus, the lawyer, makes a distinction between pre-divorce and post-divorce fornication. In 5:32 Jesus is saying that the husband who divorces his wife will be held responsible for all of her post-divorce fornication, except the sin of fornication which she committed while she was still in his house, and which was his justification for divorcing her. Jesus assumes that she will remarry, but her remarriage is a sinful state in the eyes of Jesus. There are no innocent parties if both divorcees remarry.

In Matthew 19:9, however, Erasmus turned a ‘content-identity phrase’ into an ‘exception clause,’ in that he printed εἰ μὴ ‘except’ in place of μὴ ‘not.’ Now εἰ μὴ, ‘except’ is used in situations where a statement of fact is qualified to allow one exception to a comprehensive negative. The exception is to a zero count (‘none but one’). Compare ὁ δὲ ἄγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἶ ὁ θεός, “No one is good [= comprehensive negative] except one—God” (Matthew 19:17; Luke 18:19; Mark 10:18). Matthew 11:27, “no one knows [= comprehensive negative] the Son except the Father.”

As a general rule, those writers who deny Jesus’ absolutist position, are unaware of the difference between the Greek words parektos (‘apart from’), and ei mh (‘except’), while those who defend Jesus’ absolutist position appreciate the theological differences between them. The former see no difference between the so-called ‘exception clauses’ in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9; the latter see two distinct ideas, and two different types of ‘exceptions’ in the two places. The latter are much more careful in their exegesis of the text than the former, who tend to be slipshod and casual in their approach to God’s Word.

In Matthew 5:32, Jesus says, “But I— I say to you that, who, say, may have put away his wife— apart from (παρεκτὸς) the matter of fornication— makes her to be adulterous. And who if, say, may have married one having already been put away he is adulterous.” Here Jesus introduces an exemption-from-responsibility clause, not an exception-to-illegal-divorce clause.

The significance for Jesus’ audience lay in the verb ‘makes.’ To point the finger at any man and tell him that he is responsible for turning his wife into an adulteress is a very grave accusation. The accusation is, ‘whoever may have put away his wife makes her to be adulterous (if she marries again).’ Each man standing in front of Jesus is made to feel guilty for making his wife marry another man.

But Jesus notes an exemption, and the exemption is this. If the man’s wife had been adulterous before he divorced her, then he did not push her into the first act of adultery, she went that way herself. In effect Jesus was saying, By divorcing your wives you have forced her to become adulterous, apart from (= parektos) those wives who made themselves adulterous while still married to you. You are not responsible for their pre-divorce adultery, but only in these special circumstances. But if she was a sexually faithful wife and you pushed her out, then you are responsible for all her adulteries after she has left you. She will not be held responsible—you will.
That is the significance of the word παρέκτως (parektos). It means, ‘if we leave aside for the moment the case of adultery within the marriage.’ The exemption clause was there to exempt those husbands who had divorced their wives for committing adultery while still married to them. But that does not mean that they were correct to divorce their wives for adultery in the first place, because God decreed that such wives were to be killed, as there was no divorce for adultery under the Mosaic Law.

Grammatically, it is worth noting that MH ‘not’ does not mean ‘except’ in Greek, and ‘except’ shifts the focus on to Jesus, whereas ‘not’ shifts it to the husband. When Jesus said, ‘not over fornication,’ He was identifying the causes the Jewish husbands were using to obtain their divorces. If He had said, ‘except for fornication,’ He would have been identifying the grounds on which He was prepared to allow divorce to occur.

6.3. OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIVORCE TEXTS

It is significant that when Jesus states His own teaching free from any context, He never qualifies His absolute ban on divorce. In private, with His twelve Apostles, He is consistent in denying any validity to any divorce. He stated in Luke: “Every husband divorcing his wife, and marrying another woman, commits adultery.” He stated the same in Mark: “Who if, for example, may have divorced his wife, and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.” But then, lest someone should wonder if the same applies to a wife divorcing her husband, Jesus addresses that possibility directly in Mark, when He added: “And if, say, a wife may have divorced her husband, and she may have been married to another man, she becomes adulterous by marrying him.” So there is no loophole in His teaching. Whether the wife divorces her husband, or the husband divorces his wife, is immaterial: both are committing adultery if they remarry.

But another loophole opens up. The manner in which Jesus states His teaching might suggest that it is the person who initiates the divorce, and who remarries, who is the adulterer. So what is the status of the one who has been the victim of the divorce? Is the victim free to remarry? Jesus closed off that possible loophole by stating in Luke: “And every man marry a divorced wife, he commits adultery,” and in Matthew: “And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.” So if an unmarried man innocently marries a divorced woman, he is an adulterer in Jesus’ eyes, because the woman he has married is still the wife of another man. Jesus does not recognise the validity of the husband’s Mosaic divorce. Similarly, if a virgin marries a divorced man she is an adulterress in Jesus’ eyes, because the man she has married is still the husband of another woman.

According to some the Romans took away the traditional right of the Sanhedrin to apply the death penalty for adultery, among other capital offences, so that this left the Jews unable, and disabled, to enforce the death penalty for any sin that God required the death penalty for.234 This

234 John Ignatius Döllinger, The First Age of Christianity and the Church, translated from the German by Henry Nutcombe Oxenham (1st ed; London: Allen, 1866), see Appendix II. “The Right of the Sanhedrin over Life and Death” (pp. 304-09). It is thought by many that Jn 18:31 implies that the Roman government had deprived the Sanhedrin of the power of life and death. Josephus says that the Sanhedrin could not hold a court without the Roman Procurator’s consent (Jos. Arch. xx. 9, 1). The Talmud notes that forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem (in AD 70), Israel lost the power of life and death. Against this, it would be strange if Pilate, in telling the Jews to judge Christ themselves, publicly insulted the rulers, if they knew that they could not do what he told them to do. Döllinger points to the Romans allowing subjected people to live by their own laws (p. 305), and Josephus makes the high priest, Ananus, and Titus himself declare that the Romans had confirmed and secured to the Jews the free use of their laws; even after war broke out Titus offered to the Jews autonomy, if they would submit, which, they, therefore, clearly had not lost (Jos. Arch. xvi. 9, 4; Cf.
was to fulfil Jesus’ own prophecy of the manner of His death, which was decreed to be by crucifixion. To be deprived of the ability to obey God’s commands was surely an indictment of the ruling class—the high priesthood—by God Himself.

Jesus was well aware that God had not granted the Jews the option to divorce their wives for adultery/fornication, so that sexual offences by females (married and unmarried) could never be commuted to divorce without direct authority from God, and no such right was ever granted to the Jews by God. So, to commute the death penalty to divorce was unlawful in the eyes of God. Consequently when Jesus referred to the upper limits of the causes the Jews were traditionally using to divorce their wives, from the time they came out of Egypt to the day Jesus spoke, these limits embraced every possible cause, from the most trivial cause, going right up the most heinous crime of fornication (which embraced adultery), but not including that offence, which had to be punished by death, Jesus’ statement in effect covered every conceivable cause that a Jew might nominate to be a ‘cause’ for divorce, and He condemned all divorces based on any cause that they traditionally used to get rid of their wives.

Up until the time that the Romans took away the Jews’ right to live according to the laws of God, they were under a strict obligation not to divorce for fornication. That particular sin, and the judgment God imposed on it, was not up for discussion. Divorce for fornication was never an option. So, when Jesus said, ‘not over fornication,’ He used it as the limit up to which the Jews had been traditionally able to get a divorce for non-fornication causes. And it was the current practice, without explicitly breaking any law of God (for divorce per se was not outlawed by God), that Jesus now condemned and abolished it in His new kingdom, the Church.

Jesus, in effect was saying, that any man who got a divorce for any cause up to the most heinous of all deserving causes, namely, fornication, which was to be punished by death, did so unlawfully. So the practice of the Hebrews/Jews from the time they multiplied in Egypt until Jesus’ day was tolerated by God as an evil manifestation of unregenerated men. God did not forcibly prevent the evil of divorce from being part and parcel of the evil condition that Adam’s sin had brought into being in the lives of all men toward their wives.

So Jesus’ use of ‘not over fornication’ (or, ‘not over fornication’) meant that He had in mind all the other causes that the Jews had been traditionally employing to get a divorce right up to the crime of fornication, and He condemned all these other causes. It was as comprehensive a way of referring to all causes as He could encompass in the minimum of words. It was lawful for the Jews to apply the death penalty for all capital offences, including all sins of fornication and adultery (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). It was not lawful for them to divorce their wives for capital offences, such as fornication, and the Pharisees who questioned Jesus knew the law. So when they asked Jesus, “Is it lawful . . . ?” Jesus replied in the language of the lawyer, “Anyone who divorces his wife for a non-capital offence and marries another commits adultery.” The phrase ‘for a non-capital offence’ is the same thing as ‘not over fornication.’ Jesus used the legal negative to point to whatever is left over.

The Jews knew that it was unlawful to get a divorce on the grounds of fornication, because God had specifically laid down the death penalty for that particular ‘cause’ (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). So, while Jesus used a negative statement, ‘not over fornication,’ He was, in effect, using it in a positive manner to define the upper limit of what constituted a ‘cause’ for divorce (which was the way the question had been framed by the Pharisees). He defined the upper limit as well as the lower limit, when He used the phrase ‘not over fornication,’ and it was within these boundaries that the Jews had traditionally obtained their grounds to divorce their wives.

In a head-to-head confrontation if you can corner your opponent to end up on the wrong side of the law, then he is broken. Jesus knew that no Jewish lawyer could change the law of God over the capital punishment for the sin of fornication/adultery. Everyone knew that the lawful penalty was death, not divorce, and no lawyer had ever tried to rewrite the law. So both Jesus and

13, 1. Bell. Jud. vi. 6, 2; 3,5). Döllinger claims that all Jewish writing of that date speak of ‘autonomy’ as the thing to strive for and retain.
the Pharisees were on the right side of the law in not permitting divorce for fornication. To the question, 'Is it lawful to divorce for fornication?' the Jews would be forced to reply, 'It is unlawful to divorce for fornication,' but under their breath they would mutter, 'If we can't divorce her for fornication, we will get rid of her using our traditional 'ervat dábár excuse.' So the metaphorical use of 'ervat dábár in Deuteronomy 24:1 could not refer to fornication (so rabbi Shammai was wrong). It could only refer to a non-capital offence in the description that God gives of the evil man who divorces his wife in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

The revolution that Jesus brought about was that He declared that all divorces obtained for non-capital offences (such as through an ‘ervat dábár or hatred) were now a sin against His Father's new dispensation of Grace into which Jew and non-Jew were invited to enter by faith, and by faith to appropriate the life and work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the ‘righteousness of God’ is obtained only through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Regarding the hardness of man’s heart, and God’s unwillingness to forcibly change it, the Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) was composed of sinners who retained their old natures, but still they constituted God’s people—His Church. If the unregenerate nature of man is likened to a carpet, then the men of the Old Testament Church walked on this carpet throughout their history. While walking on this carpet they committed evil deeds, and it is these evil deeds, and not the underlying carpet/heart, that is addressed in the Law of God. The focus of the Law was to curb the evil deeds that emanate from the evil heart, and not to ‘cure’ the evil heart itself. This is captured in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount where He contrasts the Old with the New Covenant. Under the Old the law was kept if a man did not physically commit adultery. He could think about it, but that was not considered to be breaking the Law. But in the New Covenant Church, it is different: whoever looks at a woman to desire sex with her has sinned before he has committed the act. The carpet has been removed and God’s followers no longer walk in the flesh but in the Spirit. The old nature has been removed and a new heart and a new spirit have been given to all members of the New Covenant people of God. This is a major change in God’s dealings with His chosen people under the Old Covenant and under the New Covenant.

Many evangelical preachers regard Jesus as just another Moses, who did not drastically revise the old Mosaic Law, but retained the provisions for divorce as laid down in Deuteronomy 24 and Exodus 21. The only reform Jesus made was do away with the death penalty for fornication and allow His disciples to substitute divorce in its place. Consequently, Christians are encouraged to take advantage of all the causes of divorce as set out in the Old Testament, and to ignore the reforms brought in by Shammai and Hillel. These preachers claim that divorce is not a sin provided the grounds for it are based on Scriptural texts.

Hard-heartedness was at the core of life under the Old Covenant. The Law could not remove it. Hard-heartedness has been totally removed from the core of every Christian’s new life in Christ Jesus. It is the absence of this hard-heartedness that constitutes the genuine Christian. Its presence is a sure sign that the individual is a Christian in name only. And there are more of the latter than there are of the former in the visible Church of Christ today.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus what causes He would allow to get a divorce, Jesus in effect said, ‘None,’ because the single case behind every divorce was hard-heartedness, and in the new nature that He gives to each of His followers hard-heartedness has no place. Jesus rightly discerned that the countless faults that a man can find in his wife are not ‘causes’ but ‘excuses’ to get rid of her. A thousand thousand are their excuses, but all their causes—one (hard-heartedness).

There can be no doubt about the challenge that Jesus mounted against the Mosaic law on divorce. He deliberately invalidates all divorces obtained through Deuteronomy 24:1-3 and Exodus 21:1-10. This is another case where Jesus might have said, “You heard that it was said of old, a man may divorce his wife for anything that displeases him, especially adultery and desertion, but I say to you that if any man obtains such a divorce he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

The challenge Jesus mounted against Moses’s acceptance of divorce meant that all marriages entered into, following a divorce, were adulterous relationships. Jesus, quite bluntly, and implicitly
condemned Moses’s action, when Moses issued a command regulating divorce. This command gave credence to the worldwide custom of his time that divorce dissolved a lawful marriage. It didn’t. But both God and Moses realised that divorce was an unavoidable consequence of, and an integral constituent of, Adam’s fallen nature.

Jesus recognised that Moses was forced into issuing such a command, because of the hardness of men’s hearts. But giving in to the hardness of men’s hearts compromised the original teaching on marriage that God instituted ‘in the beginning,’ between Adam and Eve, and it is to the glory of the Lord Jesus that He alone can raise man and woman out of their fallen Adamic nature and give them His own nature, so that they cannot sin while walking in that new nature. A good tree brings forth good fruit, and an bad tree brings forth bad fruit. We are one or the other, not both.

Jesus brushed away man’s degrading law of divorce which was created by men for men to gratify their lusts, and He reinstated the original law of marriage, which ruled out any divorce on any grounds. By undercutting Deuteronomy 24 and Exodus 21 with His return to Genesis 2:24, Jesus totally undermined the rationale for divorce. It meant that Jesus lifted His disciples on to a different plane of experience and living, one in which His spirit would indwell every believer and remove the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, of feeling, of compassion, of forgiveness, and mercy. Jesus took away the right of all of His followers not to forgive. And once He took that away, then divorce could never become a possibility. The unbelieving spouse could separate, but they could not break the marriage bond.

### 6.3.1. Jesus’ new teaching on divorce seen from His enemies’ point of view

We have examined Jesus’ statements about divorce which He gave in private. Now let us examine how He handled questions about His absolutist position. News, no doubt, soon spread about Jesus’ abolition of divorce on any grounds. His enemies must have heard this news with astonishment. But astonishment soon turned to glee, because here was a clear case where this ‘country rabbi’ took on Moses in a head-to-head confrontation. Moses was clearly superior to this ignorant, self-appointed rabbi from Galilee, they must have thought. Jesus’ reputation, as a national leader, would be lost overnight if they could trap Him in a direct confrontation with Moses. To claim to be a higher authority than Moses would ensure His rejection by the nation, for who could condemn Moses and win the respect of the nation? The entire religious establishment was united behind Moses’s personal authority and his command to the people that every divorce be accompanied by a ‘roll of severance’ which was to be handed to the divorced woman. In commanding that a ‘roll of severance’ be handed to every divorced woman, Moses implicated himself in approving of divorce as a legitimate practice among God’s elect people. His reputation and standing in God’s eyes ensured that his approval of divorce made it a permanent feature of Hebrew and Jewish society.

The trap to set Jesus in a head-to-head confrontation with Moses’ reputation as God’s authoritative lawgiver posed a significant threat to Jesus’ reputation and standing among the Jews. Jesus was fully aware of the open-endedness of the term ‘ěrvat dāhār in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, by which hard-hearted husbands had obtained a divorce for virtually any cause that a husband chose to nominate to divorce his wife, apart from sins requiring the death penalty, such as fornication and adultery (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). In order to capture this limitless category, the negative is put for the positive. The issue was clear to Jesus. Since divorce could never be obtained ‘for fornication,’ which sins were punished with death, it could only be obtained ‘not over fornication,’ which were non-death penalty offences. This simple division, based on punishment, permitted Jesus to cover every offence that a Jew could nominate to divorce his wife, and then comprehensively bracket all these non-fornication, non-death penalty excuses as invalid and unlawful in His new Kingdom of God.

So when Jesus said, “Whoever divorces his wife—not over fornication—“ He was referring to every non-death penalty offence that a Jew had used to get his divorce.

**God took away the claim of any man to divorce his wife for fornication, and God’s Son took away the claim of any man to divorce his wife for a non-fornication cause.**
Together, they comprehensively abolished divorce for any cause—fornication or non-fornication.

From the giving of the Torah in 1446 B.C. to Jesus’ day, Hebrew and Jewish men had granted themselves divorces for all causes other than fornication. They would have divorced their wives ‘for fornication’ had God not stepped in and demanded the death penalty for this particular category of sin (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). So they were left to get their divorces on a ‘not over fornication’ basis. So, legally, Jesus did not leave them a leg to stand on, because it was never lawful to get a divorce for adultery/fornication under the Torah (see 6.4.). In this, Moses supported Jesus’ position.

The question the Pharisees put to Jesus was not one of expediency, such as, ‘The Romans do not allow us to put our wives to death for fornication, so can we divorce them instead?’ Their disdain for Jesus would not allow them to ask Jesus (a nobody from Galilee) to modify the Torah to allow divorce ‘for fornication.’ Rather, the question they put to Jesus was one of law, Is it lawful to divorce our wives for every cause? Jesus took them to the law and to God’s fixed punishments. He and they knew that it was unlawful to get a divorce ‘for fornication,’ so the question boiled down to how Jesus would react to the phrase ‘for every cause,’ which amounted to the same thing as ‘not over fornication,’ because Jesus’ frame of reference is still the law, and its two-fold, fixed penalty categories of (1) ‘for fornication’ (death penalty), and (2) ‘not over fornication’ (used to obtain divorces).

The Pharisees failed to get Jesus to speak evil of Moses, as they had hoped. Instead of getting Jesus to go head-to-head against Moses, Jesus demonstrated by His teaching that it is possible to obtain spiritual wings and rise above the sordid life that Moses tried to manage. Jesus exposed the real engine behind divorce which was the unregenerate, hard heart of every man born into this world.

Sometimes, at the end of a discussion, those who cannot envisage Jesus without a doctrine of divorce, desperately latch on to the negative particle MH in the hope that somewhere in Greek literature a single case can be found where it means ‘except.’ That is how desperate the situation has become for them.

Wenham & Heth made the point, “it is a general principle of interpretation to accept the least semantic content in a word or phrase that makes sense of the passage.” The ‘least semantic content’ of the negation particle, MH, is ‘not.’ The least semantic content for MH EPI PORNEIA is ‘not over fornication.’ Taking this at its face value means that Jesus is saying whoever divorces his wife for a cause other than fornication and remarries is an adulterer, because all such divorces are unlawful in His Kingdom. This might imply that if a man divorced his wife for fornication that the divorce would be valid. There is just one snag with this, the Jews could not get a divorce for fornication (adultery) because God decreed the death penalty for it. By using the simple negative Jesus cut off the only grounds that the Jews had been using for millennia to get their divorces, using the minimum of words, ‘not over fornication.’

Note the statement, ‘This might imply that if a man divorced his wife for fornication that the divorce would be valid.’ In Greek and Roman society a man could get a divorce for fornication and ‘not over fornication.’ So Jesus’ statement (His content-identity phrase ‘not over fornication,’ meaning all other non-fornication causes) would not have made sense if it had been addressed to Greeks or Romans. This is the reason why Mark and Luke could not include it. Jesus’ statement ‘not over fornication’ only made sense when addressed to a Jewish audience who could not get a divorce

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for fornication. This cultural difference is what set Jews off from Greeks and Romans, and this is what sets Matthew off from Mark and Luke. To each of these three cultures, the Holy Spirit guided three Gospel writers to convey, in different ways, and masterfully tailored to meet the needs of these three diverse cultures, Jesus’ teaching that divorce on any grounds was now null and void.

6.3.2. The logic behind the ‘exceptive clause’ in Matthew 5:32

The context of Jesus’ abolition of the age-old custom of divorce is His Sermon on the Mount. The following outline has been taken from my Harmony of the Four Gospels.

MATTHEW 4:23—8:13 THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

§25 1. Matthew 4:23—5:1 Nationwide recognition for Jesus’ miraculous powers
§25 2. 1. Matthew 5:2-12 Nine states of blessedness
§25 2. 2. Matthew 5:13-16 His disciples are the salt and light of the world
§25 2. 3. Matthew 5:17-48. Regulations that exceed those of the Pharisees
§25 2. 3. 1. Matthew 5:17-20 The permanence of the Law
§25 2. 3. 2. Matthew 5:21-26 ‘You shall not kill’
§25 2. 3. 3. Matthew 5:27-30 Its better to lose one body part than the whole
§25 2. 3. 4. Matthew 5:31-32 Divorce only proliferates adultery
§25 2. 3. 5. Matthew 5:33-37 ‘You shall not swear falsely’
§25 2. 3. 6. Matthew 5:38-42 Retaliation outlawed
§25 2. 3. 7. Matthew 5:43-48. ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’
§25 2. 4. Matthew 6:1-18 Righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees
§25 2. 4. 1. Matthew 6:1-4 ‘Do your good deeds secretly’
§25 2. 4. 2. Matthew 6:5-15 ‘When you pray . . .’
§25 2. 4. 2. 1. Matthew 6:5-6 ‘Say your prayers privately’
§25 2. 4. 2. 2. Matthew 6:7-8 ‘Avoid vain repetitions in prayer’
§25 2. 4. 2. 4. Matthew 6:14-15 ‘Be as forgiving as the Father’
§25 2. 4. 3. Matthew 6:16-18 ‘Do your fasting secretly’
§25 2. 5. Matthew 6:19-24 Resolutions that exceed those of the Pharisees
§25 2. 5. 1. Matthew 6:19-21 ‘Set your heart on a different kind of riches’
§25 2. 5. 2. Matthew 6:22-23 ‘Set your sights on a different kind of light’
§25 2. 5. 3. Matthew 6:24 ‘Set your energies to serve a different kind of Master’
§25 2. 6. Matthew 6:25—7:12 Rules for living that exceed those of the Pharisees
§25 2. 6. 1. Matthew 6:25-32 ‘Value the inside more than the outside’
§25 2. 6. 2. Matthew 6:33-34. ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness’
§25 2. 6. 3. Matthew 7:1-2 ‘Judge others as you would want to be judged yourself’
§25 2. 6. 4. Matthew 7:3-5 ‘Remove your own fault first before you remove it in others’
§25 2. 6. 5. Matthew 7:6 ‘Be discerning to whom you reveal spiritual truths’
§25 2. 6. 6. Matthew 7:7-11 ‘Request the Father for all your daily needs’
§25 2. 6. 7. Matthew 7:12 Conclusion. The Golden Rule
§25 2. 7. Matthew 7:13-29. A Readiness that exceeds that of the Pharisees
§25 2. 7. 1. Matthew 7:13-14 ‘Be always alert to seek the narrow way.’
§25 2. 7. 2. Matthew 7:15-20 ‘Be always alert to avoid false prophets’
§25 2. 7. 2. 1. Matthew 7:15 Avoid false prophets
§25 2. 7. 2. 2. Matthew 7:16-18 How to recognise false prophets
§25 2. 7. 2. 3. Matthew 7:19 Warning to false prophets
§25 2. 7. 2. 4. Matthew 7:20 Criterion restated for recognising false prophets
§25 1. Matthew 7:21-23  'Be always alert to do the will of God

§25 2. Matthew 7:21  Criterion for admission to the Kingdom of God

§25 2. Matthew 7:22-23  Many so-called disciples will not be admitted into it

§25 2. Matthew 7:24-29  'Be always alert to hear and carry out the teaching of Jesus'

§25 3. Matthew 8:1-4  (#Mark 1:40-45 = Luke 5:12-16)  A leper is healed but told to tell no one


Jesus' reform of the divorce laws that God's people had been living under comes very early on in His sermon, under the section, Matthew 5:17-48. Regulations that exceed those of the Pharisees. This section is made up of seven distinct insights, the middle one of which concerns divorce. His teaching is addressed to His disciples, not to the crowds whom He had just come from, having healed every sickness among them. However, by the time Jesus finished His teaching, crowds had arrived and were impressed with His authoritative style (Mt 7:28-29). Jesus begins this series of seven lessons by taking up the Sixth Commandment, "You shall not murder."\(^\text{237}\)

6.3.2.1. *How to keep the Sixth Commandment*

The first lesson sets out the principle that unless the lifestyle of His disciples was superior to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they will never enter into the Kingdom of God (5:20). The Pharisees lived out the Law as closely as they could, and had a national reputation for being holy men of God. Outwardly, they were as perfect as humans could get in their zeal to follow every demand that the Law imposed on them. But outwardly was not good enough. The 'outwardly' was attainable by human effort. This is illustrated in the story of the rich young ruler who claimed to have kept all the commandments that Jesus listed in Matthew 19:19-20 from his youth. Jesus began His list with the sixth commandment, "You shall not murder," and continued with the seventh, "You shall not commit adultery." Outwardly, the rich, young ruler could tick off these commandments, but Jesus knew that inwardly he could not keep any of the Ten Commandments from the heart, because the human heart is deceitful and thoroughly diseased and deformed, and not capable of being healed.\(^\text{238}\)

Man requires a spiritual operation to remove the old heart and implant a new heart in him, donated by Christ Himself. He alone can perform the operation. No other religion, or founder of a world religion, can do this.

Jesus attained the outward standard of the Law, so that His achievement—His righteousness—could be handed on to all those who became His disciples. But Jesus knew that reaching the outward standard did nothing to change the inward nature of fallen man, and that was why the Father sent Him into the world.

Jesus came to impart His own Spirit into the physical bodies of all His disciples which would enable each of them to keep the higher calling of the Law—to keep it from the inside out and

\(^{237}\) Matthew follows the canonical order of the commandments here and in his list in 19:18. In the latter place, however, the parallels in Mark 10:19 and Luke 18:20 reverse the order and list keeping the seventh commandment (on adultery) before the sixth commandment (on murder). Both Mark and Luke were writing to non-Jews in the Roman empire, which may have a bearing on the switch. For other minor switches of order see Mt 4:5-7 and Lk 4:9-12 (Jesus' temptations); Mt 14:21; 15:7-9; 15:19; 19:18; lastly, Mt 24:9b; 24:14 and Mk 13:10; 27:35.

\(^{238}\) Jesus exposed the rich ruler's priorities by asking him to sell up everything he had and follow Him. A Christian will not sell up Jesus for anything. Nothing is more valuable to him or her than their love for Him and His. They will still be intensely joyful if their house burns down around them, for they have in Jesus something they can never be robbed of in this life. They can say with Paul, 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ' (Phil 3:8).
not from the outside in. He came to plant the love of God right in the centre of each disciple’s being; in the mind and in the heart, transforming not just the quality of the life they would have, but its very nature, once they bowed their heads to God in total submission to do His will, which will was, that they do the will of His Son, whom He had made head over all His creation.

What Jesus was offering to His disciples on the mountain-side was nothing short of offering to indwell their bodies with His own spirit. This indwelling would guarantee that their whole life would be pleasing to God. His indwelling would enable them to see into the spiritual world, and walk in the light, and understand the motive behind each of God’s commands in a totally natural way, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. What Jesus promised would set His disciples on a totally new elevation, far above the purely physical keeping of the letter of the Law. By having His presence on board they would naturally understand the mind of God, and naturally know how to please Him in any given situation, or temptation, or persecution. They would not be aping the lifestyle of some holy man.

The presence of Christ in the believer did not guarantee that they would not revert to their old nature from time to time, but this old nature was no longer their true nature, and they would experience remorse any time they followed their old nature and not their new, spiritual nature, which was none other than Christ living in them.

God sent His Son into the world to transform men’s spirits into the likeness of His Son’s nature, something that keeping the outward demands of the Law could not do, and this Jesus sets out to show by contrasting the weakness of the Law over against the strength of His indwelling spirit.

His first contrast is the keeping of the command, ‘You shall not kill.’ In the flesh, the ordinary man can keep this law fully. But Jesus drew attention to another dimension where the same law was broken repeatedly by those who kept the outward letter of the law. He said, ‘You heard that it was said to the ancients, “You shall not murder,” . . . but I— I say to you that everyone who is angry at his brother rashly, shall be liable to the judgment.’ By the term ‘ancients’ Jesus was referring to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai in 1446 BC to the Hebrew fathers.

The crime of murder has its origin in a tiny seed of anger, which builds up inside the mind and eventually manifests itself in a physical deed. What Jesus brought to light was that the first, infinitesimal spark of anger is no different in substance and nature than the anger that results in the death of another human being. Jesus puts His finger on the origin of murder, and it begins in the fallen nature of the natural man. In other words, every human being, male and female, has the potential to murder written into their fallen, human nature. It lies dormant until the circumstances arise which are conducive to stirring up this murderous anger. Many factors of upbringing may prevent this anger going to term, and anger management may cause the end result (violence and murder) to be aborted. But what Jesus is offering His people is the extinction of the flame of this anger that leads to violence and murder. It is exterminated while He is in control of the mind and heart of each of His followers.

Jesus shows that there is a surface keeping of the law ‘Do not kill,’ which does not exhaust the fulfilment of that command. He exposed the deep-seated root that produced the fruit of murder, and unless that root is killed, it will kill human beings, starting with a spark of anger.

The application that Jesus drew out of His own insight into the depth of the depravity inherent in human nature was to suggest a way of avoiding a rift developing between themselves and their fellow human beings. He desires no conflict between human beings. Therefore if another human being has something against you, which is the first manifestation of the anger that results in murder, ‘first, be reconciled to your brother, and then bring forward your gift’ to God.

The act of reconciliation defuses the anger and prevents it building up inside your brother, and we are to consider ourselves responsible for fanning the flame of this evil fire deep in the psyche of our fellow human beings. Jesus puts the emphasis on defusing or dissipating the anger of our opponents (as Jesus calls them), if we have given them just cause to be angry with us, and to do it quickly, before the anger has time to consolidate and result in a heavy price to assuage.
Christians should not allow anger to fester in the minds of their opponents, because by delaying to be reconciled, they are directly contributing to the growing sense of frustration and the bottling up of anger in the minds of their opponents. We are driving them toward an act of murder.

Jesus is the only known rabbi to realise that there is no difference between the anger that comes from the tongue (abusive language to a brother) and the anger that results in the death of a fellow human being. It is the same anger that gives rise to both manifestations. This anger must not reside in any of His followers. If it does then they will never enter into the Kingdom of God.

What Jesus is demanding of each of His followers is nothing short of the death of their own nature and the acceptance of His offer to abide in each one of them. Only in this way would they be able to keep the Sixth Commandment right to its core, and not just on the surface. By putting to death the anger that curses our fellow human beings, we put to death the anger that kills another human being. Consequently, Jesus funnels every would-be worshipper of God to come to Him, for He alone, of all world religious leaders, is able to impart the spirit of God to man. He alone, is the Way back to God, and only in Him can eternal life be found.

Having dealt with the Sixth Commandment, Jesus moved on to how the Seventh Commandment should be kept.

6.3.2.2. How to keep the Seventh Commandment

Jesus reminded His disciples of the words of the Seventh Commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” as something that they had heard many times. The seventh commandment is

\[\text{ou mouchiupheis} \text{ ou porneusheis} \quad \text{‘Do not commit fornication.’}\]

The reason for this is that a child of fornication would not inherit anything from his father. He would be considered an illegitimate child (like Jephthah). The danger lay in a married man producing offspring through another man’s wife. This would contaminate the wife’s offspring, whose child might well be, unknowingly, accepted by her husband as his child. It was to avoid this genealogical contamination that the Seventh Commandment made it a capital offence. We have an instance of this in David’s affair with Bathsheba. If Uriah had slept with her after David had caused her to conceive, this would have covered up his deed, and Uriah would have not known that it was David’s son that was born to Bathsheba. It was because Uriah refused to sleep with Bathsheba that he had to die to cover up David’s adultery. The goal behind the Seventh Commandment was to avoid genealogical lines becoming contaminated, so that the line leading from Abraham to David and thence to Jesus was a pure, unbroken, blood-line. Joseph, Jesus’ putative father, was in the loins of Abraham and David.

Probably every Pharisee in the land could say that he kept the seventh commandment. But Jesus knows differently. “But I— I say to you that, everyone viewing a woman, with the motive to desire her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” This opened up a completely new angle on the keeping of this commandment. Those who had ticked off keeping this commandment outwardly, were suddenly confronted with the possibility that they had broken this commandment many times at another level of interpretation.

As in the case of the origin of the anger that results in the death of another human being, Jesus traced the origin of adultery to a sinful desire. In substance and nature there was no difference between the desire and the act (the result). No rabbi before Jesus had made this connection. It had never dawned on them that the two things were one and the same thing. The fact that the idea of having sex with another man’s wife arose in the mind of man, showed that the mind was under the control of the man. However, his mind was under the control of his fallen, human nature. This was the core centre that fed the mind. Man was trapped inside his fallen nature, and unable to free himself from it. In the absence of the spirit of Christ overpowering and killing off this old man nature, men will go on committing adultery in their minds until the day they die. Only the intervention of Jesus can save him from himself.

In order to bring home to all men the inability of man to free himself from his own fallen nature, Jesus, with some irony and with tongue in cheek, suggests some ways they could try to free themselves from committing sins. He suggests that if their hand causes them to sin against God,
then they should try cutting off the offending hand, so that they cannot repeat the offending action. He suggests the same thing about their right eye—pluck it out, and you cannot repeat the sin. Behind these two suggestions lies the unspoken one, namely, that they make themselves eunuchs so that they cannot physically commit adultery.

The stupidity inherent in these drastic solutions to avoid sinning against God would be evident to all His hearers. They knew that the problem did not lie in the physical hand or the physical eye, but in the mind, and cutting off parts of the physical body would leave the real culprit—the mind—untouched. Only the fool would take Jesus literally, and he would be no better off as a result of these self-mutilations.

Jesus, in His own subtle way, indicated that man could not reach into his mind to cut off the real offending parts—those parts that were generating the evil ideas and the evil desires. Once again, Jesus brings it home to His disciples that there is nothing man can do to change his fallen, human nature. He is stuck with a nature that has degenerated to such an extent that it cannot repair itself, or be repaired, even by God. No amount of religiosity or seeking after knowledge can get him out of his inexorable, downward slide toward and into eternal death.

Man will go on committing adultery ‘in his heart,’ said Jesus; because the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Only a new heart, and a new mind, is the solution, and that solution cannot be bought or worked for. The solution lies within the power of the Lord Jesus to give or to withhold. The price to receive it is none other than to forsake everything for it, and become His full-time slave and servant. He demands nothing short of total surrender to Him as the Son of God, who is the one who will judge all the nations of the earth in the last day.

6.3.2.3. The futility of a divorce that does not dissolve a marriage

Having concentrated the mind of His disciples on the futility of man to change his own nature, He turns their attention to the futility of a divorce that does not divorce a marriage. Jesus does not introduce His new teaching by referring to what was said to the ‘ancients’ (distant ancestors), but intimates that it was more recent, and the content suggests that Jesus is referring to an unwritten command of Moses which would have read: ‘Who, for instance, may have divorced his wife, let him give her a divorce document.’ If divorce was of God, then what was wrong with this humane law? It protected the woman’s new, single status, and it protected a prospective second husband from committing adultery with another man’s wife. Where is the evil in this common-sense provision? But if divorce was not of God, everything was wrong with this law.

When a pirate hijacks a ship the witness of the passengers to his kindness and thoughtfulness for their well-being, and the glowing reports of the crew that his treatment of them surpassed that of the captain and his offices, counts for nothing, since his initial action was unlawful. So it is with any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman. The provision of a divorce document may have many good points, as mentioned above, but these ‘good points’ are carried on the back of an evil deed. In the Last Judgment there will be many Christian leaders, bishops, and archbishops, who will catalogue the many miracles they did in Christ’s name, but as far as Jesus is concerned they were done on the back of an evil deed—they despised Him and His commands, and for that initial evil deed their life was worthless in His sight, and they are turned into hell.

Jesus countermands the provision of a divorce document on His own authority. ‘But I—I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife, apart from a matter of fornication [by her], in which case she will be blamed, forces her to commit adultery, and who, for instance, may have married a woman having been divorced, he is adulterous with her.’

The central thought in Jesus’ teaching is, Whoever divorces his wife for a non-fornication issue, he forces his wife to be adulterous against him, unless she had already committed fornication before he divorced

239 The fact that a woman may commit adultery through fornication (aside from adultery through adultery) is stated in Ecclesiasticus 23:23 (see 5.10. for the text).
out, beloved had diminished to a dot and then was extinguished completely. Divorce was his only way had once burned so intensely that a man gave up his independence to become ‘one flesh’ with his love. Those words opened up a scenario of a man wanting to turn the distance that had opened between him and his wife over a period of time into a permanent state. The flame of love that had once burned so intensely that a man gave up his independence to become ‘one flesh’ with his beloved had diminished to a dot and then was extinguished completely. Divorce was his only way out, and he took it. How could this happen?

Jesus put His finger on the cause. Hard-heartedness. A soft, tender, affectionate heart, became hard, unfeeling, unforgiving, and selfish. Divorce does not happen overnight. Divorce has a root,
and that root manifests itself in its earliest stage in a feeling of resentment over something very small, insignificant, and inconsequential. It is at that very point that divorce came into existence. A tiny gap opened up in that instant which was to get larger and larger. As the mental distance increased, so did the physical, sexual intimacy decrease in like proportion, until the tongue took over and harsh words began to flow, tiny at first, then the flow became a torrent, and the torrent became a violent flood of abuse. The end result of this process, that began with a tiny rift, was a permanent parting of the ways, ending up in a divorce court.

Because all divorces have their origin in a hairline crack of resentment, every marriage, no matter how strong the bond is at the beginning, is never immune from losing its initial hot-blooded affection for its object of desire. But Jesus knows the heart better than anyone, and He, alone of all the rabbis of His day, made the connection between hard-heartedness and divorce. They were two sides of the one coin, just as anger and murder were, and just a lustful leer and adultery were.

The insight that Jesus gave to the world was that if you want to avoid murder, then you must kill anger; if you want to avoid adultery, then you must kill the lustful leer, and if you want to avoid divorce, then you kill hardheartedness. Murder, adultery, and divorce are evils that emanate from a degenerate heart. They are all manifestations of sin. Anger multiplies murder; leers multiply fornication; and divorce multiplies adulterers and adulteresses. No good can come from these evils.

However, Jesus goes on to examine an unforeseen consequence of divorce in some detail. Suppose a man comes to a state of utter contempt and hatred for his wife, who has never been unfaithful to him all her life, but he wants rid of her just the same. He has been led to believe that if he divorces her that the marriage bond will be dissolved between them, and they would be as if they had never been married. He sees himself and his wife as single persons again, who are free to remarry whoever they choose to. He delights in the provision of divorce to be free again, and so he divorces her. Both are released from a bond that they have come to hate. Both look forward to finding love again in their lives. The future is bright. They have left a horrible relationship in their wake and they can look forward to peace and happiness once again. Divorce is a welcome release mechanism that they thoroughly approve of. But Jesus thinks differently. The marriage bond is for life, He revealed. There is no way out of a marriage except through the death of one of the spouses. This revelation came as a bombshell to his nation and to His disciples, who expostulated that if is so it is better not to marry. But the Pharisees expostulated that this cannot be so because Moses approved of divorce by commanding them to write out a bill of divorce whenever they divorced their wives. Jesus’ reply was to ask them to examine the reason why Moses commanded them to write out a bill of divorce. Without waiting for their reply He divulged that it was to accommodate their hard-hearted, unforgiving, attitude toward their wives.

The Pharisees could not point back to the beginning of humankind on the earth, and urge that God made provision for divorce when He performed the first marriage ceremony between the first pair of human beings. The furthest back they could go was to Moses. Jesus trumped them by being able to reveal the Creator’s will for marriage right at the beginning, and that will was that marriage was an indissoluble union between a man and a woman. Jesus took away divorce, which was not from the beginning, that he might establish what was from the beginning. The purpose of Christ was to restore all things to their pre-fall condition. This is contradicted if Jesus made an exception for adultery, which did not exist in the beginning.

What Jesus did not reveal to the Pharisees was that God’s will was appropriate for unfallen, sinless human beings. What brought the anger-murder, leer-adultery, hard-heartedness-divorce,

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\[240\] It is odd that Carl Laney denies that Moses commanded the issuance of a divorce document (op. cit., p. 33). Yet Jesus specifically states, “For your hard-heartedness he [Moses] wrote this command for you” (Mk 10:5). What C. Laney did not take into account is that this written command by Moses was deliberately not permitted to enter God’s Torah, because He detested it. The command that Moses issued had to transmitted outside God’s Word, and Jesus was fully aware that this was so.
situation about was the first sin of Adam. Through the sin of Adam death entered into humanity and all his descendants would die as a result of his first sin of rebellion against his Creator and God. Through his first sin, the immortal life that he was created with was altered by God to a mortal life. Adam was created out of the dust, never to return back to dust, but through his first sin, he, and all his descendants would return to the dust. That was not the only permanent change that came over him. He lost the ability not to sin. Sin became his master. Death became his end. What an inglorious beginning Adam bequeathed to his future offspring.

But Jesus came to restore the inner, spiritual life that Adam had experienced for the first few days of his life on Earth, before it evaporated with his first sin. What Jesus came to this Earth to offer to all men was none other than a return to the state that Adam once enjoyed briefly of being in a position of being able not to sin. But the catch was, if such a word can be used, that this could only be achieved by allowing Jesus to become master of their lives. Becoming master of their lives meant that He would take up residence at the core of their being, which would enable them to please God in everything they did. He would give to each of His followers a new spirit, a new heart, a new mind, and send the love of God into their being, transforming every part of their being to being cloned versions of Himself. Jesus would break the seemingly unbreakable connection between anger and murder, between leer and adultery, and between hard-heartedness and divorce, and infuse His followers with His mind, His will, and His affections, and make them new, born again, men and women. He would reverse all the results that Adam’s sin brought into being, except the physical death of their bodies.

It is to this new life that Jesus would give to all the members of His Church that His teaching on divorce and remarriage relates. If they have this new life then they are to reckon their old, Adamic life to have died within them, and reckon Christ to be living in their physical bodies, and they are to foster the new life they have been given by avoiding all their old ways of thinking, and putting to death all their old standards and moral codes, and being transformed and translated to a higher plane of spiritual life. The gap between their old life and their new life is such that divorce would never enter into their heads. It would be a denial of the transformation that should have taken place if Christ truly was at the helm of their life, and infusing His thoughts into their mind.

Jesus was fully aware that by entering into this Earth and making disciples of all nations, He was entering into the kingdom of Satan, who is the ruler of this world. Robbing Satan of his citizens was not going to please him. Satan does not want any human beings to transfer into the kingdom of his enemy.

His citizens are marked by their old, Adamic natures, and can be identified through their hatred of Christ’s citizens. The battle between Christ and Satan for the allegiance of Adam’s descendants is unrelenting and deadly. The mark of Satan’s citizens is anger (leading to murder), lustful eyes (leading to adultery and fornication), and hard-heartedness and an unforgiving nature (leading to divorce). These are unmistakable signs that all of Satan’s followers manifest in their ordinary day lives.

Where divorce is, there is Satan; where Satan is, there is divorce. Satan loves divorce. God hates divorce. Satan separates couples. God binds couples. They are opposed one to the other at all levels, and this deadly opposition is mirrored in their respective citizens on Earth. ‘Whoever is not for Me is against Me,’ said Jesus. There is no neutral position. By default all human beings are born citizens of Satan’s kingdom, and he will control their minds so long as they live a natural life. He will determine their moral standards through the powers that be (redefining what marriage is), and moulding the minds of his infants through parents who owe their allegiance to him, and also by abiding in his citizens.

Before every human being dies they must escape from Satan’s kingdom and come under the control of Christ, and allow Him to determine their moral standards by abiding in them. This is the central thought and goal behind the endeavours of every evangelist. Every world religion and philosophy is a means of holding Satan’s citizens together under his control. He cares not what they
believe so long as they are zealous for it, for in that zeal they are sealed citizens of his kingdom. Their zeal is his insurance that he will have them, and their descendants, for life.

6.3.2.4. The unforeseen consequences of divorce (Matthew 5:32)

Jesus often heard it said, If you are going to divorce your wife, give her a written statement to that effect and be done with her. The person who gave this advice was convinced that by going into, and coming out of, a divorce court, a person could dissolve the marriage bond, and leave them free to remarry. They were in for a shock, when Jesus informed them that no such dissolution took place; that they came out of the courtroom still married in the eyes of God. That is not what they had been led to believe.

Jesus then pointed out that if a Jewish husband divorced his wife, using a divorce court to do so, and his wife went off and remarried, she would be committing adultery because she was still married to him. He could claim that when he divorced her he did not intend her to sin the sin of adultery. He thought she was single. Jesus pointed out that if his wife had never committed adultery the whole time she was married to him, but that he divorced her because they fell out and could not live with each other, Jesus said that by his act of divorcing her he directed her into a second marriage, in which another man would sleep with his wife. This made her a defiled woman in God’s eyes. She was an abortion through adultery. This was bad enough, but to be told that he would be held responsible for making her a defiled, unclean woman in God’s eyes, this was unheard of. This was preposterous.

The only exception that Jesus made to his culpability for her unclean state was if she defiled herself before he divorced her. His culpability, therefore, depended on how her unclean status came about.

If she was an innocent, faithf ul woman when he divorced her, then her defilement was his responsibility. If she was unfaithful and committed adultery, she should have been stoned to death, not divorced.

However, if her adultery was not found out, and he divorced her for a non-sexual reason, she still goes out a defiled woman, but God, who sees all things, will not hold the husband responsible for her defilement because he knew nothing about it. She would bear that herself, whether he divorced her or not.

However, the post-divorce remarriage of his secretly adulterous wife is an unlawful, and a defiling relationship, for which he will be held responsible on the Judgment Day. His act of divorce and its consequences are his responsibility irrespective of the reasons he gives for divorcing her. There are no valid reasons to dissolve any lawful marriage.

The revolutionary aspect of Jesus’ new doctrine of marriage was that He overturned the common assumption that what happened after a divorce was not the responsibility of either spouse. Everyone believed that both spouses were independent, and responsible for their own decisions and who they married. Not so, said Jesus, there is no way out of marriage but through death.

The Jewish husband who heard Jesus in the flesh deliver this new, revolutionary way of looking at marriage and divorce, would look at Jesus and hope that He was just a man, with his own opinions, and that He was wrong. Because if He was more than a mere man, and if He was right, then he was in a terrible predicament.

The only course open to the Jewish husband would be to divorce his second wife and be reconciled to his first wife, but God would not allow him to do that. It was His way of punishing Jewish husbands who sinned against Him. They would die in their sins. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God, and He detested divorce, and detested those who stooped to divorce their lawful wives, and give them such a hard life (see 5.5.3.).

6.3.3. The logic behind the ‘exceptive clause’ in Matthew 19:9

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If we examine the first statement as Erasmus printed it, and as the KJV has it, it states: “whoever may divorce his wife, except for fornication, and may marry another, he commits adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

If we take the final statement, ‘And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.’ to apply to the whole verse, then Jesus would allow divorce for fornication/adultery, but would not allow remarriage to occur as a consequence of the divorce. So whether a man divorced (ἀπολύω) his wife, or ‘separated’ (ἀφίεμι) from his wife, the consequence is the same—remarriage is forbidden in both cases. In the case of ‘separation’ there is always the possibility of reconciliation. Presumably, in the case of divorce for adultery, there would have to be a remarriage to the reconciled husband, if the divorce did what it claimed to do, namely, dissolve the marriage bond. But this raises the possibility that Jesus agreed in principle and in practice to divorce, and in the case of adultery, He agreed to the dissolution of a lawful marriage. This flatly contradicts the message taken out to the Greeks and the Romans by Luke and Mark. Only the Roman Catholic Church has adhered to the traditional interpretation that Jesus abolished divorce on any ground.

The more usual way of reading the texts is to argue, If Jesus truly made an exception for divorce on the ground of ‘fornication,’ then the logic of His position would mean that if a man obtained a divorce because of his wife’s adultery, Jesus would have approved of him remarrying another woman without any accusation of being an adulterer. But if a man obtained a divorce due to a non-adulterous act, then Jesus would not approve of him remarrying another woman, and would regard him as an adulterer if he did remarry. However, the logic of the grammar means that what Jesus goes on to say next: “and may marry another, he commits adultery,” can only apply to the man who divorced his wife over a non-adulterous act, because her non-adulterous act did not sever the marriage bond.

The second half of 19:9 must also apply only to the man who divorced his wife over a non-adulterous act, for it says: “and he who marries her who has been divorced commits adultery,” because her marriage bond has not been severed. This would suggest that it is the act of adultery/fornication that severs the marriage bond and no other named cause does this. But this raises the same problems that the previous interpretation raised.

Given this second scenario and interpretation, Jesus has said nothing about the position of the wife who was divorced for adultery/fornication. If the bond between her husband and her has been severed, and if he is free to remarry, then she is also free to remarry. It follows then that if a man marries her, then he is not committing adultery. So the statement Jesus made, that if a man marries a divorced woman he is committing adultery, requires a second exceptive clause to allow the woman who was divorced for adultery/fornication to remarry.

In the absence of a second exceptive clause, clearing the way for the innocent party to remarry after adultery, the most that can be deduced from Jesus’ statements in Matthew 19:9 is that following any divorce, be it for adultery or a non-adulterous act, no one can marry a divorced husband or a divorced wife, because the marriage bond can only be severed by God, not by man, and He uses only death, not divorce, to sever the bond. In which case we are back to the first interpretation given above.

Augustine was persuaded that marrying after a lawful divorce (which was only granted by the Church for fornication/adultery) was forbidden in Scripture; yet it was not so clearly forbidden, as to render a man incapable of baptism. See Joseph Bingham [1668-1723], Origines ecclesiasticae: or, the antiquities of the Christian Church; and Other Works. Revised by R. Bingham. 9 vols. (London, 1829), vol. 6. p. 374.

This was the position held by the Greek Orthodox Church in AD 1030; Canons of Alexius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. The second canon reads: A woman divorced from her husband by reason of her husband’s adultery is blameless if she desires to marry; the priest is blameless who blesses her marriage; the husband is blameless in marrying again when he is divorced by reason of his wife’s adultery. (Taken from Davies Morgan, op. cit. II. 202)
There is not a single statement anywhere in the Gospels, or in Paul’s writings, that mentions remarriage after divorce, or after a separation, as a lawful act. The focus of Jesus is entirely on the evil consequences of anyone attempting to sever the marriage bond. And every mention of remarriage on the lips of Jesus is in the context of it being an adulterous relationship.

Even if we grant that Jesus made divorce for fornication/adultery an exception, the Jews would have rightfully accused Him of making the Torah law of no effect by His own new tradition. However, Jesus acknowledged the justice of His Father’s decision to punish adultery with death, because when the woman taken in the act of adultery was brought before Him He asked that the stoning of her be commenced by someone who was sinless.

In mock surprise Jesus asked the adulteress, “Where are your accusers?” Her accusers had been *eyewitnesses* to her sin, but because they were not without sin themselves (albeit different sins from hers), they did not qualify *on the terms set by Jesus* to carry out her execution. Because no one had passed the death sentence on her, she was free to go when Jesus said to her, “Neither do I pass sentence on you. Go, and sin no more.” Jesus used the authority given to Him by His Father to forgive sins on the earth, and this was one occasion that He chose to exercise that authority.

Under the Old Covenant, David was forgiven his act of adultery by God Himself, albeit with a price to pay which would lie on his genealogical descendants. No doubt he resolved to ‘Go and sin no more.’

If Erasmus’s exceptive clause represents Jesus’ teaching then Mark and Luke have misrepresented His teaching, because there is a world of difference in excluding divorce for any cause, and excluding divorce with a single, large exception. If Jesus allowed but one exception for divorce then He drops down to the level of another Moses.

By allowing one exception Jesus has conceded the principle of divorce, that certain marriages can be dissolved, and dissolved lawfully, such that the one flesh becomes two individuals again, and remarriages in these cases are lawful second marriages. By conceding the principle of divorce, Jesus also concedes that divorce is a necessary evil among the citizens of His kingdom.

Now once the principle and the practice of dissolving marriages is conceded as a lawful act in the eyes of God and the Lord Jesus, this opens the door to extending the principle to other causes such as desertion (the so-called Pauline Privilege), and once two sheep have got through the fence the whole flock will follow, so that all the causes that the rabbis permitted, using biblical texts as their justification, can also become legitimate causes to dissolve any marriage. The slide takes the Church back to Moses and his command (given in his own authority) to write out a bill of divorce and all the remarriages that follow are lawful.

It is argued that God, not Moses, created the lawful conditions under which His chosen people could obtain lawful dissolutions of their marriages, and these lawful conditions are said to be set out in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 and Exodus 21:3-10. The conditions, however, are so generous that almost anything that upsets a husband can become a lawful condition to divorce his wife. It is argued that God cannot be wrong in allowing the principle of divorce to operate among His elect, either under Law or under Grace, and so for Jesus to permit divorce for fornication is not seen as a revolutionary new teaching.

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243 The absence of the Pericope Adultery in some Caesarean manuscripts, and in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, may have been due to a perceived disagreement between the Father and the Son over the right punishment to mete out to the adulteress. Since Jesus was sinless, then He should have commenced the stoning in order to ‘fulfil the law of Moses’ that the accusers wanted to inflict on her. Some early Jewish Christians would have perceived a flaw in the impossible terms that Jesus demanded before any violation of the Law could be punished. It would have been argued that if every judge and eyewitness had to be sinless before any crime could be punished, then no violator of the Law could ever be punished. No wonder that a small handful of copyists deleted this story from John’s Gospel.
It is claimed that Jesus approved of His Father’s generous conditions, but that Hillel and others exploited God’s generosity and opened the door to the most trivial grounds to divorce their wives, and that all Jesus did was to curb the excesses that had crept in to make divorce as easy as possible. If so, then Matthew’s so-called exceptive clauses do not do that. As the exceptive clauses stand they permit divorce for fornication and nothing else, on a pro-divorce reading of the text. At best this can be construed to mean that all sexual sins involving the state of the wife’s purity and faithfulness can become lawful grounds to divorce her. The exception clause rules out non-sexual misdemeanours as being legitimate causes to divorce a wife. On this reading, Jesus would have ruled out all the non-sexual causes that Hillel and others had introduced, but it still leaves Him conceding the principle of divorce to operate in cases of fornication, which would include adultery.

If there is no rift between Jesus and His Father, then Jesus would have had to accept the generous conditions that God handed to His people in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, which are not restricted to fornication and adultery—which last sins were punished with death, not divorce.

On a pro-divorce reading of the biblical texts, the generous conditions in the Torah are summed up in the phrase ‘the uncovering of a matter that displeases the husband,’ which cannot be fornication or adultery, so they must be non-sexual, non-capital offences. God, we are assured, also allows simple ‘dislike’ to be a lawful condition to divorce a wife, on a pro-divorce reading of Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

This licence to divorce a wife on such a broad band of nebulous conditions has been thought to represent the position held by the School of Hillel, which held that it was lawful to divorce a wife if she burned the family dinner, and rabbi Akiba said it was lawful to divorce an old wife for a younger one because God permitted him to divorce his wife if she did not find favour in his eyes. He based this on the words of Scripture. Scripture backed him up. Scripture justified his action. His reasoning, and that of the School of Hillel, was impregnable, because it was built on the rock of Scripture (or so they thought).

If Jesus rescinded all the generous conditions that His Father regarded as lawful—which all related to non-fornication grounds for divorce—where does this leave Jesus? The opponents of Christianity were quick to exploit this apparent conflict between God and His Son, and to postulate that there were two Gods; the God of the Old Testament, and a God of the New Testament. These early opponents simplified the issue to say that the God of the Old Testament held to the dissolubility of the marriage bond, while the God of the New Testament held to the indissolubility of the marriage bond. They make no mention of Matthew’s exceptive clause, which means that they did not read them as exceptive clauses, and neither did Christ’s Church for the first four hundred years of its existence. So these early heretics become unintended witnesses to the way the early Church interpreted the so-called exceptive clauses in Matthew’s Gospel.

6.3.3.1. The solution to the apparent conflict between God and Jesus

The solution to the apparent conflict between Jesus and His Father is that God did not give His people any generous conditions to divorce their wives. The people gave themselves these generous conditions. In Deuteronomy 24:1-3 God simply describes what happened when they availed themselves of these self-assumed powers in order to condemn it in verse 4. That He thoroughly disapproved of what He was describing is brought out in the punishment He lays on any husband who avails himself of these divorce provisions—they are not permitted to be reconciled to their divorced wives. This action of theirs resulted in their wives remarrying, and this in turn resulted in them becoming defiled, unclean, and an abomination in God’s eyes, as all divorced and remarried persons are to this day.

God excluded these defiled women from being reconciled to their husbands in order to control the spread of their defilement. Their defilement was contagious. Whoever remarried them became defiled. A divorced woman was considered a slut, and no man would raise a family through her unclean body, because his children would be tainted. Her only hope of remarriage would be
with elderly men, probably widowed, who had already raised a ‘clean’ family. Josephus despised any man who married a divorced woman, considering him the lowest of the lowest of the male kind.

There may be another reason why God would not allow a defiled wife to return to her first husband. He is concerned about contagion. After she has remarried, the act of having sex with two living men makes her a defiled, unclean woman, and an abomination in God’s eyes, because this is not what He intended her to be. If the first husband takes her back this will cause the land to sin against God. By this God means that if He allows one man to take her back, then He allows all men to take back their wives, and this will result in chaos in the genealogical records. Wife-swapping would be the norm, not the exception. Because God despises a divorced and remarried wife (even if her defilement was imposed on her against her will), any offspring that she might have of a second husband will not be legitimate, and will be registered in her name, if registered at all. He might even see to it that she is barren, for children are of the Lord. God is concerned about the bigger picture at all times, and He can see the implications quicker than anyone else, therefore the ban on reconciliation was made with a view to limiting the contagion of uncleanness, so that the rest of the population are preserved from her like. God holds out no hope for a divorced and remarried woman ever regaining her clean status. She is unclean for life. She has passed her sale-by date and is totally useless to God and man. But this is all due to the hard-heartedness of her first husband. He is to blame for her being discarded by God. She is no longer fit for purpose. But Jesus holds out hope for these divorced wives because He taught that the punishment for their adulterous second marriages would be laid on their first husbands, and not on them (Mt 5:32).

Jesus was totally aware of the evil consequences that Moses’s consolidation of divorce would bring on these divorced wives, and for the first time He reveals that the defiled status that remarriage brings on the divorced and remarried wife would, in future, be laid at the door of the husband. He would be held responsible for her defilement when she remarries, because his action brought an end to her clean status. The only exception Jesus makes to his culpability is when his wife ends her clean status herself by committing fornication while still married to him. She, not he, ended her clean status, so in the Judgment Day he will not be held responsible for causing her to lose her clean status. That is what the so-called ‘exception clause’ refers to in Matthew 5:32, which should read, “But I— I say to you, that who, say, may put away his wife makes her to commit adultery— apart from the matter of her own fornication—and who, say, may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.”

Jesus is not creating a lawful cause to divorce a wife. He is creating a lawful case to be exempt from the blame of her losing her clean status. This lawful case is independent of the last statement, which states that any marriage with a divorced person, male or female, is an adulterous relationship, which will exclude those persons from entering the Kingdom of God.

Once it is realised that God is not prescribing in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 how a law on divorce is to operate, and that divorce did not originate with Him or with Moses, nor was it ever sanctioned by Him, there is no conflict between God and the Lord Jesus. Both are firmly against divorce for any reason. The clue that Deuteronomy 24:1-3 describes something that is abhorrent to God lies in the punishment clause in verse 4.

6.3.3.2. Did Jesus change the death penalty into a ground for divorce?

It is conceded by Judaism that the death penalty for adultery was in operation throughout the Old Testament period and up until they lost their political independence to Rome. We have no evidence—not a single case—where divorce was substituted for the death penalty even under Roman occupation. In the eyes of a Roman governor of Judea, Jesus was an obscure figure, who lived on the fringes of the religious establishment which constituted the force that Rome had to deal with and appease. If this religious establishment threatened to disturb the peace, and they were quite capable of doing so, Rome had to listen to them. Consequently, when they kicked up a row over the punishment that they wanted to mete out to their prisoner, Jesus, they appealed to have
him crucified by the Roman authorities. Jesus was arrested by Jewish law-enforcement officials, not on the authority of the Roman governor, nor by Roman soldiers, because He was arrested on a religious charge, not a civil charge.

The unjust nature of this request was not lost on the Roman governor, who thought he could shift the blame for Jesus’ death on to the religious establishment itself, by giving them the right to judge Jesus by their Law, and he was quite prepared to accept the outcome, even if it resulted in the death of the prisoner.

Here we have a clear, historical account where the death of an individual who incurred a breach of the Law of God was allowed by the Roman authorities to be put to death by the native religious authorities. So the death penalty for religious capital offences was conceded by the Roman authorities. As far as they were concerned this was an internal matter that did not concern them. Their concern was to keep public order and collect the taxes.

Given permission by the Roman governor to carry out the death penalty on an obscure rabble-rousing preacher who claimed to be king, but had no army, the religious authorities could have put Jesus to death for blasphemy—which was a death penalty offence—immediately. But for some unexplained reason they feared to carry out their own sentence of death. Instead, they wanted the Roman authorities to kill Jesus, so they changed the religious charge into a non-religious charge, which put the ball back into the Roman governor’s court. Pilate found Jesus not guilty of the charge of civil disobedience, or causing a riot, or anything else that would justify the death penalty. Four times he pronounces a ‘Not guilty’ verdict. But mindful of the powder keg that he was sitting on, it was expedient to kill an isolated individual (for all forsook Him) than risk the wrath of the powerful religious establishment whom he had to placate if he wanted to keep the peace, and appear to be in control of his delegated Roman province in the eyes of the Emperor back in Rome.

Against his better judgement, and the warning conveyed to him by his wife, the gentile Roman governor condemned an innocent man to death out of fear of what trouble the Jewish religious establishment might cause him in the future if he did not carry out their demand. He had nothing to lose, and he could gain a long period of respite if he could put smiles on the faces of the men of the Sanhedrin. Huge grins spread over their faces when he sentenced Jesus to be crucified as a criminal. They had got what they wanted: Jesus’ blood would not be on their hands, but on the hands of the Roman authorities. It was exactly the outcome they had prayed to God to give them, and they were absolutely delighted and over the moon with unspeakable joy when they heard the verdict. The governor became their best friend overnight. He would have peace throughout his governorship, and throughout the land, as a result of his action.

When the leaders of the religious establishment appealed to the governor to set a seal on the tomb where Jesus was laid, he granted it immediately. They could get whatever they demanded.

In the light of the readiness of the Roman governor to grant the religious establishment the right to rule their own house as regards implementing the punishments laid down in their law, there can be little doubt but that the Roman governors of Judea left the Sanhedrin to prosecute their own religious offenders, and that the death penalty for adultery and blasphemy, etc., would be nodded through by the Roman authorities, as an indifferent matter, and a small matter of religious housekeeping. If the religious establishment put Jesus to death for blasphemy, they would have had to stone him (Lev 24:23, 14-16; Exod 20:7), not hang Him on a tree, or crucify Him.

Pilate’s action may have been typical when he threw back the execution of religious criminals to the religious authorities to carry out in the manner prescribed in their law, be it stoning or hanging, or burning them to death. The execution of religious criminals was not the task of the Roman authorities, and in any case, death by crucifixion was not in conformity with the method laid down in the Law of Moses. Consequently, in the eyes of the religious establishment, Jesus did not die for breaking the law of God, the highest law that there is, but for the lower law of the Roman empire. This was a shame on them, because he broke no Roman law, as Pilate stated on four separate occasions; but they were adamant that He blasphemed God by ‘making Himself God’ (Jn 10:33 Mt 26:65; Mk 14:64).
In the light of this glimpse into life in Judea under Roman dominance it is very likely that the death penalty was carried out by the Sanhedrin in accordance with their law, for all capital offences, including adultery, and that this set-up was viewed by the Romans as an internal matter about which they would not interfere. There was no threat to the stability of their rule in allowing the Sanhedrin to carry on their normal religious duties.

However, the question still has to be answered, Did Jesus commute the death penalty for adultery/fornication to divorce? The answer lies in how the Church dealt with other capital offences. In the case of the man who slept with his father’s wife, this was a capital offence, but the Church excommunicated him from their company until he repented and was brought back into fellowship. Paul mentions converted adulterers and adulteresses as members of the churches he founded. If they were Jews they should have been stoned to death, or at least excommunicated, but they were accepted into membership upon conversion. We search the New Testament scriptures in vain to find an example where divorce was demanded for adultery, and whether such divorced persons could remarry.

Everything comes back to how we interpret and translate Matthew 19:9. If we accept Erasmus’s text then Jesus made an exception to His no remarriage stand, but only in the case of fornication (which is generally held to include adultery). If we accept the Nestle-Aland text (2013) then the Erasmian doctrine becomes problematic.

There is only one solution that brings all the elements of the puzzle together and that is that Jesus upheld the death penalty for fornication (adultery) and consequently God never allowed divorce for it. This left only non-fornication issues by which the Hebrews and the Jews could obtain their divorces. Now, Jesus referred to these non-fornication issues when He said, ‘Who, for example, may have divorced his wife over a non-fornication issue, and may have married another woman he becomes adulterous by marrying her.’

The phrase, ‘over a non-fornication issue,’ is exactly what μὴ ἔπι Πορνεία conveys. The phrase covers everything left over once the capital offences for fornication (adultery) have been removed. God ruled out divorce for fornication (adultery) under Moses’s dispensation of Law, and His Son followed the Father’s lead in the new dispensation of Grace.

There is an inherent confusion if the Erasmian doctrine is what Jesus taught and that fornication/adultery is a grounds for divorce. The meaning of Matthew 19:9 would then be that (a) a man is forbidden to divorce his wife unless she has been sexually unfaithful to him, (b) if he divorces her for some other reason, and remarries, when he consummates the union with the second woman he marries, he will be committing adultery, and (c) if a man divorces his wife with just cause — i.e., because she committed adultery — then if another man marries the divorced woman, he is committing adultery.

Logically, it follows that if Jesus taught that adultery dissolved a consummated marriage (i.e., the (c) option) then both parties should be free to remarry. But if Jesus taught that when both divorced parties remarry they are committing adultery there is an inherent confusion in His thinking, because adultery implies that the union has not yet been dissolved.

6.4. THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE JESUS’ TEACHING IN MATTHEW 5:31-32 & 19:9

One writer who researched the so-called exceptive clauses over a life-time declared that he knew of no scholar who disputed the consensus that the two Matthean exception clauses were intended to teach the same point. He went on to note that this helped many to use one clause to throw light on the other clause. The object of this section is to challenge that consensus.

It might seem redundant to some to have a section bringing together the difference between what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:32 and what He taught in Matthew 19:9, but in researching commentaries old and modern it is surprising how often these two passages are misunderstood. The
chief cause of this misunderstanding has been Erasmus’s faulty Greek text, which became the basis behind most of the Reformation translations, and the commentaries that soon followed.

It is understandable that taken in isolation the two phrases appear to say the same thing:

“except for fornication” (εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία = Erasmus’s text) (Mt 5:32)
“apart from the matter of fornication” (παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας) (Mt 19:9)

There are two observations to make. First, the correct text is not εἰ μὴ but simply μὴ. Erasmus has translated the Latin Vulgate back into Greek. He did not follow the evidence of the manuscripts he had before him, none of which had the word εἰ in them. If we remove Erasmus’s addition the English should read “not over fornication.” Now this new translation of the original Greek introduces us to a hidden meaning behind Jesus’ words, for He was asked if it was lawful to divorce for every cause. By ‘lawful’ the Pharisees wanted to know if their pre-Mosaic, age-long practice of divorcing their wives for any cause was according to the law given by God at Mount Sinai. Jesus said it was not. God had not given them permission to divorce their wives for adultery (fornication), neither had He given them permission to divorce their wives for any non-fornication offence. So the Pharisees had no basis in law to divorce their wives for non-fornication offences. So when Jesus said, Whoever divorces his wife for a non-fornication offence (‘not over fornication’) and remarries he is committing adultery, He cancelled out ‘every cause’ that the Pharisees had been traditionally using since the time of Moses to divorce their wives. So Jesus answered the Pharisees’ question directly and fully, when He told them it was unlawful to divorce for every non-fornication offence.

Second, there is a marked linguistic difference between the simple negative ‘not’ (μὴ) and ‘apart from, besides, not counting’ (παρεκτὸς), which has been set out under section 5.10. and 6.2. above.

The removal of Erasmus’s addition of εἰ by Lachmann in 1842 came too late to halt the momentum that Erasmus’s faulty text had generated. From Lachmann’s day to the present day no critical edition of the Greek New Testament has followed Erasmus’s addition of εἰ in Matthew 19:9. The Reformers had based their European translations on Erasmus’s faulty Greek text, and so they translated εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία as Erasmus hoped they would as an exception to Jesus’ apparent total ban on divorce.

In the many English translations that followed the publication of Erasmus’s Greek text, right up to the present day, without exception, not one of them went back to Lachmann’s discovery that Erasmus had bequeathed a false Greek text to the Reformation churches, who had built their theology around his text, and introduced his exception into their newly created Confessions of Faith. And once Erasmus’s exception for divorce got into these Confessions it was impossible to change them without undermining other doctrines. It was imperative to appear to have recovered all the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles in their pristine glory, without spot or stain, or any hint of fallibility.

It would have been an enormous embarrassment to all the Protestant denominations that emerged out of the Reformation to admit that they followed a faulty Greek text, and so, in this instance, they were fooled into misrepresenting Jesus’ teaching on the issue of divorce and remarriage.

Today, even though it is becoming more widely known that Erasmus’s Greek text caused the Reformers to miss out on Jesus’ teaching over divorce, not a single denomination has revised its doctrinal basis to reflect Jesus’ total ban on divorce. The same goes for every modern English translation to date. Not a single English translation reads, ‘not over fornication’ at Matthew 19:9. Why is this? The answer is simple: they all love Erasmus’s exception and want to retain it.

Since the Reformation in the sixteenth century, scores of thousands of Christians have got a divorce on the strength of Erasmus’s faulty Greek text. Among these scores have been bishops and
church leaders, and especially members of various translation committees, many of whose members had already availed themselves of Erasmus’s exceptive clause to divorce their wives.

If those in leadership positions had got a divorce and had remarried they were not going to turn around and say that they were wrong, and get out of their second marriages. Rather than do that, they preferred to grant divorces to all who applied for a divorce on the same grounds that they got theirs. The more that divorce spread throughout Christ’s Church, the harder it would become to say that they were all wrong.

When some leaders then added ‘desertion’ to adultery as a second, lawful cause to divorce a spouse, this multiplied the number of those divorcing their wives. When some other leaders advocated following the Jewish practice of divorcing for other ‘biblical’ causes, this opened the flood gates to divorce for a whole string of new grounds for divorce, so that today there is practically no difference between the grounds that Christians and non-Christians use to get a divorce. It has been shown that the percentage of divorces among Christians is, on average, the same as among non-Christians. Christ’s teaching has been totally nullified among His followers. He has nothing distinctive to say about divorce. He is made to agree with the world, and to grant divorce for any reasonable cause. His Church and the world have joined hands in singing from the same hymn sheet. On the issue of divorce, Moses has come alive again in Christ’s Church, and his voice and opinion once again dominates among the People of God, and drowns out the voice of Christ. The Lord comes across as ideal; Moses comes across as real. Moses is flexible and sympathetic; Jesus is hard and unyielding. Moses speaks common-sense; Jesus speaks nonsense. Because of this, Moses has more disciples than Christ, in Christ’s own Church.

6.4.1. Is ‘except for fornication’ the same thing as ‘not over fornication’?

There is a move to exonerate Erasmus’s instinctive awareness of the truth and to say that even if we remove his addition of ‘i’ this would not do away with his exception, because it is argued that, ‘except for fornication,’ is the same as ‘not over fornication.’ But let us examine this in more detail.

Jesus, like no man before Him, could see the evils of divorce. We have in Matthew 5:31-32 His thoughts on the implications of divorce. Here He is not spelling out His absolutist position, but commenting on the implications of going ahead with a divorce. And the implications are extremely serious, as He is about to explain to them. He said, “Now it was said, ‘Who, say, may have divorced his wife, let him give to her a departure document.’ But I, I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife he makes her to become adulterous—apart from the case of [her] fornication. And who if, say, may have married a divorced wife he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

Note the insinuation of Jesus. The man who divorces makes his wife commit adultery. Josephus noted that according to Jewish law only the man “is permitted by us to do this [initiate a divorce], and not even a divorced woman may marry again on her own initiative unless her former husband consents” (Ant. vol. 8. Bk 15. §259 [= 7.10]). A later bill of divorce contained the following words:244

... I . . . have voluntarily, with the willingness of my soul, without constraint, both dismissed, and left, and put away, thee, N. the daughter of N. . . . who has been my wife heretofore; but now I dismiss thee, leave thee, and put thee away, that thou mayest be free and have power over thine own soul, to go away, to be married to any man whom thou wilt; and that no man be refused of thine hand for my name from this day and for ever. And thus thou art lawful for any man: and this bill is unto thee from me a writing of divorcement, and bill of dismissal, and epistle of putting away, according to the law of Moses and Israel.

244 Taken from Davies Morgan, op. cit., p. 36.
The culpability for the divorced wife’s remarriage is laid at the feet of the husband in Jesus’ statement, and Josephus’s statement confirms the background to Jesus’ teaching. The husband would vehemently dispute the implication that Jesus has imposed on his act of divorce. He would argue that once he had handed to her her bill of divorce, setting her free to marry whoever she pleased, that what she did after that was none of his business. This Jesus challenged head on.

Under His new Covenant rule over all men, the man who divorced his wife would be held responsible for his wife’s subsequent adultery when she remarried. The implication of this new ruling was that it was impossible to get a divorce and remain innocent, and that is exactly the point Jesus was determined to push all men to. Divorce was now abolished worldwide, and anyone who thought they could go on living under the old Mosaic provisions would be excluded from God’s presence.

Matthew 5:31-32 must be set in the context of who is culpable for the consequences of divorcing one’s partner. Jesus puts the responsibility on the husband for what happens to a man’s wife after he divorces her.

Jesus’ words are, “Whoever may divorce his wife makes her to commit adultery.” Note that adultery is the sin of a married woman. This is an important observation. Jesus chooses His words very carefully. If divorce did what it claims to do, then she is not a married women once she is divorced, and therefore she cannot be committing adultery as a single woman. If divorce did what it claims to do then Jesus used the wrong verb. He should have said, “makes her to commit fornication (not adultery),” because she is an unmarried woman if she is truly divorced. An unmarried woman cannot commit adultery; she can only commit fornication.

Jesus goes on to say, “and who, if say, marries a woman having been divorced commits adultery.” Now if divorce truly means what its claims, then the divorced woman is no longer a married woman, she is single again, therefore the bachelor who marries her cannot be said to be committing adultery with her. Adultery is a sin that only married persons can commit. Jesus abolished the idea that if she has been divorced then she is not married, she is single again, and this is how Jesus views her post-divorce remarriage. She is in a state of sin, and living in sin with her second ‘husband’ (who is not her husband). She is living the life of an adulteress, and as such she will not enter the Kingdom of God. She is, to use God’s own words from Deuteronomy 24:4, an unclean or defiled woman, and one whom He regards as an abomination.

If we take the view that Jesus did not use the wrong verbs, then He is clear in His mind that divorce did not do what it claimed to do, namely, sever the ‘one flesh’ union of the first marriage. As a consequence, after the divorce she is still married to her first husband. She is not a single person. As a married woman she cannot marry a second husband, as that is bigamy, and this is how Jesus views her post-divorce remarriage. She is in a state of sin, and living in sin with her second ‘husband’ (who is not her husband). She is living the life of an adulteress, and as such she will not enter the Kingdom of God. She is, to use God’s own words from Deuteronomy 24:4, an unclean or defiled woman, and one whom He regards as an abomination.

If we take the view that Jesus did not use the wrong verbs, then He is clear in His mind that divorce did not do what it claimed to do. Nothing happened to the union between husband and wife during the divorce proceedings. Once this is accepted then it becomes obvious that Jesus did not use the wrong verbs. His choice of verbs indicates quite clearly that after the husband issued his wife with a ‘roll of severance’ nothing changed. The husband might well have handed her a roll of toilet paper for all the difference it made to their married status in the eyes of God.

Jesus was the first rabbi in history to realise that the ‘roll of severance’ was completely bogus and a sham—a scam. He overturned one of the central tenets of Judaism in an instant, as surely as He overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple. Judaism could never be the same again. Jesus, through the force of His personality, rewrote the foundation document of the
New Judaism. He abolished the millennia-long tradition of divorce showing that it was incompatible with His Father’s stated will for all marriages as encapsulated in Genesis 2:24.

The implication of Jesus’ new revelation over the ineffectualness of the obsolete ‘roll of severance’ (or ‘bill of divorce’) was that every divorce (with or without a written statement) since the dawn of time was bogus. God never sanctioned man’s creation of divorce at any time in the history of mankind. Every divorced couple since the beginning of the world were, and are, adulterers through their remarriages.

As far as Jesus’ disciples were concerned, who sat listening to His Sermon on the Mount, this meant that every divorce since the time of Moses was a bogus ‘divorce,’ and every remarriage based on this bogus divorce was an adulterous relationship, because they were still married. Every ‘divorce’ was ineffectual and a fraud. This was a truly breath-taking and astounding statement to make on that hillside.

As the rabbis took stock of this unbelievable statement, the enormity of the accusation and its implication must have struck home to them. For Jesus to claim that no divorce was ever effectual since the time of Moses meant that all the children of remarriages were defiled or unclean children. It also meant that if anywhere in their genealogical records they discovered that they were the offspring of a remarriage then they were the descendants of defiled parents. Rather than accept Jesus’ reinterpretation of their genealogical descent they would have dismissed Him as a crank.

Once Jesus’ teaching on the bogus nature of divorce got out, He would have been surrounded with Jewish lawyers plying Him with supposedly difficult questions to which only they had the answers (or so they thought). They were the experts in such matters. The people would listen to them.

One of the implications that must have disturbed the unbelieving Pharisees enormously was that in the entire history of Israel there was not a single case of a legitimate divorce. If Jesus was correct then God never dissolved a single marriage through divorce, because all divorces were bogus divorces. This revelation would have stunned the entire judicial system in Israel. The consensus of the entire religious establishment could only be that Jesus had over-reached Himself, and made a fool of Himself to make such a claim. The enormity of the implications were too great to contemplate, and for the majority in the religious establishment this is the point at which they knew Jesus was a bogus messiah. They would not have any respect for Him from this point onwards. He was finished. They could despise Him with impunity, knowing that He was just a country bumpkin saying outlandish things, which were so obviously wrong.

It must have greatly damaged Jesus’ reputation among the masses when they learned that no divorce since the time of Moses was valid. This was just too preposterous to be true. ‘It is a crazy thing to say,’ His sympathisers would have said to one another. ‘Why did He have to say that?’ others of His friends would have asked, shaking their heads in disbelief.

The claim that only death ended a marriage meant that all other means for ending a marriage were bogus, false, spurious, a sham, and a deception. This was revolutionary stuff. If death alone ended a marriage, then indeed, divorce could not end a marriage. Many would have seen the logic of Jesus’ teaching, without necessarily agreeing that He was right. For them, the fact that Moses commanded them to write out a ‘roll of severance’ clearly implied that Moses believed it did what was claimed for it. By regulating a divorce procedure Moses showed that he was not anti-divorce, and so Moses must have believed that divorce did dissolve a lawful marriage if the procedure was properly carried out.

Those who saw in Jesus the long-awaited Messiah, whom Moses had prophesied would come, when they looked more closely and carefully at Deuteronomy 24:1-4, noticed that there God was only describing the sin of divorce. He was not condoning it, legitimising it, or incorporating it into His Law. Rather, He condemned it by punishing anyone who took advantage of this worldwide custom and tradition, which had legal force behind it in all Near Eastern civilisations.

Jesus, in one bold statement, took away from man the claim to be able to end a marriage through divorce, when He said, “they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has
joined together, let not man separate (χωρίζω).” With this one statement Jesus dismissed all divorce courts throughout the world. Jesus has restored to God the sole right to end a marriage, and the only instrument He has chosen to use is death (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2).

The abolition by Jesus of all Jewish courts throughout Israel that handled divorce issues was another step too far for many of Jesus’ sympathisers. They must have groaned repeatedly the more they heard of His unbelievable claims and His revolutionary reforms. It was all too much, too soon, to have a hope of being welcomed by the masses, particularly when not a single rabbi in the land could be found to endorse His preposterous claims. If Jesus had moderated His teaching, and toned down the more unacceptable elements of His revolutionary ideas, then maybe He could make Himself more appealing to the masses, would have been the advice of His closest friends, especially those in high places, among the movers and shakers in the nation.

But Jesus was not looking solely at His contemporary world. His was to be a kingdom that would fill the Earth. He was laying out His manifesto which would never need to be revised as long as the Earth existed. Humanly speaking, He was head-strong, because He knew right from wrong as no other rabbi did. He could not be deflected to gain the favour of the masses of His day. His was a global vision. He saw Abraham’s day (looking backward) and He saw our day (looking forward), and He catered for both, and for all time to come. His teaching was set in stone during His earthly ministry. It cannot be altered by any preacher or teacher. Jesus presents us with the stark choice: ‘Take it or leave it; but do not interfere with it.’

Another aspect of Jesus’ teaching on divorce that must have come under close scrutiny by contemporary Jewish lawyers was Jesus’ claim that a wife cannot have sexual relations with two living men. Jesus taught that she must wait until her first husband died, and only then could she remarry. This was a fixed law in His teaching on marriage and remarriage. So the sequence was: marriage: death: remarriage. The wrong sequence was: marriage: remarriage: death. Death must come between ‘marriage’ and ‘remarriage’ to be valid.

This divine sequence was unacceptable to sinful man, so man (not God) introduced the bogus step of divorce between ‘marriage’ and ‘remarriage.’ Man claimed that he could turn back the ‘one flesh’ union into its two constituent parts, and begin the sequence all over again as though the first union was completely reversed. The claim was bogus in the eyes of the Son of Man.

Nations will go on claiming to have power to ‘put asunder’ what God has fused together in a ‘one flesh’ union. They are on the same level that Moses was on. Those who believe in this bogus power and get a divorce, and then remarry, are in an adulterous relationship. If they want to come to Christ to seek His forgiveness, then they must retrace their steps by dissolving their second marriages, either unilaterally or by retracing the legal procedure that got them into their mess, and stay single or be reconciled to their first partner. Only then can they have a clear conscience and devote the rest of their lives to ‘preaching’ the Gospel in whatever form their gender dictated for them. This could take the form of personal evangelism, writing, singing, etc.

Jewish lawyers may have thought they spotted a flaw in Jesus’ teaching that a woman can only have sexual relations with one man during his life time. The perceived flaw in Jesus’ teaching is that He stated that if a husband ‘divorces’ his wife he becomes responsible for all her sins of adultery, because he put her out in the street with a written document which told her that she was free to marry whoever she choose. From Jesus’ point of view the written document does not give the divorced wife freedom to marry whoever she chooses. Jesus still views her as married to her first husband, who has now given her permission to have sexual relations with any other man. Her husband has given her permission to commit adultery. The husband would insist that he followed the legal procedure correctly and so his marriage was dissolved. Jesus has to inform him that he is mistaken in his belief that divorce dissolved the union. The union still stands, and consequently he will be held accountable for his wife’s sins of adultery following the divorcement.

Lawyers would have been quick to point out that if the wife had sexual relations before her divorce with a second man, without the knowledge of the husband, the husband could not be held
accountable for her defilement, since it occurred before he divorced her. It was a subtle point, and one which a lawyer would spot. And of course they were right.

Jesus (supreme lawyer and teacher in His own right) had already anticipated this perceived flaw — being more knowledgeable in the Law than any lawyer alive or dead — when, in His carefully crafted statement in 5:32, He said, “But I — I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife — apart from a deed of fornication [by her] — makes her to commit adultery [through a remarriage].”

If the wife had committed adultery against her husband she would have been stoned to death. Jesus recognised the distinction between ‘fornication’ and ‘adultery’ by a married woman and a married husband. A married husband could commit fornication with a prostitute (1 Corinthians 6:15-16), or sleep with his father’s wife (1 Corinthians 5:1; cf. Deut 22:30). These are not sins of adultery. These are sins of fornication. Given the fact that in the Graeco-Roman world one could have a mistress without being guilty of adultery by Roman standards, and that sexual relations with prostitutes, boys, or slaves were not illegal by Roman standards, and were considered a part of normal life, it is not surprising that the Council of Jerusalem specifically excluded fornication from the lives of Christ’s followers (Acts 15:20, 29).

Fornication, in this context, would have included adultery and homosexuality of any kind. The command to abstain from porneia is the only injunction in the Apostolic Decree that does not concern itself with defiling food. The connection between the items is defilement, and porneia involves moral defilement.

Leviticus 18 contains a list of forbidden sexual practices. These include incest (18:6-18), sexual relations with a menstruating wife (v. 19), adultery (v. 20), male sodomy (v. 22), and bestiality (v. 23). All of these acts involve moral defilement. Second Temple Jewish sources continued to stress the defiling force of sexual immorality. While ritual impurity can be removed through rites of purification and atonement sacrifices, the sexual abominations of Leviticus 18 cannot be expiated through ritual or atonement. Peter’s vision of the impure foods becoming pure for him to eat, set over against his abhorrence to eat with defiled Gentiles, and its application to Cornelius and the Gentiles gathered in his house represents a miraculous transference in the status of all believers in Christ, Jew and Gentile. This miraculous change in the purity status of Gentiles through faith in the Lord Jesus, is the concern that lies behind the Council’s decision to include all forms of sexual impurity.

The Hebrew noun תִּנְצֶה (‘nakednesses’) and its LXX translation, ἁςχμοσύνη (but never πορνεία), appear throughout Lev 18. In the LXX πορνεία is the usual translation of ζανυθ (zanuth), and while the LXX never uses it in Lev 18, the Targums do use it. The Targums, Neofiti and Pseudo-


246 Lev 18:8 explicitly forbids ‘uncovering the nakedness’ of a father’s wife, which Paul calls ‘fornication’ in 1 Cor 5:1, which is an incestuous relationship. So the term πορνεία can have a wider meaning than illicit sex, prostitution, and gay and lesbian aberrations (cf. 1 Cor 7:2). The Council chose the most suitable term to encompass all the forbidden relationships in Lev 18, plus any deviant sexual practices, and all related defiling talk, literature, pictures (pornography), and ideas that defile the morals of Christ’s cleansed followers. ‘Avoid fornication,’ encompasses everything of a sexual nature that defiles the mind and body.


Jonathan, use πως (zanuth) in Lev 18:17 to denounce the practice of uncovering the nakedness of a woman and her daughter. If a Greek scribe were to translate these Targums he would use the term πορνεία to translate πως (zanuth). These targumic references demonstrate that Jews could find πορνεία (= πως) to be an appropriate term for describing and denouncing the various illicit practices mentioned in Lev 18. On the use of πως (zanuth) in the the targums, and its standard Greek equivalent, πορνεία, in the LXX, Isaac Oliver suggested that:

The term would have proven particularly useful to denounce the sexual practices and relationships of the Gentiles on moral grounds, which seems to be the primary aim of the Apostolic Decree. In light of the overlap of pornei/a/πως with the concept of incest as well as its application to a variety of sexual practices, it is possible that the Apostolic Decree would have demanded Gentiles to abstain from incest (Lev 18:6-18), adultery (18:20), sodomy (18:22), bestiality (18:23), and even sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstruation (18:1). Luke, however, does not specify what is actually covered by the term pornei/a, and so it is possible that he expected Gentile followers of Jesus to abstain primarily from the immoral sexual acts stereotypically associated with non-Jews (licentiousness, prostitution, adultery, etc.) rather than incest.

Jesus is quite explicit in telling the married husband that if he divorces his wife, and in written form permits her to sleep with a second man, he will be held responsible for her sleeping with a second man. But the husband could rightly point out that when his wife committed fornication while still married to him, it was her choice to sleep with the second man, and not his. He only divorced her after, and because, she slept with a second man. Jesus concurs that if his wife slept with a second man before her husband divorced her, then he could not be held accountable for her first sin of fornication, but once he had divorced her because of her first sin, then all subsequent relations with other living men would be charged to his account. This was a very sobering prospect. The husband would be exempt from punishment for his wife’s first act of fornication (and breach of marriage covenant), but because, in the eyes of Jesus, he is still married to her after the legal divorce has gone through, he will be punished for her remarriage.

If, however, the divorced wife does not remarry but becomes a prostitute, or sleeps around with other men, she knows that this is wrong, and so her divorced husband will not be held accountable for these sins of fornication. She will bear these herself. But he will still be held accountable for putting her out in the street.

Now here comes the ‘exemption clause.’ Note that the so-called exception is not a loophole to Jesus’ absolutist position, but an exemption (note the change in terminology) to the man’s culpability for what happens to his wife after he has set her out in the street. It should be borne in mind what a divorce document could have said:

“... I, ... with entire consent of mind, and without any compulsion, have divorced, dismissed, and expelled thee – thee, I say, M. the daughter of M. ... who wast heretofore my wife: but now I have dismissed thee ... so as to be free, and at thine own disposal, to marry whomsoever thou pleasest, without hindrance from any one, from this day for ever. Thou art therefore free for any man. Let this be thy bill of divorce from me, a writing of separation and expulsion, according to the law of Moses and Israel. ...”

There can no doubt about the blank cheque that the husband was handing to his wife “to marry whomsoever thou pleasest, ... Thou art therefore free for any man.”

250 Ibid. p. 379-80.
However, in the case of Jesus’ teaching on marriage, His exemption covers only the case where she commits fornication during her marriage and/or after her husband has divorced her. Jesus would not be unjust to blame a man for his wife’s unfaithfulness while she was living with him. Neither would Jesus hold a man responsible for his wife’s sexual sins after he divorced her if she prostitutes herself. She knows that this is an unlawful state, hence she becomes responsible for her own sins. But if she remarries, thinking that she has been truly set free by her husband, then her second marriage is an adulterous relationship, because in God’s eyes she is still the wife of her first husband. In this case, Jesus puts the blame for her adultery on her first husband, but He makes an exemption if his wife, of her own free will, does not remarry but lives a life of fornication. This is the explanation for the exemption clause in Matthew 5:31-32.

Likewise, if a wife divorces her husband for fornication while they were still married, she is not held responsible for his sin. When he leaves her, if he chooses not to remarry, but lives a life of fornication, then she will not be held responsible for his sins. However, if he believes that she has given him his freedom to remarry, then she will be held responsible for his sin of adultery, because in God’s eyes he is still married to her.

However, there was another dimension to the Pharisees’ trap. They had heard Jesus preach the sum of the Law as, ‘Love God and love your neighbour as yourself.’ He had also preached that unless we forgive others their sins, God would not forgive us our sins (Luke 11:4). It implied that the sin of adultery had to be forgiven should the offender ask for it (cf. Luke 17:3). The ancients had preached, ‘Love your neighbour, and hate your enemy’ (Matthew 5:43), but Jesus turned this on its head and commanded His followers to ‘love your enemies’ (Matthew 5:55). They were to bless those cursing them. They were to do good to those hating them. They were to pray for their persecutors and those saying all manner of evil things about them. They were to turn the other cheek, when hit by their enemies. The Pharisees could not understand this new teaching of the ‘Kingdom of God’ that Jesus preached everywhere as ‘being within you’ (Luke 17:22), and as having ‘come near’ to the nation of Israel. Jesus prayed to His Father to forgive those who crucified Him. He was true to His own teaching right up to the end.

The trap the Pharisees laid for Him was simple. They tempted Him to name some sins that would justify divorce. They dictated the shape of Jesus’ answer by posing the question in a loaded manner. They asked, Is it lawful to divorce for every cause? If He had replied: ‘for every cause,’ then He would have agreed with rabbi Hillel’s list and his interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-3, which consisted of (1) adultery, (2) desertion, (3) abuse, (4) hard-heartedness, (5) neglect, and (6) any other cause a husband wished to nominate, such as burning his dinner.

No doubt, as they discussed the possibilities that Jesus might give in His answer, they would have assumed that He would mention fornication as the number one sin worthy of a divorce, as this was universally agreed to be the most heinous sin against the marriage union. It was also common-sense. How far His list would agree with Shammai’s or Hillel’s was, no doubt, also on their minds. But if Jesus had agreed with them to nominate one sin that should not be forgiven, then He was a hypocrite, and they would have laughed Him to scorn. Why? Because He preached that men should forgive seventy times seven (Matthew 18:21-23), and seven times a day (Luke 17). Now if Jesus had an exception clause tucked away somewhere in His teaching, to His own absolute position on forgiving all sins, then He misled Peter. An exception for the sin of fornication would have undermined His own teaching that men must forgive others all their sins. But has Jesus nominated a sin that should not be forgiven? If He has, that would not be in keeping with the Lord’s Prayer (‘forgive us our sins as we forgive others their sins’). And significantly, it would be the only sin that Jesus taught should be punished, rather than forgiven.\footnote{252 Many in Paul’s churches had been adulterers and fornicators (1 Corinthians 6:11) before their conversion but they were ‘cleansed’ of this sin before they were permitted to become church members. Jesus did envisage church discipline, see Matthew 19:15-17, and excommunication (1 Corinthians 5:1-5) with the object of restoring the sinner to full membership again.}
Jesus saw through their trap easily and in His answer He put them on the spot. The one sin that they felt sure He would agree not to forgive would be fornication, but it was precisely this sin that He side-lined when He said: “Whoever divorces his wife—not over fornication [which God has specifically singled out for the death penalty]—and marries another commits adultery.” Jesus taught that no sin was too great that it could not be forgiven unilaterally, even fornication, or adultery. Jesus easily evaded the trap because His teaching on love and forgiveness was at the heart of His Gospel. God had continually forgiven Israel her ‘adultery’ for 1500 years. Hoshea had forgiven his wife her adultery. Neither divorced their spouses in real historical time. Jesus found the golden rule in the Scriptures: “All things, therefore, that you wish that men should do to you, do likewise to them, for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

Jesus came through the trap laid for Him without compromising His absolutist position regarding the illegitimacy and unlawfulness of divorce among His followers. He upheld His Father’s teaching: “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The exemption clause in Matthew 5:32 is a genuine exemption clause. The evil came about through Codex Vaticanus and other corrupt manuscripts, which transferred this grammatically, genuine exemption clause into Matthew 19:9, where it does not belong. Matthew 19:9 contains an exclusion clause, not an exemption clause.

From an examination of the above texts it is clear that Jesus has abolished divorce per se. There are now no grounds for divorce. Divorce was the creation of man. Marriage was the creation of God.

It follows that if the man-made creation of divorce has been abolished for all time to come then remarriage is out of the question. All remarriages are adulterous relationships while both spouses are still alive. Both fornicators and adulterers are excluded from heaven:

Have you not known that the unrighteous the reign of God shall not inherit? Be not led astray; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, the reign of God shall inherit. And certain of you were these! But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were declared righteous, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9).

When Codex Vaticanus transferred the exemption clause in Matthew 5:32 into Matthew 19:9, and when Erasmus added ei (EI) before mh in Matthew 19:9, both of these changes introduced a completely new idea. Where Jesus had said, ‘not over fornication,’ meaning, a man may not divorce for a non-fornication cause, Erasmus changed it to read, he may not divorce ‘except for fornication,’ which Erasmus then translated into Latin to read, ‘except for indecency,’ thereby permitting divorce for fornication and virtually ‘every cause’ that a man could squeeze into the term ‘indecency.’ He is rabbi Hillel come alive again.

The Torah ruled out divorce for fornication, and Jesus specifically ruled out non-fornication issues as grounds for divorce, but Erasmus turned the text into grounds for divorce. You could not get a more blatant contradiction that this, and this blatant misrepresentation of Jesus’ teaching is present in every major English translation from the Reformation to the present day. It is these mistranslations which are the cause of sin among all Protestant denominations.

A large number of Christian leaders are in an adulterous, second-marriage situation. These men are never going to abide by the standard that Jesus has set for His people. It is from among these men that translation committees are formed, ensuring that the ‘exceptive clauses’ remain embedded in each succeeding new translation.

6.4.2. Does ‘making her an adulteress’ have any exceptions?

In order to correctly understand the implications of Matthew 5:32 it is helpful to restate its propositions clearly:
1. Anyone who divorces his wife for any reason other than marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress.

2. Anyone who divorces his wife for marital unfaithfulness, does not cause her to become an adulteress.

Proposition (1) clearly states that the practice of divorcing one’s wife has the ultimate effect of turning her into an adulteress, given that she would inevitably remarry.

Proposition (2), on the other hand, states that if a man divorces his wife because she has committed adultery, then he would not cause her to become an adulteress because she would already be an adulteress. Thus, her moral status would not change if she married again. This is the reason why Matthew specifies an exception at this point. If the exception was not present, Matthew’s statement that the divorced woman would subsequently be made into an adulteress given that she would inevitably remarry, becomes superfluous because her adultery was the reason for the divorce in the first place.

The objection to this interpretation is this. If the husband divorced his wife for her adultery, this was an unlawful act while he lived under the Torah. He should be seeking a death certificate for her, not a divorce certificate. He had no right to divorce her. Consequently, if he divorced her, then he is causing her to commit adultery against himself, because in the eyes of God and the Lord Jesus, she is still his wife, because only her death can sever the marriage bond. And whoever marries her after she has been divorced for adultery becomes an adulterer.

The exemption must relate to the same woman throughout verse 32, otherwise the statement “…and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery” becomes grammatically independent of the exemption clause (which some writers want to do) and would state that a man who marries a faithful but divorced woman (i.e., a woman who was divorced for any reason other than marital unfaithfulness) commits adultery. But this ‘faithful but divorced woman’ is not under scrutiny by Jesus at this point in time. But it is implied. If the ‘unfaithful’ woman is divorced and remarried and she makes her second husband an adulterer, so also must be the case of the ‘faithful’ woman who is divorced and remarried. The truth is that Jesus is focused on who is responsible for the sins of a divorced woman who remarries. And He lays the blame on the husband who divorces her.

The diagram below shows the gulf that exists between the life of the Lord Jesus and the life of the Pharisees. Jesus was ‘in the world’ but not ‘of the world.’ His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom. To enter His kingdom a man had to be ‘born-from-above.’ To remain within His kingdom one had to have the Spirit of Christ living within him. The contrasts could not be greater. Jesus knew that His kingdom had invaded the realm of the kingdom of Satan, and from Satan’s kingdom would be rescued a remnant of humanity. The mind-set of that remnant would be increasingly conformed to His own image—an image of freely forgiving all who sinned and an intense love to do all in one’s power to urge all men to be reconciled to God, their Maker. Jesus called on His disciples to live a life totally different from that of the Pharisees. A crucial area of difference was one’s attitude to the marriage bond.

The diagram shows that where the Pharisees could not forgive their wives they resorted to divorce. Jesus taught that this act was incompatible with His forgiving spirit. That clearly marked off His disciples from the disciples of Moses. Indeed, an unbridgeable gulf separated the two life-styles.

The diagram shows that where the Pharisees introduced remarriage, Jesus permitted His followers to accept enforced separation, the separation that comes from sin—and to patiently wait for reconciliation. If reconciliation did not look probable, His followers were not to be anxious about it, but to devote their new status as ‘freed from marriage’ to give more time to His cause.

The diagram also shows that Jesus put remarriage on the same level as adultery. Remarriages can only occur in the worldly realm, in the kingdom of Satan, among those living ‘according to the flesh,’ in other words among those who are perishing, who are living without the Spirit of Christ. Remarriage after a divorce is a sin, because it opposes what God has required of all men from the beginning of the creation.
The constant danger facing the Elect remnant is to forsake the spiritual realm and go back into Satan’s kingdom to take advantage of his Divorce Certificate, thinking that it will free him from his unwanted wife. But to do so will lead to spiritual death. If he can’t forgive, then neither will he be forgiven.

Jesus put marriage in its place when He avoided it in order to concentrate body, mind, and spirit on doing the will of God for Him. Paul put marriage in its place when he advised every brother in Christ to avoid it if he could and, like Jesus and himself, fasten their eyes on doing the will of God. This avoidance of marriage should not be construed that Jesus and Paul were anti-marriage. Did not Jesus do His first miracle while attending a marriage with His disciples? Satan has a vested interest in portraying Jesus and Paul as deficient in sexuality themselves, and despisers of those who ‘give in’ to their sexual desires. But though a blanket of abuse has been thrown over Jesus and Paul and countless monks, and other unmarried saints down through the ages, the Elect are not fooled by these slurs, and they are given insight into the wisdom of God in calling single men and women to follow Him as they are.
THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A woman who has sex with two living men is a defiled woman and an abomination to God and the Lord Jesus Christ from the creation of the world to the end of time.

LIFE WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

MARRIAGE

IMPOSED ON THE CHRISTIAN

SEPARATION

NO REMARRIAGE PERMITTED

"ANOTHER WOMAN"

ADULTERY

"DEATH" (EXCOMMUNICATION)

LIFE WITHOUT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

MARRIAGE

DIVORCE

REMARriages

ADULTERY

"ANOTHER WOMAN"

"ANOTHER WOMAN"

NO PENALTY

BOTH ARE CONSIDERED ADULTERY BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

GOD

CHRISTIAN

JESUS CHRIST

SPIRITUAL REALM

A FIXED GULF: THE TRANSITION FROM MAN TO GOD IS THROUGH A 'BORN-FROM-ABOVE' EXPERIENCE

WORLDLY REALM

MAN

MOSSES

NON-CHRISTIAN

DIVORCE

REMARriages

ADULTERY

"ANOTHER WOMAN"

"DEATH"

PHYSICAL DEATH UNDER THE OLD COVENANT. SPIRITUAL DEATH UNDER THE NEW COVENANT
6.4.3. Summary of difference between Matthew 5:32 and 19:9

Matthew 5:32 contains an exemption from blame clause; Matthew 19 is an exclusion to divorce. The two words that sum up the difference are ‘exemption’ and ‘exclusion.’

*The exemption clause*

Matthew 5:32, “But I— I say to you, that who, say, may put away his wife makes her to commit adultery— apart from the matter of her own fornication—and who, say, may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.”

*The exclusion clause*

Matthew 19:9, “And I say to you that who, say, may put away his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may marry another commits adultery; and he who did marry her that has been put away commits adultery.”

The difference between Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 is that in the former Jesus warns every man divorcing his wife, that if another man sleeps with his wife, he is guilty of making her commit adultery, unless, and this is where the exemption comes in, unless she commits fornication of her own accord while still married to him, then he is not guilty for her sin under those circumstances. But he is guilty if she remarries.

In the case of Matthew 19:9, Jesus warns all Jewish men that divorce on the grounds of a non-sexual offence is against God’s will. There is no exception under Jesus’ content-identity phrase, ‘not over fornication,’ because the death penalty covered the sin of fornication and adultery.

There are some who, through carelessness or indifference, do not want to understand the two distinct, spiritual truths that Jesus taught in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. They import the legitimate exemption clause in 5:32 into 19:9 where it is illegitimate, and they cause Jesus to be a teacher of divorce.

There will always be some Christians who will want to insist that Jesus provided for divorce for adultery. In this work I have shown that the original text of Matthew 19:9, which is now followed by all printed Greek texts, did not have the Erasmian exceptive clause. Instead, it had a content-identity phrase, specifically identifying non-sexual grounds for divorce as invalid. Those who want to use Erasmus’s Greek text to get a divorce from their spouses are choosing to ignore the fact that no critical text of the Greek New Testament agrees with Erasmus’s text in Matthew 19:9.

Even if some Christians want to go on believing that Erasmus’s Greek text is the original text, because it is the Textus Receptus, then they should spell out the difference between the two, so-called exceptive clauses in Matthew 5 and 19. Through this exercise they will recognise that Matthew 5 teaches an exemption from blame not an exception to divorce, whereas Matthew 19 teaches the abolition of divorce for any cause currently being used by the Jews in Jesus’ day.

Now we know that the exception for divorce in Matthew 19:9 depends solely on Erasmus’s text, but if they concede that that text is now wrong then they lose the Erasmian text, and they lose the textual basis for their exception for divorce. In other words, the Lord Jesus deliberately and pointedly excluded divorce for any cause currently being used by the Jews in Jesus’ day.

6.5. WHY ARE THE EXEMPTION AND EXCLUSION CLAUSES ONLY IN MATTHEW’S GOSPEL?

The Pharisees had heard of Jesus’ absolute ban on divorce as recorded in Luke 16:18, which pre-dates Matthew 19//Mark 10 by a few months. It must have come as a shock to them to hear that He had totally abolished their carefully crafted list of grounds for divorce. Jesus must have come
across as an extremist. No doubt they debated among themselves the implications of His teaching on account of the multitudes that had obtained divorces on their authority. So a trap was set for Jesus. They crafted their question in such a way that He would have to state unambiguously before witnesses on what grounds He would or would not grant divorces. They decided to ask Jesus if it was *lawful to divorce ‘for every cause.’* They could have asked directly if He agreed with Shammi and condemned Hillel’s quickie, divorce-on-demand (if such existed). They probably took for granted that Jesus would go along with both rabbis in granting divorce for fornication, seeing that was universally conceded by the entire nation (so we are told), but they wanted to probe further and see if Jesus would go beyond their number one grounds for divorce, and list a few other grounds for divorce, possibly including some of rabbi Hillel’s non-sexual grounds. Indeed, if the group of Pharisees who asked the question were opposed to Hillel’s ‘any cause’ grounds for divorce, they may have hoped to use Jesus as an ally to condemn the quick divorces handed out by the Hillel school (if it existed at that time). So they were both testing and tempting Jesus to say something that they could later on use against Him, or against the Hillelites. But Jesus knew the entire background to the coming temptation and testing. He knew their motives and He knew that they relied on their own interpretation of Deuteronomy 24.

Jesus knew that Deuteronomy 24:1-3 portrayed and highlighted the evil of divorce, which came by men, and for man’s advantage. Women were given no rights to divorce their husbands. It was a one-sided, *private,* family law. It was a very unfair law, an evil law. It was a sexist law. It was a cloak for bullying. It could not have come from God, or originated with Him. And Jesus very pointedly stated that Moses consolidated an unlawful practice, which was not sanctioned by His Father. He distanced His Father from the practice, and He distanced Himself from it. It was an evil tradition, concocted by evil men, to gratify their evil lusts. It exploited women. It degraded women. It treated women like chattels. Jesus put His finger directly on the origin of the *idea* of divorce. It arose out of the evil heart of man, from man’s hard-heartedness. By pinpointing the origin of the idea Jesus showed that it was evil in essence.

6.5.1. **Why did Mark leave out Matthew’s content-identity phrase?**

The short answer is, it would have been inappropriate for Matthew to incorporate Mark 10:12 into his Gospel, as it would have been inappropriate for Mark to incorporate Matthew’s content-identity phrase ‘not for fornication’ into his Gospel. Because these two Gospels were written for different cultures, each spoke directly to the target culture in such a way as to leave both cultures in no doubt about Jesus’ absolute ban on divorce for any reason. Jesus was driven, *nay compelled* to abolish divorce because it was incompatible with His teaching on forgiveness.

The clearest explanation for the presence of the exemption and the exclusion clauses in Matthew’s Gospel is that (1) this Gospel was written for Jews and Jewish believers in particular, and (2), that Matthew deliberately chose the *complete wording of the question* that the Pharisees asked, which included ‘for any [all] cause,’ because he wanted to convince the Jews that there was no cause that could dissolve a lawful, consummated marriage.

This explains why Mark curtailed the Pharisees’ question. Mark and Luke knew there were no exceptions, and this they conveyed to their respective, target audiences. Matthew was saying the same thing. So Matthew’s content-identity phrase in Jesus’ reply is directly related to the Pharisees’ words: ‘for any cause.’ Because Matthew made the conscious decision to include the words ‘for any cause’ in his account, he was obliged to include Jesus’ exclusion of all non-fornication causes, so that Jesus was seen to give a direct and *full* answer to the Pharisees’ loaded question. If Matthew had left out the clause, then Jesus would not have given a full answer to the question that He was asked.

Because Mark did not include the words ‘for any cause’ in his account, he was under no obligation to include Matthew’s content-identity phrase. So with or without the words ‘for any cause,’ Jesus gives a full answer in both Gospels on where He stood over the issue of divorce.
We can now appreciate the appropriateness of the Spirit guiding Matthew to include the longer version of the question, so that the Jews would be left without excuse.

We noted that what Matthew said in 19:7-9 was passed over by Mark because Jesus’ answer was tailor-made to answer a Jewish question about Jewish law (“Is it lawful to put away a wife for all [non-fornication] causes?”). If a Roman or a Greek had asked the same question, “Is it lawful to put away a wife for all causes—sexual or non-sexual?” the answer would have been an unambiguous No, because as a matter of law the Gentiles had written their own law-codes, and gave themselves that privilege.

Matthew passed over what Mark included in 10:11-12, because it would have been a repetition of Jesus’ position on divorce. However, Mark chose to reveal to his readership what Jesus said in the house to His own disciples, who asked for clarification of His position. Jesus’ reply was tailor-made to suit a Gentile audience, or rather, a universal audience, because not only did Jesus condemn husbands taking the initiative to divorce their wives, but He condemned wives taking the initiative to divorce their husbands. Only in non-Jewish cultures did wives have the right in law to divorce their husbands. No Jewish woman, living in Israel, had that right, as Josephus and Philo inform us.

There are no ‘exceptional clauses’ in Mark or Luke because there are no exceptional clauses in Matthew. The so-called ‘exceptional clause’ in Matthew turns out to be a content-identity phrase informing the Pharisees that all cases of divorce based on non-fornication, non-capital offences were unlawful, and were unlawful from the beginning of the creation of Adam and Eve.

The implication of Jesus’ new teaching was that Moses was forced to give in to the hard men of his day and buckle under social pressure to allow them to continue their current tradition of divorcing their wives ‘for all [non-capital] causes.’ Having lost the moral battle, and aware that Yahweh had instituted the death penalty for sexual misdemeanours, Moses commanded the males (for he bowed to male privilege) to write out a private bill of divorce when they sent away their wives, in order to avoid the death penalty for adultery. His command, which never entered Scripture, was directly influenced by the death penalty for adultery and fornication of any kind. He would never have issued his command if the death penalty had not been instituted for fornication by Yahweh.

Moses did not institute divorce in Israel. It existed in his day as a tradition of the elders, and he could not change it, or abolish it. He succumbed to national pressure to retain it. Not so, did the second Moses. Jesus stood up and abolished divorce ‘for all causes’ and took the nation back to the will of Yahweh as expressed in Genesis 2:24. His boldness was like poking a bees’ nest, and the entire religious establishment descended on Him and crushed Him by having Him nailed to a Roman cross. They thought that in silencing the man they had silenced His teaching, but twelve Spirit-filled apostles took His teaching out into all the world.

Jesus’ teaching has been retained only by the Roman Catholic Church to the present day. It was retained by the Church of England up until 1856 when a Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 was passed in Parliament allowing “the principle of divorce a vinculo [from bond] for adultery,” but not for desertion.253

253 William E. Gladstone, Gleanings of Past Years, 1843–1878. Vol. VI. Ecclesiastical (London: John Murray, 1879), “The Bill for Divorce (1857),” pp. 47-107. Reprinted from the Quarterly Review, July 1857. Available at: www.wisereaction.org/ebooks/Gleanings_of_Past_Years.pdf. Gladstone (29 Dec 1809 to 19 May 1898) was Prime Minister of England on four separate occasions, 1868-74; 1880-85; Feb-July 1886; and 1892-94. He was still PM at 84 years of age, when he resigned. But for following Erasmus’s faulty Greek text, Gladstone may have arrived at the present author’s solution. Gladstone relied on Hector Davies Morgan, The Doctrine and Law of Marriage (2 vols; Oxford: W. Baxter, 1826), and an anonymous article, Barrister at Law, Considerations, which I have not been able to trace. The full title of Morgan’s book is: The doctrine and law of marriage, adultery, and divorce: exhibiting a theological and practical view of the divine institution of marriage; the religious ratification of marriage; the impediments which preclude and vitiate the contract of marriage; the reciprocal duties of husbands and wives;
6.5.2. The unity of the Gospels over Jesus’ no divorce teaching

We now have a situation where all three Gospels are united in excluding any grounds for severing any marriage where God has fused man and woman into a ‘one-flesh’ union. No man, or human court, must attempt to undo that ‘one-flesh’ union. The Synoptic Gospels speak with a united voice and in perfect harmony on the issue of disallowing remarriage on any grounds while both spouses were alive, and the practice of the Early Church is in accordance with this finding.

We now know that if Jesus did make a single exception for divorce then His doctrine of forgiveness must also include an exception clause in it to match it. So we are faced with a dilemma. If Jesus taught that there were no exception clauses when it comes to forgiving our neighbour his sins, but then He allows us not to forgive the sin of fornication, where does this leaves His claim that we are to forgive our neighbour all his sins? There is an inherent contradiction here.

The way to resolve this is to say (1) that He did not mean we were to forgive 70 x 7 times. That in His mind He always knew that we did not have to forgive our neighbour the sin of fornication unilaterally. Or (2) He really meant that there were no exceptions when it comes to forgiving our neighbour his trespasses, and consequently there could be no grounds for withholding forgiveness for the sin of fornication or adultery.

Jesus’ absolutist position comes out strongly in Mark 10:10-12, when the disciples in private asked Jesus about the divorce issue again, to which He replied: “Who, for instance, may put away his wife, and may marry again, commits adultery against her; and if a woman may put away her husband and is married to another, she commits adultery against him.” There is no need for an exception clause. We could paraphrase Mark as follows: “Who, for instance, may have divorced his wife, and may have married another, he becomes adulterous.

Now compare this with Mark 10:9 And he says to them, ‘Who if, for example, may have divorced his wife, and may have married another, he becomes adulterous.

Now compare this with Luke 16:18 Everyone divorcing his wife, and marrying another, commits adultery.

By temporarily removing the content-identity phrase in Matthew 19:9 it becomes absolutely clear that in the new Kingdom that Jesus came to set up on the earth, divorce has no place among His people. It is incompatible with the new nature that He gives to each of His followers, and it is incompatible with His teaching on forgiveness.

Mark wrote for the Romans, and Luke for the Greeks, and those nations had adopted their own laws governing how they wanted to live. They were a law unto themselves. The Gospel they sent to these Gentile nations stated very clearly that divorce, according to their law, which allowed divorce for sexual and non-sexual causes alike, as there was no consistent death penalty for fornication, was incompatible with being a disciple of Jesus. Their message meant that there were no exceptions. Jesus’ teaching was absolute, for Jew and non-Jew, and we can appreciate why this is so, and why it had to be so.
Matthew wrote for the Jews who had a very strong culture of divorcing their wives for any reason apart from sexual misdemeanours, which had to be punished by death. Consequently, unlike the Greeks and Romans, the Jews could only obtain a divorce for non-sexual, non-capital offences, and it was these non-sexual offences that Jesus referred to when He used the phrase ‘not over fornication,’ which is the same as saying, ‘for non-fornication causes.’ By means of this content-identity phrase Jesus was positively identifying all the causes of divorce that were unlawful to the Jews by subtracting all the capital offences that male Jews could not use in the past to obtain their divorces. What better way to cover this multitude of unlawful causes than by saying (I paraphrase Him), ‘Whoever got a divorce for a cause that was not subject to the death penalty [‘not over fornication’], it is an unlawful divorce.’ In plain language this was just another way of saying that divorce ‘for any cause’ was unlawful, and this is how the Pharisees understood Jesus, and explains their incredulity when they heard it.

Jesus had just robbed them of their two primary grounds for divorcing their wives by abolishing their ‘ervat dābār, and their ‘hate’ causes (cf. Deut 24:1-3). These terms were aptly chosen by Yahweh because they were vague enough to include any cause the Hebrews chose to nominate, even something as trivial as burning the evening meal could come under the term ‘ervat dābār.

The implications of ruling out fornication as a ground for divorce was not lost on the Pharisees, because they immediately countered Jesus’ new teaching with the old practice that they had inherited from Moses’s day. They were not to know that a greater than Moses stood in their midst who would abolish the low life that Moses permitted to hard-hearted men, because Moses could not change the fallen, Adamic nature of the evil generation he was leader of.

When writing to non-Jews, if Mark and Luke had stated that anyone who got a divorce ‘apart from fornication’ and remarried they were adulterers, non-Jews could rightly conclude that Jesus was allowing them to divorce their spouses for fornication, because they had been in the habit of doing this for centuries. It was because Mark and Luke knew that the Greeks and Romans were able to divorce their wives for sexual and non-sexual misdemeanours that they were able to ban divorce using absolute terms. This total ban on divorce for any cause, brought their Gospels into line with Matthew’s Gospel, which, likewise, placed a total ban on all the causes that the Jews had been traditionally able to use to get a divorce.

Read in this light, Jesus is consistent in all three Gospels in ruling out divorce on any grounds for the Romans, Greeks, and the Jews. All the world was to know that divorce was incompatible with being a disciple of Jesus. In one sentence Jesus abolished the sub-standard life that Moses, Shammai and Hillel had brought the people down to, and, unfortunately, there are some so-called evangelical leaders who are determined to bring Christ’s followers back to Moses’s sub-standard way of living, and reintroduce divorce into Christ’s Kingdom.

What makes divorce impossible among Christians is the nature of the new life that Jesus gives to each of His disciples. We have our old nature (the old man) and the new nature (the new man) struggling for mastery of our minds. The new nature cannot sin, because it is Christ living in us, so that when we do sin it is our old nature which has gained the upper hand at that moment. We are told to continually crucify the old nature and all that emanates from it, and live according to our new nature. Hatred and hard-heartedness, and an unforgiving spirit, emanate from the old nature, not from the new nature. This is why divorce is incompatible with having the Spirit of Christ dominating our mind, will, and heart. We are to forgive unilaterally, not conditionally, all who sin against us, or abuse us, or murder us; such is the Spirit of Christ living in us. Paul could say, ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.’

Incidentally, if the Jews had been in the habit of getting divorces for adultery/fornication before Jesus was born, as some believe, then the distinction that Jesus made between ‘for fornication’ and ‘not over fornication’ would not have made sense, any more than it would if addressed to Greeks and Romans. Thus Jesus’ distinction between the two types of offences becomes indirect evidence that the Jews kept the distinction in law between punishment for fornication and punishment for non-fornication offences. They were in the habit of issuing a Death Certificate for the
offence of fornication, and a Divorce Certificate for all other non-fornication offences. It is this latter
Certificate that Jesus made null and void, which left the Jews with no grounds at all to divorce their
wives.

6.5.3. Was there a Hebrew version of Matthew’s Gospel?

That the Gospel of Matthew was written primarily for the Hebrew nation has been
recognised from the earliest extant writings of the Church Fathers. Indeed, there is good reason to
believe that it was first written in Hebrew and only after the Jews (as a whole) turned away from
accepting Jesus as the promised Messiah was it turned into a language that the Gentiles could
benefit from, namely, Greek, the lingua franca of the entire, civilised world at that time.

The fourth-century Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, recorded the statement of
Papias, who is said to have been a direct disciple of the apostle John (who wrote John’s Gospel), to
this effect: “Matthew put together the oracles [of Messiah-Jesus] in the Hebrew tongue, and each one
interpreted them as best he could.”

Irenaeus (2nd. cent.) was another very early Christian writer, who is reported to have
learned that “Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while
Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their
departure [i.e. their death], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in
writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the
Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His
breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.”

Another witness to a Hebrew Gospel of Matthew was Origen (245-248) who wrote,
“Concerning the four Gospels which alone are uncontroverted in the Church of God under heaven, I
have learned by tradition that the Gospel according to Matthew, who was at one time a publican
and afterwards an Apostle of Jesus Christ, was written first; and that he composed it in the Hebrew
tongue and published it for the converts from Judaism. The second written [Gospel] was that
according to Mark, who wrote it according to the instruction of Peter, who, in his General Epistle,
acknowledged him as a son, saying, ‘The church that is in Babylon, elect together with you, salutes
you; and so does Mark my son.’ [cf. 1 Pet 5:13] And the third was that according to Luke, the Gospel
commended by Paul, which he composed for the converts from the Gentiles. Last of all [was written]
that according to John.”

6.5.4. The split between Jew and Gentile Christians

Now Peter was the apostle appointed by Jesus to oversee the Gospel being taken to the Jews
(Acts 15:7, 14; Gal 2:8), and Paul was appointed to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; 15:16;
Acts 9:15; Gal 2:8; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). But Paul’s missionary policy was to take the Gospel to the
Jews first wherever he travelled in the Roman Empire, because he was acutely aware that they were
the chosen people of God, and to them belonged the oracles of God (Rom 3:2; Acts 7:38; Heb 5:12; cf.
1 Pet 4:11). This was the policy followed by Paul’s mentor, the Lord Jesus, who commanded His

255 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book III, Ch 1, 1. Source: Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 1 (available in e-
256 Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 9, Origen’s Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. (Available in e-

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apostles to take His Gospel exclusively to the Jews. “These twelve Jesus sent out, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into any city of the Samaritans, rather go the lost sheep of the House of Israel” (Mt 10:5).

The Gospel contained the next collection of the oracles of God, so it was only natural that the Jews should be the first to receive the latest issue of God’s messages to them in the same language in which He had delivered all the previous oracles, which would complete and complement all that God had communicated to them in the past.

Paul strove mightily to convince his fellow-countrymen that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah promised by God through Moses, but when they attacked him and rejected his message he made the memorable and momentous decision to turn away from the Jews and concentrate on the Gentiles. “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken257 to you: but seeing you put it away from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. . . . from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46; 18:6; cf. 22:21; 26:17; 28:28).

This turning point was probably the point at which the Holy Spirit caused Matthew to reissue his Gospel in Greek for the benefit of those Jews who had thrown in their lot with Jesus’ Gentile converts and were prepared to put their Jewishness behind them and identify with the Gentiles in a single Church (Rom 3:29; 9:24; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 3:6). It was very appropriate, therefore, that Matthew’s Hebrew Gospel should not disappear off the face of the earth, but should be retained for the benefit of the Jewish-Gentile Church, hence its contents were translated into the common language of the Gentiles, Koine Greek, and thus the Church of the Lord Jesus did not lose the unique contents of a Gospel that was specifically written throughout with Jews in mind.

The Jewishness of Matthew’s Gospel has been fully documented elsewhere by others, so it is only necessary to cream off the more salient points here. It is well known that the Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans, and Peter seems to have moved in distinct racial groups of Christians, so that he willingly ate with groups of Gentile Christians, but when a group of Christian Jews arrived at his place, he withdrew from the Gentile Christians and separated himself from them ‘fearing those who were of the circumcision’ sent to him from the apostle James (Gal 2:12). This suggests that the Christian Jews who came from the Church in Jerusalem had not yet come to terms with the implications that their food laws were no longer mandatory. It took some time for Christian Jews to realise that they were to share their inheritance with the Gentiles as fellow-heirs, and constitute one body (Gal 3:6).

Paul was not alone in thinking that Jews came from a cultivated olive-tree, but Gentiles came from an uncultivated olive-tree (Rom 11:17). Paul was aware that the Jews came under the direct upbringing of God their Creator and parent, through His management of them for 1,500 years and this had shaped the nation’s psyche so that he could discern a difference between the Jews as a deeply religious people over against the ignorant Gentiles whom God left to their own devices and their own laws (“you were Gentiles carried away unto these dumb idols, even as you were led . . . Gentiles who walk in the vanity of their mind” 1 Cor 12:2 and Eph 4:17 [cf. 1 Pet 4:3]). God winked at their past, lawless history (Acts 17:30). The long-term effect of living under God’s direct rule had a profound effect on the Jews, so that Paul could say, “We are Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles” (Gal 2:15). The ghetto-mentality that kept Jew and Gentile apart in the dispersion of the Jews probably lies behind the Jewish thought that if Jesus left them and went away to teach the Gentiles that this would explain how they would not be able to find Him (Jn 7:35).

It came as a shock to Jewish Christians that God would give the Holy Spirit to Gentiles, of all people. Up until the time that Peter met Cornelius he could honestly say, “I have never eaten anything common or unclean” (Acts 10:15), but Jesus was to teach Peter a lesson that he was not to call any Gentile ‘common or unclean’ when He let down a sheet containing animals that Peter had

257 We could add in: [and written] . . .

258 We could add in: [Matthew’s Gospel] . . .
never eaten before in his entire life, being a rigorous keeper of the Torah. He might be a Christian, but he was still wedded to keeping the food laws.

When Peter was introduced to Cornelius and his gathered relatives and friends, he reminded Cornelius, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). God had to intervene in a supernatural way to break the ghetto-mentality that held the Jewish people in dread of contaminating themselves by keeping company with Gentiles, otherwise the wall of partition would have kept Gentile Christians apart from their Jewish brothers and sisters. In that moment the realisation dawned on Peter that “God shows no partiality, but in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35).

When the Holy Spirit ‘fell’ on the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house, the Christian Jews who accompanied Peter were astonished that God would give His Holy Spirit to ‘common and unclean’ people (Acts 10:45). When Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Christian Jews were extremely angry with him for breaking the law that Jews are not to, in Peter’s own words, “keep company with or go to one of another nation.” Their accusation read, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” Yes, it was ‘unlawful’ to do what he did, but he explained that that law was no longer mandatory because of something that God did, and that changed everything. God poured out His Holy Spirit on these ‘common and unclean’ uncircumcised, Gentile, baptised Christians, thereby making no distinction between His followers.

This single event was like emptying out the helium in a balloon, or draining the power out of a battery, for overnight the Torah was lifted off the shoulders of all God’s New Covenant people. Its power over men was gone. It lost its control over the lives of God’s people. It was a catastrophic collapse of the whole Mosaic system and way of life. It had become obsolete overnight.

However, through force of habit, Jewish Christians could not divest themselves overnight of their Jewishness, as one would divest himself of an overcoat, and change into another item of clothing. They wrapped their Jewish coat even more tightly around their bodies as they ventured into the new world that Jesus had opened up for them. It took a long time for Jewish Christians to realise that what they were clinging on to was creating a two-tier Church, especially when the Council of Jerusalem rejected their call that all Gentile converts to Jesus must be circumcised in order to join them (Acts 15:1), and especially when the appointed Apostle to the Gentiles declared that all the food laws were optional, not compulsory, and the same applied to the holy days of the Jewish calendar; and that the requirement that all Christian men, Gentile, had to appear before God in Jerusalem three times a year, was all gone. This was a hard pill for Christian Jews to swallow. They were not happy with this new dispensation.

Up until now, their way of life, their culture, their customs, their whole outlook on life was completely foreign to the outsider. It was not surprising that if a Gospel was written specifically for them that it would address issues that would be incomprehensible to non-Jews without a good deal of explaining beforehand. Thus it is that Matthew refers to things that any Jew would be expected to know from his upbringing without any necessity on Matthew’s part to fill in the background, which he would need to do if his audience included Gentiles. Matthew knew his Old Covenant Scriptures extremely well because it has been estimated that he makes about 53 direct quotations from the Scriptures, plus another 70 allusions. This is a very large number, and was clearly intended to show that Jesus was the focus of the entire Old Covenant Scriptures. A Jewish reader would have been hugely impressed with Matthew’s skilful use of these Scriptures to prove that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.

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259 When Mark includes non-Greek words, he is obliged to translate them (Mk 7:34), which would be redundant to do in Matthew’s Gospel.
6.5.5. Evidence that Matthew wrote for his fellow-countrymen

A common thread in all works supporting the betrothal interpretation is their strong emphasis on the Jewishness of Matthew’s Gospel. For some this is the key to understanding the term πορνεία in that Gospel. While the standard Greek lexicons and dictionaries agree that the term is an ambiguous word that can refer to all types of sexual sin, betrothal supporters are agreed that the specific context in which it is used in Matthew’s Gospel narrows down its range to fornication within the betrothal period. But this is only so once the presupposition is accepted. Labosier wrote, “It is the context of Matthew 5 and 19 that provides the strongest evidence for this interpretation of πορνεία as referring to such things as . . . betrothal unfaithfulness.”

Seeing that the new solution being put forward in this work also makes much of the Jewishness of Matthew’s Gospel it will make for a good background to spell out the Jewish nature of this Gospel.

Matthew includes material that would not be relevant to a Gentile audience, such as
(1) the priests in the Temple breaking the law of the Sabbath day, and yet they are blameless (Mt 12:5-7).
(2) The Pharisaic rule that you must not do good on the Sabbath day, lest you profane it (Mt 12:11-12).
(3) The long quotation from Isaiah 42:1-4 (Mt 12:18-21).
(4) Only Matthew records Peter walking on the water (Mt 14:28-31), which would have been familiar to Jews, but not to Romans or Greeks.
(5) Matthew alone has the local formula for forecasting the weather (Mt 16:2-3), which would have been familiar to Jews, but not to Romans or Greeks.
(6) Matthew alone notes that a prominent Jew, not a Roman or a Greek, would be the rock upon which Jesus would build His universal empire/assembly (Mt 16:17-19).
(7) Mark only records that Jesus entered into Jerusalem and then went into the Temple, whereas Matthew gives the same information but dwells on the rapturous reception that Jesus got from the Jews as a prophet (Mt 21:10).
(8) Matthew alone links events happening in Jesus’ life to specific prophecies, such as His entry into Jerusalem on a donkey (Mt 21:4-5).
(9) Matthew alone records that the Jewish Gospel he has written up will be taken out (by the Jews, understood) into the ‘whole civilisation.’ This appeal to the centrality of a Jewish leader, sending out His Jewish (Hebrew?) Gospel into all the nations of the world, as a witness, would make a strong impression on his readers. They could miss out if they do not side with their Messiah; but there is the price of persecution to endure to be saved (Mt 24:9b-14).
(10) Matthew alone refers to Noah and his Flood (Mt 24:7-9), which may not have resonated with Mark and Luke’s audiences. Included here is the warning that the Second Coming could happen at any moment, so be ready! (Mt 24:40-51).
(11) Only Matthew follows this up with parables inculcating the need to be vigilant (Mt 25:1-46).
(12) Matthew alone records that Jesus could call upon twelve legions of angels to defend Him (Mt 26:53-54), talk of which would raise military eyebrows in Rome, so Mark wisely omitted this section.
(13) In the trial of Jesus, Pilate comes across as a righteous governor, who, having judged Jesus to be not guilty washes his hands saying he was innocent of the blood of ‘this righteous one’

(referring to Jesus), to which the crowd responds, ‘Let His blood be on our heads, and upon our children’s heads,’ which only Matthew records (Mt 27:24-25).

(14) Matthew alone records a local earthquake in Jerusalem at the very moment that Jesus expired, which burst open some local tombs of Christ’s saints, who rose from the dead only after Jesus rose from the dead (Mt 27:51b-53), and went into the ‘Holy City,’ a term that would endear Matthew to his fellow-countrymen.

(15) Matthew alone views the Great Commission as being given to eleven Jewish leaders to go into the whole world and baptize all the nations (Mt 28:16-20).

Now Matthew, because he is addressing knowledgeable Jews, can take a lot for granted. For instance, in Matthew’s Gospel, the Jews challenge Jesus with the accusation, ‘Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the Elders?’ No explanation is required to explain what is going on here. But if we turn to the parallel passage written for Gentiles, Mark has to break off and explain what lies behind the question, as the following layout illustrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 15:1-2</th>
<th>Mark 7:1-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Then come to Jesus do they from Jerusalem—scribes and Pharisees—saying,</td>
<td>1. And gathered together to him are the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, having come from Jerusalem,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ‘Wherefore do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they do not wash their hands when they may eat bread.’</td>
<td>2. and having seen certain of his disciples with defiled hands—that is, unwashed—eating bread, they found fault;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. for the Pharisees, and all the Jews, if they do not wash the hands to the wrist, do not eat, holding the tradition of the elders,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. and, coming from the market-place, if they do not baptize themselves, they do not eat; and many other things there are that they received to hold, baptisms of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and couches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Then question him do the Pharisees and the scribes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Wherefore do thy disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but with unwashed hands do eat the bread?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that Mark has to use up three verses to get his Gentile readers to the same place that the Jews were at naturally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 27:16-17</th>
<th>Mark 15:7-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. and they had then a noted prisoner, called Barabbas,</td>
<td>7. and there was [one] named Barabbas,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. they therefore having been gathered together,</td>
<td>bound with those making insurrection with him, who had in the insurrection committed murder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. And the multitude having cried out,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notice that Mark has to pause to explain to his audience who Barabbas was, because they would not be expected to know who this intifada leader was.

6.5.6. Deuteronomy 22:20-21 as the background to the exemption clause in Matthew 5:32

Because Matthew’s readers were Jews, there was no need for him to treat them like children and explain what they already knew. Matthew can take for granted that his readers know what he is referring to, and this is the key to understanding the two so-called exception clauses in his Gospel. If Jesus used a phrase that meant something to a Jew, but which would be an enigma to a non-Jew, then once we have identified what lies behind that phrase, then we will be in a position to understand the cryptic phrase and recover the teaching in which the phrase formed an integral part.

If we take the first cryptic phrase in Matthew 5:32, it reads, “but I— I say to you, that whoever may put away his wife, not counting the matter of fornication, makes her to commit adultery; and whoever may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.”

Now, when Matthew’s Jewish readers heard the phrase λόγος πορνείας ‘a matter of fornication’ what Scripture would this instantly bring to his mind? Well, the only place in the entire Old Testament where the components of this phrase occur together is in Deuteronomy 22:21, where the Septuagint translates the Hebrew as follows:

13. 'Now, if, say, a man may have taken a wife, and has lived with her, and may have hated261 her, 14 and laid against her accusing words [λόγου], and may have brought over her an evil name, and he may say, “This woman I had received,262 and having drawn near to her, I did not find her [tokens263 of] virginity.”

15 And the father of the young person—and her mother—having retrieved, they shall bring out the [tokens of] virginity of the young person to the council by the gate. 16 And the father of the young person shall say to the council, “This daughter of mine I had given264 to this man for a wife, and he has hated her. 17 The same [man] now places on her accusing words [λόγου], saying, “I did not find [tokens of] virginity [belonging] to your daughter,” — and these are the [tokens of the] virginity of my daughter! And they shall spread out the garment before the council of the city.

18 And the council of that city shall take the man, and discipline him, 19 and they shall punish him a hundred shekels, and they shall give them to the father of the young woman, because he brought out an evil name upon an Israelite virgin, and she shall be to him for a wife. He is not able to send her out the whole time [s/he is alive].

20 Now, if, say, upon [investigation] this word (ὁ λόγος οὐτος) is borne out to be truthful—and [tokens of] virginity were not found for the young woman . . . . 21 And they shall lead away the young woman by the doors of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones, and she shall be killed, because she acted foolishly among

261 In Deut 24:3 ‘hate’ was a successful route to take get a divorce, but here (and when applied to the second scenario) the hate is geared not toward obtaining a divorce, but to have her killed for fornication. It is hatred+accusation of fornication. The ‘hate’ in Deut 24:3 must have been hatred+a non-fornication issue, because he was successful in getting it.

262 This is the perfect tense: ‘had received and still have.’ The ET is mine.

263 The idea of ‘proofs’ might be in mind here throughout the narrative. This is how it is seen in Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (eds.), A New English Translation of the Septuagint (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

264 This is the perfect tense: ‘had given and still give.’
the sons of Israel, to fornicate [ἐκπορνεύσαι] [in] the house of her father; and you shall remove the evil from among you.

We might suitably entitle this pericope: The matter (λόγος) of pre-marital fornication investigated. Two scenarios are described. In the first, the newly married bride is accused of not being a virgin, but her parents prove that she was. The punishment for the husband is that his cultural privilege to divorce his wife on any charge is removed from him for as his wife is alive. He played for high stakes, which rebounded on him.

In the second scenario the newly married bride is accused of not being a virgin, and her parents cannot prove that she was. The punishment for the newly married bride is that she loses her life, and the innocent husband is permitted to remarry another bride.

The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has an interesting addition (written as capitals below) in its paraphrase of Deut 22:25-27, which reads:

. . . if a man find a damsel in the wilderness, and does violence to her and lies with her, the man only shall die who lay with her, for the damsel is not guilty of death; BUT HER HUSBAND MAY PUT HER AWAY FROM HIM BY A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT; for as when a man lies in wait for his neighbour and takes his life, so is this matter (πράγμα): he found her upon the face of the field; the betrothed damsel cried out for help, but there was no one to deliver her. 265

The date for the composition of this Targum is put some time between the 7th century (after the Islamic conquest of the Middle East) and the 15th century when it is quoted in Jewish sources for the first time. Consequently, it tells us nothing about the traditions current in New Testament times. It is claimed that the Talmudic tractate Gittim records similar concepts to the Ps-Jonathan targum. Unfortunately, the Talmuds were themselves only composed hundreds of years after the New Testament was completed, and from oral traditions, which are notoriously vulnerable to editing of various sorts, including additional material which was known to the copyists, but which was not found in the exemplar.

The reason for the addition was triggered by the statement in 22:19 “he cannot divorce her all the days of his life.” Targumists were driven by analogies and parallels, and a penchant to tidy up loose ends. What the addition tells us is that the virgin lost her virginity and her rapist died. If she married, she did so as a non-virgin bride. The Targumist covers the case whether she can ever be divorced during her lifetime due to the special circumstances under which she became a wife to another man, and he concluded that she was not immune to being divorced on the grounds of some other ervat davar misdemeanour (Dt 24:1-3).

In the case of Deuteronomy 22:26 the incident is called a πράγμα ‘an event/occurrence, a deed.’ However, the earlier incident in 22:20-21 is called a λόγος ‘a word/thing, a matter/deed.’ Deuteronomy 22:20 uses the term λόγος of actual words, the words that constituted the accusation of fornication, hence ‘report’ would suit the context precisely.

According to some writers, this then becomes a ‘report of fornication,’ which is said to occur in 5:32 as λόγου πορνείας (logou porneias). This is then said to throw new light on the so-called exceptive clause in Matthew 5:32, where the Greek particle παρεκτός means ‘not taking into account/apart from/excluding.’ Matthew 5:32 would then read: “but I—I say to you, that whoever may divorce his wife, not counting the report of fornication, makes her to commit adultery; and whoever may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.” What Jesus is pointing out is that if one divorces his wife, serious repercussions will follow, chief of which is that when his wife

remarries she will be committing adultery, but all her adulteries will be laid at the feet of her divorcer. The only sin that will not be laid at his feet is her sin of fornication which she committed before he divorced her. The flaw with this interpretation is that it sets Jesus against the Law of God. The penalty was death, but according to this interpretation, Jesus reduced the penalty to divorce for pre-marital fornication, because this is how Joseph treated Mary’s sin of presumed fornication.

It is very likely that Jesus examined every law of the Torah with His laser-sharp eye backed by a razor-sharp mind absorbing every minute detail of the Law, and He pondered the wisdom of His Father in how He handled two accusations of pre-marital fornication that were potentially devastating to a husband’s genealogy. In the one case the λόγος πορνεία (logos porneia) was false, but in the other case the λόγος πορνεία was true.

Jesus was a realist, and He knew that not every bride would be as innocent or as white as she appeared to be on the outside. There would also be unscrupulous parents who would pass off their promiscuous daughters as virgins in order to get the bride price to claw back the expense in bringing her up. Evidence of virginity could be faked, falsified, or borrowed from another virgin, to outwit the prospective buyer of their daughter. It happens. And Jesus, no doubt, with His superior knowledge of all things necessary for His mission on earth, would take this into account when it came to wording His teaching. And so it was, when He wanted to scare the daylights out of every male in Israel, He informed them that when they got a divorce, nothing happened; they were as much one flesh after they got their divorce as they were before it. Even the most dumb of Jewish males could work out that that meant if their wives ‘married’ another man, they were committing adultery, because the marriage bond had never been dissolved, and couldn’t be except by death. Once the penny had dropped that all married men were stuck with their first wives for life, with no prospect of ever getting release from them, their hearts must have died within them.

But then, some of them would have confessed to Jesus that they had already divorced (as they thought) their wives. Jesus does not feel any sympathy for them. He tells them bluntly that if they put their wives out into the street and they remarried other men, then the acts of adultery that their wives were committing would be laid at the husband’s feet.

The only concession He makes for their culpability was that if their wives were found guilty of pre-marital intercourse with another male, then these sins of fornication would not be charged to their husbands, but the general charge of getting a divorce on the grounds of her pre-marriage fornication still stood, because there were no grounds, not even pre-marital fornication, to get a divorce, because it did not exist in the life of God.

The fact that Jesus thought it necessary to exonerate the husband for his wife’s pre-marital fornication reveals His view that every man is responsible for his wife’s sexual history. Every man started off his married life joined to a virgin for life. Her sexuality belongs to him (and vice versa. 1 Cor 7:4). Jesus, like any professional judge would, took into account that the husband cannot be held legally responsible for his wife’s infidelity before he married her, and this is what the exemption clause refers to in Matthew 5:32.

God had fixed penalties to cope with newly married brides who were not virgins, namely, death, not divorce. The same went for adultery. In neither case could any man get a divorce, because God never instituted it in Israel. The only options open to a righteous man under the law, as regards punishment of his wife was death or stay married-for-life. There was nothing in between these two options. God made no provision for divorce of any description. That was the reality that Jesus was commissioned by His Father to bring to this earth and make known to all men on this planet, through the Great Commission.

6.5.7. The death penalty as the background to the content-identity phrase in Matthew 19:9

We have shown that Matthew’s Gospel was written for Jews, and that Matthew could take it for granted that his readers knew the laws of the Torah inside out and back the front more closely
than any modern expert or academic scholar can ever hope to reach or match. We have also shown in the previous section that not until we can provide the Scriptural background to some of Matthew’s statements can we enter into his understanding of what Jesus taught on any one subject. In other words, the non-Jew must take hold of the skirt of the Jew and be taught by him what is the key to understanding Jesus’ words.

It is the experience of many that there is an arrogance, typical of academia in the sciences and other disciplines, but especially in evolutionary biology, that assumes all others to be fools but themselves and their new insights are to placed above all others. This is especially so when it comes to an understanding of God’s Word, both Old and New Testaments. “Knowledge puffs up, but loves edifies,” is as true today as it was when Paul penned those words. It takes humility to sit at the feet of a Jew and be taught by him. The Western scholar is not comfortable in that position. But those who earnestly seek the truth will know the doctrine whether it be of God or whether it be of man (Jn 7:17).

If we start off by recognising that Matthew’s Gospel was not written for Romans and Greeks, of whom the Western world and civilisation is an extension, but was written solely for a people who were dominated by a comprehensive system of laws, rituals, ceremonies, and traditions, that were absolutely unique to it as a system, then we are on the verge of adopting the correct approach to understanding their world, and how much these unique people lived in a bubble that was incomprehensible to outsiders. What they ate, when they could sleep with their wives, what things were ‘holy’ and what things were ‘common,’ what things were ‘clean’ and what things were ‘unclean,’ controlled their whole lives from birth to death, covering hatch, match and dispatch.

It is obvious that the further a Westerner travels into this different world of another, very strange culture, and gains a foothold in understanding why they did things a certain way and not another way, and how they use terms, expressions, and phrases in a different way, with a different outlook on life, and with their own traditions surrounding major events in their lives such as birth, marriage and death/burial, the further he travels away from his own culture, and acquires wisdom and understanding in the process. But this wisdom is lost in transmission when he reports back to his own culture because they have not made the journey themselves to appreciate what they are hearing from the first traveller.

Given that the Western approach to life and especially its moral values are different from those to whom Matthew was writing, there will always be a distance between the Jew and the non-Jew, and this difference will manifest itself in reading the literature of the Jews. That is one problem that must be borne in mind.

The other difference is what others have commented on more eloquently, which is a superficial reading of Scripture without the background that a Jew in Matthew’s day would have possessed, because he lived, moved, and has his being, in that closed environment. This approach treats Scripture as if it were an exhaustive encyclopedia of knowledge, and if something is not in the Bible then it doesn’t exist. This is especially the cop-out that the majority of Young Earthers adopt when it comes to reading the two accounts of creation in Genesis 1-3. This simplistic approach to Scripture will always result in stunted growth spiritually, mentally, and academically, and will result in an inability to bring factual, scientific data to cast light on how God put His universe together, and an understanding of the various laws that hold the entire creation together, which the Bible has nothing to say. Failure to take in all knowledge from every direction will produce a teenage approach, not a mature and maturing approach to God’s creation. The same applies to reading Scripture.

If we ignore the wealth of extra-biblical information regarding the chronology of the ancient Near East kings adjacent to Israel, we would never be able to reconstruct the chronology of the Bible. A wrong attitude toward this extra-biblical data will take pride in boasting that its biblical chronology is based solely on the Bible, as if that factor alone gave it credence, or accuracy, or the infallibility that is sometimes claimed for some hair-brain, chronological schemes!
What applies to budding Bible chronologists applies to other topics, such as Infant Baptism, and a whole range of other debateable topics, where the criteria used to read God’s Word is: “Does it make sense to me?” And, “If I cannot find an actual text to support a view, I will not accept it.” On this criteria, there is no Trinity, and women cannot take Communion because there is no ‘actual text’ to say they can, and Eve was not expelled from the Garden of Eden, because there is no ‘actual text’ to say she was expelled. The list could go on and on. It is not possible to add maturity to a child’s life, by education alone, and neither is it possible to understand all of Scripture except by maturing in the faith and increasing one’s knowledge of spiritual matters. This may take years. But God has set mature teachers in the church to guide the immature into a full understanding of His word.

Nevertheless, Matthew’s Gospel will always present a challenge to the Western reader because it was not intended for him. The Holy Spirit guided Mark and Luke to write for the Western man, and to present Jesus’ teaching on divorce and marriage in terms that the Western man can understand. In both Gospels there is no so-called exception clause, and the Western man is left without an excuse. Now, if the Spirit guided Mark and Luke to make no exception for divorce, then it follows that He must have said the same thing to the Jews, otherwise there would be one doctrine and ethic for the Jew and another for the Gentile. This would create two bodies of Christ.

Now the Jew lived under God’s Torah, and in that Law it stated clearly that the punishment for adultery and for fornication was death, not divorce. Consequently God removed the possibility of any Jew getting a divorce for these two crimes. But that would not stop renegade Jews from getting a divorce for these crimes if they were determined to do so. The question the Pharisees asked Jesus was a legal one: ‘Is it lawful . . . to divorce for any cause?’ On a matter of law, it was unlawful to divorce for fornication.

What God did not do was give a similar law banning divorce for any non-fornication cause. This looks like a deliberate loop-hole on God’s part not to shut off the possibility that hard-hearted husbands will hate their wives and seek to get rid of them. But God envisaged a day when He would send His Son who would shut the door on this loop-hole, and shut up all mankind to the abolition of divorce on any grounds, sexual or non-sexual, and that day arrived with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Pharisees came to Jesus with their question whether it was lawful to divorce for any cause, we are not to impose our Western point of view on these Pharisees, and assume that they were asking Jesus if it was lawful to get a divorce for adultery/fornication. They knew the answer to that question: it was not lawful to get a divorce for adultery/fornication. They knew the answer to that question: it was not lawful to get a divorce for adultery/fornication. So we should rule out any suggestion that these Pharisees were asking Jesus if He was going to abolish the law relating to the death penalty for adultery/fornication. After all, they regarded Jesus as just another human being, with a large than life ego about His self-importance. They disdained Him. What they had in mind, with their question, was whether it was lawful to divorce for non-fornication issues. Why would they raise that question? Answer: they had no direct warrant for divorce in the Torah.

It is now widely recognised that in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 we have Yahweh describing (not prescribing) how His people went about divorcing their wives, and showing the arbitrariness of their action. Then after Yahweh described what He hated to see His people doing, He slapped a penalty on anyone who would take advantage of the pre-Moses custom of divorcing a wife, namely, they would be barred from being reconciled to their first wife. It has been recognised by commentators that Moses did not introduce divorce into Israel, but that it had been going on among the Israelites while they were in Egypt for 430 years.

The innovation that Moses contributed was an oral command that every divorce must be accompanied by a bill of divorce, which the divorced wife could use to remarry, and so avoid the death penalty, which had just been introduced by Yahweh for all sexual offences that defiled a woman. God ensured that even Moses’ command did not get into His Torah, such was His detestation of the practice. The rabbis were in a quandary: they had no text to use as a pretext to smuggle divorce into the Torah.
The suggestion was could they use Yahweh’s *description* of what they were doing wrong to justify continuing to do wrong? Could they take the two grounds that Yahweh coined to describe what they were doing wrong and create a law of divorce which would include these two grounds, namely, ervat davar, and hate, and in this way smuggle divorce into the Torah?

This seems a bizarre way to make divorce lawful. It is on a par with a noted burglar who only broke into houses in the dead of night, and a guild of burglars meeting together make it a law that it is only lawful to burglar in the middle of the night; that all daylight robberies were unlawful! Or imagine a public boys school in England where all the boys started daubing the walls with excrement, and creating art-work out of it. Apart from the unsightliness of the daubing, one boy was seen to eat it. For health and safety reasons the headmaster instantly issued a command forbidding the eating of excrement with the threat of instant expulsion. He could not expel every boy who daubed the walls, for they all did it, because the school would have no pupils if he expelled them all, and he would be out of a job; but he could curb an evil within an evil. This is the situation that Yahweh met. Instead of daubing the walls, they were divorcing their wives. Neither the daubing nor the divorcing could be stopped. The best that Moses could do was command them that if they were going to do evil to their wives then at least give her a chance to have a life on the other side of the divorce. And Yahweh contented Himself to issue an order that if they obtained a divorce they could not undo their evil deed. They would die in their sins.

How the rabbis managed to smuggle divorce into the Torah is not relevant at this point. What is important to note here is that among the Jews, but not among the Greeks or the Romans, there was a sharp, twofold division into capital and non-capital punishments, and that all sexual offences came under capital punishment. This meant that the common people in Israel knew that sins of fornication (including adultery) were punished with death, but that non-fornication sins were not met with death.

Ben Bloggs (fictitious name) could work out that if he was going to divorce his wife he would have to catch her committing a non-fornication sin. So when he heard Jesus say, “Whoever divorces his wife for a non-fornication sin, and marries another woman, he is an adulterer,” he recognised instantly that Jesus had just robbed him of the only grounds he could get a divorce on. His instant recognition of the significance of what Jesus had just said was because he was a Jew, and not an ignorant non-Jew.

What Jesus said was unambiguous. It could not be clearer. God the Father had ruled out divorce for fornication sins; and His Son had ruled out divorce for non-fornication sins. Together they had banned divorce from the earth. That left no grounds on which Ben Bloggs could safely get a divorce from his hated wife. Jesus had just shut him up to living with her for the rest of his life. He would have to conclude that this new religion was not for him, and turn his back on Jesus (and on eternal life), as many still do today over His total rejection of divorce on any grounds.

The chart below illustrates the difference between Roman and Greek law compared to Jewish law. Outside of Judea all cultures made provision for divorce for sexual and non-sexual misdemeanours, so that adultery and hate were treated as equal grounds for divorce. *The Jewish distinction between ‘fornication’ issues and ‘non-fornication’ issues when it came to obtaining a divorce was rigid and permanent, compared to lax situation in Roman and Greek law-codes.*

Jewish law was unique in that God made a sharp, and unambiguous distinction between ‘fornication’ and ‘non-fornication’ misdemeanours. In sharp contrast to Roman and Greek law, adultery had to be punished by stoning or strangulation under Jewish law. *They had no choice in the matter*, because their law descended from heaven and was written by God. There was no option to punish adultery with divorce under Jewish law, which Jesus and the Pharisees were fully aware of.

Prior to the birth of Jesus, there is no known case in Jewish history where this law was violated, and where Jews in Judea could obtain a divorce on the ground of adultery.

Given this background, we now have a solid, historical (cultural) reason why Matthew was written to the Jews, and Mark and Luke were written for the Romans and Greeks respectively.
This background must also be carried into any reading of Matthew’s so-called ‘exception clauses.’ When the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful to divorce their wives ‘for all causes,’ they had in mind all causes outside the capital offence causes, and so they were not asking Jesus if it was lawful to get a divorce for adultery. They were asking Him if they could get a divorce for any non-capital offence, or in terms of the pie-chart, for any non-fornication misdemeanour.

Both Jesus and the Pharisees would have agreed that divorce could not be had lawfully for fornication or for adultery, so we can take that for granted. The issue the Pharisees put to Jesus was whether He would agree with their age-old tradition of obtaining a divorce for all the non-fornication issues that they were presently using, or would He limit the number of non-fornication issues that they could use. Jesus knew the boundaries they were currently using, which encompassed every cause imaginable except fornication (which would include adultery). So when Jesus replied to their question, He took up their current boundary which was ‘anything, but not including fornication,’ and declared that any Pharisee who got a divorce ‘not over fornication’ (i.e., they got it on non-fornication grounds) and married another woman, he was committing adultery against his first wife, and anyone who married his ‘divorced’ wife was likewise committing adultery, because he was sleeping with another man’s wife.

The implication of Jesus’ revelation was that Mosaic divorce did not dissolve any lawful marriage; after the ‘divorce’ the husband was still married to his wife. Consequently, when another man married his ‘divorced’ wife, that man was sleeping with his wife. It must have become obvious to the Pharisees that, according to Jesus, nothing happened when they got a Mosaic divorce. The bond could not be broken by handing a wife a piece of paper.

This was a monstrous, and completely unacceptable new teaching, because it implied that from the time of Moses no divorce was lawful in the eyes of Jesus. The Jews took great pride in their ancestry because all their mothers were virgins. But if Jesus was right that no Mosaic divorce ever dissolved a single lawful marriage during the entire Old Testament period, then He was casting aspersions on the legitimacy of their births.

If the fathers of any of the Pharisees who asked Jesus the question about divorce, had divorced their first wife, and they were born of a second wife, then they were the children of fornication, and hence bastards. They said to Jesus on one occasion, ‘We were not born out of fornication’ (Jn 8:41). This could be rendered: ‘We were not born out of prostitution [ἐκ πόρνειας].’ Jesus thought otherwise, because divorce could be had for the most trivial of excuses in Jesus’ day, so much so that Jesus termed the nation a generation of adulterers (Mt 12:39; 16:4; Mk 8:38).
The entire male population of Jesus’ day had deluded themselves into believing that they had the power to sever what God had joined together, and that this power extended back to the time of Moses. That they never had this power must have come as a bombshell, and must have sent many of them scurrying to the Temple to find out from the national genealogical records kept there, if any of their ancestors came through a second wife following a divorce, or through a many times divorced wife, who had three or more husbands. If so, then their line of descent was tainted with illegitimacy, and illegitimate children were excluded from being counted among the Sons of Israel for ten generations. ”A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord” (Deut 23:2). In this place the Septuagint reads ἐκ πόρνης ‘out of a prostitute’ to describe the illegitimate sons who are barred from citizenship of Israel.

This one teaching alone would have incensed the entire male population against Jesus, and should be viewed as a prime contributory factor that led to His rejection by the nation, and His death on the cross, accompanied by the roar of angry divorcers baying for His blood. The pie-chart also brings out the historical background to Mark and Luke, because the Romans and the Greeks had no consistent equivalent for the death penalty for fornication/adultery. Generally, their only punishment consisted of divorce accompanied by exile. This explains why Mark, in particular, could not include the phrase Jesus used to refer to the category of causes that the Jews had been using to obtain their divorces. Mark omitted what Matthew said in 19:7-9 because it did not apply to his audience.

Significantly, when Jesus repeated His teaching privately to His disciples in the house immediately following this confrontation with the Pharisees, He gave them a version that was applicable to all three cultures. Indeed, His vice versa statement referring to wives divorcing husbands was unknown in Israel, but practised in all non-Jewish cultures. No wonder Mark chose to include the vice versa version in his Gospel to the Romans.

The Romans and the Greeks lumped the two distinct Jewish categories of punishment—capital and non-capital—into one category, namely, non-capital, so that divorce could be had from the most trivial to the most serious offences. It was a case of one size fits all. One divorce law applied to all cases, whereas the Jews retained divorce only for non-fornication (in Jesus’ words, ‘not over fornication’) offences.

In conclusion we have seen that each Gospel was carefully crafted to bring the ‘Good News’ to all the nations of the world. Each Gospel writer had to choose what to include and what to exclude, which was at all times influenced by his target audience. Even when they each include the same story, event, parable, or teaching, they are consciously editing the material to get the attention of their diverse audiences in order ‘that they might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life in His name.’

We have seen, in the case of Matthew’s Gospel, that because it was written for knowledgeable Jews, that Matthew could assume they had the necessary background knowledge in their memories, to understand everything he wrote to them. While exploring the implications of this ‘barrier’ that non-Jews encounter while reading Matthew’s Gospel, it turned out to be the key to understanding the enigmatic ‘exceptive clauses,’ which turned out not to be exception clauses after all, but of Jesus, in the case of Matthew 19:9, answering the Jews in terms that only Jews would understand, and which they did understand, namely, that divorce had been banned from the earth, and anyone who thought that they could divorce their wives would not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the case of Matthew 5:32, Jesus took into account that if a husband did divorce his wife, then all her sins of adultery would be laid at his feet except for the situation that obtained in Deuteronomy 22:20-21, where his wife came into his marriage having committed fornication already. Jesus was careful to exempt the husband from blame for her pre-nuptial sins of fornication. This is how the Jews would have understood the ‘exemption from blame’ to come from. Ignorant non-Jews,
looking to justify Erasmus’s new doctrine, changed the ‘exemption from blame,’ into an ‘exception to divorce,’ with disastrous consequences, affecting millions of lives.
CRITIQUE OF THE BETROTHAL SOLUTION

ABSTRACT

The Betrothal solution was born out of the necessity to harmonise Jesus’ abolition of divorce on any grounds, on the one side, and the ‘exception clauses’ in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 on the other. It was assumed that both exception clauses were genuine exceptions and should be translated as “except for fornication.” From an examination of the extant writings of the Early Church Fathers up until the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 remarriage after a separation (indistinguishable from a divorce) was not permitted, confirming Jesus’ total ban on remarriages after a divorce. To explain the apparent exception clauses it was thought that these must be related to something peculiarly Jewish, because they are found only in Matthew’s Gospel, which was written specifically for the Jews. The solution was simple. The clue came from two directions.

From Scripture came the revelation that when Mary was betrothed to Joseph ‘before they came together,’ that is, before they consummated their marriage, ‘she was found with child of the Holy Spirit’ (Mt 1:19).

From rabbinic literature came the revelation that during the espousal period an engaged couple were regarded as husband and wife. This is confirmed in Matthew 1:19 where Joseph is called the ‘husband’ of Mary (1:19), and she is called his ‘wife’ by the angel of the Lord (1:20, 24).

According to the Betrothal solution, both sources indicated that if the bride was not a virgin leading up to the marriage ceremony she could be divorced and the wedding aborted. This is what Joseph intended to do. Consequently the Betrothal interpretation was brought to bear on the exception clauses, not to weaken or delete them, but to take full advantage of the unique situation in the Jewish religion whereby it was possible to get a divorce before one was married.

By demonstrating that Jesus distinguished between two types of divorces, one before and the other after the marriage ceremony, this interpretation argued that the exception clauses related only to divorce before the marriage, and that there could be no divorce once the marriage was consummated, unless, of course, it was discovered that the bride was not a virgin on her wedding night, and that she ceased to be so prior to the marriage, during the espousal period (as in the case of Mary). According to this solution, a significant confirmation that this re-interpretation was correct came in the discovery that pre-marital sex was called ‘fornication,’ and post-marital sex was called ‘adultery,’ and that these terms were rarely (if ever) misapplied in the Greek Scriptures. The outcome of this re-interpretation of the so-called exception clauses in Matthew was that there was a good divorce, which Jesus approved of, and a bad divorce, which He disapproved of.

6.6. CRITIQUE OF THE BETROTHAL SOLUTION

6.6.1. The pros and cons of the betrothal interpretation

The beauty about the betrothal interpretation is that it defends the indissolubility of every lawful, consummated marriage. That cannot be said of very many other solutions. It also defends...
The prohibited relationships of Leviticus 18:6-18. The meagre arguments for this view are summarised in J. Carl Laney’s contribution in H. Wayne House (ed.), Divorce & Remarriage: Four Christian Views (Downers Grove, ENG.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), pp. 36-7. This view stumbles over the same situation occurring in Greek and Roman cultures, so that the same exception clauses would be required in the gospels of Mark and Luke to meet the same situation. Is it not obvious that in the unique case of unlawful, incestuous unions the prohibition against divorce did not apply? There never was the possibility of obtaining a bill of divorce to undo these unlawful marriages. There are no history cases where a bill of divorce was used to disband these abominable unions. Annulment, not divorce, was the appropriate legal action to take in these cases. It is a sign of desperation to apply Jesus’ so-called exceptive clauses to these unlawful unions.

This solution is better known under the title, Marriage within the prohibited relationships of Leviticus 18, which is supported by J. Carl Laney, The Divorce Myth (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1981), pp. 72-77.
par with the annulment of a contract of ‘marriage,’ even though it had not been consummated to qualify as a full marriage. His words were:

A husband’s divorcing such a wife [i.e., one who has been unfaithful during the betrothal period] can equally well be described as the annulment of an unfulfilled contract of sale as a divorce. . . . Although the term divorce was used in these cases, it is more accurate to say that it was a matter of cancelling an unfulfilled contract of sale, because one of the parties had tricked the other as to the nature of the goods. . . . The word divorce is used even when a man divorces his wife because of her premarital unchastity. Actually he does not divorce his wife but is himself relieved by a court order of the need to fulfill his obligations under the marriage contract, since it has been established that the other party has deceived him.269

Wenham and Heth agreed that, “This is not actually a divorce, though a legal bill of divorce was required by the Jews in such cases.”270 Given the contractual and conditional nature of the betrothal stage it is surprising to find a defender of the betrothal solution argue that: “Advocates of the betrothal view assert that this practice of nullifying an unconsummated marriage during the betrothal period because of unfaithfulness is the event in view in the Matthean exception clause.”271

One can understand that Christians who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture would seek out a solution that would allow Jesus to be consistent in His teaching on divorce as stated clearly in Mark 10 and Luke 16. This is highly commendable, but if the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 has been tampered with, and a Greek word added to Jesus’ words to make Him allow for divorce for fornication, then it is wrong to defend the tampered text as representing what Jesus taught. The added word must be removed in order to recover the original words that Jesus actually used in conveying His teaching. When the offending word is removed we find Jesus teaching the complete opposite to what the addition produced. For instead of Jesus saying “except for fornication,” He said, “not over fornication.” The full text of Matthew 19:9 then reads, “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

Since the days of Moses no Hebrew or Jew had been allowed by God to obtain a divorce for fornication or adultery. God chose the severest penalty available to Him to get rid of such defiled persons. The only grounds that Hebrews and Jews had been using to get a divorce since the time of Moses were for non-fornication issues, but Jesus referred directly to these grounds and declared that all such divorces were now null and void. Anything outside fornication was no longer a ground for divorce. He was asked, “Is it lawful . . . .” and He answered clearly, “It is not lawful to divorce for a non-fornication issue, and My Father made it unlawful to divorce for a fornication issue.” God, in

269 Abel Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple. A Study with Special Reference to Mt. 19.13 [sic]-12 and 1. Cor. 11.3-16.* Trans. Neil Tomkinson with Jean Gray (ASNU 24. Lund: Gleerup; Copenhagen: Munsgaard, 1965), pp. 137, 140. It should be borne in mind that Isaksson assumed that Jesus permitted divorce in Mt 19:9 because he was under the false impression that Erasmus’s text represented Jesus’ teaching (ibid., p. 139). All advocates of the betrothal solution labour under the same misapprehension, and even by most of their opponents, cf. J. Carl Laney, *The Divorce Myth* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1981), p. 65f., who advocated the solution Marriage within the prohibited relationships of Leviticus 18 to account for Erasmus’s exception clauses (ibid., p. 72).


the Person of the Lord Jesus, abolished the practice of divorce on planet Earth for all time to come, and restored the original standard by which all men and women will be judged in the Last Day.

According to the betrothal solution, one cannot say that Jesus banned all divorces under all circumstances. Jesus has room for this kind of divorce within His teaching. He has given permission to Jews who are in a marriage contract, and whom He regards as husbands and wives, even though the consummation of their marriage is still up to one year in the future, to divorce one another if one of them commits fornication. He does not allow them to divorce on any other grounds. Apart from this single sin, this means that their engagement vows are unbreakable, and they must go through with the marriage. That Jesus would put the full weight of His authority behind this special case—this exception to His ‘no divorce on any grounds’—has alarming implications.

**First,** it means that Jesus’ name is associated with divorce and it has His approval, albeit it is a special kind of divorce available only to Christians belonging to a certain race.

**Second,** it means that divorce per se is not a word to be associated with sin. It is no longer appropriate to infer that ‘divorce’ of any kind is evil. In the betrothal solution Jesus has created a valid divorce which is not a sin. Consequently, there were three stages at which a divorce could be had in Jewish society: divorce leading up to the consummation (Matthew 1), divorce at the moment of marriage, (Deuteronomy 22), and divorce well into a marriage (Deuteronomy 24).

**Third,** on the betrothal interpretation there are now good divorces and there are bad divorces. Jesus is on the side of good divorces. Jesus loves divorce—the good kind. The argument goes that the espoused virgin is truly married, as truly as any married wife is, except for the matter of consummation, so that it is necessary to have a full, and proper divorce, complete with a bill of divorce, exactly the same as would be given to a married woman, to dissolve her espoused union. The betrothal view requires, nay, demands, that the term ‘wife’ should apply to a woman before and after consummation for the exception clauses to function. The betrothal vows have got to be as binding as the marriage vows (Deut 20:7; cf. 24:5). This is absolutely crucial if the exception is to work. But the more one argues for equality between the betrothal state and the married state, the wider becomes the logical gap in allowing the betrothal ‘wife’ to lose her wifely status for infidelity, but not allowing it in the case of the married wife. If betrothal were the same as marriage then why would the couple still need to be married?

Here the procedure of divorce does do what it claims to do, namely, it dissolves a lawful union of ‘husband’ and ‘wife.’ And Jesus, it is claimed, agreed that the divorce procedure truly dissolves unconsummated marriages because of unfaithfulness. Consequently, it is argued, that what God had joined together in holy matrimony in an espousal ‘marriage,’ He can dissolve through the law courts of this world. The question naturally arises, if God does this for unfaithfulness in the pre-consummation period, why would He not do the same in the post-consummation period? This disparity would place faithfulness prior to the marriage on a far higher level than on faithfulness after the marriage. God will not punish a married wife for adultery, or allow her husband to divorce her; he must put up with her all the days of his life. But God does punish the betrothed wife who commits exactly the same sin as the married wife, by allowing her ‘husband’ to divorce her, so that he is not glued to his ‘wife’ all the days of his life. This is an illogical, not to mention, immoral, situation to be in.

We noted above that the betrothal vows have got to be as binding as the marriage vows. This is absolutely crucial if the exception is to work. The reason for this insistence by the supporters of the Betrothal solution is this, when Jesus commences His statement He uses the term ‘his wife’ and this must include espousal and married wives. He is addressing both types of wives. The term ‘wife’ (γυναῖκα) is an inclusive term in this context, we are told. Now if we omit the exception clause, the text would apply to both types of wives, and would read, “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife [espousal or married], and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”
Now, if Jesus had made no distinction between these wives (in different stages of becoming potential mothers), then it logically follows that if, say, Joseph obtained a bill of divorce to dissolve his union with Mary, because of her fornication [loss of virgin status], then no man could marry her without being condemned by Jesus as an adulterer. We are told that it was to allow the innocent espoused husband (in this case, Joseph) to find another wife that Jesus inserted the exception clause.

If so, then we must return to the commencement of Jesus’ words and understand the ‘who’ in 19:9 to be inclusive of betrothed husbands and married husbands.

There is an illogical sequence here. Jesus, we are informed, taught that the exception allows only the espoused husband to divorce his espoused ‘wife.’ Now, if Mary was truly divorced from Joseph, so that whatever bond there had between them as ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ has been truly dissolved, then how can Mary’s next husband be regarded as an adulterer? The charge of being an adulterer can only apply if Mary’s second husband marries a married woman, which Mary was not, if the divorce did what it claimed to do.

The only way out of this situation is to speculate that in the second half of the v. 9 Jesus has mentally put the betrothed couple behind Him, and addresses only the situation that pertained to fully married husbands and wives, as in v. 9a. If so, the text should now read:

“Now I say to you that who [= a married man], for instance, may have divorced his [wedded] wife—except for the espoused husband who divorced his espoused wife for betrothal fornication which is punished by death—and he [= a married man] may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

The odd thing in this whole set-up is that an espoused wife can be lawfully divorced on Jesus’ express authority, for the sin of fornication, but when a married wife commits the exact same sin of fornication, she cannot be divorced, yet the theory places great emphasis on the belief that at the betrothal ceremony the two are married in the eyes of the law. And so binding is this union, we are informed, that it takes a divorce certificate to get out of it. Playing up the permanency of the betrothal contract only heightens the nonsensical nature of not allowing married couples to be divorced on the same grounds of a broken contract.

Fourth, Jesus hates fornication so much so that when it occurs between two persons who are engaged to be married, the innocent party can sue for a divorce with His full approval and blessing. But if fornication occurs after they have consummated their marriage vows, then the innocent party cannot sue for a divorce, and if he does get a divorce it does not have His approval or blessing. The former is a just divorce, the latter is an unjust divorce. The flaw in this argument is that if the espoused wife is found to have committed fornication (note the term) before she consummated the marriage, she is not divorced, but stoned to death (Deut 22:21). There is, therefore no parallel with Joseph’s action to ‘put away’ his wife privately. This was an unlawful act on Joseph’s part in the eyes of the rabbis.272

Fifth, in order to administer Jesus’ ‘special case’ divorce, Jesus would need to set up the equivalent of the Jewish Sanhedrin in His Church to appoint judges to investigate each case. These judges would need a salary or stipend, secretaries, financial boards, and the whole paraphernalia that goes with human law courts. Or, are these privileged Jewish Christians to go to Satan’s Gentile law courts to obtain Jesus’ special divorce certificates?

Sixth, this ‘special case’ divorce would not be available to Jesus’ non-Jewish converts. It is a special privilege which He has granted only to those who are still participating in the traditional Mosaic way of life, and who are living under the same conditions that obtained when the Torah became the established way of life for all Jews. Jesus discriminates between His Jewish followers and His Gentile followers. He cares more for one than the other. One is more highly favoured than the

272 I have elsewhere dealt with the lawfulness of Joseph’s action in putting away Mary, which is not the same as legally divorcing her.
other. There is a class division between His followers. They are unequally yoked together in a single Body.

**Seventh**, in effect the vows that the Christian Jews make at the traditional pre-nuptial stage are the same vows that the Christian Gentiles make on the day of their traditional way of becoming husband and wife, the only difference is that the Christian Jew has a longer period of time between making the vows and consummating the marriage.

In the case of Gentile Christians, bringing forward the pre-nuptial vows to within a few hours of the point at which those vows are consummated, does not allow any time for the bride or groom to commit fornication, but even if, God forbid, one of the parties commits fornication between making the vows in the morning and consummating the marriage in the evening, and it can be proved that fornication has taken place, Jesus does not allow this Gentile couple to sue for divorce on the grounds of fornication, because He discriminates between His Jewish and His non-Jewish followers. It follows from this, that if one of the Gentle parties is guilty of fornication before the marriage is consummated Jesus’ attitude toward the innocent Gentile party is to say, ‘Hard luck, but you now have to live with your guilty partner for the rest of your life, because I have not given you the option that I have given to my Jewish followers to sue for a divorce, and extricate themselves from a defiled relationship.’

Let us be clear, in the case of Jewish Christian weddings, because there is a longer period of time between making the vows and consummating the marriage, if one of the parties commits fornication in that time, then the innocent party can sue for a divorce, *but only if they are Jewish*, because the exception is found only in the Gospel that was specifically written for the Jews.

In effect, Jesus discriminates between His Jewish converts and His Gentile converts; the latter are second-class converts. If Jesus did make a ‘special case’ for His Jewish converts then a new batch of legal questions come to the table. What if only one of the parties is Jewish, can they sue for this ‘special case’ divorce? What is the shortest time that can exist between the pre-nuptial vows and the consummation of the marriage? Can it be a week, or one day? What is Jewish? Is it biological or cultural? If biological, what percentage of the DNA must be ‘Jewish’ (however defined) to qualify for this ‘special case’ divorce, approved of by Jesus and having His full imprimatur stamped on the divorce certificate?

**Eighth**, one would have to question the wisdom of Jesus who had the foresight to realise that God’s will for marriage pre-dated Moses’ approval of severing marriages. He displayed His supernatural wisdom when He took His disciples back to Genesis 2:24, not to Deuteronomy 24:1-3. This insight is highly commendable, but in the case of His ‘special case’ divorce, He took up a tradition that Moses did not institute, which has no legal foundation in God’s Torah, and which was imposed on God’s people by the rabbis, and He goes along with it. Not only does He go along with it, but He actually incorporates it into His set of doctrines. So the rabbis created their own law, with no authority from God, and Jesus meekly fell in behind these rabbis and gave His approval to their new, man-made law.

We are entitled to ask: What was the point of rescuing this man-made, post-Mosaic, Johnny-cum-lately custom to divorce an unmarried couple, when His doctrine of forgiveness stated that all adultery and all fornication committed after a marriage had been consummated had to be forgiven, and that He would not make any ‘special provision’ for divorce for sexual sins committed by married persons? The position that the supporters of the betrothal solution have put Jesus in is ludicrous. It makes Him look like a fool, taking His lead from blind leaders of the blind. Elsewhere Jesus had nothing but contempt for the ‘tradition of the Elders,’ but in this case He was blind-sided and didn’t see it coming, if we are to believe that the betrothal solution is the only solution to the so-called exception clauses in Matthew’s Gospel.

**Ninth**, if the only difference between a Jewish Christian wedding and a Gentile Christian wedding is that in the former there is a nine-month gap, and in the latter a nine-hour gap between full committal to becoming one flesh and the moment of consummation, then why did Jesus not see that this did not constitute a logical ground to deny the Gentile Christian the same right to divorce.
the guilty party that He gave to the Jewish Christian? How can this discrimination be justified? It is immoral.

**Tenth**, the concession to institute law courts to administer divorce certificates but only to His Jewish converts, and only in the case of fornication occurring in the nine-month gap (or x-months) between making a full, verbal commitment to becoming one flesh and the consummation of that intent, but deny administering divorce certificates to His Gentile followers, especially those who placed a similar nine-month engagement gap between promise and fulfilment, is odd. Written above the door of these Christian law courts would be the notice: “Admittance to Jews only.”

**Eleventh**, every one can see that an engagement is an engagement and not a one flesh union. Every one can see that if a Gentile Christian puts an engagement ring on the finger of the love of his life that he is set on marrying her, and if she accepts the ring she, too, is fully committed to marrying him. The ring constitutes a promise. They are no longer looking for their life’s mate. The promise is embodied in a tangible object. Accompanying that ring is the question, “Will you marry me?” But it is obvious to all her family, and his family, that the engagement does not make them ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ though they experience in their hearts that something has happened to their singleness, and this is recognised by God in Scripture, because He treats the engaged virgin differently to the one who is not engaged (Deut 21:13-29).

If one culture wants to capture the earnestness of their intense love for one another by prematurely calling them ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ then so be it; calling them does not make them ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ in the sense that these terms have in ordinary day usage. One would expect that Jesus would see that the engaged couple were not yet husband and wife. Why, then, does it require a divorce certificate to break off an engagement promise when the two are not yet one flesh? Gentile Christians do not need to go to a law court to get a divorce certificate to end their engagement, and to retrieve the engagement ring. They do what Joseph did to Mary, they put her away privately. End of engagement. End of story. Move on. Get another girlfriend.

It was a colossal blunder on the part of Jesus, if the betrothal interpretation is the infallible way to interpret the exception clauses in Matthew, in that He fell for the unbiblical tradition of granting a divorce certificate to break off an engagement. Jesus did not need to do this. It exposés a weakness in His claim to be God’s supreme teacher that He would fall for such a noose of a tradition as to regard the engagement to be so binding that it could only be severed or dissolved by using the same divorce certificate, with the same wording, as if the engaged couple were a one-flesh union. How did Jesus allow Himself to be duped by this unnecessary tradition? It constitutes a damaging weakness to Jesus’ claim to be God, and to deliver infallibly God’s teaching to His people if the supporters of the betrothal solution are right, but are they?

**Twelfth**, Moses never instituted divorce for engaged couples. God never instituted divorce for engaged couples. But Jesus, we are told, instituted divorce for engaged couples. Or, rather, it was done for Him by the rabbis, before He was born, and He, unthinkingly, took up their tradition and incorporated it permanently into His body of teaching. Why did Jesus not question the lawfulness of this new divorce certificate for engaged persons? Why did He not reject it in the same way, and using the same reasoning process, that He rejected Moses’ divorce certificate, saying, “From the beginning it was not so.”?

When confronted with the post-Mosaic, new-fangled, divorce certificates for engaged couples, why didn’t Jesus see through it, and declare, “The rabbis, because they wanted to protect the husband,273 permitted you to divorce your (engaged) wives, but from the time of Moses it was not so.”?

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273 A virgin wife was the expectation of every husband. If he engaged her in good faith, and having seen the evidence for her virgin state, the rabbis protected him by giving him the right to divorce her if she lost her virgin status before he married her. She became his property. He did not want to marry ‘damaged goods.’ WYSIWYG did not apply when it came to Jewish weddings.
The supporters of the betrothal solution are agreed that Jesus took His lead from the rabbis because the rabbis called the engaged couple ‘husband’ and ‘wife,’ before they were married, and Matthew, the Jew, similarly called Joseph and Mary, ‘husband’ and ‘wife.’ Jesus also, we are assured, called the engaged girl a ‘wife,’ because in the very words that He condemned married wives from being divorced, He slipped in an exception for engaged ‘wives,’ realising that they were not in the same class as married wives. But the fact that He refers to them as ‘wives’ is said to be proof that He was not including them with the other, married wives.

Jesus said, “whoever divorces his wife . . .” Which ‘wife’ are you referring to? the Pharisees could have asked: ‘engaged wives or married wives?’ but Jesus continued, “whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, . . .” The word ‘except,’ we are told, creates two classes of wives, and the word ‘fornication,’ we are told, is a sin that only engaged wives (or singles) could commit, so it is obvious, we are informed, that Jesus is talking about two different kinds of wives, and that what He says about married wives committing adultery if they remarry, does not apply to the engaged wives. They can get a divorce, and they can become the (engaged) wife of another man, while the first ‘husband’ is still alive, without committing adultery. We are told that Jesus was siding with the rabbis in order to protect these engaged ‘husbands’ from the charge of committing adultery after they divorced their ‘wives,’ which the tradition obliged them to do, using the exact same divorce certificate that was used to divorce a married couple.

In effect, the betrothal interpreters hold that what Jesus is doing is robbing the married man of his Mosaic right to divorce his married wife for fornication, but allowing the engaged man his new rabbinic right to divorce his engaged wife for fornication, which new right was unlawful, because death, not divorce, was the lawful punishment for her fornication (Deut 22:21).

Thirteenth, there is a logical and a moral inconsistency in Jesus giving permission to divorce an (engaged) wife for sexual infidelity before she is married, but not after she is married. If fornication is wrong before marriage, then it is wrong after marriage. What’s the difference? The act of fornication, and its heinousness, is exactly the same whether it is carried out before or after the marriage has become a reality.

Fourteenth, there is a logical and a moral inconsistency in Jesus punishing an unfaithful (engaged) wife with divorce, and punishing an unfaithful (married) wife with death. Jesus allied Himself fully with the rabbis when He, too, called the engaged woman a ‘wife.’ However, the rabbis were more consistent than Jesus, because if an engaged wife committed a sexual offence, they did not call it ‘fornication,’ as Jesus did, but they rightly called it ‘adultery,’ because she was a ‘wife.’ Because the sin was adultery, the rabbis rightly demanded the death penalty. Jesus, we are told, reduced their punishment to divorce, when He used the term ‘except’ in the so-called exception clause in Matthew 19:9, “Whoever divorces his wife . . . except for fornication . . .” This, we are told, gave the engaged husband the right to divorce his engaged ‘wife for fornication. The engaged husband (or her father) should have stoned her, but Jesus gives him permission to reduce it to divorce.

Jesus left Himself open to the charge that “this was not so from the beginning,” because God demanded that both the engaged wife and the married wife, if found guilty of infidelity to their husbands, were to be stoned to death. On what authority, then, did Jesus overrule God and change

274 This point is the foundation for the betrothal interpretation, namely, that by using the term ‘fornication,’ which is dogmatically declared to be a sin that is never committed by a married woman, Jesus must be addressing two kinds of wives in His condemnation of divorce.

275 Of course, betrothal supporters would never accept that a married woman can commit fornication; she can only commit adultery. If there is one thing that they will never give up, it is that fornication always and only refers to pre-marital sex, committed by unmarried persons. Only by maintaining this distinction can they get their Trojan horse wheeled into Mt 5:32 and 19:9. For inside this Trojan are two different kinds of wives, one married and the other unmarried).
the death penalty into a divorce penalty in the case of *engaged* wives? The betrothal solution puts Jesus and God on a collision course over the punishment that is to be meted out to the engaged wife. Jesus preferred to side with the rabbis and oppose God. This is an unforeseen, evil consequence of adopting the betrothal solution. It has not been thought through in a rigorous manner.

**Fifteenth**, supporters of the betrothal solution to the Matthean exceptive clauses sleep safely in their beds knowing that Jesus instituted divorce only for engaged *Jewish* couples. They feel secure knowing that Christians in the West cannot get their hands on this ‘special case’ divorce certificate. But what they have not realised is that once Jesus made an exception for divorce for engaged Jewish converts that this provision automatically became a *permanent fixture* in His teaching on divorce and remarriage. This means that as more and more Jews turn to Christ and congregate in Messianic churches, and who are determined to carry into those congregations all the trappings of their rich Hebrew/Jewish religion, they will return to their marriage traditions.

Now, if they discover that Jesus, *their* Messiah, has granted them permission to divorce their engaged wives and engaged husbands for sexual immorality during the espousal period, they will be emboldened by the betrothal solution to re-introduce these ‘special case’ divorces into their congregations, because they are the ‘special’ people of God, set apart from their Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ. With a sense of pride in their Jewishness, they can point out that there is an exception clause to be added to Paul’s statement, “that there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ; we are all one.” ‘No,’ says the modern Christian Jew, ‘Jesus has given us divorce, which He has not given to you Gentiles.’ And the supporters of the betrothal solution will have to agree with them: we are not all one; Jesus has erected a wall of partition between Jew and Gentile over the issue of divorce during the espousal period. They can get a divorce, but the Gentiles cannot. This is one of the unforeseen consequences of the betrothal solution.

Mark and Luke were written for Gentile Christians, and these Gospels make no provision for the ‘special case’ divorce to be on offer to them; it is only on offer to *Jewish* Christians, and this is why it appears only in Matthew’s Gospel. If this is so, would it not be tempting for Gentile Christians to become converts to *Jewish* Christianity, so that their offspring can be considered ‘Jewish’ and so inherit Jesus’ provision for divorce during the engagement period? By becoming ‘Jewish,’ the infants of Gentiles can be circumcised and be deemed to be within the Body of Christ, and the infant girls could receive baptism as their sign of being ‘in’ the family of God, and not left on the ‘outside,’ in limbo, as obtains in the case of Baptist churches.

**Sixteenth**, the supporters of the betrothal view made themselves hostages to fortune when they declared that the word ‘fornication’ could only mean pre-marital sex, and that no married person could commit fornication. This is based on ignorance of the facts. Married persons can fornicate and be fornicators, as well as be adulterous and adulterers and adulteresses.

**Seventeenth**, the betrothal interpretation is based on the wrong Greek text. It is based on Erasmus’s faulty Greek text. The truth is, that once you remove the Greek word that Erasmus added to God’s Word in Matthew 19:9, the exception clause “except for fornication” disappears, and the *raison d’être*—the reason for the existence of the betrothal interpretation disappears.

**Eighteenth**, the betrothal interpretation gives the same translation to the so-called exceptive clauses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, namely, “except for fornication,” despite the fact that the Greek prepositions are different in both places. They are different because Jesus was teaching two different points in these two places. Being caught in the headlights of their own theory, has blinded their minds to see the difference. These differences are crucial, because on them hang the solution to the enigma of these so-called exception clauses.

**Nineteenth**, if, as some scholars hold, the Romans and the Greeks, as well as the Jews, had a similar betrothal period prior to the actual wedding, then this weakens the foundation of the

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[276] The word *kehilla*, a derivative word from *kahal*, can mean *community*. Most Messianic congregations refer to themselves as a *kehilla*, rather than church, because that word is not derived from Hebrew.
betrothal view. Whether there was a legal commitment to marry at a future date in these non-Jewish cultures, so that there was a true parallel to the Jewish situation is unclear.

Twentieth, the supporters of the Betrothal solution would prefer to translate Matthew 19:9 as follows: “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—except for betrothal fornication which is punished by death—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.” But why would Jesus single out betrothal fornication, when the same death penalty applies to it and to adultery? To justify God’s death penalty the solution requires that the pre-marital fornication be committed after the couple have entered the spousal period, but before the marriage is consummated, because only if she can be viewed as a ‘wife’ could she receive the punishment that belongs to adulteresses.

If a young woman was raped before she was espoused to be married, so that she was not considered to be the ‘wife’ of any man, then the rapist was not subject to the death penalty (Deut 22:29), but then neither could he ever divorce her all the days of his (or her) life if he married her. Twenty-first, under point three above we noted that the Betrothal solution required the following translation: “Now I say to you that who [= a married man], for instance, may have divorced his [wedded] wife—except for the espoused husband who divorced his espoused wife for betrothal fornication which is punished by death—and he [= a married man] may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

The switch from focussing on married couples in 19:9a, to addressing betrothed couples in the exception clause, and then switching back to married couples in v. 9b is not good grammar. The implication of the exception clause is that Jesus taught that if a betrothed husband divorced his betrothed wife it could only be for fornication, and nothing else. This means that his betrothal, when once established in law and custom, is a permanent union (‘all the days of his life’), and he cannot get out of it on any other grounds, not even using the ‘eretz davur or the ‘hate’ option of Deuteronomy 24:1-3. It becomes an indissoluble betrothal bond.

Presumably, if Joseph had divorced Mary for fornication, then she would have been a divorced woman, and no one could marry her, and yet she is not married to anyone! This is unlike the case with married couples, who, after they got the same bill of divorce as the espoused couple got, Jesus did not regard their bill of divorce as dissolving their marriage bond.

Surely, if Jesus agreed that Joseph’s bill of divorce did dissolve their union, then Mary was a free woman. She was free to remarry. But if she is a divorced woman and not an adulterer? The answer must be, according to the Betrothal solution, that Jesus made a further exception to His statement in v. 9b, to allow espoused divorced wives to remarry. So the logic of allowing espoused husbands to divorce their wives is that their divorced


278 There are only two occasions when God stepped in to ban divorce. (1) When a man raped a virgin who was not betrothed, and she agreed to marry him (Dt 22:29; Exod 22:16-17), and (2) when a husband wrongly accused his newly married wife of not being a virgin on her wedding night (Dt 22:13-19). Both wives had an ugly beginning to their married lives. The seeds of disaster and the potential for divorce were there from day one. God saw it, and by removing any escape from the union, He forced the husband to comes to terms with his ‘bound’ state. The abolition of divorce in these two cases was a foreshadowing of what was to come when He would send His Son into the world to make it a universal law that once a lawful union had been formed each couple must come to terms with their ‘bound’ state, because it was one from which there was no escape. Hence the consternation of Jesus’ disciples when they learned this, “In that case, it is better not to marry” (Mt 19:10).
wives are free to remarry. So the assumption that all remarriages are adulterous relationships is false; there are some remarriages which are not adulterous affairs. This is what results when you do some joined up thinking.

At what point does God recognise a Jewish marriage to be a permanent union?

Supporters of the betrothal interpretation, who want Jesus to create an exception for divorce in the case of an unfaithful, espoused bride do so on the grounds that “the first stage [betrothal] of marriage was the legal part, and far more important than the second stage [marriage].” Because of this they argue that it is at the betrothal stage that the espoused bride becomes a wife before consummation occurs. They believe that where Jews become disciples of Jesus, and they have been following their ancient marriage customs, then Jesus made an exception in their case, that if their brides are not virgins when they married them in good faith that they were virgins, then they can divorce them without sinning. Jesus is said to support a culturally-conditioned divorce procedure.

My answer to this is as follows. If there is a public, formal declaration at the betrothal ceremony, and vows are exchanged, and the community in which such a ceremony is deemed to make them ‘husband’ and ‘wife,’ and the ceremony is to be finalised in a subsequent, public, marriage ceremony, then this is the equivalent of a Christian marriage ceremony where the betrothal and marriage elements are brought together in a single ceremony.

The only difference between the Jewish and the Christian marriage ceremonies is the length of time between making the vows and consummating the union. In the case of the Christian marriage it might be just nine hours; in the case of a Jewish marriage it might be nine months.

In the case of Christian marriages, the Jewish betrothal element and the Jewish marriage element are merged into one seamless ceremony, and at the end of this single ceremony, that is, at the end of signing the Register, the community and the State recognise that the couple are now ‘husband’ and ‘wife,’ in the legal sense, even though the consummation may take place at a later date.

The comparable stage in the Jewish custom is reached only after the marriage element has been formally concluded. Then the couple can complete the consummation any time after that stage has been completed, but not before this stage has been completed.

Thus it was possible for Joseph to go through to the final, marriage stage and be recognised as Mary’s husband, yet not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born. He was deemed to be married only after the marriage ceremony had been completed.279

279 Lk 2:4 reports that just days before the birth of Jesus, Joseph travelled to Bethlehem with Mary who is described as ‘his betrothed wife, being with child.’ If he had married her, as Mt 1:24 seems to indicate, then why is she still called ‘betrothed’? “And Joseph, having risen from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord directed him, and received (παρέλαβε) his wife [woman], and did not know her until she brought forth her son, the first-born, and he called his name Jesus.” In 1 Sam 18:27 Saul gave Michal, his daughter, to David as a wife after he betrothed her for 200 Philistine foreskins. David consummated the marriage with Michal. After he fled from Saul, Saul gave her to another man, Phalti (1 Sam 25:44). After the death of Saul, David demanded that Michal be handed back to him saying, “Give up my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself with a hundred foreskins of the Philistines” (2 Sam 3:14). It would amount to the same thing if he had said, “Give up my betrothed wife,” in distinction from a concubine wife, or a slave wife. We know from the context that David had already been married to Michal, and we know from Mt 1:24 that it was so in the case of Joseph and Mary, so it is not possible to use the terminology of Luke 2:4 to argue that Mary and Joseph were still in the betrothed period when Jesus was born to him. In Deut 22:24 “a damsel, a virgin, betrothed to a man” is described as “his neighbour’s wife,” and this is used as proof that a betrothed virgin was considered to be a wife. Unfortunately, Hebrew does not have a word for ‘wife’ so that the text reads, “his neighbour’s woman,” meaning, a woman who is in the possession
However, if, in the eyes of the Jewish community, the betrothal stage is where man and woman become ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ (this point is reached mid-way through the single marriage ceremony among Christians), then they are deemed to be married, awaiting the consummation at some future date. In which case, this is the equivalent stage of a Christian couple signing the Register at the end of their formal exchange of vows before witnesses.

There will be a gap between the Christians signing the Register and the consummation, as there will be between the Jewish couple signing their legal equivalent of the Christian register at the betrothal stage and the consummation at a later date.

The gap between being declared ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ among Christians and consumption will be nine hours, but nine months among Jews, and only after they have gone through another hoop—the marriage ceremony itself.

Does God recognise this gap as constituting a ‘one-flesh’ relationship, or does He only recognise the consummation act itself as the point of no return—the point at which both couples (Jew and Christian) become ‘one flesh’ in His eyes, and after which there can be no divorce? My judgment is that the marriage stage is where the one-flesh union is legally born, even if the consummation did not follow immediately. I base this on the following paragraphs.

Paul recognised that it was the consummated act itself that constituted a male and a female ‘one flesh,’ because going in to a prostitute created a one-flesh union, via a consummated act, but this union was a sinful act.

Over against this obvious fact is this: the fact that Joseph took Mary as his wife (after a marriage ceremony), but did not consummate the union until after Jesus was born suggests that God recognised that the point at which the couple completed the marriage ceremony itself was also the legal point after which it was impossible to break the bond by means of a divorce. Now whether God recognised that the legal contract of purchase at the betrothal stage was also the point at which a legal ‘one flesh’ union was formed is muted in Scripture.

Paul’s use of the analogy between Christ and the Church (see below) would suggest that emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (union of spirits), they were ‘one’ in some unfathomable sense, but not one at the physical level.

If the betrothal stage was a legal marriage in the eyes of God, then it would have been a sin for Joseph to try to get a divorce from Mary, be it a secret or public divorce, for in God’s eyes Joseph was married to Mary at the betrothal stage, if, indeed, this is the point at which the community recognised them to be legally husband and wife.

If the betrothal stage was not a legal marriage in God’s eyes, it would not have been a sin for Joseph to regard the terms of his purchase to have been violated (damaged goods), and therefore he was entitled to break off the contract without the charade of going through the hoop of a Jewish ‘divorce.’

Should the bride be found not to be a virgin in the gap between the betrothal and the marriage ceremony (or at consummation) God demands that she should be killed. Since the unfaithful, betrothed bride is punished with the same punishment that is meted out to a married woman, then neither can be divorced. And if neither can be divorced, then Jesus made no exceptions for unfaithful, betrothed brides to be divorced. Therefore Jesus’ teaching on ‘No divorce for any reason’ is His permanent teaching on this subject.

The relationship between Jesus and His Church is likened to the Jewish custom of marriage, in that the husband-to-be (Jesus) purchases his bride (the Church) with a bride price (His own blood), and no other man can take her from him. She now belongs to him. But between purchase and the marriage feast itself there is a gap, and it is this gap that constitutes the present era of grace. It is a period fraught with danger for the espoused wife, the Church, because while her espoused husband, the Lord Jesus, will remain faithful to her throughout the gap period, there is no guarantee of a neighbour, and as she is still a virgin, she has not yet been mated by the neighbour who owns her. Consequently this text cannot be used as a proof text that a betrothed virgin is a ‘wife.’
that she will remain faithful to Him during this same period, and the marriage feast may yet be called off, and consummation never occur.

On the other hand, if she remains faithful to Him, then she has the assurance in her heart that she can never be sent away by Him. And what applies to the Church will apply to every Christian who knows that they have been purchased by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. The individual Christian is called upon to remain faithful and obedient to the headship of the Lord Jesus, to be totally submissive to do His will, and have eyes only for Him and His interests as they make their way through the time-gap that separates betrothal from marriage and consummation in Heaven, to be forever with the Lord.

6.6.2. The way forward to a new solution

What we need is a new solution that:

1. divorces Jesus from divorce. The betrothal solution does not do that. It presents Jesus holding ‘special case’ divorce certificates in His hands, and dispensing these through the hands of His bishops and elders but only to His Jewish converts. The New Testament Church was predominantly Jewish to begin with, but in the course of time they dwindled to almost nothing. The teaching of Jesus has come round full circle again, or come into vogue once again, in that as more and more modern Jews return to be His disciples, they, but not their Gentile brothers and sisters, can avail themselves of His permanent provision of divorce to ensure that their men folk marry only virgins. Gentiles are not given the same protection, and they have to take their chance that they are marrying a virgin. If she is not a virgin, then that is hard luck on them. They have to live with her in a WYSIWYG world (what-you-see-is-what-you-get), with no prospect of ever being released from her (or him).

2. The new solution must associate every occurrence of the word ‘divorce’ with sin. In the betrothal view there is a ‘good’ divorce, which Jesus endorses as a good thing, and there is a ‘bad’ divorce which He hates. This distinction must be abolished in the new solution.

3. The new solution must take into account the linguistic evidence that the term ‘fornication’ cannot be restricted to pre-marital sex. This is the lynch pin that holds the betrothal theory together. The evidence is clear that married persons can be fornicators and fornicate, just as they can be prostitutes and prostitute themselves. The term ‘fornicate’ and ‘prostitute’ go back to the same root.

4. The new solution must be based on the Majority (Byzantine) Greek New Testament published by Robinson & Pierpont, which has removed Erasmus’s addition of τί before μη in Matthew 19:9. The removal of this word will remove the exceptive clause altogether in Matthew 19:9.

5. The new solution must come to terms with the different Greek words used in the so-called exceptive clauses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. It is a common failing of works supporting the betrothal solution that they ignore these differences, because behind them Jesus is making two separate points.

6. The new solution must take into account that Jesus is referring to one and the same wife in Matthew 5:32, and one and the same wife in Matthew 19:9, in accordance with the grammar of their respective sentences. It is a keystone of the betrothal solution that Jesus is addressing two kinds of wives in both places. This is eisegesis, not exegesis.

7. The new solution must not manipulate or distort the use of rabbinical material. For example, the rabbis regarded the engaged ‘wife’ as in the same category as a married wife, whose infidelity is called ‘adultery’ and the punishment was death. But in the betrothal solution this information is disregarded, and in its place they regard the engaged ‘wife’ as really a single person, and so her infidelity is called ‘fornication’ (which it is in Deut 22:21), and her punishment is reduced to divorce (which it is not in Deut 22:21).
Now the Jews never permitted divorce for adultery or espousal fornication. This sleight of hand is a dishonest use of the rabbinical sources upon which they claim to find their master key to unlocking the meaning of the exceptive clauses in Matthew 5:32 & 19:9. In any new solution there must be transparent honesty in the use of rabbinical sources. It must be made absolutely clear to the readers where rabbinical sources have been altered, modified, or manipulated to make them support a predetermined goal that is not found in the source documents. The betrothal solution gives the impression that it is based on trustworthy Jewish documents setting out the details and laws pertaining to marriage customs among the Jews in Jesus’ day.

(8) We must not present Jesus as taking His theology and ethics from the rabbis, as the betrothal solution does. Jesus despised them and used the harshest terms possible to condemn them and their ‘traditions of the Elders,’ which Jesus found nauseating and a burden on the people of God. The introduction of a divorce certificate to get out of an engagement was the creation of the rabbis. It has no legal basis in God’s Torah, and certainly Moses did not sanction it. We should not present Jesus as a poodle dog jumping through this rabbinic hoop. That is an undignified role to put Jesus in.

(9) The new solution must not create divorce law courts in the Church, as the betrothal solution would require for Jewish Christians to come to, to dissolve their binding engagement commitments.

(10) The new solution must not divide Christ’s Church into two distinct groups on the grounds of race between Christian brothers and sisters. Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage must be applicable to Jew and Gentile Christians alike.

All the points outlined above are present in the new solution being put forward in this book.

6.6.3. The importance of virginity in a bride

Having presented the best and the evil aspects of the betrothal solution, and an outline of a new solution to the so-called exceptive clauses in Matthew’s Gospel, it is time to delve more deeply into the betrothal solution, which appears to be the only one on offer to conservative-evangelicals to rally around.

It is wise to have grave reservations about cultures that demand virginity in the bride but not in the bridegroom, and if the bride is not a virgin on her wedding night, then she can be divorced, but not vice versa. This is a case of double standards.

Where once in Ancient Near Eastern societies a bride was bought for money and was a possession, much like cattle and goods, one can see that a non-virgin bride would be deemed to be ‘spoilt goods,’ and returned to her father (the seller). That is a given fact of life in those kinds of cultures, and we can place Hebrew culture within its Near Eastern context in this respect. But with the coming of Christ and the re-introduction of marriage as it was ‘in the beginning,’ all of these cultures must undergo a complete transformation. ‘All things become new,’ applies to marriage customs as much as to all other aspects of societal living.

280 The case of Joseph privately putting away Mary cannot be an example of the Jewish tradition relating to espoused brides, because these ‘divorces’ had to be public occasions, otherwise the purpose for introducing these bills of divorce by Moses would have been lost. Moses feared that men could accidentally commit adultery once God had introduced the death penalty for that sin, because up until his day a verbal rejection was sufficient to divorce a wife. There is no legal term in Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew, that is equivalent to the English word ‘divorce.’ These languages use verbs, all of which involve acts of aggression toward women, to refer to the act of divorce. These are hate verbs. In any case, we cannot be sure when the rabbis changed the death penalty to divorce in the case of adultery and espousal fornication. It is very likely that it came about after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. See 7.10. Paul, Jesus, Hillel and Shammai.

281 See also section 5.8. How far can Old Testament laws be imposed on the Church?
The reason why a man had to marry a virgin in Israel was to ensure that every man’s offspring could be traced back to those to whom great promises and covenants were made concerning possession of land in Palestine and future inheritances. Only physical, legitimate descendants could inherit these promises. Illegitimacy disqualified. Illegitimate sons could not be members of the people of God—‘the Church in the wilderness’ (Acts 7:38) for ten generations of descendants. The need for such purity of descent has long since passed with the coming of Jesus. In Him all genealogies have terminated. Illegitimate children can now inherit the Kingdom of God, as can repentant adulterers and murderers, and all those who formerly committed capital punishment sins while living under the Mosaic law.

So while one would expect every bride and groom to be virgin on their wedding night, anywhere in the world, no exception must be made for Christian Jews. Not to find her a virgin is not a cause for divorce, or to invalidate the union. Young men (Jew and Gentile), as much as young women, are not virgin in their thought-world while they are in an unregenerate state (before conversion).

Those who are keen to make Jesus condone divorce for those brides who are not virgin on their wedding night, and who conceal it from their husband, do so by bringing forward one law to do with sexual purity, but conveniently ignore all the other laws, and do not bring these forward into Jesus’ teaching and make them an integral part of Christian doctrine. This is picking and choosing in a mix-and-match hotchpotch of Christian doctrine to get what one wants out of the obsolete laws of Moses. If one brings forward one law, namely, Deuteronomy 22:13-19, then he must bring forward all the other laws relating to the same topic. For example, if a man has sexual intercourse while his wife is menstruating, both are to be cut off from the people of God (Lev 20:18). A man is not to disfigure his beard (Lev 19:27).

Those who are keen on insisting that Jesus is referring to Deuteronomy 22:13-19 in the so-called exception clause in Matthew 19:9 realise that if a husband does not find his bride a virgin on her wedding night that he is entitled, using Jesus’ exception clause, to divorce her the next morning, and look for another bride, who, hopefully, is a virgin, but if she is not then he can repeat the divorce procedure for as many times as he needs to, until he finds a virgin bride. Faced with this logical outcome to Jesus’ exception clause, some Christian writers are advocating that all couples (especially Christian couples) should have a private meeting at which both should confess their sexual histories before the other, and before the wedding takes place. It is thought that this would pre-empt either party divorcing the other because they enter their marriage knowing what they are getting from each other. This situation would never have been tolerated in Hebrew/Jewish culture, as Joseph’s reaction demonstrates as soon as he heard that his bride-to-be was not a virgin. It is good for a Christian man not to touch a non-virgin. It is asking for trouble, physical and spiritual.

Jesus made a great contribution to abolishing the evil of divorce in every culture when He made the statement: “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28). On this standard no young groom would ever reach the altar.

The one thing that can be said of the Hebrew religion is that every male member of the Old Testament Church was born of a virgin mother. God was absolutely strict on this necessity. So strict was He that He required the death penalty for every bride who was not a virgin on her wedding night, and whose parents could not provide proof of her virgin status when they gave her away in marriage (Deut 22:13-29). That is a very high standard of morality to maintain, and a very high price to pay if it was not maintained. But the standard and the penalty were introduced with the sole object of ensuring that the promise made to Adam that from his seed would come his redeemer, would be fulfilled. The same promise is narrowed down to Abraham, then to Isaac, then to Jacob, then to Judah, then to David’s line, and so to Christ. It was Satan’s purpose to contaminate the line

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running from Adam to Christ, so that no one would know if God had kept His promise to Abraham and David or not.

It is the fact that the Messiah-Jesus emerged out of Joseph’s house, who was ‘of the house and lineage of David’ (Lk 2:4) that God was able to demonstrate that He had kept His word. But if Satan had managed to contaminate the lineage of the Messiah as it passed down the male line from Adam through Seth, through Shem, through Abraham, through David, through Joseph, he could only do so when the seed passed out of the loins of each carrier of the seed into the womb of a virgin mother. Because each male link had to pass through the womb of a woman, because the male carriers died, the seed was at its most vulnerable to being lost when it made the transition from husband to wife. If she was not one hundred per cent faithful, then her firstborn son may not be her husband’s firstborn and heir, and that would cause great confusion.

Now that the Messiah has come, the death penalty has been removed for fornication and adultery. It is highly desirable that a Christian man marry a virgin wife, but if she is not a virgin he can neither kill her or divorce her. Jesus laid His axe to the tree of marriage as an indispensable hoop through which every man had to jump to please his Creator. The era of physical begetting to expand the membership of the Old Testament Church was now a thing of the past, The era of spiritual begetting had arrived in the person and example of Jesus Himself. There is something better to live for than sex, He revealed. The custom of marrying and giving in marrying had to take a back seat in His Kingdom.

6.6.4. Physical begetting has given way to spiritual begetting

We can start off with an analogy. The Holy Spirit did not instruct the Church of God to abolish social realities, such as the master and slave relationship. He transformed the outlook of both classes. The master is the slave of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 7:22), and Christ is his master (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1); and the slave is the Lord’s freedman, and freeman (1 Cor 7:22). Slaves and masters have the same Holy Spirit abiding in them (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). The Christian slave and the Christian master are brothers in Christ (Phlm 16), and this is all the more reason that the slaves should submit to their masters in the same manner that they submit to Christ (1 Tim 2:9-10).

At the spiritual level ‘there is no longer slave or free’ in Christ (Gal 3:28), because Christ is the master of both; they are all His slaves. They are all one class in Christ (Gal 3:28). Those who are born free must not become slaves, because they are already Christ’s slaves (1 Cor 7:23). Christian slaves are to obey their masters (Christian and non-Christian) as if they were obeying Christ Himself (Eph 6:5-7), and to do so ‘as slaves of Christ’ (Eph 6:6).

If slaves can buy their way out of slavery, or become free through legitimate and lawful means, then they should do so, but only with the motive that they can serve Christ directly (1 Cor 7:21). The slave serves Christ through serving his immediate, physical master. Likewise the wife serves Christ through serving her husband (Christian and non-Christian), who is her immediate head. The slave uses his will to do the will of his master. The wife uses her will to do the will of her

283 Some supporters of the betrothal solution use 1 Cor 7:2, “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband,” as proof that the use of the term ‘fornication,’ which is a sin that only unmarrieds can commit, implies that Paul is addressing unmarrieds. If so, then Paul is commanding every unmarried man and every unmarried woman to get out of the unmarried state as soon as they possibly can, to avoid the sin of fornication. This goes against his principle that each person is to remain in the married state in which God called him/her (7:20, 24). “Are you bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife” (7:27). The solution is that he is addressing married couples, who already have proved that they do not have Paul’s gift of continence, so they are more vulnerable to slip into fornication, a sin which marrieds can commit, according to Paul’s use of the term here.
husband. The master and the husband use their will to do the will of Christ, who uses His will to do the will of God, so that God will be seen to be all in all (1 Cor 14:28).

The husband and the master serve Christ directly, not through some human intermediary. The male slave can move from serving Christ indirectly to serving Him directly, if he can become free. The wife can never do this. All her married days she serves Christ indirectly, through her ordained head.

If it is good for a man not to ‘touch’ a woman, that is, not to become one flesh with her through marriage, so that he can be more devoted to serving Christ, then the same applies to the girl. It is good for a woman not to ‘touch’ a man, that is, become one flesh with him, so that she can be more devoted to serving Christ in body and in spirit (1 Cor 7:34).

Marriage has a detrimental effect on the level of devotion that can be given to serving Christ. It never adds, it can only subtract, and distract from serving Christ. Where possible, Paul advises, do not marry, not as a command (which some heretical groups made it), but to avoid the avoidable (cf. Mt 19:10). Paul’s advice would have been, only marry when the physical urge to do so is so great that it, itself, becomes a distraction from serving Christ as a single person (1 Cor 7:9).

The object of every convert to Christ should be to serve Christ as fully and as undistractedly as possible. If the convert is single when called to serve Christ then they (male and female) should stay single for the rest of their lives. This is the best option. This maximises what they can give back to Christ for buying them with His blood.

Those who marry because they have to marry, have no choice. They must make the best of their privileged calling to be married, for it is a charisma from God (1 Cor 7:7), and within that context to devote as much of their time to serving Christ as is possible, and raising up children (the gift of God) to serve Him. Too often today, the children of Christian parents are lost to the family of Christ, and are attracted by the lures of the world to end up in perdition. It might seem to the Christian parents that they devoted a lot of time and money to no profit for Christ.

God did not create woman in His image and likeness, as He did the man. They are not the same being in God’s eyes. He created the woman for the man, but He created the man for Himself. The man has been placed over the woman. He has been put in full control over all that God created, and that includes woman. God has created ‘sons of God’ and these are central to His creation; woman is his helpmeet, not his head, and never to exercise authority over him. The glory of the sun is different from the glory of the moon; likewise the glory of man is different from the glory of woman (1 Cor 11:7; cf. 15:41).

This top-down approach to the relationship between men and women, and husbands and wives, is reflected in Jesus’ statement that a man may even give up his wife for the sake of the kingdom of God (Mt 19:29; Mk 10:29; Lk 18:29284). But there can be no vice versa here, because the woman is subject to the man’s headship. Paul has the same outlook as Jesus in that he addresses the men-folk with the advice, “Brothers, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, . . . for the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor 7:29-31). Both Jesus and Paul are very conscious that man is central to God achieving His will on this earth, consequently, the unmarried state is preferable because God and Christ benefit most from it. The single man is to think hard before he marries. If he ‘binds’ himself to a wife, he must live with the consequences of that decision. Likewise the single woman must weigh up the cost to her of losing her glorious opportunity to devote her body and spirit to serving God, and forego marriage, if possible.

Because the ‘sons of God’ are the focus of God’s attention, every man, married or unmarried, must be ever vigilant not to allow any custom or tradition to rob him of his privileged

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284 Some early transcribers (Codex Vaticanus in Mt & Mk/Codex Sinaiticus in Mk; but Vat. and Sin. retain ‘wife’ in Lk) saw a contradiction in Jesus’ teaching here, that a man is not to desert his wife (1 Cor 7:12), and these scribes deleted the mention of ‘wife’ from their copies. Men who do such things are not to be trusted, nor their copies.
status before God. He was created to be leader of his family, and leader of women in general, such that he must never submit to any woman in any position of authority/leadership in the Church. If she cannot rule over her own husband, then she cannot rule over the husbands of other women. Attempts to get round this ban usually take the form of ‘joint-leadership,’ such as husband-and-wife teams. These must be rejected as backdoor attempts to strive for equality. It is quality, not equality, that Jesus looks for among the daughters of God.

Given today’s multi-media influence on young people and the temptations to indulge in pornography and drugs at a younger and younger age, it is a wonder that any child of Christian parents can shield them from the polluting influences of the world, which appeal strongly to the desires of the flesh. Peer-group pressures outside the family home have more influence on the child than those of the family itself, where the battle rages to establish right from wrong, and true from false values. If there is no ‘born again’ experience the war is lost, and the child is lost forever. They grow up, and are servants of Satan, to do his will. Is marriage really worth it if this is the majority experience of Christian parents in the modern, electronic era?

The Holy Spirit’s teaching through Paul had a profound impact on Christians throughout the first few centuries, where it was recognised that to be free from marriage was the best option from Christ’s perspective. Christ, Himself, set the standard, by refusing to follow the norm of His day, which was to enter into marriage. Today, marriage is still seen as the norm, and to be unmarried is seen, especially by the non-Christian world, as missing out on the pleasures of the flesh.

Where the motive of the convert is—in refusing to be married—to be totally dedicated to serving Christ, this is of great value in the sight of God and His Christ. Where refusing to be married becomes an end in itself, or a means to earn salvation, it is of no value in the sight of God and His Christ. The value lies in the motive.

Under the old dispensation, to have sons was essential to God’s plan, who constantly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a multitude of physical sons so that they could become a multitude without number, as the stars in the sky, or grains of sand on the sea-shore. But with the coming of the Messiah-Jesus all of this came to an end. The goal changed from having physical offspring to having spiritual offspring. Marriage was no longer essential, because that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Conversion to Christ became the essential thing. Spiritual begetting has taken priority over physical begetting with the advent of Christ’s coming. Christ shifted the focus and life-goal of each of His converts away from physical begetting to spiritual begetting. Paul delighted to have spiritual offspring, not physical offspring. His converts were his children, and how he loved and cared for them.

The Lord Jesus reset the compass with the needle always pointing to Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and away from Moses, who represented the physical world of marrying and giving in marriage, of divorce and remarriage, of endless sacrifices for sin, of hard-heartedness, and the inability to please God in the flesh.

What was said about physical versus spiritual begetting applies equally to physical versus spiritual land. Physical land and physical begetting were left behind with the new era that commenced with the coming of the Messiah-Jesus. What applies to one, applies to the other.

Today, the physical land of Israel is as inessential to God’s plan, as is the physical begetting of offspring. The spiritual has superseded the physical in all areas. Truly born-again Christian Jews no longer place any value on the physical land of Israel, or the physical city of Jerusalem, but have set their eyes on inheriting a different country and a different city, a new, spiritual Jerusalem, whose builder and maker is God. Everything has been moved from the physical to its spiritual counterpart in the heavens.

We all, like Abraham, look for a new country and a new city, wherein dwells righteousness and peace. Like spiritual begetting, so with spiritual land, both are experienced in the here and now, and not just in more depth in the distant future. We already tentatively walk the streets of the New Jerusalem, as we walk in the same light that lightens the New Jerusalem that is above. For God is its
light, and God is present in the lives of each of His spiritual offspring here on earth, shedding His light on their path. We *have* passed from darkness into light. We *have* passed from the physical Jerusalem to the spiritual Jerusalem. We *have* passed from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. All things have become new. All things have been changed.

Jesus opened the eyes of the world to see a completely new dimension to life that was kept hidden from the foundation of the world. But once opened and ignored, or glimpsed and turned away, or tasted and rejected, it will be more tolerable for those of Sodom and Gomorrah than for those who had the privilege to encounter Jesus through His new teaching and not become His disciples.

### 6.6.5. The ‘exception of Jonah’ in Matthew 16:4 and the parallel in Mark 8:12

Those who hold that the Jewish espousal custom holds the key to the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 are to be commended in that they have arrived at the right conclusion (no divorce for consummated marriages) but from the wrong direction.

One of the strongest arguments used to support the betrothal interpretation is that the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 is not repeated in the parallel account in Mark 10:9 nor in Luke 16:18. Therefore the exception clause must have something to do with something that is unique to the Jews.

Are there any parallels in the Gospels where an exception is made in one Gospel, which is not repeated in another Gospel, but, which must be assumed to carry over into the Gospel that does not record the exception? There is one such example. The pericope Matthew 16:1-4 = Mark 8:11-13 takes place at Magdala, where the Pharisees press Jesus to display His miraculous powers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 16:4</th>
<th>Mark 8:12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and no sign shall be given to it, except (τι μη) the sign of the prophet Jonah.</td>
<td>Why does this generation seek after a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the occasion is the same, and the place is the same, and the time is the same, is it not reasonable to conclude that Mark left out the exception clause when he came to edit the material he used to compose his Gospel? If, as some believe (and wrongly), Mark wrote his Gospel first, and Matthew and Luke used it as the basis for their Gospels, where did Matthew get his exception clause from? Could it have been that the ‘sign of Jonah’ was still fresh in his memory from 12:39-40? Luke does not have a parallel to this particular pericope, but he records the exception clause in Jesus’ discourse in Luke 11:29-36. Verse 29 reads, ‘This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign shall be given to it, except (τι μη) the sign of the prophet Jonah.’

What would Mark’s readers make of his omission to mention the exception in Jesus’ apparently absolute statement that the Jews would not be given a single sign, i.e., a demonstration of His miraculous powers? What looks like an absolute statement in Mark turns out not to be absolute after all, because Matthew retained the exception clause, ‘except for Jonah the prophet.’

Is this not a parallel to the missing exception clause in Mark 10:9? Matthew retained the exception clause, ‘except for fornication,’ which Mark omitted. Many pro-divorce writers feel strongly that the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 should be in the mind of the reader who reads Mark 10, Luke 16, Romans 7, and 1 Corinthians 7. On the face of it they have a strong case. Erasmus and the Protestant Reformers argued cogently that all Scripture passages about divorce must be
interpreted in the light of the unambiguous exceptions contained in Matthew’s exception clauses,
and it was very difficult for anyone to escape the logic that enclosed the mind of Europe at that time.

What is damaging to this parallel is that while there is an 

\[ \text{ēi0 mh} \]

in the Jonah passage, there is

no \[ \text{ēi0 mh} \]

in the case of Matthew’s so-called exception clause. Here is where the breakdown occurs.

However, supporters of the betrothal interpretation arrived at their solution in the distant past,
when Erasmus had changed the Greek of Matthew 19:9 to read \[ \text{ēi0 mh} \], thus creating a direct parallel
with the exception clause in the Jonah passage. The betrothal solution worked on the assumption
that Jesus did make an exception for fornication, and they were puzzled to find something in Israel’s
laws that would allow Jesus to make an exception for ‘fornication’ and yet allow Him to maintain
that no consummated marriage could ever be dissolved. The solution lay in the situation that Mary
and Joseph found themselves in. This scenario requires a separate section to unravel, see Should
Mary have been executed? below.

The point of this section is to show that the betrothal interpretation arose out of a Greek text
that was deliberately tampered with by Erasmus in order to get his interpretation of Jesus’ teaching
on divorce into the New Testament. He was a humanist, and he was determined to get Jesus to
allow divorce for fornication. The Reformers did not spot the trickery and were duped into
accepting that Jesus permitted divorce for fornication.

Those who support the betrothal solution have been similarly duped by Erasmus into
accepting that Jesus did introduce an exception clause into His teaching on divorce. This work has
exposed Erasmus’s deception, so that those who formerly supported the betrothal solution will
quickly see through Erasmus’s deception and go back to Matthew and remove Erasmus’s exception
clause, and take a fresh stand on what Jesus did say about divorce and remarriage.

6.6.6. Did Jesus make an exception for fornication?

Almost all supporters of the betrothal interpretation follow the wording of the King James
Version (AV) when it comes to the so-called exception clauses. This version followed the Greek text
of Erasmus, who added the Greek word \[ \text{ēi0} \] before \[ \text{mh} \] at Matthew 19:9, and by this small addition he
altered Jesus’ exclusion of divorce on all grounds, to one in which Jesus made an exception for
fornication. These supporters never doubted that Matthew included an exception for fornication, but they
were wrong. They were not in a position to even question the Authorized Version translation itself,
such has been the low level of scholarship among them. Unfortunately, the New King James Version
is no better than the old KJV, because it translates the Majority (Byzantine) Text as if it were translating
Erasmus’s Greek text of 1516. But the Majority Text has rightly discarded Erasmus’s addition of \[ \text{ēi0} \]
before \[ \text{mh} \], yet the NKJV retains the old exception clause, for it reads: “And I say to you, whoever
divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Given that a shift is occurring toward the acceptance of the Majority Greek text of the New
Testament, as the nearest thing we are every likely to get to the original autograph text itself, it is
disturbing that the New King James Version perpetuates the Erasmian exceptive clause, which is not
in the Majority Greek text, nor is it in the Nestle-Aland Greek text (28th ed.), which goes back to
Westcott & Hort’s 1881 Greek text, which was based on two, isolated, Egyptian manuscripts, both of
which were in a state of degenerating into oblivion when they were rescued, but not before they lost

\[ \text{285} \]

Unfortunately, almost every evangelical writer on the topic of divorce follows Erasmus’s
Greek text, and they translate Mt 19:9 as “except for fornication/sexual immorality.” This concession
to Erasmus wrong foots the lot of them. See, for example, J. Carl Laney’s contribution in H. Wayne
House (gen. ed.), Divorce & Remarriage: Four Christian Views (Downers Grove, ENG.: Inter-Varsity
a considerable portion of their text, which had to be supplied from later manuscripts. Evangelicals urgently need a revision of the NKJV which will be faithful to the underlying Greek text. Even Wilbur Pickering’s English translation of his Family 35 Greek text (really von Soden’s Kr text), which does not have Erasmus’s addition, has not altered the AV text, because his text reads: ‘except for fornication.’ This shows how embedded the KJV is in the minds of textual scholars.

However, given that the betrothal interpretation came into being on the assumption that the Erasmian exception clause faithfully represented the mind of Jesus, godly men instinctively sensed that Jesus would never allow divorce for a lawful marriage. They had to find some way that would allow them to retain no divorce on any grounds, and yet allow the exception to stand. The solution was found in the custom of the Jews whereby it was possible to get a divorce before one was married! This custom was unique to the Jews, for the Greeks and Romans had nothing exactly like it. The fact that only Matthew carried the exception, which was written to and for the Jews, lent further credence to their belief that they had stumbled on the key to the exception clauses in Matthew. The fact that Joseph availed himself of this custom to divorce Mary, his espoused wife, clinched the argument in favour of their interpretation, they held.

The question was asked, Did Jesus make an exception for fornication? According to the NKJV the answer is Yes, but according to the Greek text behind the NKJV, the answer is No. We need to bring out the meaning in the Greek text if we are to get back to what Jesus really taught on the issue of divorce and remarriage. In what follows, I shall propose a revision of the NKJV at Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

6.6.7. Does ‘fornication’ in the Bible refer only to pre-marital sex?

A search of dozens of web sites supporting the Betrothal solution to the so-called exception clauses in Matthew’s Gospel frequently contain the following sentence: “Fornication and adultery are not interchangeable words, otherwise they would not both be listed when sins are categorized as in Matthew 15:19 and Galatians 5:19.” This is a false deduction. It betrays ignorance of how language works. This is usually followed by a summary of the Betrothal interpretation such as:

In the Bible, ‘fornication’ always refers to sexual sin committed by single (engaged, or betrothed included) person and ‘adultery’ refers to sexual sin committed by those married. Hence, Jesus was not granting permission for the divorce and remarriage of a husband or wife on the grounds of sexual unfaithfulness in contradiction to the other passages cited in Mark, Luke, Romans or 1 Corinthians, but instructing the Jews that an engagement or betrothal could be broken for fornication.288

286 Codex Sinaiticus was in the process of being burnt when Tischendorf arrived in time to rescue it. Codex Vaticanus was eaten through at both ends, so that bookworms ate almost all of Genesis and from Hebrew 10 to the end of Revelation. After Vaticanus had the missing text restored, and rebound, it was again discarded and bookworms began to eat through both ends again, until it was dismantled in the 1890s and has never been put back together again. Yet these two discarded manuscripts became the basis of the Nestle-Aland editions.

287 Wilbur Pickering, The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken (published in USA; Lexington, KY, 04 December 2013).

288 The earliest reference I could find to this misleading linguistic argument comes from John Ignatius Döllinger, The First Age of Christianity and the Church, translated from the German by Henry Nutcombe Oxenham (1st ed; London: Allen, 1866, pp. 222-36; 3rd ed. 1877; 4th ed; London: Gibbins, 1906, pp. 373, 434). In 1866 (vol. 2. pp. 223, 227) he claims that πορνεία “is always applied to the sin of an unmarried person, not to unfaithfulness in a wife, which is constantly described by another word (μοιχεία) both in the Old and New Testament.” He accepts that the exceptive clauses
Defenders of the betrothal interpretation believe that if they can show that the term ‘fornication’ is not interchangeable with, nor is it a synonym for, ‘adultery,’ but refers only and exclusively to pre-marital sex, then this means that no married person can commit fornication. As a consequence, all extra-marital affairs by married persons are adultery, not fornication. They consider it a major linguistic blunder to say (1) that fornication can include adultery, and (2) that a married person cannot commit fornication. On these two presuppositions hang all their other arguments.

Of these two, the lynch pin is (2). The espousal view can be summed up in one writer’s words, including the square bracket words, “Remember,” he warns, “it was ‘except for fornication [pre-marital sex]’ during the espousal period, prior to the marriage being consummated, that Matthew said one was free to divorce-remarry.” Another writer wrote, “Could the ‘saving for fornication’ be pre-marital sex during the Jewish espousal period, making them free to divorce and remarry because they had not yet consummated the marriage?” What this writer failed to notice was that if Jesus permitted an engaged ‘wife’ to lose her virginity in the espousal period, and was divorced by her prospective husband for her infidelity, how could she be married to another man if she was not a virgin, for every man had to marry a virgin? If she was found not to be a virgin on her wedding night then she was stoned to death (Deut 22:20-21; Lev 20:10), not divorced. And Jesus is made to support divorce.

This view makes a fool of Jesus, who is presented as being incapable of working through the logic of His position.

Another writer, having followed the AV of Matthew 5:32, ‘except it be for fornication,’ asked, “What is fornication in this context? It is having pre-marital sexual relations during the Jewish espousal or engagement period.” According to the betrothal view, the primary definition of the word fornication (porneia) is unlawful sexual intercourse by unmarried persons, and the primary definition of the word adultery (moicheia) is unlawful sexual intercourse by married persons. That, they claim, is the core distinction between the two terms, and since their solution rests on just two pillars, if this linguistic theory collapses, then the whole edifice also collapses.

However, this rigid distinction between pre- and post-marital fornication, and between married and unmarried persons is not sustainable on linguistic grounds.289 It is artificial. It is contrived in order to twist the argument in favour of the betrothal interpretation. If anything the distinction is between sex outside marriage and sex inside marriage. Clement of Alexandria stated, “Anyway, there is a distinction between fornication and marriage, as great as separates the devil from God” (Strom. III. XII. 84, 4).290

Clement quotes Tatian’s view of 1 Corinthians 7:5:

Only refer to betrothal fornication (p. 227), “… Christ carefully distinguishes … between the two words, one (πορνεία) referring to unchastity in the single, the other (μοιχεία) to unfaithfulness in the married.” In Appendix III. “On Christ’s Teaching about Marriage” (pp. 310-316), he repeats his claim “that πορνεία always means incontinence in the unmarried, never, either in the New Testament or in the Septuagint or in the profane authors adultery.”


While agreement to be continent makes prayer possible, intercourse of corruption destroys it. By the very disparaging way in which he [Paul] allows it, he forbids it. For although he allowed them to come together again because of Satan and the temptation to incontinence, he indicated that the man who takes advantage of this permission will be serving two masters, God if there is ‘agreement,’ but, if there is no such agreement, incontinence, fornication [*πορνεία*], and the devil.”

(Clem. Strom. III. XII. 81, 2)

Clement disagrees with Tatian’s view and makes the observation:

The point of the apostle’s addition “And then come together again because of Satan” [1 Cor 7:5] is to stop the husband from ever turning aside after other women. A temporary agreement, although for the moment intercourse is not approved, does not mean that the natural instincts are completely removed. Because of them, he again restores the marriage bond, not so that husband and wife may be incontinent and fornicate [*πορνεία*] and do the devil’s work, but to prevent them from falling into incontinence, fornication [*πορνεία*], and the devil. (Strom. III. XII. 82, 1)

This is how Tatian and Clement expounded 1 Corinthians 7:5, showing that married persons can commit fornication. The only Church Father to attempt to make a distinction between fornication and adultery was Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 385). He wrote: “Any satisfaction of desire which occurs without injury to someone else is reckoned as fornication, whereas adultery is a plot and an injury against another person.”

This is not a very clear distinction. A better distinction would be: Fornication by a married person has the characteristic of having sex without regard to the person cooperating and is impersonal and an end in itself each time; pure sexual self-gratification is the purpose of this promiscuous activity; whereas adultery has regard for the other person and is personal, affectionate, and on-going.

A woman can commit fornication during the betrothal period, and after she has been divorced. For the evidence that married persons can commit the sin of fornication, see 5.10. Vocabulary relating to divorce.

It takes but one example from the LXX of Jeremiah 3:1 to disprove the assertion that married women cannot fornicate. The LXX reads (my ET):

1 If, say, a man sent out his wife, and say she departed from him, and became wife to a different man, surely she shall not (μή) be returning to him again? [expected answer, No (cf. Dt 24:4)] Shall not (οὐ) that women be defiling defilement? [expected answer, Yes] And you—you have fornicated (ἐξεπορνέως) with many shepherds, and are you returning to Me, says the Lord? 2 Lift up now your eyes and see, where have you not been defiled? Upon the roads you sat for them, just like an isolated raven, and you defiled the land with your fornications (πορνείας), and with your badness. 3 And you are possessing stumbling-stones for yourself with many shepherds. You acquired the face of a prostitute (πόρνης). You acted shamefully toward everybody.

Here Yahweh sees Himself in a marriage metaphor, married to Judah. He divorced her because of her unfaithfulness. She went off and fornicated with many other men, which means that she is not permitted to return to her first husband, but, surprisingly, and brazenly, Judah thinks she can come back to Yahweh, her first husband. The implication of the divorce metaphor is that she has made it impossible for Him to be reconciled to her, because she is a defiled person (cf. Deut 24:4). The metaphor continues in LXX Jeremiah 3:6-8 (my ET):

And the Lord said to me in the days of Josiah the king, You saw what she did to me, the dwelling of Israel. They went up upon every high mountain and under every leafy tree

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291 Gregory of Nyssa, *Canonical Epistle to Letoianus*, Bishop of Melitene, p. 34.

292 Clement of Alexandria wrote: “At any rate, the man [Phinehas] who speared through the fornicator [Zimri] in Numbers [25:8] is shown to be blessed by God” (Strom. III. 4. 32(1)/Ferguson 275). The fornicator was very likely a married man because he was leader of his father’s house (cf. Num 25:14).
and they fornicated (ἐπορνευσαν) there. And I said after these things—after the time of her fornication (πορνεύσας)”—“Turn back to me again.” And she did not turn round again.

And faithless Judah observed this faithless one.

I saw therefore concerning all things which she was overtaken by, in which she—the dwelling of Israel—was committing adultery (ἐμοίχευσεν), and I divorced her, and I gave to her a bill of divorcement into her hands, and faithless Judah did not fear, and she was fornicated (ἐπορνεύθη), and she fornicated (ἐπορνεύσες), she also. And her fornication (πορνεία) became for nothing, and she committed adultery (ἐμοίχευσεν) with stone and with wood.

Now, in Jeremiah 3:1 the scenario that Yahweh describes is of a married woman, who, after her divorce, was fornicating with numerous other males. This is a clear-cut case where a married woman can commit fornication. We see the same picture in 3:6 with regard to Yahweh’s other wife, the Ten Tribes of Israel, who were sent into exile. In 3:8 the married wife of Yahweh committed adultery (which is the correct word to use of a married person indulging in extra-marital affairs), so He divorced her (the Ten Tribes). Judah, Yahweh’s other wife, saw what He did to his wife Israel, but she paid no heed to it, and committed adultery and fornication against Him.

In the case of Tamar, she was the wife of Judah’s two sons, Er and Onan, but after she was married to them she remained a virgin, and it was as a virgin that Judah, her father-in-law had sex with her, thinking she was a prostitute, but she was, in fact a widow, as he calls her (Gen 38:11). When Tamar was three months pregnant her pregnancy was reported to Judah. He assumed that she had acted the prostitute. The report said, ‘Tamar your daughter-in-law has committed fornication [prostitution], and also see, she conceived through fornications.’ It would appear that any unlawful sex is fornication, whether it was committed by unmarriages, marrieds, widows, or virgin widows.

Amos prophesied that the wife of king Jeroboam (II) would prostitute herself ‘in the city,’ so she committed this sin while her husband was still alive, because he reigned 41 years, and died of old age (presumably). “Therefore thus said Yahweh: Your wife in the city prostitutes herself, and your sons and your daughters by sword do fall, and your land by line is apportioned, and you on an unclean land die, and Israel certainly removes from off its land” (Amos 7:17).

Only by limiting one’s search to a small corpus of Greek literature, namely, the New Testament, is it possible to impose the pre- and post-marital distinction, but it has to be imposed.

New Testament Greek was not a special, ‘holy’ dialect of Greek, confined only to Jews living in Palestine in the time of Jesus. It was Koine Greek which was spoken throughout the Roman Empire as seen in the dispersion of the New Testament writings to all parts of the Empire. Consequently, to be sure one has got a clear definition of what porneia meant, one would have to examine its use in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), and then in the writings of those closest to the time of the New Testament writers, such as the Early Church Fathers who wrote in Greek, and then expand the search to include its occurrence in any classical writers. Only by casting the linguistic net as widely as possible is it possible to define the contexts in which the word porneia and moicheia are used. The smaller a net a researcher uses the less likely he is to come to a definitive decision.

However, even if we confine ourselves to examining the thirty-two cases of the use of porneia in the New Testament it is clear that the pre- versus the post-marital sex position does not

293 This would have been Joseph’s assumption when he heard that Mary was three month’s pregnant. Her sin would have been fornication, not adultery.

294 To accept this text at its face value, supporters of the betrothal interpretation are compelled to assume that Jeroboam’s wife outlived him, and as a widow, she prostituted herself. This follows their key assumption that no married woman can commit prostitution (fornication).
hold up. It is not possible to impose on these texts this distinction in every case; there are always
texts where the imposition does not fit. For instance in John 8:41, “You do the deeds of your father.
Then said they to him, We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.” If this is a
snide reference to Jesus’ virgin birth, then the supporters have overlooked the fact that Mary was the
‘wife’ of Joseph before she became pregnant. Her infidelity, according to the betrothal view, you would
think, was one of adultery, not fornication, because she was considered to be the wife of Joseph, and,
according to the betrothal view, wives cannot commit fornication. But the supporters of the
betrothal view will not say that Mary has committed adultery (but the rabbinic work Sanhedrin
would), because their theory states that a married woman cannot commit adultery. The theory is
determining the meaning of words, not linguistics or grammar. The theory is the driving force, not the
lexicons, not the dictionaries, and not the grammars.

The supporters of the betrothal solution thought they were on to a good thing when they
discovered that a Jewish wife could be divorced before she was married, as well as after she was
married! Great pride was taken in unravelling this mysterious tradition before the eyes of ignorant
Western Christians, and being assured that Christians did not have to rely on non-canonical writings
to prove that this unusual Jewish tradition existed in Jesus’ day, because, providentially, there was a
record of Joseph actually using this rabbinic divorce to sever his connection with Mary. But the
discovery was a two-edged sword. It was not all good news.

The moment a supporter of the betrothal view says that Mary committed adultery “before
they came together,” in that admission, the solution disintegrates into thin air. Supporters are not
allowed to say that. They must keep to the party line that she committed fornication, not adultery.
Only if Joseph got a divorce for fornication can the exception clauses be made to apply to his case. If
he got a divorce for adultery then the exception clauses cannot be restricted to engaged wives. The
clauses must then apply to all wives, engaged and married. This is not the outcome that the
supporters of the Betrothal solution want to see come about. This would be a disaster for their
position. It had to be suppressed at all costs, and the best way to do this was to say nothing, and
hope that nobody would notice the inconsistency in their position.

The supporters of the betrothal solution should come clean about the way they are picking
and choosing to make their case stand up. First of all, they should acknowledge that rabbinical
literature, and Matthew, call an espoused, engaged woman ‘his woman.’ Second, they should
acknowledge that rabbinical literature regarded infidelity in an espoused wife as ‘adultery,’ and not
‘fornication.’ They can then place their cards on the table and say, “If we accept that her sin should
be called adultery, then our whole theory crashes to the ground. We cannot allow this to happen, so
we are going to claim that Jesus decided to re-write rabbinical literature and re-classify Mary’s sin as
‘fornication.”’ If we had honesty to this degree, then the claim that Jesus, off His own bat, decided to
re-classify His mother’s infidelity as ‘fornication’ could be examined to see what it was worth, and
whether the grammar or syntax or anything, could deflect the charge that the supporters of the
betrothal interpretation have brought their theory to the text, and imposed it on Jesus, in order to
extricate Him, and shield Him, from being a supporter of divorce for all cases (married and
unmarried) involving fornication.

Supporters of the betrothal solution are against any supporter who claims that “fornication
may sometimes include adultery by extension, and adultery may include cases where there is
fornication.” They point out that this may be so in English usage, but it is definitely not so in Greek.
They point out that if the blurring of the semantic fields that obtain in English were to be repeated in
Greek then it would no longer be possible to be sure which wife Jesus was referring to in the
exception clause itself. They argue that for Jesus to refer to engaged wives then there must be a black
and white distinction between fornication (unmarried) and adultery (married), which means that the
distinctions are locked in pairs. Fornication and unmarried go together; and adultery and married
go together. We are informed that it is because this distinction is frozen solid linguistically in Greek.
that we are able to discern who Jesus is referring to, just through the vocabulary alone that He employs.\textsuperscript{295}

However, in Proverbs 7:10 a wife dresses up as a prostitute [πορνικόν] when her husband has gone on a long journey and she has sex with a perfect stranger whom she finds in the street. She entices the stranger with the information (LXX), “My husband (ὁ ὄφις μου) is not present. He has gone on a long journey. He has taken a bag of money in his hand. At the time of the new moon he will come back.” She wins him over with her flattering talk and the enticing seclusion of a luxurious, scented bedroom, and he falls for her charms, not realising that the sin he is about to commit will cost him his life. If a wife could dress up as a prostitute, then a betrothed ‘wife’ could also dress up as a prostitute. So prostitutes can be of any age and status, single, married, or divorced. The sin they commit is fornication. In the case of married women, their sin can also be classified as adultery.

Supporters are clear over the consequences if adultery is the exception in Matthew’s exception clause, because this would open the flood gates to legitimise the vast majority of all cases of adultery going through the law courts today. Indeed, there would be no law against divorcing your wife every year, if this is what Jesus’ exception referred to. A husband would not need to get his wife to be unfaithful to him in order to get rid of her. All he need do is commit adultery with the woman he wants to marry next, and get his divorce that way. Adultery will dissolve every marriage (so the rabbis believed, and their supporters), so that the two become single again. The innocent party can remarry without waiting for the guilty spouse to die. The guilty party will also be able to remarry, but they will have a black mark against them for the adultery that dissolved the marriage, but apart from that black mark they can enjoy marrying a new partner.

If John 8:41, however, is a snide reference to Jesus’ virgin birth, which it could be,\textsuperscript{296} then Mary, a married woman, committed fornication (the term used by the Jews in v. 41) as the ‘wife’ of Joseph. If Mary was not the intended target of the remark, then the Jews have overlooked the fact that the tribe of Judah had its origin in Judah having sex with a woman he took to be a prostitute, but it turned out to be Tamar, his daughter-in-law.\textsuperscript{297} Judah in this case was a widower. He had no intentions of ever marrying her, but he was prepared to sow his wild oats with a proven prostitute (or so he thought), so this can hardly be considered to be pre-marriage sex. It deserves the description of being indiscriminate, promiscuous sex.

It is frequently asserted that if a married man has unlawful intercourse with an unmarried woman this is fornication, not adultery.\textsuperscript{298} The rule of thumb among betrothal supporters appears to be, if any man (married or unmarried) has sex with an unmarried woman it is fornication, and if any man (married or unmarried) has sex with a married woman it is adultery. This does not hold up in Luke 16:18, or Mark 10:11-12. However, it is frequently argued in betrothal circles that the only time a ‘wife’ could possibly commit ‘fornication’ would be during the betrothal period, because before

\textsuperscript{295} A variant on the Betrothal solution hinges on a similar, rigid distinction in Greek. Here the pairs are ‘prostitution’ (πορνεία) and ‘adultery’ (μοιχεία). Mt 5:32 reads, “except for a report of prostitution.” Presumably this is to make the exception a difficult category to qualify for a divorce.

\textsuperscript{296} For the evidence see David W. Jones, “The Betrothal View of Divorce and Remarriage,” BibSac 165 (2008) 68-85, esp. p. 81 n 40; p. 79 n 35.

\textsuperscript{297} Could it be that within the tribe of Judah there was a split into those born of Perez and Zerah (children of fornication), and those born of Shelah (child of a legal wife)? Jesus’ branch came from the children of fornication, in that Perez begat Hezron, and down his line came Boaz, who begat Obed, who begat Jesse, who began David, and so his line leads to Joseph and Jesus. If so, then there was no knowledge of Jesus’ virgin birth until after He ascended into heaven. The Toledoth Jesu was a scurrilous book, written by Jews, and mimicking the opening words of Matthew’s Gospel. In this work Jesus is said to have had a Roman soldier as his earthly father, but this work came too late to influence John 8:41.

\textsuperscript{298} See M. G. Easton, \textit{Illustrated Bible Dictionary} (London, 1893).
the betrothal period she would not be a ‘wife’ yet, she would still be a single woman. But after the betrothal period she would be ‘married,’ and therefore she would be committing fornication if she cheated on her husband during the betrothal period.

A study of the Greek translation of the two key terms πορνεία ‘fornication’ (and its derivatives (Heb. zenut) and μοιχεία ‘adultery’ (and its derivatives)(Heb. na’af) in the Hebrew Bible, shows a very consistent equivalent translation of the two terms. They never confuse the translation terms.

| πορνεία | 34x Qal/7x Hiphil | πορνη | 41x |
| εκπορεύειν | 1x | | |
| πορνεόμενον | 1x | | |

| μοιχαλίς | 6x |
| μοιχαθαί | 10x |
| μοιχήα | 3x |
| μοιχευεῖν | 11x |
| μοιχός | 4x |

TOTALS: 88x 34x

E. Lövestam made a study of the Hebrew equivalent to porneia and found it was invariably the word zenut. He concluded that zenut covers all the sexual scenes that porneia covers, ‘and both can be used about matters which come under the category of adultery.’ He wrote:

This is the case in the Old Testament, where in many places zanah/porneuein [fornication] (with derivatives) is used side by side with na’af/moicheuein [adultery] (with derivatives) to express the same thing (Hos. 1:2; 2:4; Jer. 3:1ff; Ezek. 16:38-41; 23:37, 43ff; etc.). . . . If we turn to the Rabbinic literature the use of zanah (porneuein) (with its derivatives) about a wife’s unfaithfulness to her husband is well in evidence. In the following passage, zanah [fornication] and na’af [adultery] are directly related to each other: When a wife “commits fornication (mezanaah) she is in the first instance false to her husband . . . and in the second place she is false to the Holy One, blessed be He, who has commanded her, “Thou shalt not commit adultery (tin’af)” (Ex. 20:14) and who says, “Both the adulterer (hano’ef) and adulteress (vehano’afer) shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 20:10” (Num. Rab. 9:2, 25a). This statement relates to the instructions about the wife suspected of adultery in Num. 5:11ff. In the Rabbinic discussions about the possible unfaithfulness of a wife zanah (derivatives) is often used. Here are just a few examples (note that Lövestam has retained the wrong English translation of the Mishnaic Hebrew terms. I have placed the correct ET in square brackets):

“R. Johanan said, Whoever is faithless, his wife is faithless (mezanenet) [= fornicating] to him.” (Sot. 10a).

“What if his wife (is charged with having) committed adultery (zintah) [= fornication] on the testimony of one witness, and he (i.e. the husband) is silent?” (Kid. 66a).

“If we say that they (scil. the witnesses) come before she drank the water, she is an adulteress (zonah) [= fornicator]” (Sot. 6a).

“Suppose that she committed adultery (zintah) [= fornication] within the Temple precincts” (Sot. 6b).

“She committed adultery (zintah) [= fornication] with one of these (the priestly) novitiates” (Sot. 6b).

R. Jose b. Kipper (ca. 180) does not hold the view that a negative precept is applicable to a sotah “even in the case where she had actually committed adultery (zana’i) [= fornication]” (Yeb. 11b).

(In connection with Num. 5:12) A wife “does not commit adultery (mezanah) [= fornicating] unless she has lost her reason” (Num. Rab. 9:6, 25a).

(About the wife who is suspected but does not drink the bitter water. There is a matter of doubt, “did she or did she not commit adultery (zana’i) [= fornicate]?” (Yeb. 38b).

The wife who had committed adultery (zintah) [= fornication] instantly died when she smelled the bitter water (Num. Rab. 9:9, 26a).300

Lövestam claims that the verb zanah ['fornication'] is used about married wives in similar contexts in the writings of the Rabbis, for example, Yeb. 56b; Ket. 44b, 46a, 81a, 101a; Shab. 88b; Sanh. 50b; Siphra 21.9 (94c); Siphre Deut. 22:21 (118a).

Lövestam concluded:

“Against this background the most plausible interpretation is without doubt that porneia in the exceptive phrases in Mt. 5:32 and 19:9 means sexual unfaithfulness. If the intended meaning was any other the term used would have been highly open to misunderstanding.”301

I have omitted Lövestam’s use of the Testament of Joseph as evidence here, because it may not be valid. When the terms are viewed from Potiphar’s wife’s point of view it is adultery, but from Joseph’s point of view it was ‘fornication,’ and this helps the reader to recognise the point of view each time these terms are switched around. However, when Jesus said that any man who marries a divorced woman is guilty of adultery, He did not exclude the possibility that she could marry a bachelor. In which case a single man can commit adultery, as well as fornication.


It is clear from the above evidence that it can no longer be claimed that the term ‘fornication’ is the prerogative sin of unmarried persons. In what follows let us change ‘fornication’ into ‘pre-marital sex’ (for the sake of the argument) in the following texts and see what happens.

First, at the very first Church Council, held in Jerusalem, the apostle James suggested that the Church should send out a decree to all the churches not to come under the yoke of the Mosaic Law, and suggested—“that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from pre-marital sex [fornication], and from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:20). Are we to believe that the Council, in choosing to use the word ‘fornication’ in vv. 20, 29, were addressing only unmarried, young men and women, and asking them to control their sexual urges before they got married? Were they not also addressing married men and women in all the churches? The wording of the decree is repeated in Acts 21:25. The context in Acts 15:20 would suggest that ‘fornication’ was a general word to cover all unlawful sexual activity by all members of Christ’s Church—married and unmarried.

Second, Paul does not seem to abide by the rule that fornication only refers to pre-marital sex by unmarried singles, for as a close observer of human nature he noted, of the wicked men of his day, that “God gave them over to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, . . . God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, pre-marital sex [fornication], wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; . . . .” (Rom 1:26-29). Paul notes that these wicked men ‘leave the natural use of the women,’ which suggests that they were married. Or if Paul means that they turned their backs on marriage and sought an outlet for their sexual drive in homosexual relations instead, then are we to assume from this narrow definition of ‘fornication’ that all these wicked men were unmarried? The betrothal definition would exclude married men being in view here. Greek does not have a word for ‘wife,’ so when Paul says, ‘even their women,’ this could be a reference to their wives, who indulged in perverted sexual behaviour. Were all these men and women unmarried?

Third, Paul urges the brothers he is writing to in Corinth, “Flee pre-marital sex [fornication]. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits pre-marital sex [fornication] sins against his own body” (1 Cor 6:18). If the definition holds up, then Paul is addressing only unmarried men, because they alone can indulge in pre-marital sex. Is this how the text is to be exegeted? Or is Paul addressing all the brothers in the church, married and unmarried? The only obstacle to saying that Paul is addressing all the men in the church is the narrow definition that the supporters of the betrothal interpretation have imposed on the word ‘fornication,’ but is that sustainable?

Fourth, Paul knew his Bible well, and knew that 23,000 men had been killed by a plague that God sent on them for committing fornication (see Num 25:1-9). Paul refers to this event as follows; “Neither let us commit pre-marital sex [fornication], as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Cor 10:8). Is it credible to say that the 23,000 who died were all unmarried men? It is more likely that the majority of these 23,000 were married men.

If fornication refers to indiscriminate sex, then the LXX and Paul wisely chose to throw a blanket over the entire 23,000 men, irrespective of their marital status, and refer to what they were doing as ‘fornication.’ Age does not come into the picture, neither does marital status, what does come into the picture are men (single or married) having sex with Moabite women (single or married), and morality also comes into the picture: it is unlawful sex. When Paul addressed the men in the church at Corinth, and said, ‘Neither let us . . . ’ did he exclude all the married men from his use of ‘us’ in this injunction, and direct his words only to the unmarried brothers? If so, then everywhere where the word ‘fornication’ occurs in Scripture it can only refer to unmarried persons. This is not a credible position to hold. There are too many holes appearing in the dyke to plug all of
them, and is a futile attempt to try to hold back the flood of evidence that points in another direction.

**Fifth**, Paul shows his concern for the breakdown of Christian witness in some members of the church in Corinth, and writes, “And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many who have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleaness and pre-marital sex [fornication] and lasciviousness which they have committed” (2 Cor 12:21). Is it credible to believe that those who sinned in Corinth were only unmarried men? If the narrow definition of the betrothal supporters is correct then they can dogmatically assert, as part of their principles of exegesis, that Paul can only have been referring to single men in this context, on the grounds that they have empirically analysed the use of the word ‘fornication’ throughout all biblical Greek literature, and they have been unable to find a single example where fornication was committed by a married man or a married woman.

**Sixth**, in his letter to the Ephesian church Paul wrote, “But pre-marital sex [fornication], and all uncleaness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints” (Eph 5:3). In 5:5 Paul reminds them, “that no fornicator [one who committed pre-marital sex], an unclean person, nor a covetous man, . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” Does ‘fornicator’ in this context not include ‘adulterers’? With this compare 1 Corinthians 5:11 “and now, I wrote to you not to keep company with [him], if any one, being named a brother, may be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a raider, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — with such a one not even to eat together.” If a brother is not to keep company with someone who has had pre-marital sex, can he keep company with a brother who is an adulterer? The answer would appear to be No, but the supporter of the betrothal interpretation is adamant that the adulterer and the fornicator are two distinct persons, and must not be confused.

**Seventh**, when writing to the church at Colosse Paul advised the brothers, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth;” then he mentions some of these sins, “pre-marital sex [fornication], uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). The first item is ‘pre-marital sex’ but this, according to the supporters of the betrothal interpretation, applies only to unmarried persons; it does not apply to married persons. Paul, we are informed, in this instance has only unmarried persons in mind, because he used the word ‘fornication’ which never applies to married persons. In reply it could be asked, Why would Paul want to single out unmarried persons, and say nothing to the married couples to mortify the infidelity in their lives? Is it not obvious that the term ‘fornication’ has nothing to do with marital status, but has everything to do with unlawful sex, irrespective of the marital status of the person committing the unlawful sex? Linguistically, all apples are fruits, but not all fruits are apples. Once again the truth is that all adulterers are fornicators, but not all fornicators are adulterers. The relationship between ‘fornication’ and ‘adultery’ can be likened to two concentric circles, the smaller, inner circle sitting in the middle will represent the sin of adultery. The much larger circle on which the smaller circle rests, will represent the sin of fornication. So in using the term ‘fornicators’ Paul includes anyone who had indulged in unlawful sex, and this would include all adulterers, and all fornicators. The fact that in John 8 a woman is said to have been ‘taken in adultery,’ does not rule out the possibility that she was, like Mary, an espoused wife, because in Jewish tradition, such wives could be guilty of

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302 It is argued that when Paul told the members of the Corinthian church that to avoid fornication “let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor 7:2) that he was addressing unmarried men and women, and that this proves that fornication was the sin of unmarried persons. But it could easily be argued that Paul is addressing married persons and due to the external pressure to take advantage of free sex, for which Corinth was infamous, he was ensuring that they used the natural outlet of their spouses to ‘burn’ toward one another and not with any other available fornicator.
adultery. But in the betrothal interpretation such wives could only be charged with fornication during the espousal period.

If we return to his advice again, it reads, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” The sin of fornication is not confined to the unmarried, because when the fornicator gets married, the sin of fornication is not left at the altar or at the door of the bridal suite, but lies latent in his nature, and when it is indulged in again we call it adultery, but it is still fornication by another name. It is this evil propensity to misuse sex that Paul identifies as fornication; and this propensity runs from youth to old age. It is not found only in the promiscuous youth but lies dormant in any human who is capable of sex.

Theologically, let us not play around with words, but get down to substance. The evil impulse to have unlawful sex outside and inside marriage is a result of the fall of Adam, and the degeneration of the spiritual life that he once knew. His fallen, human nature has been transmitted to all men. It is this misuse of the sexual drive (good in itself) that is called fornication in Scripture when it is misused. When this misuse is exercised by married spouses inside marriage we call it ‘adultery,’ but it is no different from its misuse outside marriage. Behind both is the driving, evil impulse that Paul calls ‘fornication.’ Getting married does not kill off this evil propensity. Paul says, ‘Kill . . . fornication,’ and this applies to marrieds as much as to unmarrieds. Fornication (= the impulse to have unlawful sex) belongs to our old natures, and he commands all Christians to kill the old man with the lusts and passions that inhere in that nature.

Eighth, when writing to the church at Thessalonica Paul is very clear. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from pre-marital sex [fornication]” (1 Thess 4:3). According to the supporters of the betrothal interpretation, and they make no apology for saying so, Paul’s advice here is addressed only to half of the congregation, the unmarried half, because it is irrelevant to tell married couples to ‘abstain from pre-marital sex,’ seeing they are already married!

Ninth, Jude, when meditating on the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, wrote, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to pre-marital sex [fornication], and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). Are we to conclude from the solution’s narrow definition of fornication—sin committed before marriage—that none of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah who committed this sin of fornication were married?

Tenth, in the book of Revelation there are two significant references (2:14, 20) where the members of the seven churches of Asia are under constant pressure to commit pre-marital sex [fornication], but there are no references to pressure them to commit adultery. Why? Did Satan only target the unmarrieds in these churches?

There are a number of references to the Prostitute [Whore] of Babylon with whom the kings of the earth committed pre-marital sex [fornication], according to the betrothal interpretation (17:2; 18:3, 9). Are we to assume that all these kings of the earth were unmarried men when they committed fornication with her?

In the vision of the Seventh Trumpet, accompanying Revelation 9:20–21, we discover that one-third of mankind were killed, then we learn that “the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands . . . and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries, or of their pre-marital sex [fornication], or their thefts.” Does this mean that two-thirds of the entire population of the world had unlawful sex before they were married? Or does the sin of fornication know no barriers of age, or marital status, or gender, or class? Surely it is the latter.

Jesus analysed the implications of a husband divorcing his wife for any reason, which would be that she would remarry, according to Matthew 5:32. He pointed out that if she did remarry she would be committing adultery, because as far as He was concerned she was still married to her first husband. The bombshell that Jesus dropped at the feet of the first husband was that he would
be held responsible for causing his wife to commit adultery. Then Jesus qualified His statement that the first husband would be held responsible for all of his wife's infidelity by inserting an exemption clause, and the exemption was that if his wife committed fornication before he divorced her, then obviously her husband did not cause her to commit this initial act of infidelity, she did it herself, hence the exemption clause read, 'apart from [her own] fornication.' Here Jesus attributed the sin of 'fornication' to a married woman. So married persons can commit fornication as well as adultery, as Jesus' scenario shows. In His scenario Jesus maps out the consequences of divorce for any husband who divorces his wife. The exemption clause applies to the husband, not to his divorced wife. The entire scenario is limited to the same couple—one wife and one husband.

Jesus' scenario in Matthew 5:32 is a real headache for those who support the betrothal interpretation because of Jesus' use of the term 'fornication,' which is always defined as pre-marital sex by unmarried persons, by those who advocate the betrothal solution. To extricate themselves they have to assume that Jesus is referring to two wives, not one wife. One wife is a married wife (consummated), and the other wife is an engaged wife (unconsummated). The betrothal solution is that the exception clause applies only to the engaged wife, while the rest of the verse applies to the fully married wife. What this solution overlooked was that an engaged wife who loses her virginity faces the death penalty, and she is considered to have committed adultery, not fornication, according to Sanhedrin 52, 66.

In this short section, having examined the thirty-two occurrences of the word fornication in the New Testament, and picked out ten of them where the distinction that the betrothal interpretation has given to the term fornication breaks down, it is clear that one cannot restrict the sin of fornication to unmarried persons indulging in pre-marital sex. This is a real hammer-blow to the betrothal interpretation.

The question was asked, Does 'fornication' in the New Testament refer only to pre-marital sex? The linguistic answer is a definite No. The literary answer is also a definite No. An orange is a fruit, but not all fruits are oranges; so likewise, adultery is fornication, but not all fornication is adultery. Both 'orange' and 'adultery' are sub-categories of the general class. It is for this reason that 'adultery' and 'fornication' can exist side by side, in the same way that 'orange' and 'fruit' can exist side by side in any language. Now, just as 'fruit' embraces 'orange' within its broad classification, so likewise, 'fornication' embraces 'adultery' within its broad classification. In both cases 'orange' and 'adultery' are specifics within their broader, umbrella terms of 'fruit' and 'fornication.' The 'orange' is a specific kind of 'fruit,' and 'adultery' is a specific kind of fornication. For the purpose of this section it is worth repeating that all adultery is fornication, but not all fornication is adultery. Linguistically, they cannot be put into two separate, watertight compartments, with no overlap between them, as those who hold to the betrothal interpretation attempt to do, with their restriction of 'fornication' to the specific sin of unlawful, pre-marital sex, and 'adultery' as unlawful, post-marital sex. But once the lid of these artificial boxes have been blown off, the grounds for their specialised use of these terms evaporates. The attempt to impose on words the meaning that best suits one's argument will eventually be found wanting.

It is as nonsensical to restrict fornication to unmarried persons as it would be to do the same with prostitution. There are married and unmarried fornicators and prostitutes (both words come from the same root). Israel was married to Yahweh, but she was a prostitute, who indulged in fornication (Jud 19:2; Jer 3:1, 8; 13:27; Ezek 16:8+15, 16, 28, 31, 33, 35, 41; 23:5-7, 19; Hos 2:5; 3:3; Amos 7:17) and adultery. Unmarried daughters committed fornication, not adultery, and married wives committed adultery in Hoshea 4:14. Now, while unmarried daughters may not commit adultery, married wives could commit adultery and fornication. It is clear from this that if a married woman can commit fornication and adultery, but an unmarried daughter can only commit fornication, yet the

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303 In Isa 57:3 the sons of Israel are the seed of adultery and the seed of fornication, suggesting that their mother had sex with married and unmarried men, or else through gay abandonment ("with many lovers" Jer 3:1).

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The term ‘fornication’ has been used in its normal, non-specialised, general, signification of unlawful sex whether committed by married or unmarried persons. This undermines the betrothal interpretation, which requires that the term ‘fornication’ can only refer to pre-marital sex. Their solution has demanded that the term ‘fornication’ lose its general signification and become a sin peculiar to unmarried persons. Their interpretation has determined the meaning that ‘fornication’ is to bear. This should be left up to the dictionaries to determine. And the dictionaries should be subordinate to the literary uses that occur in real life situations as recorded in historical documents. The bottom line is that the dictionary definition should come up from below, from usage, and not imposed on the term from above. The betrothal interpretation is guilty of imposing from above a narrower definition of the term ‘fornication’ with the specific intention to make it conform to their predetermined interpretation. This is not a healthy linguistic corner to box oneself into.

It has been shown above (§5.10) that the term ‘fornication’ is used in Greek literature to refer to deviant sexual behaviour by married and unmarried persons. The NKJV translation of Matthew 19:9 reads, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” Armed with the solid, linguistic evidence that ‘fornication’ is unlawful sex, and can be attributed to married and unmarried persons, then, logically, the Erasmian exception clause means that Jesus taught that divorce was permissible for this sin. In other words, Jesus taught that divorce was permissible for adultery, which is fornication.

This Erasmian conclusion was totally unacceptable to some Christians, and out of their consternation was born the betrothal interpretation which depended on rewriting the dictionary definition to suit their argument. It is truly a sign of desperation when one has to rewrite the dictionary to make ‘fornication’ refer only to pre-marital sex, and only performed by unmarried men and women.

For a while the naïve and the gullible will be taken in with this rewriting of Greek dictionaries, this, plus the doctrine that it seeks to defend, will appeal to the Christian who instinctively knows that divorce is incompatible with the Jesus they have come to know and love, and so they feel bound to defend the betrothal view, because if they abandon this ‘rock’ what other ‘rock’ can they stand on? But eventually this redefining of the dictionary definition of ‘fornication’ will be exposed, to the embarrassment of all those who were taken in by it.

It is the purpose of this section to show that there is another ‘rock’ that concerned supporters of the betrothal interpretation can flee to, that will give them the reassurance that they crave, namely, that Jesus had no doctrine of divorce, not even one for engaged couples. The interpretation put forward in this work is that Jesus ruled out divorce for all non-fornication causes, and His Father ruled out divorce for all fornication causes, so that together, they ruled out divorce for any cause.

6.6.8. Should Mary have been executed?

The short answer is Yes. Abel Isaksson noted, “As a just man, Joseph should have accused Mary in court and thus have shamed her publicly. . . . When instead he decided to divorce her secretly, i.e. to hand her a bill of divorce in the presence of only two witnesses, this decision is not
completely consistent with his being a just man.”  Unfortunately, Isaksson interpreted ‘just’ to mean one who abides by the law, and by law he means rabbinic laws. This was an unfortunate assumption.

In Genesis 38:24, we read of Tamar, “Behold she is with child by fornication.” This is Mary’s case exactly, and Judah used her pregnancy as the incontrovertible evidence of her infidelity to have her stoned to death. He acted as a righteous man should. Some condone Joseph’s action not to report her fornication to the public authorities on the grounds that he did not have the required ‘two or three witnesses’ to have her stoned to death. Two or three witnesses may have been required in the case of verbal exchanges, but who could deny that witnesses, in the form of incontrovertible physical evidence may not constitute the place of two or three persons as witnesses? A very brief interview with Mary by the public authorities would have proved that Joseph was not the father of her child. This was not the case when Tamar was interviewed by Judah!

If a man raped a betrothed bride in the countryside (Dt 22:25-27), there would have been no witnesses, yet he was stoned to death on her witness alone, despite the requirement of ‘two or three witnesses’ as stated in Deuteronomy 17:6. There is a similar case to Joseph and Mary in Genesis 38:24, “Behold she is with child by fornication.” Judah used the evidence as his witness to have her stoned to death. Witnesses are important where there is no hard, indisputable evidence.

Deuteronomy 22:22 reads, “And if a man be found lying with a woman married to a man, you shall kill them both . . . “ If her husband is the sole witness of finding her in a compromising sexual intercourse act, does she escape the death penalty because he is the only witness?

Besides this contextual assumption, there are two other assumptions in Isaksson’s actual statement. First, we have no proof that Joseph went through any legal process. The fact that Matthew (writing for Jews) adds ‘secretly,’ tells us that Joseph avoided any publicity, which two witnesses would negate. Isaksson assumes two witnesses would be needed in Joseph’s secret abandonment of Mary. Joseph took unilateral action and backed off from continuing to have any relationship with her. That Joseph never got as far as rejecting her, never mind calling in two witnesses, is clear from the narrative, where he only planned to reject her, but an angel of the Lord intervened to stop him. Isaksson assumes that Joseph is divorcing Mary because of presumed fornication, which he believes is specifically alluded to by Jesus in His exception clause. This is also an unfortunate assumption. It is from his misunderstanding of Joseph’s action that he got the idea that the exception clause could only relate to premarital unchastity, and hence the Betrothal interpretation took hold in his mind.

Secondly, the verb ἀπολύω is an everyday verb and can range from to ‘put out the milk bottles’ to legally put away your wife. The narrative states that Joseph “was not willing to make her an example” (Mt 1:19), which takes it out of the public and legal domain and moves his action into the private and secret domain. It was something he was going to handle personally, and this would be done in secret, or privately, between himself and Mary.

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305 Judah acknowledged that Tamar was ‘more righteous’ than he (Gen 38:26), but he did not deny that he was a righteous man in executing a sexual offender. Joseph should have followed his distant ancestor’s example, because both men were numbered in the ‘Righteous Branch’ that led directly to the Lord Jesus (Lk 3).

306 Cf. Deut 19:15; Num 35:30; Mt 18:16; Jn 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Heb 10:28, for two witnesses.
6.6.8.1. **Could Mary have been executed by the Jews without permission from the Roman authorities?**

It is often assumed that the Roman authorities took away the right of the Jewish Sanhedrin to discipline its heretics. This allows pro-divorce writers to assume that Jesus would have acquiesced in the inability of the Jews to comply with God’s set standards. It would have been to the advantage of any occupying force to allow the Jews to do their own in-house disciplining, and if that involved the death penalty they could turn a blind eye to it. But civil matters was another and very different matter. Here, the death penalty for civil disorder would be the preserve of the Roman authorities.

John records in his Gospel numerous occasions where the religious leaders were in total control of the national religion and had the public audacity to seek to kill religious heretics, such as Jesus. They had their own Temple police force. See John 5:16, 18 (Judea); 7:1, 19, 20, 25 (Galilee); 8:22, 37, 40; 11:53; 12:10. These twelve references to assassination attempts on Jesus’ life at the instigation of the highest religious authority had strong, religious backing in the Law of Moses, where law-breakers and blasphemers were to be stoned to death. Paul was one of these zealous defenders of the Law of Moses.

Paul was given authority from the religious leaders in Jerusalem to imprison and kill any of Jesus’ followers, which he did willing out of pure zeal for God, and to preserve the national religion from heretical views.

A woman taken in adultery would have been stoned to death at a nod from Jesus, showing that these men were keeping strictly to the commands of God. If the Roman authorities had tried to control the death penalty for breaking the Law of God they would have been sent packing with the words that Peter uttered before the Sanhedrin, “We ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). Every Jew, to a man and boy, had nothing but contempt for every Roman soldier who would keep them from obeying God. It was within this fiercely, nationalistic defence of their religion that Jesus lived and moved and had His being. If the Roman authorities had attempted to change the Law of God and take away from the Sanhedrin their right to discipline its heretics, they would have stirred up a hornet’s nest of protest, and galvanised the entire nation to such a pitch of national anger that it could have sparked off riots nationwide, which the Romans would not have been able to quell. The Romans had to tread very carefully not to offend the religious sensibilities of the people, as represented by the Sanhedrin. So if divorce replaced the death penalty, this would have to come from the religious leaders themselves and not be forced upon them by the Romans.

It is an unproved assumption that the Roman authorities interfered in the internal affairs of the Jewish religion and could prevent the death penalty for adultery from being carried out. God commended any Israelite who took it into his own hands to inflict the death penalty for sins that He had laid down the death penalty for. So those who were prepared to stone the adulteress in John 8 would not have been sinning against God if they had carried out the stoning, because they were still living under the Law, and not under Grace, and death for adultery, Sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, etc. etc., must often have been carried out during the 1,500 years since God gave the law at Mount Sinai.

In any case we do not know when divorce certificates came into use to end a betrothal contract, we cannot be sure what Joseph intended, except that it was to be done well away from the spotlight of publicity. Yet the whole point of issuing a divorce certificate, as Moses envisaged it, was that it *had* to be public knowledge to be effective. A private divorce defeated its purpose. It should not be assumed, therefore, that when Joseph planned to ‘send away’ Mary secretly that this had any legal connotations. His son, Jesus, despised the traditions that the Pharisees added to Moses’s law to keep the people in bondage to them, and divorce for betrothal engagements was one such addition. Should we take Joseph’s action in not going public about Mary’s fornication as his snub to these man-made traditions? Did Jesus get His disdain for the whole corpus of oral material that is now contained in the Mishnah from His putative father? The Mishnah represents the lowest level of
spirituality that the Jewish religion descended into. Its pettiness, its triviality, its obsession with minutiae, its lack of respect for the written word of God as shown up by Jesus repeatedly, must have been a pain for the ‘just man’ to put up with. Jesus once said, “Let the dead bury their own dead.” The Mishnah has all the hallmarks of having been written by a dead hand and placed on the shoulders of another dead man to carry out. There is no life in it; just the flounderings of a fish out of water, going nowhere.

Given what we know through Josephus of the intense pride that the Jews took in keeping the Law of God, and the eagerness of civilians to implement the death penalty for adultery right under the noses of the occupying Roman authorities, see John 8, would Mary have been executed by civilians if he had made her fornication public knowledge? Is this why he planned to keep her pregnancy a secret? Did Joseph fear mob rule?

6.6.8.2. When did a divorce certificate become compulsory for betrothal divorce?

The truth is we do not know. What we do know is that Moses never authorised it. We can trace the origin of Isaksson misunderstanding of the exceptive clause to his understandable assumption that Matthew used the term ‘divorce’ to describe Joseph’s reaction to Mary’s pregnant condition as a legal move on his part. He then read back into Joseph’s marriage in 7 B.C., something that we have no proof existed, namely, that a divorce certificate was required to extract oneself from a betrothal marriage.\footnote{Isaksson argued that the Talmud taught that Adam was created an androgynous being in Gen 1:27, but he denies that Jesus was influenced by this contemporary rabbinical exegesis: “The theory of the androgynous Adam is so weak and is avouched at so late a date that it is a very bold assumption to consider it as known and accepted anywhere in Palestine in Jesus’ day” (p. 144). The same could be said of divorcing betrothed marriages!}

We simply have no proof that such a certificate or legal procedure existed in 7 B.C. He concedes that, although the term divorce was used in these cases, it is more accurate to say that it was a matter of cancelling an unfulfilled contract of sale, . . . (cf. Ket. 1.6). . . Actually he does not divorce his [betrothed] wife but is himself relieved by a court order of the need to fulfill his obligations under the marriage contract, since it has been established that the other party has deceived him. . . an exception which Jesus had to make if he did not wish to side with the swindler instead of the person swindled.\footnote{Isaksson, ibid. p. 140.}

The observation has no force because Mary was three months’ pregnant. There was no possibility of Joseph being swindled, therefore there was no necessity for such a law. God had made full provision to ensure that each man had the right to marry only a virgin. It was man who added to God’s Word to make it a law that a divorce must be sought to annul a betrothed ‘marriage.’

With the introduction of a new era—the Kingdom of God—the Torah passed away into history as an obsolete way of living, and Jesus did not envisage a revised Torah. He made no provision for His male followers to ensure that they married only virgins.

Given the new era that Jesus brought into being, the question arises, Is there no divorce even when a bride is not a virgin on her wedding night? The answer is that in Western culture there is no divorce for a lawful marriage. If in a culture you buy your bride on the understanding that she is virgin, and she is not, she is like damaged goods; you take her back and get your money back. End of story. End of contract. It is not lawful, and Joseph did not avail himself of it. In those cultures it is an annulment; the contract was not kept. It is how they view marriage. It is on a par with any other human contract.
In the West, however, all marriages are on a WYSIWYG basis, and it is up to the couple to sort out what they expect of each other, and if the guy expects to marry a virgin, then he must be virgin himself, both in mind and in body. But once the marriage is consummated there is no going back. It is a permanent union which only death can break.

Why insist that Jesus step in and safeguard every man’s right to marry a virgin, but not expect Him to include other exception clauses to divorce an incestuous marriage, or divorce a same sex marriage, or divorce any other devious union? Why pick out betrothal marriages? What is so special about them? Jesus is not at our beck and call. He declined to intervene when a man demanded that He order his brother to share the inheritance equally. “And he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” (Luke 12:14). We could add to this retort of Jesus, “Who made me a divorcer between you and your ‘spoilt goods of a wife’?

The tide has turned with regard to marriage. The era when every Hebrew/Jewish man had to marry a virgin was past once the Messiah had arrived. Once the Messiah had arrived, the preference in the new era is that every follower of Christ (male and female) should not be married. They are more useful to Christ unmarried, than married, because marriage distracts from full-time devotion to Him.

Jesus did not set Himself up as a Divorcer. His sights were set on bigger, more important goals. So when He looked at the state of marriage among God’s Chosen people, He issued a severe warning to the Jews about the consequences of using divorce to get rid of their wives. If the reader can hold that thought, and place himself in Jesus’ sandals, then Matthew 5:32 becomes an ‘exemption to blame,’ not an ‘exception to get a divorce.’ The idea of blame is uppermost in Jesus’ thinking, and being a just Judge, He will not attribute the sin of ‘fornication’ that a married woman might indulge in while still married, and lay it at the feet of her husband. That would be unjust, and Jesus avoids this injustice in His exemption clause. He is careful not to overstate His warning. He is clear that only when the husband puts her out on the street and he makes her commit adultery (through a remarriage) that he becomes culpable for her adultery, but not if she goes off and becomes a prostitute (= fornication), because she knows this is immoral, and God will lay the blame for her prostitution (= fornication) at her feet, not at the feet of her husband. He is culpable for her adultery; she is culpable for her fornication. Jesus gets the balance right every time.

Isaksson defends his betrothal interpretation of the exceptive rule because it allows Jesus to maintain His teaching on the indissolubility of consummated marriages. He gets round the absence of Matthew’s exception clause in Mark and Luke by speculating that it “was so self-evident that there was no need to repeat it each time the divorce logion was quoted.” In which case, if it was so self-evident why did it need to be given to the Jews of all people? It would be needed among the diverse nations that constituted the ‘civilised’ world at that time, especially those who also practiced betrothal marriages. Surely, if an exception clause was deemed necessary to endorse divorce for pre-marital fornication, then there ought to be another exception clause to cover the self-evident case of incest marriages, which was widely practised throughout the Gentile world. What about same-sex marriages? Are all these cases so self-evident that it was not necessary for Jesus to issue an exception clause for these unlawful marriages?

Isaksson’s second explanation why the exception clause is not in Mark and Luke is to say that “the question of the bride’s virginity was not of such significance, . . . since the exception mentioned in it [Matthew’s logion] was not interpreted as being equally necessary as in a Jewish environment.” This negates his first explanation which argued that the exception was ‘self-evident’ and therefore it was not necessary to repeat it for the non-Jews. If anything, the exception would not be necessary to spell out to the Jews, for whom it was self-evident. The ones who most

309 Ibid. p. 141.
310 Ibid. p. 141.
needed to know about the exception clause would be the non-Jews, and therefore it should have been in Mark and Luke and omitted in Matthew because it was so self-evident to the Jews.

The betrothal interpretation takes Matthew 19:9 ‘except for porneia’ to refer to pre-marital sex during the Jewish esposal period. This presupposes that Jesus is exempting engaged, Jewish couples from His charge of adultery if they ‘divorce’ on the grounds that one of the engaged parties has had illicit sex before the marriage was consummated.

Apart from the major problem that “except for fornication” is a translation of Erasmus’s faulty Greek text, there is a problem with this limitation on Jesus’ teaching. If the engaged couples are regarded as married (even though the consummation is still in the future), and they break off their official, and very public engagement (much feasting by both families and friends), as Joseph planned to do with Mary, if this was done privately (or secretly), does this mean that Mary is still technically a ‘wife,’ and if so, the second half of Jesus’ statement in 19:9b, warns that anyone marrying ‘a woman having been put away’ (i.e., marrying Mary after Joseph has rejected her) is committing adultery by marrying her? The answer would be No; and that the esposal period has been unilaterally terminated. Or, if someone marries Mary after Joseph has rejected her, are they committing fornication, or adultery? If Mary had been guilty of sex with another man while engaged to Joseph, would Jesus have approved of stoning her as an adulteress or as a fornicator? Indeed, was Joseph ‘putting her away’ as an adulteress or as a fornicator? Most likely as the latter.

God makes a distinction between a virgin who was betrothed to marry a man, and a virgin who was not betrothed to a man. But nowhere does He call the engaged couple ‘husband’ and ‘wife.’ That was invented later on by the rabbis, and out of which they created the need for a divorce certificate to get out of it. In the case of a betrothed wife, if the virgin was raped in an uninhabited place, and her cry for help was not heard, then only the rapist died (on the strength of her report; Deut 22:25); but if she was raped in an inhabited place and did not cry for help, then she and he had to die. In the case of an unbetrothed virgin, the rapist did not die, but was forced to marry her (Deut 22:29), but only if the father agreed to it (Exod 22:16-17), and to pay her father the bride price, but he was not allowed to divorce her, if they did marry. The different treatment meted out by God would suggest that He regarded the betrothed virgin as something special, because He deals with her as He would with a married wife (compare Deut 22:22 with 22:23-24).

An interesting detail is omitted from the case where a betrothed virgin was raped away from human help, and was declared innocent by God, did the espoused husband need a bill of divorce to end the relationship? Each man was entitled to marry a virgin to ensure the purity of his genealogy. It is likely that the espoused husband did what Joseph did, and put her away privately, seeing it was not her fault that she lost her virginity during the espousal period. The Western idea of love and romance was absent in arranged marriages.

So the issue in the rape cases boils down to timing. If she had sex between the betrothal event and the marriage event, according to the Law of God she comes under the same category as a married woman, and so Mary should have been stoned to death. The issue of divorce would not have arisen. It would appear that Joseph only intended to ‘put away’ Mary, when God prevented him from doing so. He was duty bound, as a righteous man, to follow the public judicial procedure to

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311 The prohibition against divorcing her is not to be taken as evidence that Yahweh approved of divorce among the common people. Rather, it was His opportunity to teach the man a lesson, and so prevent others from following his example, for the right to get rid of a wife was highly prized by hard-hearted husbands, and there was very little that God wanted to do to curb this evil. This explains why He did not put a blanket ban on divorce. Better to let the evil come out of them and punish them hard later on, than prevent the evil coming out and unable to punish them as they deserved to be.
stone her to death (or burn her if she was of the tribe of Levi, which she probably was\textsuperscript{312}), but it is more likely that this duty would have fallen on her father to carry through the courts.

The notice that Joseph decided to put Mary aside \textit{privately} may have been a correct record of his initial reaction to what he had heard, which was a righteous reaction, with a view to investigating the matter further, face to face with Mary. The initial reaction of Joseph to ‘put her away privately’ is ambiguous. Some, with a knowledge of rabbinic conventions surrounding wedding traditions, would jump to the conclusion that Joseph intended to divorce her. But the word ‘privately’ rules this out, unless another theory is invented that it was possible to get private divorces! But this smells of a cooked up ploy to remove the objection.

The verb ‘to put away’ (\textit{ἀπολέλυω}) is a very common verb with no technical or legal meaning to it. There is no equivalent to the English word ‘divorce’ in Greek or Hebrew. The verb literally means what it says \textit{in every instance of its use in the New Testament}. The exact same form of the verb is used (1) when Jesus did not wish to ‘send away’ the starving crowds (Mt 15:32; (2) when Pilate wished ‘to release’ Jesus at His trial (Lk 23:20); and (3) when the Roman judges wanted ‘to release’ Paul from prison. In the others cases of this word they all refer to release from the marriage bond (to divorce). What links all these cases is that someone is in a ‘bound condition’ from which they are \textit{released}. In the case of Joseph and Mary it means that Joseph would have literally and physically sent Mary away from his presence, if he was allowed to carry out his intention.

The least that we can infer from the use of this common verb, in this context, is that Joseph made the decision to release Mary from her solemn commitment to marry him, by physically putting a distance between him and her. He shows great concern for her welfare in thinking how he might shield her from public humiliation and disgrace. He does not regard her as a slut or a prostitute. He seems to know her well enough to make a sound assessment of her character.

The Greek uses the adverb ‘secretly’ in conjunction with the infinitive ‘to release,’ so that he intended to release her, but in a covert manner. Maybe the use of postponement was the cover he needed to extricate himself from his legal commitment to marry her. After all, there was a baby on the way. If he delayed long enough (six months), and the baby was born out of wedlock, then a decision would have to be taken by her parents at that stage. Because Joseph was in direct descent from David, he would not register this child as his own, in the normal course of events.

It is probably best to explain Joseph’s action in terms of a looming marriage ceremony, when suddenly on the ‘eve’ of his wedding day he gets the shocking news that his bride-to-be is pregnant. His immediate reaction is to find an excuse to postpone the wedding day, but before he can call off the well-advanced arrangements for the week-long wedding feast, he is told by God in a dream to go ahead with the wedding, much to his relief, I’m sure, and this provides Mary with the cover she needs to hide her three-month pregnancy from the public (and her parents?).

It is a weak argument of those who support the betrothal solution to say Mary could not be stoned because there were no witnesses, so the only option open to Joseph was to divorce her. The evidence for her ‘adultery’ (rabbinic interpretation of her state) was growing fast in her womb! This is what would lead to her death, not the technicality of there being no witnesses. The only way she could escape the death penalty was to charge her with a non-fornication charge (an \textit{erovat davar} cause). In which case she fell into the category that all fully married wives fell into of being divorced for a non-fornication cause. But it would require Joseph to be dishonest in hiding the true cause

\textsuperscript{312}The scientific mind of the Western Christian tries to see an organic, DNA, blood connection between Mary and David (Luther’s solution), otherwise they cannot see how Jesus could be of the seed of David. Unfortunately, the transmission of the Y-chromosome is only through the male contribution to the conception (cf. Heb 7:10). But in many cases a son-less Israelite could adopt a household slave as his son-in-law and heir (cf. 1 Chr 2:34-41), and it was Joseph’s reception of Jesus as his secretly adopted son and heir that Jesus was connected to the Davidic line. In the Temple records Jesus would have been registered as, and assumed to be, the natural son of Joseph, because illegitimate children did not count. Only males can constitute links in a genealogical chain.
behind his action to divorce her. Rather than do that he opted not to divorce her at all, but simply to drop her.

There is a large consensus assumption that the action Joseph took was a legal one. This is not necessarily so. According to the law in Deuteronomy 24, divorce was a private matter, and belonged to domestic law/tradition. If Joseph decided to go back to the law as stated in Deuteronomy 24 and follow that law, instead of following the rabbinic law of public divorce, then it might be possible to interpret Joseph’s action as seeking an actual divorce. The only snag with this is that Deuteronomy 24:1-3 does not allow divorce for fornication or adultery.

According to Deuteronomy 24:1-3, no man was compelled to get legal authority before he divorced his wife. He was king of his own castle. He could do as he liked. Moses never set up any courts to enforce his new divorce command, nor did any husband have to get a special certificate. Any scrap of papyrus would do to scrawl a few hurried words telling her she was no longer his wife and to clear off for good. That is how easy it was for a husband to divorce his wife in Moses’s day. The hard-hearted divorcer was answerable to no one for his actions.

That Joseph did not use the public system to ‘divorce’ Mary, but sought to put her away privately, shows that he was not using the normal, rabbinic procedure (current in his day?). In any case, he could argue, according to Deuteronomy 24:1-3, the termination of a consummated marriage was a private matter, so how much more so would have been the termination of a marriage that had not yet taken place?

If Joseph had been lawfully ‘one flesh’ with Mary, as a married couple, then indeed, as a righteous man, he would have had her stoned (or burned), and rightly so. As it was, he knew her character sufficiently well to have doubts about her unfaithfulness toward him, and in this state of shock and disappointment—since he was not married to her—he did the right thing, and had nothing to do with her. It was up to Mary’s father, not to Joseph, to demand the death penalty if his daughter was found to be with child once Joseph had nothing to do with her.

While the Jews may have demanded the same divorce document (ἀποτάσιον/get) and procedure to end a betrothal as well as a consummated marriage, Christian theologians recognise only the latter as constituting the ‘one flesh’ union. Joseph did not sever a one-flesh union, but only a contemplated one. So we should not have a problem with the break-up of engagements, Jewish or Gentile. They do not constitute a ‘divorce’ because there is no ‘one-flesh’ union to ‘put asunder.’ There is no need to go through the charade of a ‘divorce’ proceedings, except in those cultures (such as the Jewish) where contracts are in use and are an everyday part of the culture. But Jews and Christians should avoid the term ‘divorce’ to cover these situations because of its Mosaic associations with the evil and sinful practice of legalising dissolution. (Christians can use the State’s divorce laws to dissolve all invalid remarriages, but more on this below.)

Some modern, pro-divorce writers regard a lawfully conducted Gentile marriage to be invalid in God’s sight, “after the disclosure or discovery of pre-marital promiscuity at or before the time of the marriage.” While we might sympathise with the groom, or the bride, being disappointed on their wedding night to find that their partner is not what they had expected, I am at a loss to know where to find this pro-divorce, time-limited criterion in Scripture. Does it apply to Jewish and non-Jewish marriages? Where is this standard of purity stated in Scripture?

No provision is made in Scripture for a ‘divorce’ in the situation Joseph found himself in. The fact that he planned to put her away privately defeats the whole purpose of issuing a ‘roll of severance.’ These rolls had to be public knowledge, not private knowledge, to function in society. This was the point that Moses made when he commanded that a bill of severance be handed to every divorced wife. So Joseph was not even following the normal, public procedure for divorcing Mary. Joseph, obviously, did not regard himself as bound to obey human extensions to Moses’s unrecorded command, so he spurned the unbiblical, rabbinic addition to the unrecorded command of Moses, and set about to put away Mary privately. Good for him. We should applaud this disdain for man-made ordinances. His son, Jesus, showed the same disdain for rabbinic hoops.
God may not approve of the promiscuous life that precedes marriages in the West, but are we really to go so far as to declare that all marriages which were preceded by promiscuous behaviour and lifestyle are ‘invalid in the eyes of God’? What about African tribal marriages before David Livingstone opened up Africa to Christian influence? Were all or some of these ‘one-flesh’ unions invalid? Are not all civil marriages by godless persons, communists, atheists, etc., if lawfully entered into, by first-timers, as valid as Christian marriages? The logic of 1 Corinthians 7:15 is that the unbelieving husband who departed from his Christian wife was still validly married to her.

Somewhere, lodged deeply in the mind of untaught Christians is the humanist instinct that divorce does what it says it does, namely, it dissolves marriages. They know of divorced couples among their relations and friends, and divorce is a real fact of life. The one case that confirms this instinct in the untaught Christian is the case of Joseph divorcing Mary. Under Jewish law you can get a divorce before you are married as well as after you are married. This is an odd state of affairs, but that is Jewish culture, whether it pre-dates the coming of Jesus is another matter.

The Torah was given to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. It is inappropriate for Gentiles to reach into the Law and extract bits and pieces that suit them, and incorporate them into Christ’s teaching. Those who support the betrothal interpretation are guilty of doing just that if they believe that if a bride is not a virgin on her wedding night then she can be legitimately divorced the next morning.

To avail oneself of this provision, a Gentile would have to become a Jew, and be circumcised, and live as a Jew, and live under the Law, and obey its every precept, and protect the virginity of his daughters up until they are married, and be able to produce the evidence required by Jewish law that his daughters are what they claim to be, then, and only then, would he be in a position to make use of the Law to divorce a non-virgin bride the next morning.

The Western Church cannot pretend to have anything like the protection of its female members in place that obtained under the Law, and parents have no certain knowledge of the virgin status of their teenage daughters or sons. Paul likened the difference between Jew and Gentile Christians to one of a cultivated olive tree, and an uncultivated, or wild olive tree (Rom 11:17, 24), and Gentile Christians are ‘wild by nature’ (Rom 11:24). When it comes to finding a suitable Christian partner to marry in the Western world it is a case of what-you-see-is-what-you-get (WYSIWYG). Indeed, the spiritual advice of Paul is worth pondering very deeply, ‘It is better not to touch a woman.’ But if you must, then choose only a Christian partner, who truly bears fruit of being born-again, because once you marry her you are stuck with her for life, and vice versa.

It is worth bearing in mind that the custom of regarding an engaged couple as virtually husband and wife was never part of the Torah that God gave to Moses.\(^{313}\) It is one of those man-made traditions that grew up probably some time before the birth of Jesus. Other traditions also were introduced, such as washing the hands before sitting down to a meal. The Pharisees treated Jesus like a poodle dog when He sat down without washing His hands. They put the hoop of their tradition in front of Him and expected Him to jump through it. Jesus refused to recognise their hoops as having any authority from God, and so He deliberately disdained to play along with their silly rules.

Obtaining a bill of divorce to break off an engagement was another such hoop, which Joseph ignored. When Mary, his espoused wife, was found to be with child, he simply dropped her, as any self-respecting righteous man would do. The verb used is simply he decided to put her away *privately*, something which the holders of the hoops would have been incensed to find he had done, and ignored them, and thereby offended them.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* records that after the betrothal ceremony the parties were regarded as man and wife. Their betrothal ceremony bound them on a set course to the marriage ceremony.

\(^{313}\) The earliest references to betrothal occur in Deut 22:24 (‘the wife of his neighbour’) and 2 Sam 3:14 (‘my wife whom I have betrothed’). That marriages were arranged between parents is clear from Gen 24; Song of Songs 8:8; and Jud 14:2-7. If the bride was a widow, the betrothal period was reduced to thirty days (Ket. v. 2; Shulhan ’Aruk, Eben ha-‘Ezer, 56; cf. also Kid. 13a; Yeb. 52a).
itself. The bond could only be dissolved by death or a formal bill of divorce. If the woman proved to be unfaithful between the time she was betrothed and the wedding night, she was regarded as an adulteress, not as a fornicator, and her punishment was to be stoned to death (Deut 22:22; Sanhedrin 66b). She was punished more severely than the unfaithful married wife, who was strangled (Deut 22:22; Sanhedrin 52b).\footnote{The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1925), I.217. Vol. 8.239.}

Jerome (AD 396), when replying to an indirect enquiry by a woman whether it was right for a wife to divorce her husband on the ground that he was an adulterer and a sodomite, replied, “Let her read the books of Moses and she will find that if violence is offered to a betrothed virgin in a city and she does not cry out, she is punished as an adulteress.”\footnote{See 6.7.5. Jerome on divorce and remarriage.} Note that Jerome is aware of the rabbinic class that the betrothed virgin is in: she is considered to be a wife, so if she consents to having sex during the espousal period, she is not guilty of fornication, but of adultery. (Jerome, Letters 55, 58) And if she is guilty of adultery then death, not divorce, awaits her.

Jerome also wrote: “As long as the husband is alive, even though he be an adulterer ...and is deserted by his wife for his crimes, he is still her husband, and she may not take another.”

If the supporters of the betrothal interpretation want to make use of the above rabbinic tradition on marriage etiquette, and see it as the key to their solution to the exception clause in Matthew 19:9, then they cannot manipulate, modify, or twist the custom to suit their requirements. It is clear from the custom that the sin that Mary committed was not fornication, but adultery, for which she would have been stoned to death, like the woman taken in adultery in John 8.

If it had been Jesus’ intention to cover the case of His mother, then He would have had to reword His exception clause to read, ‘except for adultery,’ because that was her crime, not fornication.

Whichever route we take, whether the biblical one, or the rabbinic one, Mary, by becoming pregnant before she was married, was to be stoned to death, not divorced. The only thing that could save her from discovery was a gunshot wedding as soon as Joseph took her back again. Only in this way could she escape the death penalty. Hers was a unique situation which called forth unique action on the part of the Holy Spirit to avert public shame coming upon Mary. In every other case in Hebrew and Jewish history a young woman found in her pregnant condition would have been stoned to death. It did not require witnesses. Moses was powerless to command that such pregnant women could be given a bill of divorce and allowed to live on and try for another husband.

That the case of Joseph and Mary could not have been in Jesus’ mind when He identified all the causes that the Jews had been in the habit of using to obtain their divorces in the phrase ‘not over fornication,’ i.e., for non-fornication causes, is plain from Deuteronomy 22:23-27, where we find that if an espoused wife was not a virgin on her wedding day she was to be stoned to death, and the husband was free to marry another virgin. The rabbinic work, Sanhedrin, regarded the espoused wife as having committed adultery, not fornication, so if the supporters of the betrothal interpretation use the rabbinic law to make out a case that Jesus was referring to an espousal divorce, as distinct from a marriage that had been consummated, then they have a real obstacle to overcome in that the biblical and the rabbinic law coincide in demanding the death penalty for her. She falls into the category of having committed a capital punishment crime, so that Mary would have been in the same category as if she had become pregnant with Jesus after she had been through the marriage ceremony proper. In her case it made no difference whether she became pregnant before or after the marriage ceremony, provided Joseph did not lie with her at any time before she became pregnant with Jesus. There are some things we need to draw attention to.

First, if the law of God placed Mary in the same category as a woman who committed adultery with another man, after she consummated her marriage with her own husband, and this is
confirmed by rabbinic practice, then there is no escape for her: she cannot be divorced. This means that the ‘exception clause’ has nothing to do with Mary and Joseph, and Jesus was not shielding her from the death penalty that His Father had laid down for an espoused wife in her pregnant condition.

Secondly, the rabbinic law requiring the same bill of divorce to break an espousal agreement as was needed to break a consummated marriage did not come from God, nor did it come from Moses, it was a hoop that the rabbis created. It had no legitimacy. It was a Mickey Mouse certificate, and, like their roll of divorce to end a consummated marriage, its value was no higher than that of a piece of toilet roll. Neither God nor Jesus had anything to do with Moses’s command to issue these bills of divorce.

Thirdly, we have shown that the attempt to restrict the term ‘fornication’ to sexual sins committed by unmarried persons has not been proved linguistically. Even within the narrow compass of the New Testament writings, it has been shown above that the betrothal definition of fornication cannot be restricted to unmarried persons. Elsewhere in this work it has been shown that the term cannot be restricted in this way in the literature surrounding the New Testament period.

And the wider one extends the search into the huge volume of surviving Greek literature going back to the time of Homer, no one has brought up a single example where the Greeks restricted the meaning of ‘fornication’ to a crime peculiar to unmarried persons.

It would appear that the betrothal solution has been imposed on Matthew 19:9 to prevent the exception clause being used to dissolve a consummated marriage. The solution came first and then the evidence was ‘found’ to give it legitimacy. The search for ‘evidence’ began with the clumsy conclusion that ‘nowhere in the New Testament is the term ‘fornication’ used of a married person.’ This was a case of not looking hard enough at the New Testament use of that term, which has been shown above, to apply to every class of society, to married and unmarried persons, to both genders, and to all classes of society. The further out one extends one’s research for evidence, especially into the non-canonical writings of the Early Church Fathers and the Septuagint, the clearer it becomes that to restrict ‘fornication’ to pre-marital sex is an artificial distinction, imposed on the literature.

In the early days of the betrothal solution, maybe somewhere in the nineteenth century or earlier, this solution gave its supporters the ‘evidence’ they desperately needed to sustain Jesus’ total ban on divorce ‘for any cause.’ In ignorance they believed that the New Testament use of the term was the bedrock they had been looking for, and on which they could build their case. Unfortunately for this solution, with time has come greater access to the whole of Greek literature on computers, which was denied to the ones who first proposed this solution, and with this extended access to the whole of Greek literature the restriction that this solution required has been undermined and is no longer sustainable.

If one examines the writings of modern supporters of the betrothal solution their case is based on out-dated research.

They have simply recycled the solution as it was dreamed up a few centuries ago by Daniel Whitby (1638 - 1726),

when Erasmus’s exceptive clause was accepted as part of the Word of God. In place of fresh research we find dogmatism, and a refusal to budge. In place of interaction with new discoveries, especially linguistic ones, we find withdrawal or ignorance. In place of a willingness to be exposed to a different, but equally biblical, interpretation of the data, we find a defensive posture. In place of opening up to the possibility that they could be wrong, we find a brick wall behind which they sincerely believe that they, and they alone, hold the

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316 A very common fault in the betrothal solution is the failure to note that Jesus is teaching two different things in His use of the so-called exception clauses in Matt 5:32 and 19:9. These two passages are treated as if Jesus is making the same exception in both places. Very few supporters of this solution are aware that this failure goes back a long time, especially in nineteenth century and right up to the present day (see §6.4.).

317 See the Postscript to this section, which gives extracts from his Paraphrase on Mt 19:1-9.
Infallible key to unlock the meaning of the exception clause in Matthew 19:9, because only they hold to the full inspiration of Scripture, whereas all their rivals do not. In the end, it is this latter point that proves to be the dividing line that separates them and their solution from all their rivals and their rival theories. They sincerely believe that they alone are standing on the bedrock of Scripture, and everybody who opposes them and their solution, are not standing on it.

Behind one’s beliefs lies pride, and pride can blind the eyes to facts that would undermine one or more of those beliefs. The shame of being shown to be wrong humbles the proud man. If he is prepared to acknowledge that he was wrong, he is a true seeker after the truth, and he takes the indignity of shame on the chin. But if his pride kicks in and he cannot bear to suffer shame and humiliation, he will suppress the truth at the expense of his dignity and pride. There are many supporters of the betrothal interpretation who have taught this solution all their lifetime. The shame of having to abandon it would be too much, because of the knock-on effect that this would have on their ministry as a whole. For, it would be argued, if this minister, after forty years of defending it, now tells his congregation that he was wrong, could the same not apply to some of the other doctrines that he preached on for the same number of years? Rather than face the humiliation of a confession to having been duped by Erasmus, such ministers would prefer to end their days leaving their congregations and friends in ignorance of their final position.

While the stand of the supporters of the betrothal interpretation on the question of the full inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is highly commendable, they must not allow themselves to be duped, as were the Reformers, into accepting Erasmus’s Greek text as the infallible, inspired Word of God that they want to follow. It is not. It is an interfered with text. It is a text edited by a humanist. It does not convey Jesus’ infallible teaching on divorce and remarriage. It must be thrown away, and replaced with the Majority (Byzantine) Text, which has been the only universal text in constant use in Christ’s churches. The minority Egyptian text is no better than Erasmus’s edited text. Indeed, it has been more heavily edited than Erasmus’s Greek text. It has only antiquarian interest. It belongs in a museum, not in the hands of the leaders of Christ’s Church.

If the supporters of the betrothal solution can bring themselves to throw away Erasmus’s faulty Greek New Testament and move over to the Majority Text, then they also throw away the exception clause that Erasmus imposed on the Lord Jesus’ teaching. And if they lose the exception clause then they do not need the betrothal solution to explain it away. This would disturb them, because in giving up their pet theory, they would feel that this would be opening the door to divorce, because, they are convinced, it is only their interpretation that constitutes the only barrier to the introduction of divorce into the Church.

Now given the fact that the betrothal interpretation was based on the wrong Greek text, where does this leave the betrothal solution?

**6.6.9. What is the alternative to the Betrothal solution?**

We have challenged the betrothal solution on a number of points. **First,** we have shown that they used the wrong Greek text, when they based their interpretation on Erasmus’s Greek text. If a new version of the betrothal solution is to be found it must be based on the Majority (Byzantine) Greek text, which does not differ from the Nestle-Aland text with regard to the wording of the so-called exception clauses. At Matthew 19:9 both Greek texts read: ‘not over fornication’ (meaning, ‘for non-fornication causes’).

**Second,** those who first propounded the betrothal solution were duped by Erasmus into believing that Jesus made an exception for divorce in the case of fornication. To be tricked into accepting a Greek text which does not have a single Greek manuscript in support of its reading is a serious blow against any solution. To be duped is a serious and devastating situation to find oneself in. It is embarrassing. It exposes the solution to ridicule and ignominy. It exposes the lack of serious scholarship that should have gone into it.
The first thing any scholar worthy of the name should do is make sure the foundation they are about to erect their house on, is built on rock and not sand. The betrothal solution was built on sand. The Greek word ἕν was added to Matthew 19:9 by Erasmus in 1516, and no one realised what he had done until textual criticism got under way. Apart from the Roman Catholic Complutensian Polyglot in 1522, the first printed text to remove Erasmus’s addition was that by Albert Bengel in 1734, who was followed by J. J. Griesbach in 1777, and from that day onwards to the present day no critical text has ever allowed Erasmus’s personal addition of ἕν to gain any credence. Indeed, no modern critical apparatus even mentions Erasmus’s text and build their case on a more solid textual foundation, such as the one nominated under the first point.

Third, in order to maintain that Jesus never gave permission to dissolve a lawful marriage, through a bill of divorce, the supporters of the betrothal interpretation were forced to restrict the meaning of ‘fornication’ to unlawful sex performed by unmarried persons. This decision became the lynch pin on which the whole theory would rest. The linguistic argument is seriously flawed.

Fourth, they overlooked the fact that Mary’s pregnant state before she married Joseph carried the death penalty in Deuteronomy 22:23-27; and this was confirmed in the rabbinc writing called Sanhedrin. She should have been executed by her parents, and not put away privately as Joseph intended to do.

Fifth, it is constantly said that when Jesus said, ‘except for fornication,’ He was referring to ‘pre-marital sex during the Jewish espousal period “before they came together”.’ But if so, this means that Jesus overruled His Father’s law that such fornicating women were to be stoned, but on the betrothal view Jesus reduced the penalty to divorce in the espousal period. Jesus is made to contradict His Father. The inability of those who support the betrothal view to think through the implications of what they are talking about is astonishing. The ignorance is shocking and only matched by the shallowness of the research that lies behind it.

Sixth, and arising out of the above five points, if fornication can be committed by married persons, and the proponents for the betrothal view agree with Jesus that divorce can be had for fornication, then Jesus has permitted married persons to be legitimately divorced. There is no escaping from this conclusion: Jesus supports good divorces.

It is to no avail that many defenders of the betrothal interpretation defend their position that the words, ‘except it be for fornication,’ refers to ‘pre-marital sex during the Jewish espousal period “before they [Joseph and Mary] came together.”’ In other words, they do not regard Mary’s sin as a death penalty crime, even though her case would come under Deuteronomy 22:23-27 by the populace, who would be ignorant of the part the Holy Spirit played in making Mary pregnant, and in Deuteronomy 22:22 her crime is punished with death, not divorce.

The defenders of this solution have confused two different scenarios. The first scenario is this. If an engaged couple decided not to go ahead with their marriage, and neither were guilty of pre-marital sex, rabbinic custom demanded that they had to get a bill of divorce to end their engagement. It is obvious that in this case both persons were free to marry (not remarry), without being accused of adultery.

318 This text was re-issued by Arias Montanus (1583) and by Joseph Scaliger (1620), with slight modifications.
319 An English translation of Griesbach text was made by the Unitarian, Samuel Sharpe, The New Testament, translated from the Text of J. J. Griesbach (London: John Green, 1840; 2nd ed. 1844; 3rd ed. 1856.)
The second scenario is this. If an engaged couple decided not to go ahead with their marriage, because one of them was guilty of pre-marital sex (as in Mary’s case), rabbinic custom demanded that the wife who committed the sin had to be stoned, because her sin was not fornication, but adultery. This left the innocent partner free to marry another person. It is obvious that in this case only one person was free to marry without being accused of adultery.

The rabbinic procedure was the same whether the couple were getting a divorce as an engaged couple or as a married couple, because both sets of couples were regarded as being married.

What has happened is that the first scenario has been applied to Mary and Joseph, on the grounds that Joseph intended to get a legal bill of divorce. But what they have ignored is that he did not divorce her publicly, or before witnesses, because private divorces were unknown in Israel. The reason why Moses commanded the Israelites to write out a bill of divorce before sending his hated wife out on to the street, was so that everyone knew her new status, that she was no longer the wife of so-and-so. It had to be a public affair, otherwise a man could commit adultery with her out of ignorance.

Now there was no technical term equivalent to the English word ‘divorce’ in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. Various verbs were used, all of which conveyed the sense of sending someone away from their presence. Consequently when we read that Joseph, “being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example” (which would have happened had the knowledge of her pregnancy come to the knowledge of the custodians of public decency), “he was minded to put her away privately” (Mt 1:19). He made no fuss. He did not get a public divorce, because that would involve telling the truth about why he wanted to divorce her, which would have meant divulging the fact that she had committed ‘adultery’ against him (‘adultery’ because he was deemed to be already married to her).

Joseph had a choice. He could go public, or he could go private. If he took the public option then he had to tell lies about the real reason for divorcing her, otherwise she would have been stoned, but Scripture honours him with the reputation of being a righteous man, and righteous men do not tell lies. So he took the private option, and intended to break off his engagement to her in a low key manner, which would allow her to become a single mother, and for her family to ‘deal’ with her in whatever way they chose. We know from the sequel that he was not permitted to drop her quietly, but was told to take her as his wife, and presumably they got married within a few days so as to cover up the fact that a baby was well on the way.

Other defenders have argued that divorce is not permitted to non-Jews for pre-marital sex per se, but is only available to Jews, because only Jews have an espousal period in which the engaged couple are treated in law as if they were already married. It is claimed that Jesus knew of the custom of divorcing an engaged couple and He approved of it, and defended it in an aside to His condemnation of divorce for married couples. We have pointed out that this would be inconsistent on His part, because His Father ruled that any Jewish bride who was not a virgin on her wedding day had to be executed, so why is Jesus giving His approval for her engagement to be terminated with a divorce and not with stones?

Now, if Joseph and Mary were considered to be husband and wife ‘before they came together,’ then if either of them was sexually unfaithful to the other, it would be adultery. Now the Erasmian translation of Matthew 19:9 reads: “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery.” So what is this sin of fornication, which if a married woman commits, her husband is allowed to divorce her? If fornication, in this context, means, ‘pre-marital sex during the espousal period by an unmarried person,’ then we have confusion, because in the context Jesus is talking about a wife who commits fornication, but this

320 It would not make any difference to the punishment whether Mary’s pregnancy was due to fornication or adultery, but in terms of how the rabbis viewed her sin it is important to note the terms they used.
contradicts the betrothal definition of ‘fornication,’ because Mary and Joseph could not commit fornication because they were regarded as husband and wife. The lack of joined-up thinking behind this solution has contributed to its confused presentation.

The only reading of Matthew 19:9 that would make an exception possible (and allow Jesus to retain His teaching of no divorce for any consummated marriage) would be the first scenario given above. Now if it was Jesus’ intention to take into account that an engaged couple, who are classed as husband and wife, could get a divorce on the grounds of incompatibility, with no sexual impropriety present, then it would be possible to allow an engaged ‘wife’ to get a divorce and be lawfully married to another man (because she was still a virgin). If this was the scenario in the mind of Jesus when He issued His exception, then the text should have read, “And I say to you, that whoever divorces his wife, except for a non-fornication cause, and marries another, he commits adultery.” But this is the exact opposite to what Jesus did say in Matthew 19:9.

Since many Christians, who hold that Jesus ruled out divorce for any reason, have latched on to the betrothal interpretation as the one that comes closest to Jesus’ teaching condemning divorce and remarriage, it is worthwhile to repeat here (from §5.10) how the so-called exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 should be translated.

6.6.9.1. The exemption-from-blame clause (exemption from culpability)

Matthew 5:32, “But I – I say to you, that who, say, may put away his wife makes her to commit adultery—apart from the matter of her own fornication—and who, say, may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.”

The fornication mentioned here must have been committed after the marriage was consummated otherwise the wife would have been stoned to death if she was not a virgin on her wedding night. If her fornication preceded her divorce, the husband cannot be charged with causing her to commit it, which is the focus of the exemption clause. We have seen that all adultery is fornication, but not all fornication is adultery, so Jesus’ choice of terms meant that there were no loopholes.

The text is not spelling out an exemption to the verb ‘put away’ (divorce), as if Jesus said: “But I – I say to you, that who, say, may put away his wife—apart from the matter of fornication—makes her to commit adultery, and who, say, may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.”
The text is spelling out an exemption to the verb ‘makes’ as follows: “But I – I say to you, that who, say, may put away his wife makes her to commit adultery—apart from the matter of her own fornication—and who, say, may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.” The use of παρεκτός makes it clear that the exemption goes with the verb ‘makes her commit adultery,’ and not with the verb ‘puts away.’

6.6.9.2. The content-identity phrase (if not that, then it must be this)

Matthew 19:9, “And I say to you that who, say, may put away his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may marry another commits adultery; and he who did marry her that has been put away commits adultery.”

The phrase, ‘not over fornication’ was intended to identify all the non-fornication sins that had been used to obtain a divorce. It would make it even clearer if we translated the text as: “And I say to you that who, say, may put away his wife for a non-fornication cause, and may marry another commits adultery; and he who did marry her that has been put away commits adultery.”

The difference between Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 is that in the former Jesus warns every man divorcing his wife, that if another man sleeps with his wife, he, her husband, is guilty of making her commit adultery, unless, and this is where the exemption comes in, unless she commits fornication of her own accord while still married to him, then he is not guilty for her sin of fornication under those circumstances. But he is guilty, if she remarries, of causing her to commit adultery. The assumption is that she was a virgin when he married her (otherwise she would not still be his wife, but dead), and she committed fornication before he divorced her, which may have been hidden from him, but God sees all sins. What the supporters of the betrothal solution have ignored is that the main verb is ‘makes’ or pressurises her to commit adultery against him. The issue is not one of creating an exception to allow divorce. This is to miss the point entirely of what Jesus was teaching His disciples and the people. Jesus is totally focused on the unintended consequences that will follow anyone who divorces his wife, no matter what excuse he gives.

This criticism applies to every other solution that uses Jesus’ exemption-from-blame clause to turn it into an exception-to-no-divorce clause. This is to seriously distort Jesus’ teaching and to make Him say something that was absolutely abhorrent to Him. Often errors occur when one comes to the text looking for an exception, because that has been the traditional way of interpreting Erasmus’s Greek text, and of course, if one comes looking for an exception, an exception will be found. “Seek and you shall find,” applies to interpreting the text as much as to any other discipline. It is true that:

Wonderful things in the Bible I see,  
some put there by you,  
and some by me.

The exception that allows one to divorce their partner is one of those ‘wonderful things’ that hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people, have been grateful to the Lord Jesus for providing for them (so their religious teachers tell them) to be rid of a troublesome partner. But who put it there? The answer is, it was not the Lord Jesus, but Erasmus.

In the case of Matthew 19:9, Jesus warns all Jewish men that divorce on the grounds of a non-sexual offence is against God’s will. There is no exception under Jesus’ content-identity phrase, because the death penalty covered the sin of fornication and adultery.

It follows that if Jesus banned divorce for all non-capital offences, and God banned divorce for all capital offences, then this left the Pharisees with no grounds for divorce.

Jesus answered their question in full, because in essence He said; ‘It is not lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause.’

In Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees He used a phrase that captured every excuse that a Jew could use to get a divorce from his wife, namely, ‘not over fornication.’ He could not have made Himself
clearer where He stood in the absolute minimum of words, for it was only three words in Greek (as it is in English).

The way Jesus approached the problem set by the Pharisees was to set the unlimited number of ‘causes’ that the Jews had been using, from the trivial to the serious (but not including anything sexual), on the one side, and to set the sexual causes on the other side. Then He cleverly used simple, arithmetical logic. The case Jesus put to the Pharisees was this: ‘If you cannot get a divorce for fornication, can you get it for a non-fornication cause?’ And the Pharisees’ answer would have been, ‘Yes, according to our pre-Exodus tradition, and approved by Moses, we can only get a divorce for a non-fornication cause.’ ‘Well, then,’ Jesus would have replied, ‘simply subtract the sins that you cannot get a divorce for, from the sins that you cannot get a divorce for, and that will leave you the remainder of causes that you can get a divorce for. When you have done that, I am telling you that if you get a divorce for any of the remainder sins, and you remarry, you are committing adultery.’

The use of ‘remainder’ was a very astute way of referring to all the non-fornication causes that the Jews could think of, and had been using for centuries to obtain their divorces. Jesus referred to this remainder by using the negative to point to these remainder sins when He said, ‘And I say to you that who, say, may put away his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may marry another commits adultery; and he who did marry her that has been put away commits adultery.’ The negative phrase ‘not over fornication’ was Jesus’ positive way of referring to the remainder of causes that they had been using traditionally to obtain a divorce. If not this (fornication), then it must be that (non-fornication).

It is a trivial objection to complain that Jesus should not have used a negative to identify a positive category of sins that were unlawful causes to obtain a divorce. But given the countless sins that wives can commit, any one of which could become a cause for divorce, Jesus, with the Pharisees’ category of ‘every cause’ in mind, chose to subtract her sexual sins from her non-sexual sins, and in this way He identified what ‘every cause’ meant for Him. It meant ‘every non-sexual cause,’ which is how the Pharisees understood their own words, for they knew it was unlawful to divorce for every sexual cause. So instead of Jesus identifying all the long list of categories of causes, and there were scores of them, that He would rule out as causes for divorce, He did a very simple sum in front of the Pharisees, which was breath-taking in its simplicity, and shows that He had given a lot of thought to this issue.

Despite Western reservations over the manner in which Jesus defined ‘every cause’ in the Pharisees’ question, the mathematical precision and logic of Jesus’ position on divorce was instantly recognised and understood by the Pharisees to mean that there were no causes left to get a divorce if (1) they could not get one for fornication or adultery, because God demanded the death penalty for these causes, and (2), if Jesus had just removed getting a divorce for any non-fornication causes.

However, the Pharisees would not be outdone by this ‘man from nowhere’ telling them what was right and what was wrong. They instantly realised that there was a flaw in Jesus’ position because it was different from Moses’s position. Moses clearly permitted divorce for ‘any cause (except for fornication),’ provided they followed his command that they must write out a bill of divorce and hand it to the hated wife, and then send her out of his house, never to return again.

Now Moses was the supreme teacher and leader of Israel, and it was obvious to all the Jews that he would not do anything that was unlawful in the eyes of Yahweh, their God. By pitting Jesus against Moses they thought that they were on to a winning argument. Jesus was a nobody, whereas Moses was at the nation’s top hero. Jesus was a country bumpkin, Moses was the acknowledged friend of God, who spoke face to face with God. God personally handed to Moses His Ten Commandments. God honoured Moses in the sight of all the people, whereas Jesus was an obscure, self-appointed rabbi from Galilee, of all places, for no great leader ever emerged from that backwater place. It looked like a no-win situation for Jesus when He went against Moses, because as the Pharisees quickly pointed out to Jesus, divorce had the backing of none other than Moses’s own authority and standing in God’s eyes. Now, if no less a person than Moses authorised them to write
out a bill of divorce, who was Jesus to say he was wrong? To condemn Moses was to condemn Himself to the contempt of the people, to be ridiculed, to be ostracised as an extremist, and, worst of all, to show disrespect to God’s supreme teacher of Israel.

At that moment in history, Jesus stood utterly alone against the massed ranks of the religious establishment in Israel. There were always odd-balls in any community who stepped out of line with the consensus, and Jesus was just another example of such an odd-ball, rabid ranter, calling the establishment figures ‘hypocrites,’ and ‘fools,’ and ‘blind teachers of the blind.’ In the eyes of all who witnessed this confrontation between the Pharisees and Jesus, Jesus had put Himself outside the consensus that dominated Jewish life for the past 1,500 years by challenging the establishment’s defence of Moses’s position on divorce and remarriage.

On the day the confrontation took place Jesus was the only Jew in Israel who said that Moses was wrong to sanction divorce for any cause. Even His own disciples standing by were not on His side. They had to wait until they got Jesus alone, and out of sight of the Pharisees, before they could question Him over His brand new teaching on divorce and remarriage. Jesus’ position of ‘not over fornication’ clearly ruled out divorce for any non-capital offence, which adultery and fornication clearly were. So if it was not possible to get a lawful divorce on the grounds of adultery or fornication, then what grounds were left to get a divorce, and Jesus’ answer was ‘None.’ The answer He gave behind closed doors was the same that He gave in the public square.

Moses had never given the Jews the right to divorce an espoused wife. This was a ‘tradition of the Patriarchs’ that pre-dated the Exodus. Moses merely conceded that divorce, like the poor, would always be with Israel. When the Pharisees asked their question, they and Jesus were focused on the issue whether a consummated marriage could be dissolved. Jesus’ answer had to come to terms with that issue, and not stray off into the legitimacy of broken betrothal contracts.

If the Pharisees had come asking if it was lawful to divorce a woman in the betrothal period, Jesus would have thrown the question back at them, ‘What does the law say?’ They, and Jesus knew that the law said absolutely nothing at all about getting a divorce for such a pre-nuptial, betrothal contract. They all knew that it was a ‘tradition of the Elders’ that had grown up apart from the law. It had no legitimacy from God or from Moses. Such contracts fell into the civil realm of the nation’s life, alongside other human contracts, or agreements, or promises, or covenants, even marriage covenants, about whose contents the Bible has nothing to say.

We must be clear in our minds that Moses did not approve of divorce. His sole contribution was to force the husband to write out a bill of divorce when he divorced his wife. Moses was a realist and he knew what he was up against, and to ban divorce altogether was impossible. The best he could do was to sharpen the husband’s oral decision to throw out his wife, by forcing him to give her a written form of his oral decision, so that his action would be set in a permanent form for all time to come. Unknown to the divorcer it would become his own spiritual death certificate that he was writing out.

When the Pharisees put their question to Jesus their minds were not on whether it was lawful to divorce a betrothed wife, about which Moses said nothing. Their question was directed at whether it was lawful to divorce a consummated marriage. This is how Jesus understood their question, for He asked, ‘What did Moses command you?’ Now the command that Moses gave them is not recorded in Scripture. It was an oral command, but written down at the time, but not allowed to be included in the Torah. The effect of Moses’s oral command is recorded by Yahweh Himself, who describes the grounds on which tradition had permitted them to divorce their wives, which grounds were, logically, for non-capital offences. They could not get a divorce for fornication as this was a death penalty issue. So tradition restricted the husbands to non-fornication issues to get their divorces, what Yahweh refers to as ‘the exposure of a matter’ (ervat davar), or anything that displeased the husband. That was how easy tradition made it possible to get a divorce. Yahweh also refers to tradition legitimising divorce for hatred in Deuteronomy 24:1-3.

Now Yahweh described the effect that Moses’s oral command had on His community in Deuteronomy 24, but later Judaism, used the description to justify divorcing their wives on these
same recorded grounds! But the point of Yahweh’s description was just a lead up to His condemnation of divorce in Moses’s day, which came in the form of a ban on any wife returning to her divorced husband.

Later Judaism did not see this as a condemnation of divorce—they missed the point completely—but, rather, they turned it around and used it as proof that God approved of their divorces provided they did not try to be reconciled to their divorced wives! That was the state of thinking that occupied the minds of the Pharisees who asked Jesus a lawyer’s question, ‘Is it lawful to divorce for every cause?’ They had in mind that it was probably lawful from the way they read Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Jesus does not get into an argument with them over the legitimacy of their exegesis of Deuteronomy, whether it was descriptive or prescriptive. He goes straight to the engine that is the driving force behind all divorces—an unwillingness to forgive others their sins. He calls it hard-heartedness. The logic of His position is, that if hard-heartedness did not exist, then divorce would not exist. They need each other. They feed off each other. It is a shame to find hard-heartedness in any Christian. It is a denial that Christ lives in them. Hard-heartedness belongs to the old man, to the old nature, which every Christian is called upon to crucify daily. Many evangelicals pass this off as an ideal and unrealistic aspiration, and fall back to their pre-born again’ days, and divorce their spouses in the law courts of Satan, having convinced themselves to their own satisfaction that they were left with no other option. By opting to get a divorce they seal themselves in their own sin, which will ultimately eat its way into every fibre of their physical and spiritual bodies, like a cancer. They will walk in darkness for the rest of their lives and be rejected in the Day of Judgment as one of a vast hoard of human beings who did not forgive others their sins, and consequently their sins could not be forgiven them by a righteous God, who is no respecter of persons, be they archbishops or successful missionaries, or professors of theology.

In conclusion, this critique has found the betrothal solution wanting in the following areas.

First, the claim that ‘fornication’ is always committed by unmarried persons is not the defining characteristic of this sin, which is sex for the sake of sex; sex as an end in itself; sex without any thought about the biological consequences; unrestrained and irresponsible sex. While this will most often be found among prostitutes and among those who are unprepared for marriage; the mature and the married are not immune from taking advantage of free sex, as Paul was well aware of when he wrote, “let each [married] man have his own wife, and each [married] woman have her own husband” (1 Cor 7:2).

Second, divorce during the espousal period has no foundation in Scripture. It is a tradition that sought to safeguard the husband’s right to expect to marry a virgin. That a divorce certificate was required to end such an espousal makes no sense, because there was no one-flesh union to divorce. In any case, Scripture requires that the bride who is not a virgin on her wedding night could not be divorced, but had to be stoned to death. Consequently, this notional divorce cannot be compared to the divorce of a one-flesh union, which Jesus is focused on in the so-called exception clauses.

The above issues were the two pillars on which this solution was built, and unfortunately, the foundation of these two pillars rested squarely on the wrong Greek text of Erasmus.

The instinct of those who put forward this interpretation was correct in that Jesus never permitted divorce on any grounds to dissolve a lawful, consummated marriage. The manner in which they went about it was deeply flawed. It is an embarrassment, and should be consigned to the bin of false leads. Also to be consigned to the bin of history is Erasmus’s addition of ἔτι before μὴ in Matthew 19:9, and the exceptive clauses that they created.

In their place the following translations of the so-called exceptive clauses should be adopted.

The exemption-from-blame clause (exemption from culpability)
Matthew 5:32, “But I – I say to you, that who, say, may put away his wife makes her to commit adultery—apart from the matter of her own fornication—and who, say, may marry her who has been put away commits adultery.”

The content-identity phrase (or the remind/remainder clause)

Matthew 19:9, “And I say to you that who, say, may put away his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may marry another commits adultery; and he who did marry her that has been put away commits adultery.”

These translations bring the teaching of Jesus in Mark and Luke into line with Matthew. All three Gospels are sending out the same message to Jew and Gentile alike, that divorce has been abolished from the face of the Earth for all time to come. To divorce anyone, for any reason, if not repented of, will exclude that person from entering the Kingdom of God.

This critique of the betrothal interpretation shows that it is possible to hold to a high view of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, and at the same time to show that Jesus made no exception for divorce on any grounds.

This work sets out a biblical alternative to the betrothal interpretation. It is a biblical alternative to the many competing interpretations that would introduce divorce into Christ’s Church on the back of Erasmus’s tampering with Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:9. It is a biblical alternative to the move to turn back the Church to following the teaching of the rabbis on divorce and remarriage, which some evangelical teachers and writers are pressing for.

ADDENDUM

The exception of Jonah in Matthew 16:4 and the parallel in Mark 8:12

One could account for the omission of the exception clause in Mark by contextualising the event that Jesus was referring to, namely, His own resurrection, which only believing Jews were privileged to witness, as Jesus never appeared before the general public as He had done before His death. But the report of His miraculous resurrection would constitute the ‘exception clause’ to Mark’s absolute statement that no sign would be given to ‘this generation.’

Mark’s answer would have been to say that what the Jews were looking for was, that Jesus would perform a miracle before their very eyes, which would have them speechless with awe and wonder. This is how Jesus understood the expectation of the Jews at that time. Jesus was not prepared to act like a poodle dog and to jump through the hoops that they set in front of Him to jump through. In this sense His statement is absolute: they would not be given one of those signs.

However, knowing that His own resurrection was a miracle in its own right, and one that was not what they were looking for, for they killed Him and wanted Him to stay in that condition, He would offer a ‘sign’ that they did not want to see, which would condemn them. So the exception He offers them is not a concession to show them one of the kind of ‘signs’ that they were hoping to see Him perform. The exception would be of a different order of miracle altogether. In this sense, Mark read the mind of Christ correctly: Jesus would not be jumping through anybody’s hoop.

POSTSCRIPT

321 This addendum was deliberately displaced to here to allow the force of the argument to sink in to the mind of the reader, that it looked like there could be an exception that is omitted in a parallel account, which ought to be carried over. This addendum is my explanation why it is not necessary to assume that the exception given in Mt 16:4 must be carried over into Mk 8:12.
The earliest supporter of the betrothal solution appears to have been Daniel Whitby (1638–1726), who says that he did not find his interpretation in any other author. In his work, *A Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament* (2 vols.; London: W. Bowyer, 1703323), on Matthew 19:1-12 he wrote:

And the Pharisees came unto him, tempting him, and saying, *ei ecestin anqrwpw apolusai ton gunaika autou kata pasan aitian*, Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for every Cause? The School of Hillel taught, That a Man might put away his Wife for any cause, because this Divorce was permitted, if she found not Grace in his Eyes, Deut. 24. 1. and this was suitable to the current Practice and Exposition of these words. For that which we render, The Lord saith, he hateth putting away, Mal. 2. 16. is by the Chaldee and the Septuagint, rendred thus, *ean mishsaj ecaposteilhj*, If thou hatest, thou shouldst put her away. And the Son of Syrach [Ben Sira] saith, chap. 25. 26. If she go not as thou wouldst have her [if she does not do your will], cut her off from thy Flesh, give her a Bill of Divorce, and let her go. And (a)324 Josephus saith, the Law runs thus, He that would be disjoined from his Wife, *kaq ) a$j dhpotoun aitia*  

The School of Shammai determined on the contrary, that the Wife was only to be put away for Adultery, because it is said, Because he hath found some Uncleanness in her. The Pharisees seek the resolution of this Question from Christ, tempting him, i.e. to induce him to decide this Question, either against the Law of Moses, or else, as he must do, against the Determination of one of these two famous Schools, and so to render him offensive to them. 

. . . [vv. 4-5] . . . and when they have, after a mutual consent to enter into that Relation, done so, they are no more two, but one Flesh; and therefore are not to be separated, unless by cleaving so unto another, they have made themselves one Flesh with that other . . . 1 Cor 6: 16 . . . and of whom he [God] hath thus spoken, let no Man put asunder: God himself who binds, may see cause to permit in some cases, the Solution of this Obligation, to prevent Cruelty, and other Mischiefs, as he did to the Jews, by reason of the hardness of their Hearts, allowing a Divorce; but, without such Permission, no Man ought to do it. . . .326 [vv. 7-8] . . . but then he [Moses] acting in this as God’s Minister, it must be a Divine Permission. . . . That this Permission excused those Jews, who made these Divorces according to the Law, not only from Punishment by Man, but also from Fault before God, and more especially from being guilty of Adultery, is evident (1.) From the Permission given to the Woman thus divorced, to marry with another, Deut. 24. 2. which plainly shows, The Bond of Matrimony must by it be dissolved, since otherwise this must be a Permission to be an

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322 The spelling in the following abstract is as printed.

323 This was reprinted as *A Critical Commentary and Paraphrase on the Old and New Testament and Apocrypha, Vol. 4* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1845), see p. 136 for a different style of this same quote.

324 This is Whitby’s way of referring to his footnotes. I have placed these footnotes below this extract from his *Paraphrase*.

325 1760 edition reads: as many Causes there are, . . . (vol. 1. pp. 200-203)

326 The 1760 edition adds quotations from Greek authors (Hierocles and Plato) that two should become one flesh.
Adulteress. (2.) From the Prohibition of the Person thus divorcing her, to receive her again as his wife; which yet he was bound to do, if the Bond of Matrimony still continued, and she was still in truth his Wife. And, (3.) Because otherwise, the whole Commonwealth of Judea, by a Divine Permission, must be filled with Adulteries, and with a spurious Offspring. . . 

And I say unto you, Οὐ οὐκ απολύσῃ τὸν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ ἵνα μὴ ἔπι πορνεία? . . . Whosoever shall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication, and shall marry another, committeth Adultery] Here it seems evident, That Christ prescribes a new Law, which had not before obtained among the Jews; Divorce being permitted to them for other Causes: For, tho' it be said, Deut. 24. 1. he must find some Matter of Uncleanness in her; yet that cannot signify Fornication or Adultery, seeing for these things, she was by the Law to die by stoning, if she committed Fornication before her Marriage was completed, Deut. 22: 24. by Strangling, say the Jews, in case of Adultery, ver. 22. (2dly,) Because this Divorce was permitted to all, except the Person who falsely pretended, he found her not a Maid; for that Law so peculiar to him, he may not put her away all his Days, Deut. 22:19. shows, that others were permitted to do so: Now Adultery being a Sin against the Law of Nature, could be permitted upon no account. And (3dly,) Any other, excepting only the High Priest, Lev. 21. 7. might marry her who was thus put away, Deut. 24. 2. whereas it could be lawful for no Man to commit Adultery with her. . . 

Moreover, whereas all Commentators I have met with, by Fornication here, do understand Adultery, or the defiling of the Marriage Bed: I incline rather to take the word in its proper sense, for Fornication committed before Matrimony, and found after Cohabitation. (1.) Because Christ speaking of this Divorce here and elsewhere, doth never use the word moixei/a, which signifies Adultery, but always πορνεία, Matth. 5. 32. which word, both among Jews and Gentiles, doth properly import the Sin of unmarried Persons lying one with another, and so being made one Body, 1 Cor. 6. 16. It is not therefore likely, that Christ receded from the known and common acceptation of the Word. (2.) The punishment of Adultery after Marriage, was Strangling; after Sponsalia, Stoning; Divorce not being mentioned in either case; but simple Fornication was not thus punished by the Jews. And, (3.) By this Interpretation, the Law of Marriage is by Christ reduced to its Primitive Institution; that Conjunction with another, makes them both one Flesh: and so the Woman who had thus transgressed, was to be dismissed, because she before was one Flesh with another, and therefore could not be so with the Man to whom she afterwards did marry. Note also hence, that according to either Interpretation, where it is lawful to put away the Wife, it is so to marry again. For (1st,) Such were the Divorces of the Jews, of which Christ speaks. And, (2dly,) Christ by pronouncing such Divorces, as were not for this cause, adulterous in him that married another, doth plainly insinuate, there was no such Crime committed in this case; and then the Marriage must be dissolved by that Act. (Vol. I. pp. 156-8) 

(a) Antiq. l.4. c.8.p. 125. G. (b) In vita sua, p. 1031. F.

In the 1760 edition, the following paragraph was added:

Ei mh epi porneia, Except for Fornication.] St. Jerome here saith, that if the Woman hath committeth adultery, Non debet teneri, she ought not to be kept by her Husband, lest he fall under Condemnation; he being pronounced a Fool, and a wicked Person, qui adulteram tenet, who retains an Adulteress, as the Septuagint reads, Prov. xviii. 27. The Greek Fathers say almost generally it is καλὸν εκβάλλειν, an honourable thing to cast her out: And (*) St.

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having said it was permitted, but not commanded so to do, retracts that Saying, as being contrary to the Words of Solomon. He that retains her, say the Apostolical Constitutions is Φυσικός θεμον παρανομος, a Transgressor of the Law of Nature. L. 6. c. 14.

Footnote (*) Retract. l.1.c.19.


Stooke-Vaughn suggested that the Syriac translation may be the earliest support we have for the betrothal interpretation because it translates Matthew 19:9 as ‘a writing of breaking a contract,’ and this occurs in the Sinaitic Palimpsest in 19:9 and 5:32.327

6.6.10. Alternative interpretations of crucial texts

Matthew 1:19

(1) The verb used of Joseph is not a legal term; it is a verb that describes a physical action, such as releasing a prisoner, or sending away a crowd. The context alone fixes its meaning. Neither Greek nor Hebrew uses or possesses a legal term for ‘divorce.’ Nor do they have a separate word for ‘wife.’

(2) If Joseph was already legally married to Mary through his betrothal to her, by Covenant vows, then he was wrong to divorce her. He had no authority from God to change her death sentence into the lesser punishment of divorce. The same goes for a married woman who commits fornication. If Jesus regarded it as right to divorce an unfaithful espoused wife, then the same right should be given to the unfaithful married wife.

Because Joseph was a righteous man he could not disobey God, therefore the verb used in Matthew 1:19 must be taken in a non-legal sense, as explained in the next paragraph.

(3) The fact that Joseph wanted to keep Mary’s condition out of the public arena says something about his respect for her character. The knowledge of her condition must surely have come as a surprise and a shock to him, and received with disbelief. Matthew tells us that Joseph decided to hide Mary’s condition. He used the adverb λάθρα (lathra) to qualify the verb ἀπολύω (apoluo) ‘to release.’ Now according to BDAG328 λάθρα (lathra) means (1) (to do something) without


others being aware, secretly. (2) (to do something) without going through proper channels, without the knowledge of, behind the back of. Matthew explains the motive behind this secrecy, which was that since Mary would be stoned to death by the people and become a public example of what happens to unfaithful, betrothed virgins, Joseph wanted to avoid this shameful end to her life. Her sin was indisputable as she was three months’ pregnant and not married (i.e., not yet taken home by Joseph after the marriage ceremony). Joseph’s action was one of delaying her execution as long as possible.

Being a righteous man, if it turned out that she had slept with another man then he would have accepted her death by stoning. The cloak of secrecy was not a cloak to hide her ‘sin’ but to prevent a premature death occurring before he could hear her explanation.

It may well be that the occasion of his discovery of her ‘fornication’ was on the eve of the final stage to her becoming his wife, i.e., the marriage service and feast itself when all the guests were invited. He probably had just a few hours before he would have to announce the postponement of the marriage feast, when the ‘angel of the Lord,’ in a dream, told him to ‘take’ Mary as his wife, so the marriage service and week-long festivities were back on track again with no one being any the wiser about Mary’s pregnancy, because a three-month pregnancy may not have been visible.

The fact that at that very moment in history Caesar Augustus decided to impose a census on the Jews, was providential, because this drew Mary away from her community and gave her the cover she needed to avoid any scandal about the ‘premature’ baby she bore after six months of marriage. For her baby should have been born nine months after the marriage ceremony, and not six months.

Also, the fact that the family were forced to flee to Egypt before they returned to Nazareth about two years later, when Jesus was just weaned, would have further covered up the fact that she bore her son only six months after her wedding. The first time the community in Nazareth set eyes on Jesus was when He was a walking, babbling toddler, about two years old. (Herod the Great died in 4 BC, and Jesus was born in 6 BC.)

(4) Josephus informs us that the death penalty for unfaithful, betrothed virgins was death, not divorce, in his day. He was born the year after Pontius Pilate left Judea, and he lived into the early part of the second-century (about AD 105). Consequently he grew up in the same milieu as Jesus and His apostles did.

Josephus had at least three different wives. One deserted him and he tells us he divorced another (see his autobiography, Life, 415, 426f.). He divorced his virgin wife when he was released from a Roman prisoner of war camp and on account of his going to Alexandria in Egypt, where he married another woman. He divorced her on the grounds that he was “not pleased with her behaviour.” This shows how easy it was to divorce for a non-sexual cause. Josephus was familiar with the customs of his day, and there is no reason to doubt that he records the facts of life as he experienced them while living in Judea.

Josephus’s witness to the existence of capital punishment for unfaithful betrothed virgins, for adulterers and adulteresses, and for homosexuals, up until AD 100, plus the event of the attempted stoning of the woman taken in the act of adultery in John 8 (AD 28), plus the evidence that RogerAus has unearthed of stoning promiscuous daughters of priests prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, plus Eusebius’s account of the stoning of James the Just on the authority of the chief priest, Annas, these all contribute to our understanding of Joseph’s action to hide Mary’s condition before it became public knowledge, and before she would have become a public spectacle through stoning. What a horrible end awaited her! And it was this real prospect of stoning that accounts for his protective action.

Bauer-Danker Lexicon,’ or BDAG. We are told that Herod secretly/privately (λόθρα) inquired of the magi when they saw the star (Mt 2:7).

The Mishnah, however, states that if the girl wasn’t a virgin at the time of betrothal - when the marriage contract was written, in which it was stated that she was a virgin - then both the betrothal and the marriage could be **annulled with no certificate of divorce** and without any payment of the bridal price (Ketuboth 7.7-8 and 1.6). The reasoning was that if the betrothal and the marriage was based on deceit or fraud by the girl’s family, then they were not legally binding and could be annulled. In which case we have another argument for stating that Joseph was not ‘divorcing’ Mary but ‘sending her away privately,’ as would have happened in the case of the annulment of this marriage, which Joseph could expect would be the outcome, given Mary’s pregnant condition. Mary’s father would have had to take the responsibility for stoning his daughter for bringing shame on his house.

Annulment of marriages which, for various reasons, are not valid, have always been known in canon law, and in most world cultures, and has not been considered divorce. Such an annulment has, therefore, not been an obstacle to remarriage. However, in the case of Jewish culture and living under the Law, an espoused woman passes out of the annulment catchment and passes into the married catchment, so that any promiscuity on her part will result in stoning, not annulment and certainly not divorce.

(5) The Greek does not have a legal term such as ‘divorce’ to point to a court decision to dissolve a marriage. Instead, it describes the action itself, using ordinary, everyday verbs. The incongruity of translating άπολύω by ‘divorce’ everywhere it occurs in the New Testament is seen in the following translations of this Greek verb.

Matt. 14:15 and evening having come, his disciples came to him, saying, ‘The place is desolate, and the hour has now past, divorce (άπολύω) the multitudes that, having gone to the villages, they may buy food for themselves.’

Matt. 14:22 And immediately Jesus constrained his disciples to go into the boat, and to go before him to the other side, till he might divorce the multitudes;

Matt. 14:23 and having divorced the multitudes, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray, and evening having come, he was there alone,

Matt. 15:23 And he did not answer her a word; and his disciples having come to him, were asking him, saying — ‘Divorce her, because she cries after us;’

Matt. 15:32 And Jesus having called near his disciples, said, ‘I have compassion upon the multitude, because now three days they continue with me, and they have not what they may eat; and to divorce [them] fasting I will not, lest they faint in the way.’

Matt. 15:39 And having divorced the multitudes, he went into the boat, and came to the borders of Magdala.

Matt. 18:27 and the lord of that servant having been moved with compassion divorced him, and the debt he forgave him.

Matt. 27:15 And at the [Passover] Feast the Governor had been accustomed to divorce one to the multitude, a prisoner, whom they willed,

Matt. 27:17 they therefore having been gathered together, Pilate said to them, ‘Whom will you I shall divorce to you? Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?’

Matt. 27:26 Then he divorced to them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered [him] up that he may be crucified;

John 19:10 Pilate, therefore, says to him, ‘To me do you not speak? have you not known that I have authority to crucify you, and I have authority to divorce you?’

John 19:12 From this [time] Pilate was seeking to divorce him, and the Jews were crying out, saying, ‘If this one you divorce, you are not a friend of Caesar; every one making himself a king, speaks against Caesar.’

Acts 3:13 ‘The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, did glorify His child Jesus, whom you delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, he having given judgment to divorce [him],

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Acts 4:21 And they having further threatened [them], divorced them, finding nothing how they may punish them, because of the people, because all were glorifying God for that which had been done,

Acts 4:23 And being divorced, they went unto their own friends, and declared whatever the chief priests and the elders said to them,

Acts 5:40 And to him they agreed, and having called near the apostles, having beaten [them], they commanded [them] not to speak in the name of Jesus, and they divorced them;

Acts 13:3 then having fasted, and having prayed, and having laid the hands on them, they divorced [them].

Acts 15:30 They then, indeed, having been divorced, went to Antioch, and having brought the multitude together, did deliver the epistle,

Acts 15:33 and having passed some time, they were divorced with peace from the brethren unto the apostles;

Acts 16:35 And day having come, the magistrates sent the rod-bearers, saying, 'Let those men be divorced;' 

Acts 17:9 and having taking security from Jason and the rest, they divorced them.

Acts 23:2 The chief captain, then, indeed, divorced the young man, having charged [him] to tell no one, ‘that these things you shewed to me;’

Acts 26:32 and Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man might have been divorced if he had not appealed to Caesar.’

Acts 28:18 who, having examined me, were wishing to divorce [me], because of their being no cause of death in me,

Heb. 13:23 Know that brother Timotheus is divorced, with whom, if he should come shortly, I will see you.

The incongruity of imposing a loaded, technical, legal term, such as ‘divorce,’ on a simple, everyday descriptive verb, such as ἀπολύω, highlights the danger of misinterpreting many of the above examples. The case of Hebrews 13:23 is a glaring example. In this wooden translation Timothy is divorced, and it could be argued from the ‘divorce’ texts of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 that this is how the text should be translated in future (!).

In Matt. 18:27 we read, “and the master of that servant having been moved with compassion divorced him, and the debt he forgave him.” The correct translation is ‘released him’ (from his contract). Joseph released Mary from her contract to marry him and vice versa. That is the minimum step he could take at that time. She had broken the terms of the contract between them.

The lesson here is that all technical terms should be avoided and description and descriptive verbs should normally be used. In all the above cases the translation ‘sent away,’ or ‘released,’ would satisfy all the contexts. These same descriptive terms should be applied to the ‘divorce’ texts of the Gospels and Paul’s epistles.

Now when we apply this preference for the descriptive translation of this verb to Matthew 1:19 it reads, “Now Joseph, her [Mary’s] man, being righteous, and not willing to make her a public example [through stoning], he resolved to send her away secretly.” In the case of a divorce, the wife is resident under the husband’s roof, and when she is ‘sent away,’ her starting-point is her husband’s home, and she ‘goes out’ and stays out. That is what is entailed in a Jewish divorce. In the case of Mary, she was not under Joseph’s roof, so he could not ‘send her away,’ so divorce is not in view.

Given Mary’s pregnant condition, and given Josephus’s witness that such pregnant, espoused brides were put to death in his day as the normal custom of the people, Joseph’s action of smuggling Mary away from instant, zealous justice makes sense, but only as a delaying tactic. He could not collude with her father to avoid the death penalty if she was pregnant by another man.

The alternative technical translation is “Now Joseph, her [Mary’s] man, being righteous, and not willing to make her a public example [through stoning], he resolved to divorce her secretly.”
Secret divorces defeated the motive behind Moses’s introduction of a written severance document, which was to safeguard Hebrew men from marrying another man’s wife by mistake, and so be guilty of adultery and the death penalty that accompanied it.

By means of a written document a Hebrew man would demand to see it before he would take the word of the prospective, divorced woman in marriage. In this way Moses hoped to reduce the level of accidental adultery among the male population, but he, and God, would not act like dictators to prevent divorces, stealing, raping, and murdering from occurring. To divorce is human, because ‘human’ is a permanently sick condition of the soul. The wonder is that any human marriage can avoid divorce, given that two ‘sick’ persons are joined together with two heads.

If we retain the descriptive translation in the first instance, which is always the first option to adopt, then by secretly sending Mary away to a safe place, and out of the reach of a zealous people who would have stoned her to death, this gave him the time to find out what happened, and how she came to be pregnant.

In any case, Joseph, being a truthful man, when it came to requesting a divorce document, he would have stated the reason for wanting it, namely, that his espoused wife had committed fornication, and even if he wanted to keep the whole affair secret, the gossip would be out in no time. So the idea of obtaining a secret divorce, and keeping the reason for it secret would not work. And the rabbis would be on to him in a flash to have Mary stoned.

INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES TO THE BETROTHAL INTERPRETATION

The betrothal solution came about at a time of ignorance over the extent to which married women could commit fornication and prostitution in ancient times while being married. It seems such an obvious mistake to make, but common-sense sometimes goes out the window when religious truths are being staunchly defended.

A need arose to reinterpret Scripture in such a way that it allowed some form of exception to exist while at the same time ruling out divorce for all lawfully consummated marriages. The New Testament used at this time was the Authorized Version which was a translation of Erasmus’s tampered Greek text, in which Erasmus added the Greek word ei (‘if’) before mh (‘not’) to give “except” and this gave rise to the exception clause in Matthew 19:9. To this day supporters of the betrothal interpretation accept the Erasmian exception clause as genuine. However, no critical Greek text of the New Testament today contains the Erasmian exception clause. The betrothal interpretation is based on a faulty Greek text.

The solution to the “exception clauses” in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 was found in the lap of the rabbis, whom Jesus utterly despised. The rabbis extended the necessity to obtain a writ of divorce to end a betrothal marriage on the same terms as if they were fully married wives. This gave those who were looking for some form of exception to Jesus’ blanket denial of divorce to latch on to this distinctively Jewish anomaly, and mesmerise the Western world with the statement that “a Jew could divorce his wife before he married her!” It was held that betrothed brides could only commit fornication and not adultery, and that married women could only commit adultery and not fornication. This distinction became the bedrock of the new solution, as it is to this day.

Apart from the obvious misinformation over the idea that married women could not commit the sin of fornication as well as the sin of adultery, which, on its own, undermines the betrothal case, there are even more serious obstacles to overcome.

The differences are: (1) whether Jesus compromised His position in changing the death penalty to divorce. That is a sin in itself, and I don’t think Jesus was capable of sinning. To say that Jesus was just following the current practices of His day, is a sad reflection on His intelligence. He didn’t make compromises in any of the other doctrines that He taught.

And (2), Jesus made this unilateral change only in the case of unfaithful brides, but not in the case of unfaithful wives. That is a serious imbalance in His judgment, and I don’t think He was
capable of such a serious misjudgment.

I think readers are not going to accept the betrothal interpretation once they realise that they will have to accept that Jesus did not fulfill the Law, but changed it to suit Himself, without thinking through the consequences of His action. According to some, Jesus made a fatal mistake in changing the death penalty in the case of the unconsummated wife, but forgot to do the same for the other, consummated wife, when both wives committed the exact same offence and the Law laid down the exact same punishment. This detracts from His divinity. There is an inconsistency in His judgment if “showing compassion” was His reason for lifting the death penalty off the wife (betrothed), but failing to “show mercy and compassion” on the other wife (married). This, too, we are informed, detracts from His claim to be the infallible Son of God. He was fallible after all, we are told, and the proof is in His inability to dispense equal justice to the two Covenant wives.

(3) The Romans did not interfere with the right of the Sanhedrin to impose the death penalty if that was the law of their religion, but they took away the Sanhedrin’s right to inflict the death penalty for civil matters. Note the difference. The Jews brought a civil charge against Jesus, “If he were not an evil doer, we had not delivered him to you” (Jn 18:30). They dropped the religious blasphemy charge under which they could have put Jesus to death, because they did not want to have His blood on their hands. They schemed to get the Romans to kill Jesus, hence they were technically and legally right to say, “It is not lawful [under Roman law] for us to put any man to death for the civil offence of ‘being an evil doer’” (Jn 18:31).

The fact that it was prophesied that no bone of Jesus would be broken in His death (cf. Jn 18:32) meant that if the Sanhedrin had convicted Jesus of blasphemy, as they did, it would have meant that the prophecy would not have been fulfilled. “Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now you have heard his blasphemy” (Matt. 26:65). With this, compare John 10:33: “The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, make yourself God.” The fact that the prophecy was fulfilled meant that God was in total control of the legal procedures, and even had the Chief Priest prophesy that Jesus would die on behalf of the nation.

God planned that the Romans would be in charge of His people when He sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour. His death had to be by crucifixion and not by stoning. Therefore He could not be killed by a religious judge but by a civil judge, and on a civil charge and not on a religious charge. Since the Romans were in control of all civil punishments, the Sanhedrin had to accuse Jesus of a civil offense to get a civil death sentence passed on Jesus, not realising that they were playing into the hand of God, who had predetermined the manner of His Son’s death via a Roman crucifixion.

We now have the full background to Caiaphas’s statement that, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death” (Jn 18:31). They had brought a civil charge against Jesus, not a religious charge, so they were correct that Moses did not give the Levitical priesthood authority to deal with civil matters. They were not the national police force. Their duties were purely to do with the service of the Temple and insuring that that was not brought into disrepute. So they were correct in saying that they did not have authority to handle civil, capital punishment matters.

Josephus is a solid witness that the death penalty existed in his day for fornication and adultery, under Roman rule; and Paul persecuted the Christians “unto death” while under Roman authority (Acts 22:4; cf. 22:20; 8:1). Note Paul’s statement, “and many of the saints did I shut up in prison having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my

330 Josephus, Antiq. 14.167. (Spoken to the ethnarch [called ‘king’] Hyrcanus when the chief Jews came to him to complain about Antipater) “Thus Herod, his [Antipater’s] son, has killed Ezekias and many of his men in violation of our Law, which forbids us to slay a man, even an evildoer (πονηρὸν ὁντα), unless he has first been condemned by the Synhedrion to suffer his fate. He, however, has dared to do this without authority from you.”
voice against them” (Acts 26:31). Here we see that persecution came from the chief priests who had authority to put Christians to death *under Roman rule*. So much for the misinformation put out by the supporters of the betrothal interpretation that the Jews could not exercise the death penalty in the case of adultery and fornication. It is further proof of the power of the Sanhedrin to impose capital punishment that the Mishnah upheld the death penalty for adultery, see *Sanhedrin* 7:3; 9; B. *Sanh.* 52b, 55b, and 66b. *Nowhere in the Mishnah, nor the Talmuds, is divorce ever substituted for the death penalty* in the case of adultery or fornication. But you will not find this statement in works supporting the betrothal interpretation. We also have John 8 and Roger Aus’s evidence to throw into the mix.

*The meaning of ‘sanhedrin’*

The knee-jerk reaction of the uninformed is that when they hear of the term ‘sanhedrin’ they assume it must refer to the assembly of seventy elders in Jerusalem. But the term ‘sanhedrin,’ is used to describe any meeting, small or large, family-size or village, town, city, or national, in size, which is formal and presided over by a chairman, and is met for a specific purpose, and its conclusions are accepted by all.

In the works of Josephus it is used to refer to the full Sanhedrin met in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 14:91, 167, 168, 171-175, 177 [intent on putting Herod to death], 15:173 [where Herod used the Sanhedrin to have Hyrcanus put to death], 20.216 [probably not the full Jerusalem Sanhedrin, as a law was passed that was not lawful]).

Hyrcanus (60–40 BC) set up five councils (συνεδρια) in the five districts that the nation was divided into. These were: Jerusalem, Gadara, Amathus, Jericho, and Sepphoris in Galilee (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.91).

A sanhedrin can be a committee set up by Caesar or a local ruler, such as a king or a procurator, which had nothing to do with the full Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Thus in *Antiquities* 16.357 Caesar Augustus “advised him [Herod] to appoint and convene (ἀποδείξεντα ‘to bring forward’) a council [συνεδριαν] at Berytus, where Romans were settled as colonists, and to take along the governors (of Syria), Archelaus, the king of Cappadocia, and as many others as he thought conspicuously friendly, or important, and with their advice to determine what should be done. . . . [Herod was glad that Caesar had given him full power to kill his sons if necessary] He therefore sent letters around and invited to the council [συνεδριαν] those whom he thought suitable with the exception (χωρίς) of Archelaus.” Josephus reported: “After the king [Herod] had spoken in this manner, without letting the youths [his sons] be produced even long enough to defend themselves, the members of the council [συνεδριαν], being agreed that they were in no position to soften him or effect a reconciliation, confirmed his authority” (16.367). This sanhedrin was a small ad hoc committee made up of men chosen by Herod to hear his complaint against his plotting sons.

At another, similar, private sanhedrin, Josephus reported: “At these words a change of feeling came over the council [συνεδριαν] for they greatly pitied Antipater [Herod’s son] as he resorted to tears and contortions of his face, so that he moved even his enemies to compassion, and even Herod now gave signs of being somewhat shaken in his purpose [to put him to death]” (17.106).

In another small ad hoc committee, called a sanhedrin, Josephus noted: “After punishing the Pharisees who had been convicted of charges, Herod held a council [συνεδριαν] of his friends and made accusations against Perris’ wife” (17.46).

The procurator of Syria, Varus, held his own sanhedrin, or ad hoc committee meeting (*Ant.* 17.132). “Caesar [Augustus] assembled a sanhedrin [council] of his own friends.” While in Rome, the

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331 The death penalty for adultery is found in the most ancient law codes, e.g., Eshunna 28; Code of Hammurabi 129-32, 155, 156; the Middle Assyrian Laws 12, 14, 17-18, 22-24; and the Hittite Laws 195, 197-98; see ANET 162, 171-72, 180-97.
same Augustus called for a sanhedrin [council] to hear the complaints of the visiting Jews who did not want Archelaus to be their king because he killed 3,000 in the temple, and preferred to be joined to Syria. Josephus tells us: “After hearing both sides Caesar dismissed the council [synhedrion], and a few days later made Archelaus ethnarch of half of the territory that had been Herod’s.”

Josephus (Jewish War 1.537) wrote: “Taking ship to Rome they delivered the king’s [Herod’s] dispatches to the emperor [Caesar Augustus], who, while deeply distressed for the young men [Herod’s sons], did not think it right to deprive the father of his authority over his sons. He replied accordingly, leaving Herod complete liberty of action, but adding a recommendation to him to hold an inquiry into the plot before a joint\(^{332}\) council (κοινού συνέδριον) of his own relatives and the provincial governors; then, if his sons were convicted, to put them to death, but if they had merely meditated flight, to be content with a milder penalty.”

Here the sanhedrin is a family affair composed of Herod’s own relatives and some provincial governors.

War 1.559. [One day Herod assembled his relatives and friends to discuss the future of his offspring.] “Having thus spoken he [Herod] gave way to tears and joined the children’s hands [his sons’s hands], and then fondly embracing one after the other dismissed the assembly (διέλυσεν τὸ συνέδριον).”

COMMENT: This ‘sanhedrin’ consisted of Herod’s relatives and friends (see War 1.556).

War 1.571. “The king was furiously indignant, particularly at the wife of Pheroras, the principal object of Salome’s charges. He, accordingly, assembled a council [synhedrion] (ἀδροίσας οὖν συνέδριον) of his friends and relatives and accused the wretched woman of numerous misdeeds, among others of insulting his [Herod’s] own daughters, and of alienating his brother, after bewitching him with drugs.”

COMMENT: This ‘sanhedrin’ consisted of Herod’s relatives and friends (see War 1.556).

War 1.620. “On the following day the king [Herod] assembled a council [synhedrion] (ἐπιόση συνέδριον) of his relatives and friends, inviting Antipater’s friends to attend as well. He himself presided, with Varus, and ordered all the informers to be produced. . . . When these witnesses had been brought in with the rest, Antipater entered and, falling prostrate at his father’s feet, said: ‘I beseech you, father, do not condemn me in advance, . . .’”

War 1.640. “Varus then called for Antipater for his defence. But he would say no more than ‘God is witness of my innocence’ and remained prostrate and silent. The governor, thereupon, called for the poison and had it applied to a prisoner under sentence of death, who drank it and instantly expired. Then, after a private interview with Herod, Varus drafted his report of the meeting [synhedrion] (τὰ περὶ τὸ συνέδριον) for Caesar [Augustus], and a day later took his departure.”

COMMENT: This ‘sanhedrin’ consisted of Herod’s relatives and friends, with Varus presiding (see 1.620).

War 2.25. “Caesar [Augustus], after reflecting in private on the allegations of both parties, the extent of the kingdom, the amount of the revenue, as well as the number of Herod’s children, and after perusing the letters on the subject which he had received from Varus [Governor] and Sabinus, summoned a council [synhedrion] (συνέδριον μὲν ἀδροίζετε) of leading Romans, at which for the first time he gave a seat to Caius, the son of Agrippa and his daughter Julia, whom he had adopted himself; he then called upon the parties to speak.”

Sanhedrins are usually formal occasions with someone presiding.

\(^{332}\) Lit. a common council.
War 2.81. “Meanwhile, Archelaus in Rome had to defend himself in a new suit against certain Jewish deputies who, before the revolt, had set out with the permission of Varus [Governor] to plead for the autonomy of their nation. Fifty deputies appeared, but more than eight thousand of the Jews in Rome espoused their cause. Caesar [Augustus] assembled a council [sanhedrin] (ἀθροίσαυτος δὲ Καίσαρος συνεδριον), composed of the Roman magistrates and his friends, in the temple of the Palatine Apollo, a building erected by himself with astonishingly rich ornamentation.”

War 2.93. [Contd. from 2.81] “The plaintiffs, being given permission to state their case, began by enumerating Herod’s enormities. . . . Caesar [Augustus], after hearing both parties, dismissed the assembly [sanhedrin] (τὸ συνεδριον).”

War 6.243. [The destruction of the Temple in AD 70] “On the following day Titus, after giving orders to a division . . . called together (συνήγας) his generals. Six of his chief staff-officers were assembled . . . and the procurators and tribunes being next collected, Titus brought forward for debate the subject of the temple. . . . Fortified by this pronouncement, Fronto, Alexander, and Cerealius now came over to his [Titus] view. He then dissolved the council [sanhedrin] (διαλύει τὸ συνεδριον). . . .”

Josephus, Life §368. “Having settled the affairs of Tiberius [city], I called a meeting [sanhedrin] (συνεδριον) of my friends, to deliberate on the measures to be taken against John. The Galilaeans were unanimously of opinion that I should arm them all, march against him and punish him as the author of all these disturbances.”

The sanhedrin that Josephus called was a council to get advice.

Now we come to the case of the death of James the Just, and the question is: Was he put to death by the full Jerusalem Sanhedrin, or was he put to death by a small group of judges, brought together by the high priest Ananus/Ananas to form a sanhedrin with the specific purpose to kill the leading Christian figure at that time?

Now [Luceius] Albinus [the procurator] not yet having started out on the road, he [Ananus, the high priest] convened a council of judges (καθίζει συνέδριον κριτῶν, lit. ‘he convened a sanhedrin of judges’), and leading into the same the brother of Jesus, the one being called ‘Christ,’ Jacob was his name, and certain others, as being law-breakers, an accusation having being made, he handed [them] over to the stoners.

[201] Now as many as were thought to be fair-minded, of the inhabitants of the city [Jerusalem], and were sternly precise about the laws, took up concerning this matter, and they secretly sent to the king [Agrippa] urging him to order Ananus never again to practice the same thing, for this was not indeed the first time, in truth, he had done this.

[202] Now some of them also went forth to meet Albinus travelling from Alexandria [AD 62], and they taught [him] thus that it was not possible to Ananus—without that333 intelligence—to convene a committee.

[203] Now Albinus having being persuaded by the things spoken, wrote in anger to Ananus threatening to take vengeance against him. And King Agrippa, on account of this [unilateral action on the part of Ananus] deprived him of the high priesthood having

333 The form is adj. sg. masc. gen., or, adj. sg.neut. gen. It could be translated as, “without that one’s consent,” being a reference to Albinus’s consent. The consent being for the ‘council of judges’ which was not the same as the full Sanhedrin, but another committee specially convened to kill Christians.
commenced three months [earlier], having appointed Jesus [son] of Damnaeus [in his place]. 334 (Josephus, Ant. 20.200-203)

The Loeb translation has ‘the judges of the Sanhedrin, with a capital ‘S’ for Sanhedrin, giving the impression that it was the full Jerusalem Sanhedrin. It should have been translated ‘a sanhedrin of judges,’ meaning a council that Annas himself set up to legitimise his actions. It was not the full Sanhedrin that was involved in the death of James the Just, and this explains the complaints of the righteous men of Jerusalem appealing against the unlawful convening of these ad hoc sanhedrins to persecute the Christians.

On top of all this Eusebius records this action of Annas the high priest who condemned James the Just to death and had him stoned to death.335 In the case of the death of James the Just, this was not carried out by the Sanhedrin. It was carried out by Annas, who used his own authority to convene a group of judges (συνέδριον κριτῶν) to condemn James. Annas was rightly condemned by the righteous citizens of Jerusalem who reported his unauthorised convening of a ‘sanhedrin of judges.’

We noted that Paul was given official letters by the full Sanhedrin in Jerusalem to suppress Christianity even ‘unto death.’ How did Paul achieve this? He tells us in Acts 26:11, “And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” It was blasphemy to call Jesus the Son of God, because that would be to make Himself equal to God, as the high priest pointed out at Jesus’ trial (Mt 26:65; cf. Jn 10:33). No Christian would deny this, so it was easy for Paul to trap any Christian by asking him or her this one question.

Now the punishment for blasphemy was death by stoning; so this was how Paul engineered their deaths. When he brought back his Jewish Christian prisoners, the Sanhedrin had no option but to stone all those whom Paul had compelled to commit blasphemy. Here we have the definitive proof that the death penalty for religious crimes had not been taken away by the Roman authorities.

Betrothal supporters claim that “Being under Roman rule, the Jews had to have the consent of the Roman rulers and could not act on their own to put any man to death.” I would deny this and point out the Scripture that states: “I [Paul] verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them” (Acts 26:9-10). When Pilate gave the Sanhedrin the opportunity to put Jesus to death [for blasphemy] they refused to accept the offer. But the very offer shows that the Roman authorities recognised that the Sanhedrin did have the power from God to put men to death for religious blasphemy. If they did not have this power, then only Pilate had this power, as betrothal supporters want to believe.

There is no precedent that I am aware of where a Roman governor could delegate his power to a third party to put someone to death. The fact that Pilate could tell the Sanhedrin to use their (not his) power to put Jesus to death “according to your [death penalty] law,” shows that the Jews always had this power.

Paul knew that the Sanhedrin had the power to discipline God’s people legitimately, both from God and the Romans, and that he was the cause of putting many Christians to death.

It is a keynote statement of the supporters of the betrothal solution to say that because the Romans took away the Jewish right to inflict capital punishment on any man (cf. Jn 18:31) that this justified the rabbis bringing in divorce in place of the prescribed death penalty, and Jesus just meekly fell in behind the rabbis, like an ignorant Jew, and took His lead from them.

334 Josephus, Ant. 20.200-203. This is my own translation of Josephus’s Greek text.
Rather than portraying Jesus as at the mercy of compromising changes to God’s Law (brought about by the rabbis?), supporters of the betrothal interpretation should stand back and view the bigger picture and ask, Why did God take away the nation’s independent status in the first place?

We have evidence as early as the fifteenth-century BC to the fifth-century BC from Elephantine in Egypt that divorce was an everyday occurrence and that divorce has a polluting effect on the land in which it occurs, and “causes the land to sin” (Deut 24:4). Judea was certainly a polluted land by the time the Romans took control of it. If the Romans did prevent the Jews from implementing the Mosaic law on adulterers and fornicators (which, we have shown, is not likely), then God was shutting them up to having to live with their adulterous wives, because He provided no alternative punishment for this particular sin. It was unlawful to substitute divorce for the death penalty.

The one question that supporters of the betrothal interpretation cannot answer is: Why did Jesus change the death penalty into a divorce penalty in the case of the unfaithful espoused wife, but not in the case of the unfaithful married wife? If the rabbis had not already altered the death penalty into a divorce penalty due to their statement in John 18:31 (that it was not lawful, under Roman rule, for them to put a man to death), then Jesus, on His own authority must have altered the Law in favour of letting the unfaithful espoused bride get off scot free, but would not extend the same judgment and justice to the unfaithful married wife. Yet both committed the same sin, and both were defiled in God’s eyes. If Jesus did not extend divorce to the unfaithful married woman, then the death penalty was still in operation in her case, but not in the case of the unfaithful, betrothed ‘wife,’ if the supporters of the betrothal interpretation are correct.

It is not relevant to argue that one woman was in a ‘one flesh’ relationship with a man, while the other was not. Under the Law, both ‘wives’ are subject to the death penalty if they were unfaithful. One is in a one-flesh union, but the other is not. But God dispenses justice in demanding death for both wives. Hence the ‘one-flesh’ status is irrelevant. We are back to God being consistent and Jesus being inconsistent in how they punish the same sin, but only because a wrong assumption has been imposed on the text of Matthew 19:9.

The assumption is that a married woman cannot commit fornication or prostitution; that fornication is the sin of single, unmarried persons, male and female. This assumption might have been sufficient in the days of Daniel Whitby (1638–1726)(see 6.6.8.), when the data to the contrary was not available, but it is surprising to find this ignorance of the facts still paraded as a linguistic fact by modern supporters today.

We pointed out earlier that the betrothal interpretation had its origin in a corrupt Greek text dated to 1516 in the case of Matthew 19:9. No critical edition of the Greek New Testament has accepted Erasmus’s tampered text, yet supporters of the betrothal interpretation continue to read an exception clause in Matthew 19:9 as if these were the words of Jesus! They are the words of Erasmus! But most supporters of the betrothal interpretation are living in the past, and living on outdated research.

The fact that Jesus’ reputation as an infallible teacher is brought into question by this interpretation is hidden from them. When it is pointed out to them that Jesus altered God’s Law to allow divorce for some sexual sins but not for others, and in this He was no different from Hillel or Shammai, it is only then that they throw away this incompetent explanation, and begin looking around for another, more biblical solution, which would harmonise with all of Jesus’ statements on divorce and remarriage, and explain the practice of the Early Church in never allowing remarriage to follow a separation by an unbeliever.

The so-called fact that Jesus altered the Law so that the unfaithful, espoused bride was not stoned to death, but allowed the death penalty to stand in the case of the unfaithful, married woman, cannot be blamed on the Romans. The Romans are blamed for not allowing the Jews to implement the death penalty, but to be consistent, if Jesus bowed to Roman law and introduced divorce, instead of stoning, for fornication, then He ought to have introduced divorce for adultery.
However one juggles the words, the result is the same, if the betrothal interpretation is correct, namely, Jesus unlawfully altered God’s Word, and if He did so, then He is not the Son of God. He is just another self-seeking rabbi. He is a bogus messiah, and not worthy to be followed by any modern Jew. The betrothal interpretation presents the man Christ Jesus as an incompetent, inconsistent, fallible, human being, struggling, like them, to find the truth, but never arriving at it.

Now that a biblical alternative exists that takes care of the theological concerns that gave rise to the out-dated, betrothal interpretation there is no need for the betrothal solution any longer. It is obsolete. Conservative-evangelical scholars can now move on at last, having moved back to the original Greek text of Matthew 19:9, and can take time to appreciate the wisdom given to the Lord Jesus to convey His mind clearly to Jew and Gentile alike, to their edification and enjoyment, that once a lawful marriage has come into being, only the death of one of the spouses can end it. The Lord also, through a revelation to Paul, forbade any of His followers from initiating the dissolution of their marriage with an unbeliever; and in the event of an unbelieving spouse forcing a ‘divorce’ on any one of His followers, they were not to recognise the ‘divorce’ as having any validity, and to (a) remain unmarried to another person, or (b) wait for the divorcer to return to them.

6.7. EARLY CHURCH FATHERS AND THE SECULAR STATE ON DIVORCE

There will always be those labelled ‘Christian’ who will have very radical views on the genuineness of the Gospels to record what Jesus taught on any subject, and divorce and marriage is not exempt from this radical approach to the Gospels.

So, for instance, Abel Isaksson, acclaimed to be the foremost exponent of the betrothal interpretation, aligned himself with those who have seriously questioned whether we can obtain any reliable knowledge of what Jesus said and did. His own criteria is:

We should accept as genuine traditions of Jesus only what appears to be absolutely characteristic, both in relation to contemporary Judaism and to the later developments in the primitive Church. The material that remains after this process of selection and that is to provide us with knowledge of Jesus is very limited, but it is surely better to have a square metre of solid ground beneath our feet than a square mile of quagmire.336

Essential to Isaksson’s reconstruction is his belief that, “Like all historical figures, Jesus was dependent on contemporary ideas and thought in the categories of his time, though in many cases he gave them a fresh significance.”337 Jesus’ claim to have received all His teaching directly from His Father is not taken into account in this type of reconstruction.

Isaksson believes that the only thing that Jesus taught was that a husband makes himself guilty of adultery if he divorces his wife and marries another woman and that every lawful marriage was indissoluble (p. 73). Everything else surrounding this logion has been imposed by the Church, at a later date, on this core logion. In other words, Jesus did not have any exception clauses, “the different forms of the logion are the result of a primitive Church halakah discussion on divorce, starting from Jesus’ prohibition of it. Thus the wording of Mt. 5.32 is not an artificial formulation but the answer given in the primitive Church to the topical question of whether it was permissible for a man to divorce his wife, if he did not re-marry.”338

337 Ibid. p. 66.
338 Ibid. pp. 74, 123.
Isaksson believes that Matthew 19:9 constitutes the original logion of Jesus, but without the exception clause, which was the work of the primitive Church (p. 75), and added in later by the author of Matthew’s Gospel, and represents “a later compromise, which shows that even in the early Church it had been found impossible to apply in practice Jesus’ saying on the absolute indissolubility of marriage.”\(^\text{339}\) Isaksson agrees with this development, and that the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 was not the work of Jesus but of those who came later (p. 127).

According to Isaksson the contemporary Jewish view was that a wife could commit adultery against her husband, but not a husband against his wife. The husband could only commit adultery by having sexual intercourse with a woman who was another man’s wife (p. 79). He believes that when the author of Matthew introduced the exception clause in 19:9 this brought Jesus’ teaching into line with Shammai’s interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-3 (p. 88).

Isaksson rejects the idea that the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 was intended to absolve Jewish men who had been compelled to divorce their wives for adultery, whether they wanted to or not. This is captured in the paraphrase of Matthew 5:32, “Every man who divorces his wife without being compelled to do so on account of the current law regarding extra-marital sexual intercourse on the part of a wife is a cause of any adultery which is committed with her” (p. 89). It is said that Matthew wished to release the husband by this clause from any responsibility for divorce and its consequences if he divorced her on account of adultery.

Isaksson believes that this clause is to be regarded as the attempt of a rabbincally educated Christian to give the expression *eruvat davar* in Deuteronomy 24:1 an interpretation which would be valid in the early Church (p. 90). Isaksson concluded that, “We have established that Matthew had this pericope [Mt 19:3-12] direct from the traditional teaching on marriage of an important Christian church and not only from Mk.”\(^\text{340}\) This tradition took the form of an early Church marriage catechism. Originally all of Jesus’ logia had no detailed information as to where and when an event took place. This information was all added later when the logia and pericopes were combined into a continuous account (p. 116).

Isaksson believes that even if the exception clause was put into the mouth of Jesus we still need to know what it was intended to convey, which he describes as a single exception from the rule on the indissolubility of marriage (p. 128). His first explanation is that some regard the exception clauses as revoking the idea of the indissolubility of the marriage bond. He claims that most scholars resolve the contradiction by viewing the clauses as later additions to the text.

Isaksson’s second explanation is that the clause only permits a separation of a *turo et mensa* (from board and bed) in cases of πορνεία but not a complete divorce with both parties having the right to re-marry. He rejects this on the grounds that this form of divorce was unknown among the Jews. He also believes that ἀπολύειν means a complete divorce with the right to re-marry (p. 128).

Isaksson’s third explanation is that divorce is permitted only when an incestuous marriage, forbidden by Leviticus 18, has taken place.

Isaksson’s fourth explanation is aimed at rejecting the idea that ‘not over fornication’ (μὴ ἐν πορνείᾳ) and ‘besides’ (παρεκτές) *includes* fornication in the ban as a ground for divorce, as in the translation, ‘not even for fornication.’\(^\text{341}\)

Isaksson’s fifth explanation is the incest solution. Here the belief is that πορνεία (πορνεία) is usually employed to describe invalid marriages, and he mentions Heb 12:16 (Esau), and 1 Cor 5:1, of a man living with his stepmother who had become a widow or who divorced his father. He rejects

\(^{339}\) Ibid. p. 76.

\(^{340}\) Ibid. pp. 113, 120. Isaksson attributed the words in Gen 2:24 to Adam, whereas Jesus attributed them to God (p. 123).

\(^{341}\) German scholars who held to this view are A. Ott (1939), K. Staab (1940, 1943), A. Allgeier (1943, 1946), U. Holzmeister (1945), P. T. Schwegler (1948), J. Sickenberger (1942), A. Tafi (1948), and M. Brunec (1949).
the case of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:20, 28-29) as a reference to forbidden degrees of marriage. His main objection is that according to Jewish law, no divorce was necessary when a marriage involved an incestuous relationship of the first degree. In that case the marriage was regarded as a nullity. He thinks it highly unlikely that any Jewish families would get anywhere near the stage of contemplating incestuous marriages. He also deals with the case of proselyte marriages and the bizarre regulations dealing with such marriages.\textsuperscript{342}

Isaksson’s is weak when it comes to discuss the possibility that a man’s wife could become a prostitute by demanding that the text should include the word πορνη. He claims not to know of any case where πορνεια could refer to a wife’s adultery against her husband (p. 132). He dismisses Jeremiah 3, where Yahweh’s wife acts the prostitute under the term πορνεια, with the observation that it is metaphorical language. He mentions Hoshea 2:4 but only to note that Hosea’s wife was both an adulteress and a harlot! He dismisses Revelation 2:14, 20-21 as a reference to some sort of ritual fornication, which he describes as a breach of faith against the God to whom one belongs (p. 134). However, the alternation between the verbs πορνευειν and μοιχευειν reflect the relationship between Israel and God in Jeremiah 3. As in a marriage, faithfulness to one partner should be the norm, but alternating between adultery and prostitution, either physical or spiritual, is a total betrayal. The fact that both verbs are used of the physical and spiritual ‘marriages’ is highly significant. It shows that married women are capable of both lewd behaviour.

Isaksson then goes through the evidence that points to married women indulging in fornication (πορνεια) and dismisses each of them in turn, mostly by reinterpreting the deed as sexual passion or desire, “and not the acts to which it might lead” (p. 134), especially Ecclus., Tobit and Hermas. The evidence is Testament of Joseph 38\textsuperscript{343} (κακειν δε υστερον εις πορνειαν με εφελκυσατο); Testament of Levi 9:6 (πορναις και μοιχαισις υπαφθησασθεις); Sir. 23:23; Tob 8:7 (ου διαπορναιεαν εγω λαμβανω τινες αδελφην μου ταυτην, αλλα επ αληθης); Hermas, Mand. IV, 1.3-8. After dismissing the evidence he concluded: “Consequently these passages cannot be cited as evidence that πορνεια could be used to denote precisely the crime committed by a married woman, in having sexual relations with some other man than her husband.”\textsuperscript{344} A cool example of wetting your enemy’s powder!

Isaksson lamely states he has been unable to find in rabbinic literature any example of the word πότερν (‘fornication’) being used to denote adultery. This is not surprising if the subject is a married woman, because all sexual unfaithfulness is adultery! It is when ‘fornication’ is used of a married woman that she becomes more than an adulteress; she is showing signs of promiscuity and behaving like a prostitute, which takes her to another level of depravity. It is not surprising, therefore, that a married prostitute would be a rare phenomenon in Israel where the death penalty existed for adultery, never mind married prostitution. But the fact that there are cases of married prostitutes and that the term πορνεια is used of their behaviour indicates she has been unfaithful to her husband. Whether it is called porneia or moicheia is irrelevant; both are breaches of the marriage bond.

Isaksson argued, “Since it is a question of a married woman’s crime and her extra-marital sexual intercourse is described as πορνεια, this word must mean a sexual offence committed by the wife before her marriage.”\textsuperscript{345} He is correct to say that πορνεια is used of the crime of a married woman, because we have enough examples to prove that this is so with consummated marriages, the only fault in his line of reasoning is that he thinks it must refer to a crime committed before she

\textsuperscript{342} Ibid. p. 131.


\textsuperscript{344} Ibid. p. 134.

\textsuperscript{345} Ibid. p. 135.
was married. But it is just as plausible to refer the crime to the period after she was divorced, if she went on to be promiscuous. Her post-divorce, extra-marital sexual intercourse would be rightly termed ‘fornication’ from the husband’s point of view—and the community—because she was no longer his wife, so she was not committing adultery against him.

It does not say much for the trust between a betrothed bride and the groom that their wedding had to take place on the fourth day of the week, so that the husband could at once bring any complaint before the court sessions held on the fifth day of the week about his wife not being a virgin. What an ordeal this must have been for the blushing bride.

According to undated rabbinic tradition, the husband was under an obligation to report his complaint to the court and to divorce her. It is unknown when the obligation to divorce her replaced the stoning of her (see M. Ket. 1.1ff.; and M. Yeb. 4.10). Deuteronomy 22:19 covers the case where the husband publicly accused his bride of not being a virgin. Nothing is stated in Scripture about the case where she is not a virgin, and he is content to live with her. (Maybe she was raped as a little child, but he loved her.) The virginity of the bride was initially a private matter, but once the husband complained then it became a public and a legal matter as Deuteronomy 22:19 makes clear.

Isaksson notes, “But when a husband wanted to divorce a wife who was not a virgin, although he had married her on the understanding that she was, it is not really a question of divorce, although the term is used.”

He should have said, it is not really a question of divorce, it is a question of stoning. The replacement of stoning with divorce, since it was a breach of the Torah law, must date to a time when the Jews were unable to enforce God’s law, and since the Roman garrison in Judea in Jesus’ time was very thin on the ground, cultural norms continued throughout the land of Israel without any interference from the Roman administration, hence it was possible to stone adulteresses in the presence of Jesus, had the loyal Jews so wished to obey God rather than man in the form of Pilate. Isaksson goes on, “A husband’s divorcing such a wife can equally well be described as the annulment of an unfulfilled contract of sale as a divorce.” Moses did not command that a divorce certificate be written out to divorce an unfaithful betrothed bride. This was the decision of man, not God. It has no legitimacy. It is not legal. It is a mere tradition of the Elders.

It is sometimes said there is an ambiguity in the word ‘divorce.’ Back in Moses’s day, a divorce certificate was issued by the husband. Today it is issued by the State. In the mind of some, the State has taken over the function of granting divorces from the husband, and somehow this makes it more legitimate. This is a false hope. We need to go to the heart of the matter, regarding where sin begins.

Stage 1. The husband hates his wife (first sin)

Stage 2. The hate becomes so great that in his mind is the determination to issue her a notice of divorce (another sin; fails to forgive)

Stage 3. He verbalises his intent to get rid of her (hardness of heart has truly set in by now)

Stage 4. He writes to his solicitor with the intent that his unwritten divorce certificate should take a written form (the grip of sin is so tight that he feels compelled to go through with the evil deed).

Stage 5. He gets the State to hand to his wife a written form of his unwritten certificate.

Result: What God warned must not be ‘put asunder’ by man, man in the shape of a human judge agrees with the irate husband to dissolve the union, which only death can sever.

This circuitous route does not change the fact that the hard-hearted husband has divorced his wife. He has sinned. The State has not divorced his wife. He has. The State is just his postman. How different is this from Moses’s day if a man, instead of handing the bill of divorce personally to his wife, as he was commanded to do by Moses, he hands it to another man to hand to her? By using a proxy, such as the State, to do his evil deed for him, the personal element has been removed.

346 Ibid. p. 137.
Whether a husband or a judge hands the woman her divorce notice makes no difference in God’s eyes. They are both men. God never handed the State any authority to make or break marriages. The State is there, at God’s behest, to see that the evil of men is suppressed and the good honoured. To dissolve lawful marriages it has no authority, nor should the Church of God condone such misuse of its authority.

6.7.1. Invalid ‘marriages’ should not to be terminated by ‘divorce’

Invalid unions, such as those within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, should not be terminated by a civil divorce, as if they were truly ‘one-flesh’ unions, but annulled. I would not use the term ‘divorce’ ever. I would call these unions ‘invalid unions,’ as I would call the one where a man slept with his step-mother (1 Corinthians 5:1, which would have incurred the death penalty under the Law, Dt 22:30), or where a man went in to a prostitute (1 Corinthians 6:16-17). You simply cease these unions without the need for a ‘divorce,’ because the term ‘divorce’ carries with it the dissolution of a lawfully contracted and consummated marriage in Greco-Roman and Hebrew cultures. No such divorce can ever take place even if both bride and bridegroom are not virgins on their wedding night, or one is virgin (male or female) and the other is not.

6.7.2. Divorce as an early fixture of Christian doctrine and practice

The Church, which was composed of Jews in the first instance, spread to the ends of the Roman Empire within the lifetime of the Apostles (from Spain in the west to India in the east), and certainly had reached the ends of the civilised world at that time, which was before the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Hundreds of churches existed all across the known world, each following the teachings of Jesus. Given Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage there could not have been an ethical vacuum when it came to such a common tradition as marriage. Christians had a perspective on marriage that was different from all existing cultures because of Jesus’ teaching that it was for life, with no provision made for divorce (Mark and Luke). The ethical standards that Jesus set for His people could not be met without a born-again experience and the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable them to live the standard that Jesus required of them.

For the first four or five centuries Christ’s Church retained Jesus’ teaching on marriage and no divorce (only separation for the unbelieving partner who demanded it).347 Davies Morgan made a thorough study of the Early Church Fathers’ understanding of the term porneia in 1826, and this was his conclusion.

Little attention has been given to the exceptive clause [in Matthew] and no attempt had been made to mitigate its restriction, except by Origen. It had been seldom quoted. Tertullian was almost its only expositor; and all the Christian fathers were agreed in upholding the indissolubility of marriage, as if there had been no clause of exception, or as if that clause related only to a cause precluding marriage.348

347 See J. Carl Laney’s contribution in H. Wayne House (ed.), Divorce & Remarriage: Four Christian Views (Downers Grove, ENG.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), p. 34 n. 33, where he states that the majority of the Patristic evidence is that they permitted divorce for adultery (equated with fornication) but not remarriage, which is footnoted to Gordon Wenham, “May Divorced Christians Remarry?” Churchman 95 (1981), pp. 152-53. The single exception was Ambrosiaster (A.D. 375) who allowed remarriage for an ‘innocent’ husband, but not for an ‘innocent’ wife.

How are we to explain this solid, unbroken, uncontested witness to the teaching in Mark and Luke, unless an ethical culture grew up immediately in Jesus’ own lifetime and spread out into all the world before the destruction of Jerusalem?

When the early Church is considered as a whole, a conspicuous unity is seen considering the subject of divorce and remarriage. Heth and Wenham wrote, “To list those who hold that remarriage after divorce is contrary to the Gospel teaching is to call a roll of the best-known early Christian theologians...In all, twenty-five individual writers and two early councils forbid remarriage after divorce.”

6.7.2.1. The Shepherd of Hermas

Our earliest noncanonical Christian writing giving an insight into how Christians coped with divorce and remarriage comes from the Shepherd of Hermas, which was popular in Egypt but reflects Roman times, and may have been set in Rome between AD 100 and 150. The earliest extant fragment of this work is dated to the early second century. How close Hermas is to Paul’s time can be gauged by the fact that the woman, Grapte, a literate, prominent churchwoman, is responsible for the instruction of women and children, but not men (Vision 2.4.3; cf. Tit 2:4). The church Elders all appear to be males, as one would expect in Pauline churches. The members of the church speak Greek, and not Latin.

In Mandate 4.4. Hermas asks the Shepherd (who is an angel):

1 I charge you, said he, to guard your chastity, and let no thought enter your heart of another man’s wife, or of evil (πονηρίας), or of similar evil things (πονηρών); for by doing this...

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349 Heth and Wenham, Jesus and Divorce, p. 38.
350 It was quoted by Irenaeus (2nd cent.), by Clement of Alexandria (d. 215) and Origen (d. 254). Tertullian (fl. 230) called Hermas the ‘lover of adulterers’ and ‘shepherd of adulterers’ (in De pud. 10.11; 20.2), because he favoured reconciliation after divorce for adultery, provided the adulterous spouse repents. Tertullian did not agree to reconciliation, but held that both parties should remain unmarried after a ‘divorce’ (really a separation). Origen [AD 186–253] even identified this Hermas with the Hermas mentioned in Romans 16:14, thus making him a contemporary of Paul. The mention of Clement in Vision 2.4.3. is thought to be Clement of Rome (end of 1st cent.). The Muratorian Canon makes Hermas the brother of [Pope] Pius I (c. 140-155), a prominent Roman churchman of the middle of the second century (according to Eusebius [AD 264–340], HE. III. 5, 6). See Carolyn Osiek, Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 2.
351 Unless otherwise stated the translation is that of the Athos Codex, published by Kirsoff Lake, Facsimiles of the Athos Fragments of the Shepherd of Hermas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907). See Kirsoff Lake, Facsimiles of the Athos Fragments of the Shepherd of Hermas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), at Mand. 4.5. Another Greek text of the Shepherd was published by Rudolphus Anger and Guilielmus Dindorf, Hermae Pastor Graece (Lipsiae: T. O. Weigel, 1856). This was followed by Adolphus Hilgenfeld, Hermae Pastor. Graece e codibus Sinaictico et Lipsiensi (Lipsiae: T. O. Weigel, 1866). This has a critical apparatus. A collation of the Hermas mss was made by Spyr. P. Lambros, which was translated by J. Armitage Robinson, A Collation of the Athos Codex of the Shepherd of Hermas (Cambridge: University Press, 1888). Unless otherwise stated Sinaicatus agrees with the embedded Greek words in the above translation.
352 Hilgenfeld reads ‘fornication’ πορνείας; but Sinaicatus and Anger read ‘evil’ πονηρίας. However, Sinaicatus was corrected to ‘fornication’ πορνείας. Hilgenfeld’s ‘fornication’ is supported by W. Burton’s The Apostolic Fathers. Part I. The Ancient & Modern Library of Theological Literature (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1889).
you commit a great sin. But if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin.  
For if, say, this thought or evil (η πονηρός) enter your heart, then you will sin; and if, say, in like manner, you think other evil thoughts (πονηράν ενθυμήση), you commit evil (πονηρό). For this thought is a great sin in a servant of God. But if, say, anyone commit this evil (πονηρόν) deed he works death for himself. Therefore, see to yourself, and refrain from this thought; for where purity dwells, there iniquity ought not to enter the heart of a righteous man.

I said to him, Sir, permit me to ask you a few questions. Say on, he said. And I said if a man has a believing wife in the Lord, and finds her in some adultery (μοιχεία τινί), does the man sin by continuing to live with her?

As long as he does not know, he said, he does not sin. But if, say, the husband knows about her sin, and the woman does not repent, but on the contrary remains in her fornication (πορνήα), and the man continues to live with her, he is guilty of her sin (ἀμαρτίας) and a participant in her adultery (μοιχείας).

Then what, sir, I said, should the man do if, say, the woman remains in this passion? Let him divorce (ἀπολύσαι) her, he said, and let the man remain by himself. But if, when he has divorced (ἀπολύσας) his wife, he marries another, he also commits adultery (μοιχείας).

I said, Therefore, if, say, sir, after the wife has been divorced (ἀπολύθηναι), the woman repents and wishes to return to her own husband, shall she not be taken back?

Yes, truly, said he, if, say, the husband does not receive her back, he sins, and brings great sin upon himself. Clearly, he that has sinned and repents must be received back; yet not often (μὴ ἐπὶ πολὺ δὲ), for to the servants of God there is but one repentance.

For the sake of her repentance, therefore, the husband ought not to remarry. Thus the case stands with

353 This is also the reading of Sinaiticus, Hilgenfeld, and Anger.
354 W. Burton, op. cit., p. 233, translates this as, “be thou at all times mindful of the Lord,” which has no support in any Greek text.
355 The words η πονηρα are supported by Anger, but omitted by Sinaiticus and Hilgenfeld.
356 Anger has the spelling πονηριαν. In place of πονηραν ενθυμηση πονηρα εργαζη (‘evil thoughts, you commit evil’) Sinaiticus reads: πονηρα αμαρτιαν εργαζη (‘evil, you commit sin’).
357 Supported by Anger, but Hilgenfeld reads ‘sin’ ἀμαρτιαν.
358 Supported by Sinaiticus, Hilgenfeld and Anger.
359 In place of the awkward Athos text: εἰ γυναικα φημι κυριε πιστην εν κυρω (literally, ‘If a woman, I say sir, faithful in the Lord’), Sinaiticus reads: κυριε φημει η γυναικα εχον τις πιστην εν Κυρω (‘Sir, I say, one having a woman faithful in the Lord’).
360 Codex Athos and Anger read ἀμαρτια ‘sin’ here, while Sinaiticus, Hilgenfeld (and W. Burton) reads πορνηα ‘fornication.’
361 In one edition (Kirsopp Lake) there is a homoioteleuthon error which omits the words: “and marries another, he too commits adultery. But if, when he has put away his wife, he marries another, then he likewise commits adultery.” But if, sir, said I, after the wife has been put away’ [end], otherwise there is doubt about the original text.
362 Charles H. Hoole, The Shepherd of Hermas (London: Rivingtons, 1879), p.47, understood this to mean, “but not if she sin frequently.” This work contains a useful Introduction (26pp.). W. Buton, op. cit., p. 234, translates “he ought to receive the offender, if she repents; only not often.”
363 This is also the view of the writer to the Epistle to the Hebrews 6:6.
364 Sinaiticus reads ‘her husband’ here.
both wife and husband. * Not only, said he, is it adultery (μοιχεία) if, say, one defiles his flesh, but clearly, even he who, for instance, performs [sexual] things after the likeness of the heathen, he commits adultery (μοιχάται). So then, also if one continues in such deeds and he does not repent, stay away from him and company not with him; otherwise you are also a partaker of his sin.\[366\] On account of this you [pl.] are commanded to remain single, whether wife, whether husband,\[367\] because it is possible in such situations there may be repentance.

Hermas advises the innocent party to ‘separate from’ persistent sinners, so that when he uses the term ‘divorce’ (ἀπολύω) he uses it with the meaning of ‘separate, distance yourself from,’ just as Paul uses his term ‘separate’ (χωρίζω) without any suggestion of the dissolution of the marriage bond by himself, or by Hermas. We find a similar confusing situation in the English translation of the writings of other early Church Fathers, because they, like Hermas, use ‘divorce’ (ἀπολύω) when it is very probable that it means no more than Paul’s ‘separate’ (χωρίζω), because the indissolubility of the marriage bond is a rock-solid doctrine in their writings, even though some modern writers focus on the word ‘divorce’ (ἀπολύω) when referring to the case of adultery, and assume that it means the dissolution of the marriage bond.\[368\]

In Hermas’s day divorce under Roman rule was easy and common for both sexes. Hermas follows the Jewish and Roman legal assumption that illicit sexual intercourse constitutes adultery only if a married woman is involved. In Roman law if a man has sex with a woman who is not married it is not adultery.\[369\]

The interesting linguistic feature in Hermas’s account is that a married woman is accused of both adultery (μοιχεία) and also fornication (πορνεία). Compare Ecclesiasticus 23:23 for another instance of the same thing. In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,\[370\] Asher mentions a married man who “commits adultery and fornication, and abstains from meats, and when he fasts he does evil, and by the power of his wealth overwhets men; and notwithstanding his excessive wickedness he does the commandments: this, too, has a twofold aspect, but the whole is evil” (Asher 2:8). In the same work, unlawful sex can become intoxicating. Judah observed, “For even though a man be a king and commit fornication, he is stripped of his kingship by becoming the slave of fornication, as I myself also suffered” (Testimony of Judah 15:3). The king is likely to have been a married man, when he becomes a slave to fornication. This kind of sex has an element of

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\[366\] The text of Hilgenfeld adds here: κείσαι, which the translator, W. Burton, op. cit., p. 234, has rendered as: “And for this cause a man that puts away his wife ought not to take another.” See Adolphus Hilgenfeld, Hermae Pastor. Graece e codibus Sinaitico et Lipsiensi (Lipsiae: T. O. Weigel, 1866), p. 42. For the translation of this text, see Ante-Nicene Fathers, 27:21.

\[367\] W. Burton, op. cit., p. 234, translates this sentence as, “If, therefore, a woman perseveres in any thing of this kind, and repents not, depart from her, and live not with her; otherwise thou also shalt be partaker of her sin.”

\[368\] Sinaiticus, Hilgenfeld and Anger read “whether husband whether wife.”

\[369\] Great care must be taken to translate πορνεία by ‘fornication,’ and μοιχεία by ‘adultery.’ Carolyn Osiek (op. cit., p. 109) carelessly translates both Greek words by ‘adultery’ in Mandate 4:1-10.

\[369\] Carolyn Osiek, Shepherd of Hermas, p.110. According to Roman law at this time, the Lex Julia de adulterii coercendis (18 BC) compelled the husband to divorce an adulterous wife and forced him to remarry another woman. Here we see the Christian husband refusing to do that. He abides by Paul’s view of ‘separation,’ which does not mean a Roman divorce, and the motive is the same—the hope of repentance.

\[370\] This work was written about 125 B.C. but received Christian interpolations some time after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It retains the NT distinction between adultery and fornication.
Irresponsibility about it. It is sex for sex sake. It rises no higher than the sex life of the common dog. Strong drink and sex go together. In the same work, when Joseph was under constant temptation to commit fornication with Potiphar’s wife, he was fully aware of the dangers of strong drink. He tells us that if his master was away from home, “I drank no wine; nor for three days did I take my food, but I gave it to the poor and sick.” He had to have his wits about him at all times. Joseph tells us that “she sought to draw me into fornication (πορνεία)"unceasingly. It was not that he was single and she was a married woman that constituted the sin of fornication. It was because it was unlawful for him to have unlawful sex before he was married. From his point of view it was fornication; from her point of view it was adultery.

6.7.2.2. The Book of Jubilees

The same situation is referred to in the Book of Jubilees, where Joseph is tempted to lie with his master’s wife. The text reads: “But he did not surrender his soul, and he remembered the Lord and the words which Jacob, his father, used to read from among the words of Abraham, that no man should commit fornication (πορνεία) with a woman who has a husband; that for him the punishment of death has been ordained in the heavens before the Most High God, and the sin will be recorded against him in the eternal books continually before the Lord” (Jub. 39:6). Judah thought Tamar was a prostitute and that she was ‘with child by fornication’ (Jub. 41:16). The punishment was by burning.

Jubilees also records that Noah, fourteen years after the Flood, instructed his married sons not to engage in fornication and he lists this sin as one of three that led to the Flood, “owing to the fornication wherein the Watchers against the law of their ordinances went a whoring after the daughters of men, and took themselves wives of all which they chose” (7:20-22; cf. Gen 6:1-4). A parallel for these unlawful marriages is recorded in Ezra 10, which Ezra rightfully put an end to as unlawful, and so null and void from the very beginning. In this context, these first marriages were not adulterous marriages, but fornication marriages. These marriages may have been lawfully entered into according to the custom of the time, but in the sight of God they were unlawful, and that is what counts in the end. The Watchers, Noah tells us, went against the ‘law of their ordinances,’ and the same disregard for the ‘law of their ordinances,’ occurred in Ezra’s day. Hence, any modern marriage which is against the ‘law of God’s ordinances’ is fornication, and should be disbanded immediately. Today, this would include all same sex ‘marriages.’

It is possible that fornication was seen as, reckless, unbridled, sex, whereas adultery might have been seen as more secretive and private with a paramour. This illustrates the maxim that, ‘All adultery is fornication, but not all fornication is adultery.’ Sex with a prostitute would be fornication, not adultery, whether the man was married or not (cf. 1 Cor 5:1; 6:16-18).

In the Testaments, Benjamin refers to the biblical event (Num 25) where God “reproved Esau through the Midianites, who deceived their brethren, so that they fell into fornication, and idolatry; and they were alienated from God” (Benjamin 10:10). The majority of the fornication, on this occasion, was done by married men.

The Book of Jubilees is dated to 125-100 BC, which provides an insight into what constituted ‘fornication’ at that time, and it appears to mean any unlawful sex by married or single persons. The marital status of the person is not in the frame. There is a strong element of lustful

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371 This was written about 125-100 B.C. by a priest who was sympathetic to the Sadducean point of view.

372 R. H. Charles. The book of Jubilees, or, The little Genesis translated from the Ethiopic text by R. H. Charles; with an introduction by G. H. Box (London : SPCK 1917). The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, in its original composition, goes back to the same time, if not earlier, so that its view of ‘fornication’ corroborates the picture presented in Jubilees.
desire, akin to animal desire, attached to its practice, leading to masturbation if not fulfilled, or worse still, sex with animals, and homosexuality between same sex couples. It is indiscriminate sex, such as having sex with a prostitute, one night stands, with no desire to produce a child. It is seeking sexual pleasure as an end in itself. All of this misuse of the gift (charisma) of the sex drive constitutes ‘uncleanness’ in Jewish writings predating the New Testament writings. Adultery, on the other hand, can range from lust (indistinguishable from fornication and ‘uncleanness’) to full-on sexual attraction (gripped by obsession) to enter into a lasting (if not a permanent) on-going relationship with another married spouse, while still married to another spouse. Marriage is seen as the only legitimate outlet for the release of sperm from a man’s body. His sperm is holy seed (Jub. 25:18).

Jubilees records the rape of Dinah and justifies the extermination of the Shechemites on the basis of the law at that time:

And if there is any man who wishes in Israel to give his daughter or his sister to any man who is of the seed of the Gentiles he shall surely die, and they shall stone him with stones; for he has wrought shame in Israel; and they shall burn the woman with fire, because she has dishonoured the name of the house of her father, and she shall be rooted out of Israel.

And let not an adulteress and no uncleanness be found in Israel throughout all the days of the generations of the earth; for Israel is holy unto the Lord, and every man who has defiled (his seed) shall surely die: they shall stone him with stones. For thus has it been ordained and written in the heavenly tables regarding all the seed of Israel: he who defiles (his seed) shall surely die, and he shall be stoned with stones. And to this law there is no limit of days, and no remission, nor any atonement: but the man who has defiled his daughter shall be rooted out in the midst of all Israel, because he has given of his seed to Moloch, and wrought impiously so as to defile it [his seed]” (Jub. 30:7-10).

The ‘uncleanness’ mentioned here is usually associated with lustful fornication in Jubilees, which reads: “And it is a reproach to Israel, to those who give, and to those who take the daughters of the Gentiles; for this is unclean and abominable to Israel. And Israel will not be free from this uncleanness if it has a wife of the daughters of the Gentiles, or has given any of its daughters to a man who is of any of the Gentiles” (Jub. 30:13).

The head of the family was under a strict obligation not to allow any female members under his headship to nurture the sperm of a Gentile man in her womb, and bring forth offspring to Moloch, who stands for any other god. These unlawful unions were viewed with intense horror. The father who allowed his daughter to marry a non-Hebrew man was punished by stoning, and his daughter was burned. However, if a Hebrew man married a non-Hebrew woman there was no penalty attached to this union. It was only frowned upon. Both Judah and Simeon married Canaanite women. Simeon repented and took a second wife from Mesopotamia (Jub. 34:20). Salmon married Rahab the harlot, and Boaz married Ruth the Moabitess (see Mt 1:5). Joseph married an Egyptian woman. Solomon’s down-fall is attributed to marrying foreign women who turned him away from serving Yahweh whole-heartedly.

The horror over some forms of fornication was expressed in demanding the death penalty, as in the case where Reuben slept with the wife of his father. Jubilees captures this disgust very vividly:

7. And when Jacob returned and sought her [Bilhah, Rachel’s maid], she said to him: “I am not clean for you, for I have been defiled as regards you; for Reuben has defiled me, and has lain with me in the night, and I was asleep, and did not discover until he uncovered my skirt and slept with me.” 8. And Jacob was exceedingly wroth with Reuben because he had lain with Bilhah, because he had uncovered his father’s skirt. 9. And Jacob did not approach her again because Reuben had defiled her.

And as for any man who uncovers his father’s skirt, his deed is wicked exceedingly,

373 According to Gen. 46:10, Simon had one son of a Canaanite wife. And according to Jub. 30:11ff. marriage to a Canaanite woman was a death penalty offence.
for he is abominable before the Lord. 10. For this reason it is written and ordained on the heavenly tables that a man should not lie with his father’s wife, and should not uncover his father’s skirt, for this is unclean: they shall surely die together, the man who lies with his father’s wife and the woman also, for they have wrought uncleanness on the earth. 11. And there shall be nothing unclean before our God in the nation which He has chosen for Himself as a possession. 12. And again, it is written a second time: “Cursed he be who lies with the wife of his father, for he has uncovered his father’s shame;” and all the holy ones of the Lord said “So be it; so be it.” 13. And you, Moses, command the children of Israel that they observe this word; for it (entails) a punishment of death; and it is unclean, and there is no atonement for ever to atone for the man who has committed this, but he is to be put to death and slain, and stoned with stones, and rooted out from the midst of the people of our God. 14. For to no man who does so in Israel is it permitted to remain alive a single day on the earth, for he is abominable and unclean.

15. And let them not say: “To Reuben was granted life and forgiveness after he had lain with his father’s concubine, and to her also though she had a husband, and her husband Jacob, his father, was still alive.” 16. For until that time there had not been revealed the ordinance and judgment and law in its completeness for all, but in your days (it has been revealed) as a law of seasons and of days, and an everlasting law for the everlasting generations. 17. And for this law there is no consummation of days, and no atonement for it, but they must both be rooted out in the midst of the nation: on the day whereon they committed it they shall slay them.

18. And you, Moses, write (it) down for Israel that they may observe it, and do according to these words, and not commit a sin unto death; for the Lord our God is judge, who respects not persons and accepts not gifts. 19. And tell them these words of the covenant, that they may hear and observe, and be on their guard with respect to them, and not be destroyed and rooted out of the land; for an uncleanness, and an abomination, and a contamination, and a pollution are all they who commit it on the earth before our God. 20. And there is no greater sin than the fornication which they commit on earth; for Israel is a holy nation unto the Lord its God, and a nation of inheritance, and a priestly and royal nation and for (His own) possession; and there shall no such uncleanness appear in the midst of the holy nation. (Jub. 33:7-20)

Jubilees also records the final speech of Abraham to all his assembled sons in which he commanded them:

That they should circumcise their sons, according to the covenant which He [God] had made with them, and not deviate to the right hand or the left of all the paths which the Lord had commanded us; and that we should keep ourselves from all fornication and uncleanness, and renounce from among us all fornication and uncleanness. 4. And if any woman or maid commit fornication among you, burn her with fire, 3 and let them not commit fornication with her after their eyes and their heart; and let them not take to themselves wives from the daughters of Canaan; for the seed of Canaan will be rooted out of the land.

5. And he told them of the judgment of the giants [Gen 6], and the judgment of the Sodomites, how they had been judged on account of their wickedness, and had died on account of their fornication, and uncleanness, and mutual corruption through fornication, 6. ‘and guard yourselves from all fornication and uncleanness, and from all pollution of sin. . . .’ (Jub. 20:3-6)

Fornication in this context will certainly include adultery. There is a very strong emphasis on physical, sexual purity of the body, but also purity in the mind. Fornication among their females results in the death penalty through being burnt to death. This was the customary punishment for
fornication as instanced in the case when Judah (the great grandson of Abraham) discovered that Tamar had played the harlot. He ordered, ‘Bring her out and let her be burned’ (Gen 38:24). Divorce was never an option among the Hebrews at any time in their history, right through into New Testament times.

6.7.2.3. Other early Church witnesses

JUSTIN MARTYR (c. A.D. 130)

Justin Martyr was an early convert to Christianity around the year A.D. 130. Patristic scholars suggest that Justin is quoting from some kind of ancient catechism. Whatever the case, Justin has some pretty strong words against remarriage. Commenting on the need for Christian chastity, Justin teaches on the different uses of the words “adultery,” as used by Jesus. Justin mentions Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” warnings, as well as His teaching from Matt. 19 concerning the “eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven”. After discussing the problem of lust, Justin brings up Jesus’ words on remarriage saying:

“And, Whosoever shall marry her that is from another husband, commits adultery. And, There are some who have been made eunuchs of men, and some who were born eunuchs, and some who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake; but all cannot receive this saying.

“So that all who, by human law, are twice married, are in the eye of our Master sinners, and those who look upon a woman to lust after her.”

Look at those words “twice married” that I highlighted. They are from the Greek words, διγαμίας ποιούμενοι which literally translate “ones making double marriage,” or rather—bigamy. Notice that he said that even though “by human law” the divorce was accepted, in the eyes of God it was sin.

ATHENAGORAS (c. A.D. 177)

Athenagoras from Athens wrote, “A plea for the Christians.” In this writing he says that a Christian:

Should either remain as he was born, or be content with one marriage; for a second marriage is only a fair-seeming adultery. ‘For whosoever puts away his wife,’ says He, ‘and marries another, commits adultery’; not permitting a man to send her away whose virginity he has brought to an end, nor to marry again.

In this statement, Athenagoras states that he recognizes that his culture is allowing remarriage so he called it “fair-seeming adultery.”

ORIGEN

Origen, a philosopher-turn-Christian, speaking sharply against remarriage said:

Just as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seems to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry who has been divorced does not marry her, but, according to the declaration of our Savior, he commits adultery with her (Commentaries on Matthew 14).

MISCELLANEOUS

374 See http://www.ephrataministries.org/remnant-2008-3Q-divorce-remarriage-early-church.a5w
Even after the age of Constantine and his legalizing of Christianity in A.D. 312, the doctrine remained strong. Stephen Wilcox, in his article, “The Authoritative Teachings of the Early Church on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage,” offers an impressive summary of the teachings of the early Church, and outlines the writers which spoke explicitly on that point. His summary goes beyond the Constantine era. However, I think the consistency and force of the later writers bears witness to the uniformity of this doctrine. Ironically, most of these later writers are venerated, even by modern Reformed theologians today.

Summary of Early Church Doctrine on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage 90 A.D. – 419 A.D.

If a spouse persists in adulterous behaviour and there is no other alternative, the marriage relationship can be terminated by the innocent party (Hermes, Clement, Jerome, Augustine).

Spouses that are divorced for any reason must remain celibate and single as long as both spouses live. Remarriage is expressly prohibited (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine).

To indulge in lust with the mind is to be guilty of adultery of the heart (Justin Martyr).
Whoever marries a divorced person commits adultery (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine).
Whoever contracts a second marriage, whether a Christian or not, while a former spouse lives is sinning against God (Justin Martyr, Ambrose).
God does not, and the Church must not, take into account human law when it is in violation of God’s law (Justin Martyr, Origen, Ambrose).
God judges motives and intentions, private thought life and actions (Justin Martyr).
The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is permanent, as long as both husband and wife are alive (Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine).

It is a serious offence against God to take another person’s spouse (Basil).
The Church must charge all persons who are in possession of another living person’s former husband or wife with adultery (Basil).
Marriage and affection with a remarried spouse while a former spouse lives is the sin of adultery (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine).
It is a serious mistake to believe that it is simply one’s right to divorce a spouse and take another. Even though human law may permit such a thing, God strictly forbids it, and cannot, and will not honor it (Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine).
Anyone who follows human customs and laws regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, instead of God’s divine instructions should stand in fearful awe of God Himself (Clement, Ambrose).
All lawmakers, in and out of the Church are warned, to their peril, to hear and obey the Word of the Lord in regard to His commands on marriage and divorce (Ambrose).
Christians are to stop making excuses and trying to find justification for divorce and remarriage. There are no valid reasons acceptable to God (Jerome, Augustine).

A marriage is for life. No matter what a spouse turns out to be, or how they may act, what they do or don’t do, or the sins they commit, the covenant remains fully in effect. A remarriage while a former spouse lives is not marriage at all, but sinful adultery. God does not divide the one flesh relationship except by physical death (Hermes, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine).
Marriage is a lifelong covenant that will never be invalidated by God while both parties live (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine).
It never has been lawful, it is not now lawful, and it never will be lawful to divorce and remarry. To say and do otherwise is to worship and adopt the adulterous superstitions of a different God than the one to which we have to do (Augustine).

6.7.3. The influence of the secular State on the Church
Whereas Roman law did not have the rigid, two-fold division of Judaism, whereby all forms of fornication (including adultery) were classified as capital crimes, and all non-fornication offences were classified as non-capital crimes, this may have lead to confusion over time within the Christian community.

The Church did not live in a vacuum, and we know that its incorporation into the so-called ‘Christian’ Roman Empire under Constantine, meant compromise with Roman and civil law, while trying to maintain a distinctively Christian view of marriage and divorce. But compromise, unfortunately, crept in with the hordes of pagan converts, probably aided by the fact that the wording of Matthew 19:9, which would have been understood by Jews to rule out any cause for divorce, was open to misunderstanding by non-Jewish converts (which most of the Early Church Fathers were) to mean that adultery was an exception, while maintaining the indissolubility of marriage.

Another factor that may have contributed to a misunderstanding was the use of the word divorce, which, in the writings of Hermas (about AD 135) meant ‘separation without dissolution.’ But in the common parlance of the non-Christian populace divorce meant ‘separation with dissolution.’

Paul, wisely, refrained from using the term ‘divorce’ (ἀπολύω) preferring the non-technical verb ‘separate.’ Hermas meant what Paul meant by ‘separation’, because Hermas held that divorce for adultery could not be followed by a remarriage, which is the biblical position. But if others, in other parts of the Roman Empire, followed the Lex Julia then remarriage following a divorce was normal legal in Roman law, so it would be easy to slip into civil law for this one exception, but not allow it for any other sin, and this is reflected in some of the post-Apostolic canons of the Councils of the Church.

It has been claimed that the Early Church was thoroughly Jewish with respect to its doctrine of marriage and divorce, as it came from Jesus, and that all He did was remove the more trivial causes that hard-hearted Jews had been using. It is then claimed that, somehow, during the first century, the Church become much stricter. The ‘somehow’ has been explained as a catastrophic wiping out of the early leadership of the Church through persecution, and that extremist leaders took over from them. These new leaders became less accommodating to the Jewish grounds for divorce, until eventually, they banned all divorces except for fornication, and even that was not a certainty in some sections of the Church. They particularly banned all remarriages (except after divorce for adultery) as adulterous affairs.

There are some teachers and preachers today who claim that Jewish divorce practices were accepted by Jesus, and legitimately carried over into Christ’s church during the Apostolic period, but that during the second century the Church banned divorce and remarriage, and this, somehow, became Church practice, wiping out any trace of its previous alignment of Jewish/rabbinic teaching and practice.

To claim that with the fall of a tiny provincial city, like Jerusalem, with no claim to fame or influence in the Roman Empire, at that time, somehow resulted in the extermination of the entire leadership of Christ’s universal Church, is on a par with some new chronologies of the Bible which involve a rewirting of the histories of all the neighbouring countries to bring them into line with their new chronology! It is not possible to rewrite Early Church history to bring it into line with the claim that the Early Church followed the teaching of rabbi Shammai, and then, somehow, and mysteriously, adopted a no-divorce policy, and foisted this on the entire, universal Church, to such a degree of success that it blotted out every trace and reference to the original teaching of Jesus.

The writers of the New Testament make no direct mention of the punishment for adultery, which was likely excommunication, as the various canons of the Councils reveal. Instead, they transfer the punishment to the next life, giving the offender the rest of his/her life to repent of their sin. The same view is taken by Clement of Alexandria. In the Apostolical Canons the punishment was perpetual penance until the hour of the sinner’s death, but in 216 Pope Zephyrinus shortened the time of penance due to such persons being driven to despair. Tertullian strongly objected to this
show of leniency, but Cyprian accepted it. In 315 the time was shortened to seven years of penance, but Basil set fifteen years. But if a man committed adultery for the second time he was excommunicated for life by the Synod of Illiberis. The adulteress was excluded for life from a second marriage so that her penance was coextensive with her life. (p. 487)

Gradually the Roman state transferred the administration of the law on marriage and divorce to the Church, but as these differed from country to country there was no uniform punishment for adultery or fornication, and for a long time the bishops governed by no other laws than those of the empire.

Tacitus records that the ancient Germans punished the adulteress by shorning her hair, stripped her naked, and turned out of the house by her husband. (p. 497) Among other European countries the punishments ranged from death (Vandal tribes, Bohemia, Sweden and Denmark) to mutilation (Poland, Spain) to payment of a fine (Belgium, France, Spain).

Beza, in his Treatise of Divorce, urged the civil magistrates to inflict the death penalty for adultery in order to remove the difficulties following her divorce (such as can she remarry?). (p. 499) When the English Reformers reformed their ecclesiastical laws under Archbishop Cranmer, they punished adultery with perpetual banishment, or perpetual imprisonment, but the sentence might be mitigated by the reconciliation of the parties. Under Cromwell’s Protectorate the death penalty was brought in, but after the Restoration it was dropped. The temporal courts of England took no notice of the crime of adultery other than to recognise it as a private injury, settled by a fine. This was considered a shameful misjudgement by other European countries, because, they pointed out, God had imposed the death penalty for it. The Church of England required only excommunication for adultery. (p. 506)

By the ancient law of England, marriage between Christians and Jews was declared to be felony; and the punishment was to be burnt or buried alive. In the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticum, chiefly the work of Archbishop Cranmer, this ancient law was widened to include marrying non-Christians, and mitigated to permit such marriages to be indissoluble if the unbeliever was content to live with the Christian, due to 1 Corinthians 7:11-13.

The Reformation in England originated in a question about the lawfulness of marrying a brother’s widow, which involved the legitimacy of both Mary and Elizabeth, hence the attention of the Reformers was drawn to the statutes 25 Henry VIII, c. 22, and 28 Henry VIII. c. 7. The fifteen degrees of consanguinity or affinity that are prohibited in Leviticus 18 and 20 were restated in Cranmer’s Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticum. The RLE made the point that there are more than fifteen degrees because when Scripture says that a father may not marry his daughter, it follows that a mother may not marry her son. So it ruled that the degrees which are laid down as to men, will hold equally as to women in the same proximity of kinship. It also ruled that the husband and wife are one flesh; so that he who is related to the one by consanguinity, is related to the other by affinity in the same degree.

This parity of reasoning led to a new table of 30 prohibited degrees, which was set out by Archbishop Parker in 1563, and which was inserted into the Book of Common Prayer. According to Canon 99 unlawful marriages should be dissolved as void from the beginning, and the pair separated. Such marriages are not followed by nullity, but are esteemed valid to all civil purposes, unless such separation is actually made during the life of the parties. For after the death of either of them, the courts of common law will not allow the spiritual courts to declare such marriages to have


376 See Davies Morgan, op. cit., I. 272-76 for the full text. The following numbered degrees are not expressly mentioned in Lev. 18, 20, but they are rightly included, they are 1-3, 7-9, 13, 21-22, 25-30.
been void; because such declaration cannot now tend to the reformation of the parties. It is only when the marriage is thus entirely dissolved, that the offspring are bastards.377

6.7.4. Divorce in the Roman Empire

The Greek states did not allow their citizens to marry with foreigners or with any who were not citizens, and they enforced the law under heavy penalties, which included being sold into slavery (p. 211378). Lawful marriage at Athens could only be celebrated between free citizens, and only the lawful offspring could inherit the father’s estate. The Athenian bastard was one who was born of a foreign woman or a harlot, and deemed the offspring of fornication.

Roman marriages were lawful only if they were contracted between Roman citizens. (p. 214) If a Roman man or woman married a non-Roman spouse, their offspring were deemed to inherit the condition of the inferior parent and be regarded as spurious, hybrid, or mongols, and their status was little better than a slave. Foreigners (and Latins) had to obtain the freedom of the city first before they could marry a Roman citizen. (p. 215) Mark Antony’s marriage to the Egyptian Cleopatra was thoroughly despised at Rome, and the people of Rome were so indignant at the marriage of Titus with Berenice of Egypt that he was forced to divorce her.379

When all the people of the Roman empire were declared to be citizens by the decree of Antoninus, intermarriage was permitted to all except the barbarians. (p. 215) Persons of the senatorian rank might marry the daughter of a freedman provided she was not an adulteress, a prostitute, or had been condemned upon public trial. (p. 220) A freedman and a free woman could not marry a lower class. Such a marriage was deemed invalid, and the offspring would be slaves. If a free woman should persist in the marriage, after three proclamations by the master of the slave she married, she was herself liable to be sold as a slave. The consequence of entering into a forbidden marriage was a fine, imprisonment or banishment, but not death. It was never lawful at Rome to have more than one wife at a time, even though Anthony and the emperor Valentinian violated this law.

The capital punishment for polygamy in the Constitutions of Constantine reinforced monogamy. (p. 251) It was a capital offence for a father to marry his daughter, (p. 226) and later on for an uncle to marry his niece (under Constans and Constantine). The marriage of cousins was not prohibited. (p. 230) The general penalty for forbidden marriages was the illegitimacy and consequent disinherition of the children, and the forfeiture of all conjugal privileges, whether for the redress of injuries or the establishment of lawful rights.

377 So Davies Morgan, I. 279.
379 In Egypt both wives and husbands had the right to divorce at any time. See P. W. Pestman, Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt: A Contribution to establishing the legal position of women. Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava (Leiden: Lugduni Batavorum, 1961), pp. 58-79. The earliest Egyptian reference to divorce is from the 12th Dynasty. The evidence for the wife is from about 500 BC certainly. She can demand her dowry back within 30 days of repudiating her husband, since she gave that money in order to be his wife. The duty of the husband in maintaining his wife comes to an end as soon as the marriage is dissolved by divorce, and his duty of maintainance is revived if he has not returned the things given to him by his wife within 30 days after she has demanded their return. Part of the husband’s repudiation includes the words, “I am the one who said to you; ‘take yourself a husband;’ i shall not be able to stand in your way in any place where you will go to in order to take yourself a husband there.” Deeds with these words are dated to 542 BC and 488 BC. The divorce is a fact before the deed is drawn up., and in many cases no deed is required. The husband’s word is sufficient. Hate and adultery were sufficient causes to get a divorce.
The law of Constantine allowed the right of marriage after divorce, only when the woman was an adulteress, a sorcerer, or a pander. (p. 252) It was objected to this licence, that it was contrary to Scripture, but the law stood. Adultery, under the imperial law, was a capital offence, but rarely, if ever, used. (pp. 252, 479, 483-4) The same applied among the Athenians. (p. 478) Revenge was satisfied with the mutilation of the offender. “When a man was apprehended upon a charge of adultery, he was at liberty to appeal to the Thesmothetae, and they referred the cause to proper judges, who might inflict any penalty short of death, and demand a pledge of chastity for the time to come.” (p. 479) Under various Roman emperors the right of private revenge was curbed and the guilty parties, after the payment of heavy fines, were exiled to separate islands. Tiberius appealed to the authority of Romulus who ordained that the husband must divorce the adulteress and her lover and both be sent into exile. Domitian downgraded a Roman knight for taking back his wife whom he divorced for adultery. Tacitus noted that Julius Antonius was punished with death for adultery with Julia (Annals IV. 44). This appears to have been a rare event and applied sparingly to those in the upper classes. In the case of Julia, the granddaughter of emperor Augustus, Tiberius banished her to the island of Trimerus because she committed adultery (Annals IV. 71.).

Under the Christian emperors adultery was made a capital offence. Under Constans and Constantius adulterers were burned, or sown in sacks and cast into the sea. Under Leo and Marcian the penalty was reduced to perpetual banishment and cutting off the nose. Under Justinian adultery was a capital crime for the husband, but not for the wife, who was scourged and confined to a nunnery for two years, after which her husband could take her back, but if not, she was to take the veil for life.

If J. Carl Laney is correct that the Romans and the Greeks, as well as the Jews, had a similar betrothal period prior to the actual wedding, then this weakens the foundation of the betrothal view.

6.7.5. Jerome on divorce and remarriage

Jerome wrote:

In explaining the testimony of the apostle [Paul], ‘The wife has not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise, also, the husband has not power of his own body, but the wife’ [1 Cor 7:4], we have subjoined the following: ‘The entire question relates to those who are living in wedlock, whether it is lawful for them to put away their wives [Mt 19:3], a thing which the Lord also has forbidden in the Gospel.’

Following the decision of the Lord the apostle teaches that a wife must not be put away, saving for fornication, and that, if she has been put away, she cannot during the lifetime of her husband marry another man, or, at any rate, that she ought, if possible, to be

380 The Monogamists contended that the marriage bond was indissoluble even in death, so all second marriages were invalid (Morgan, op. cit., I. 252 n.).

381 Tacitus notes that there was no precedent for the capital punishment of a virgin, so her executioner violated her, while the rope was round her neck (Annals VI. 9.). He also notes that in A.D. 32, Tiberius, in his 18th year, became so sexually rampant and indulged in sexual evils that new words entered the language for the first time to describe the sexual abominations rampant in the area around Rome (Annals VI. 1.).


reconciled to her husband. In another verse he speaks to the same effect: ‘The wife is bound . . . as long as her husband lives; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband; she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.’ [1 Cor 7:39]

I find joined to your letter of inquiries a short paper containing the following words: ‘Ask him (that is me), whether a woman who has left her husband on the ground that he is an adulterer and sodomite, and has found herself compelled to take another, may, in the lifetime of him whom she first left, be in communion with the Church, without doing penance for her fault.’ As I read the case, I recall the verse ‘they make excuses for their sins.’

We are all indulgent to our own faults; and what our own will leads us to do, we attribute to a necessity of nature. It is as though a young man were to say, ‘I am overcome by my body, the glow of nature kindles my passions, the structure of my frame, and its reproductive organs, call for sexual intercourse.’ Or again, a murderer might say, ‘I was in want; I stood in need of food. I had nothing to cover me. If I shed the blood of another, it was to save myself from dying of cold and hunger.’

Tell the sister, therefore, who thus enquires of me concerning her condition, not my sentence, but that of the apostle [Paul], ‘Know you not, brothers (for I speak to them that know the law), how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if, while her husband lives, she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress.’ [Rom 7:1-3] And in another place: ‘the wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.’” [1 Cor 7:39] 

You must not speak to me of the violence of a ravisher, a mother’s pleading, a father’s bidding, the influence of relatives, the insolence and the intrigues of servants, household losses. A husband may be an adulterer or a sodomite, he may be stained with every crime, and may have been left by his wife because of his sins; yet he is still her husband and, so long as he lives, she may not marry another.

The apostle does not promulgate this decree on his own authority but on that of Christ who speaks in him. For he has followed the words of Christ in the gospel: ‘whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her who is divorced, commits adultery.’ [Mt 5:32] Mark what he says: ‘whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.’ Whether she has put away her husband or her husband [has put away] her, the man who marries her is still an adulterer.

I have not been able quite to determine what it is that she means by the words ‘has found herself compelled’ to marry again. What is this compulsion of which she speaks? Was she overwhelmed by a crowd and ravished against her will? If so, why has she not, thus victimized, subsequently put away her ravisher? Let her read the books of Moses and she will find that if violence is offered to a betrothed virgin in a city, and she does not cry out, she is punished as an adulteress: but if she is forced [raped] in the field, she is innocent of sin and her ravisher alone is amenable to the laws. Therefore, if your sister, who, as she says, has been forced into a second union, wishes to receive the body of Christ and not to be

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384 This appears to be attributed to the apostle Paul, but it comes from the apostle Matthew (and from 19:9, not 5:32).
385 Jerome had already quoted this verse earlier, so it is odd that it is repeated here.
386 This is not stated in the Bible. It is found in the rabbinic work called Sanhedrin 52, 66. This shows how aware Jerome was regarding Jewish customs surrounding divorce and remarriage.
accounted an adulteress, let her do penance; so far at least as from the time she begins to repent to have no further intercourse with that second husband who ought to be called, not a husband but, an adulterer. If this seems hard to her, and if she cannot leave one whom she has once loved and will not prefer the Lord to sensual pleasure, let her hear the declaration of the apostle: ‘you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils,’ [1 Cor 10:21] and in another place: ‘what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Beliel?’” [2 Cor 6:14] (Letters 55, 58 [a])

It is not necessary to offer any comment on this evidence. Yet this was the man who was commissioned to produce the Latin Vulgate that was to dominate the Western Church for the next one thousand years. He may have conceded that a couple may separate, but he was firmly opposed to any remarriage while the couple were still alive.

Jerome also wrote: "As long as the husband is alive, even though he be an adulterer . . . and is deserted by his wife for his crimes, he is still her husband, and she may not take another."

6.7.6. Augustine on divorce and remarriage

Augustine (AD 419) influenced John Calvin to produce the set of doctrines that form the backbone of the Calvinism. He is to be admired for writing a book in which he retracted some of his earlier views which he later on discarded (Retractions). It takes an honest man to do this. Despite his brilliance to think through difficult theological concepts, he is strangely unclear over the issue of divorce and remarriage, as the following extracts will demonstrate. It is almost as if he has read nothing on the topic and comes to the text of Scripture in ignorance of its background, which is always a potentially dangerous state to be in when handling a topic like divorce. This is why Jesus set teachers in the Church.

This we now say, that, according to the condition of being born and dying, which we experience, and in which we have been created, the marriage of male and female is good, the union of which divine Scripture commends, as it does that it not permitted to marry one put away by her husband, so long as her husband lives, nor is it permitted to a woman who puts away her husband to marry another man, unless the woman who did the separation is dead then the husband can marry again.

[chap. xiv.39] “It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.” This is the lesser righteousness of the Pharisees, which is not opposed by what out Lord says: “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 loosed from her husband committeth adultery.

[chap. xiv.39] Our Lord, therefore, in order to confirm this principle, namely, that a wife should not lightly be put away, made the single exception for fornication; but he enjoins that all other displeasing things, if any such happen to spring up, these should be borne with fortitude for the sake of conjugal faithfulness and for the sake of chastity. And he also calls that man an adulterer who marries her who has been divorced by her husband.

And the apostle Paul shows how long this state of affairs is to continue for he says it is to last as long as her husband lives. Only on the husband’s death does he give her permission to marry again. He, himself, also kept to this rule, and so he brings forward not his own advice, as he does in some of his other admonitions, but [he brings forward] a command of the Lord when he says: ‘And to the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but, and if she departs, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.’ I believe that
according to a similar rule, if he shall put her away, he is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to his wife. For it may happen that he puts away his wife for the cause of fornication, which our Lord wished to make an exception of. But now, if she is not allowed to marry while the husband is living from whom she has departed, nor he to take another while the wife is living whom he has put away, much less is it right to commit unlawful acts of fornication with any parties whomsoever.

[chap. xv.40] For it may seem a contradiction to the less intelligent, that here He forbids the putting away of a wife saving for the cause of fornication, but that elsewhere He affirms that no one can be a disciple of His who does not hate his wife.


For whosoever putteth away his wife except for the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery. To such a degree is that marriage compact entered upon be a holy Sacrament, that it is not made void even by separation itself, since so long as her husband lives, even by whom she hath been left, she commits adultery in the case where she marries another, and he who hath left her is the cause of this evil. But I marvel, if, if it be allowed to put away a wife who is an adulteress, so it be allowed, having put her away, to marry another.

For holy Scripture makes a hard knot in this matter in that the apostle says, that, by commandment of the Lord, the wife ought not to depart from her husband, but, in case she shall have departed to remain unmarried, or to be reconciled to her husband...I can not see how the man can have permission to marry another, in the case where he left an adulteress, when a woman can not be married to another when she left an adulterer.

Seeing that the compact of marriage is not done away with by an intervening divorce, so that they continue as wedded persons one to another, even after separation, and commit adultery with those with whom they be joined, even after their own divorce, either the woman with the man, or the man with a woman. Neither can it rightly be held that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives because of fornication, marry others...

No one is so unreasonable to say that a man who marries a woman whose husband has dismissed her because of fornication is not an adulterer, while maintaining that a man who marries a woman dismissed without the ground of fornication is an adulterer. Both of these men are guilty of adultery. -Adulterous Marriages 1:9:9 (a) A spouse, therefore, is lawfully dismissed for cause of adultery, but the laws of chastity remains. That is why a man is guilty of adultery if he marries a woman who has been dismissed even for this very reason of adultery.

-ibid., 2:4:4 (a)

A woman begins to be the wife of no later husband unless she has ceased to be the wife of a former one. She will cease to be the wife of a former one, however, if that husband should die, not if he commit adultery.

-ibid, 2:4:3 (a)

Therefore to serve two or more (men), so to pass over from a living husband into marriage with another, was neither lawful then (in the Old Testament), nor is it lawful now, nor will it ever be lawful. To apostatize from the One God, and to go into adulteress superstitions of another, is ever an evil.

-On the Holy Spirit; Doctrinal Treatises; Moral Treatises. (a)

‘For whosoever puts away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, makes her to commit adultery.’ The marriage union that one enters into is such a holy sacrament that it is not made void even by separation, because so long as her husband—by whom she had been forsaken—lives, she commits adultery when she marries another, and the one who forsook
her is [deemed to be] the cause of this evil. But I am surprised that it is permitted to put away a wife who is an adulteress, [and] that it is permitted, having put her away to marry another, because the holy Scripture creates a real difficulty in this matter, in that the apostle says that by commandment of the Lord, the wife ought not to depart from her husband, but, should she depart she is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.

...[Now] I cannot see how the man can have permission to marry another in the case where he deserted an adulteress, when [= but] a wife cannot be married to another [man], when she deserts an adulterer.

Note that the union of marriage is not done away with following a divorce, so that they continue together as wedded persons, even after separation, and commit adultery with those with whom they are joined, even after their own divorce, either the woman with [another] man, or the man with [another] woman. Nor can it be rightly held that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives, because of fornication, marry others . . .

No one is so unreasonable as to say that a man who marries a woman whose husband has dismissed her, because of fornication, is not an adulterer, while maintaining that a man who marries a woman dismissed without the ground of fornication is an adulterer. Both of these men are guilty of adultery. ((Augustin, On the Good of Marriage, Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers (Peabody, MASS.; Hendrikson Pubs. 1994 [1888]), Vol. 3, §§6-7 (p. 402).

A woman does not begin to be a wife of a later husband unless she has ceased to be the wife of a former one. She ceases to be the wife of a former one, however, if that [first] husband should die, not [however] if he commits adultery. (Adulterous Marriages 2:4:4 [a])

Therefore to serve two or more [men], so to pass over from a living husband into marriage with another, was neither lawful then [in the Old Testament], nor is it lawful now, nor will it ever be lawful. To apostatize from the One God, and to go into adulterous superstitions of another, is ever an evil. (On the Holy Spirit; Doctrinal Treatises: Moral Treatises [a])

6.7.7. Origen on divorce and remarriage

Quotations from Origen (c. 185–c.250)
Matthew 5:32, “Jesus said, ‘Whosoever shall put away his own wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress.’” [Origen’s Greek text for this verse was unavailable to me.]

Origen: καὶ ταὐτὸν γε φίλει ἐνναὶ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς πορνείας
LMF’s ET: And this indeed he said [or, ‘it is said’] to be regarding the matter of fornication.

Origen: ὀλλὰ λεκτέονἐπρὸς οὐτὸν ὅτι, ἐἰπὲρ ἡ κατὰ τὸν νόμον μοιχευμένη λιθοβοληθῇται, δηλοῦτι οὐ κατὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔσται ἐπὶ μοιχεῖα

387 For the following data go to: http://www.trueconnection.org/DivorceAndRemarriageBook.com/appendix/exception_cl_research.html#Origen_CompleteQuotes (END OF STRING). Another source is www.trueconnection.org/goto/appx (Scott).

388 Meaning to be read or said; to be explained or told (according to the verb) (Groves p. 367).

389 Meaning (from ‘if’ + ‘through’) if indeed, if truly, if only; although, yet, since (Groves p. 176).
But explained to him that if indeed the one committing adultery according to the law should be stoned; that is to say not according to one might think this the ‘shameful practice.’ For not over adultery was it necessary to write a ‘bill of separation,’ and to give [it] ‘into the hand’ of the woman as something practised for a long time.

Scott has a translation:

After this our Saviour says, not at all (μηδείς) permitting (ἐπιτρέπων) the dissolution of marriages (διαλύειν γάμους) for any other sin (ἐπὶ ἄλλο ἀμαρτήματι) than fornication alone (ἡ μόνη πορνεία), when detected in the wife (ὑπισκομένη ἐν τῇ γυναικὶ), ‘Whosoever shall put away his own wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress.’

But it might be a subject for inquiry if on this account He hinders any one putting away a wife unless she be caught in fornication (ἐὰν μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία). LMF: The translation of ἐὰν μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία is: ‘if, say, not over fornication.’

Origen: τὴν οἰκίαν εὐρέθει τοῦ ἄνδρος μὴ πορνεύοσα δὲ ἀποβαλεί

I wonder therefore why He did not say, Let no one (μηδείς) put away his own wife saving for the cause of fornication (παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας), but says, ‘Whosoever shall put away his own wife, saving for the cause of fornication (παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας) maketh her an adulteress.’ For confessedly (ὁμολογομένως) he who puts away his wife when she is not a fornicator (μὴ πορνεύσασα), makes her an adulteress, so far as it lies with him, for if, ‘when the husband is living she shall be called an adulteress if she be joined to another man; and when by putting her away, he gives to her the excuse (πρόφασιν) of a second marriage (δεύτερου γάμου), very plainly in this way he makes her an adulteress…

But as a woman is an adulteress (μοιχαλίς), even though (κἂν) she seem (δοκῇ) to be married to a man (γαμείσα σὺν ἄνδρι), while the former [first] husband is still living (ἐὰν ζῶντος τοῦ πρωτέου), so also the man who seems to marry (γαμεῖν δοκῶν) her who has been put away (ἀπολελυμένην), does not so much marry her (οὐ γαμεῖ) as commit adultery with her (ὅσον μοιχεύει) according to the declaration of our Saviour.

ποιῶν αὐτήν μοιχεύθησαμεν ἢ ἐπὶ πορνεύσασα δὲ ἀποβαλείν


390 Meaning (from δῆλος clear, and ὅτι that) to wit, that is to say; certainly, surely; wholly, entirely, altogether; truly, indeed (Groves p. 137).
391 From νοέω to mind, consider; to understand, comprehend; to think, intend; perceive, observe, recognise (Groves p. 407).
392 This is a reference back to Deut 24:1, where the LXX used this to translate the Hebr. erva davar.
393 Meaning so much, so great, so many; so old, of such an age, of the same age (Groves p. 559).
394 Meaning usual, customary, practice, exercise (Groves p. 94).
395 No such word exists in Greek. Probably a transcription error.
And bit later:

οίον εἰ πόρνος εἰς τοῦ λεγομένου ἐν τοῖς προφήταις πνεύματος πορνείος

6.7.8. Athenagoras on Second Marriages (AD 177)\textsuperscript{396}

Since Athenagoras did not permit a man to marry again after the first wife died, it is certain that he did not permit divorce on any grounds, because he viewed the first marriage as still in force even after death had separated the married couple.

Chapter XXXIII.—Chastity of the Christians with Respect to Marriage.

Therefore, having the hope of eternal life, we despise the things of this life, even to the pleasures of the soul, each of us reckoning her his wife whom he has married according to the laws laid down by us, and that only for the purpose of having children. For as the husbandman throwing the seed into the ground awaits the harvest, not sowing more upon it, so to us the procreation of children is the measure of our indulgence in appetite. Nay, you would find many among us, both men and women, growing old unmarried, in hope of living in closer communion with God.\textsuperscript{397} But if the remaining in virginity and in the state of an eunuch brings nearer to God, while the indulgence of carnal thought and desire leads away from Him, in those cases in which we shun the thoughts, much more do we reject the deeds. For we bestowed our attention, not on the study of words, but on the exhibition and teaching of actions,—that a person should either remain as he was born, or be content with one marriage; for a second marriage is only a specious adultery.\textsuperscript{398} “For whosoever puts away his wife,” says He, “and marries another, commits adultery;”\textsuperscript{399} not permitting a man to send her away whose virginity he has brought to an end, nor to marry again. For he who deprives himself of his first wife, even though she be dead, is a cloaked adulterer,\textsuperscript{400} resisting the hand of God, because in the beginning God made one man and one woman, and dissolving the strictest union of flesh with flesh, formed for the intercourse of the race.

6.7.9. Saint Basil

Rev. Alex. M’Caul, A Letter to Vice-Chancellor Sir W. Page Wood, in Vindication of the Ancient Interpretation of Leviticus XVIII. 18 (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1860).\textsuperscript{401}

St. Basil has two Canons on this subject, the 9th and the 21st. The 9th, “The sentence of the Lord, according to the sequence of the thought, applies equally both to men and women, concerning the lawfulness of departing from marriage, except on account of fornication, But the custom (συνήθεια) is not so. In the case of wives we find much accuracy of speech, the Apostle saying, ‘He

\textsuperscript{396} Writings of Athenagoras, ET by Schaff. Introduction by Rev. B. P. Pratten. I have retained the footnotes of the ET, which is available at: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.txt.

\textsuperscript{397} This our Lord commends (Matt. xix. 12) as a voluntary act of private self-devotion.

\textsuperscript{398} There is perhaps a touch of the rising Phrygian influence in this passage; yet the language of St. Paul (1 Tim. v. 9) favoured this view, no doubt, in primitive opinion. See Speaker’s Comm. on 1 Tim. iii. 2. Ed. Scribners, New York.

\textsuperscript{399} Matt xix. 9.


\textsuperscript{401} Cambridge University Library, shelf no. Pam.5.84.218\textsuperscript{28}.
that is joined to a harlot is one body;’ Jeremiah, ‘If a woman be to another man, she shall not return to her husband, but shall surely be defiled.’ (Jer. iii. 1) ‘He that retaineth an adulteress is senseless and ungodly.’ (Prov. xvi. 22 in LXX) But the custom (sunh/qeia) commands that husbands committing adultery and living in fornication should be retained by wives.” (pp. 10-11)

In Canon 21 he says,

If a man cohabiting with a wife, afterwards not content with the marriage, should fall into fornication, we judge such an one a fornicator and we continue him longer in the penalties. We have, indeed, no Canon to subject him to the accusation of adultery, if the sin be committed with an unmarried woman, because ‘The adulteress shall be defiled and shall not return to her husband,’ and ‘He that retaineth an adulteress is senseless and ungodly. But he who commiteth fornication shall not be excluded from cohabitation with his wife, so that the woman shall receive her husband, when he comes back from fornication, but the husband shall send away the defiled woman from his house. The reason of these things is not easy, but so the custom has prevailed (η δὲ συνήθεια οὕτω κεκράτημεν).

This is not Christian morality. If he sends away his adulterous wife is this not divorce? Origen declares that a second marriage excludes him that is guilty of it from being bishop, priest, or deacon, and affirms generally that it, as well as third and fourth marriages, exclude from any part of the kingdom of heaven (p. 13). (See Cotelerius as above, where may be seen other testimonies to the same effect.) (The ref. is to “Cotelerius in Herm. Past.,” = The Shepherd of Hermas)

By the time of the Council of Neo-Caesarea this feeling against second marriages had become so strong that its seventh Canon forbids priests to be even present at a second marriage. In 374, the Council of Valence forbids the ordination of those who had been twice married, or who had married a widow, so unholy was a woman considered who had married a second time (p. 13).

He lists all the Councils who punished second marriages, which makes quite a list, Toledo (AD 400), Orange (441), Angers (453), Agde (506), Orleans (541) (p. 14). See also Jerome, Adversus Jovinianum, Lib. i.

These all branded second marriages as an unclean thing, even to marry widows.

Council of Eliberis forbad marriage with a deceased wife’s sister, but also commanded celibacy among the clergy (p. 15).

6.8. SUMMARY OF JESUS’ TEACHING

The following characteristics can be deduced from Jesus’ foundational teaching about human marriage:

(1) It is indissoluble. God has ordained that once male and female ‘come together’ in marriage the bond between them can never be severed. Only the death of one of the partners can end the relationship (Matthew 19:4b-6, 8b; Mark 6-9; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2b, 3b).

(2) Divorce per se is a violation of God’s law for marriage. No one can use any means to dissolve a consummated marriage, such as wilful desertion, or using secular divorce courts (Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10b, 11b-13).

(3) Remarriage per se is a violation of God’s law for marriage. No one can attempt to dissolve the first marriage bond by making another. The union of two is a mystery, but three is a monstrosity. A second marriage is always bigamous and adulterous while both partners are alive (Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12).
(4) Adultery occurs when partners use some means to end a consummated marriage and then remarry. Either or both members are guilty of adultery against their partner if they remarry. There is no such thing as an innocent party in a remarriage. The innocent and the guilty party must remain unmarried or be reconciled (Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:11, 15; Romans 7:3).

(5) Anyone who marries a person already married or divorced from an existing partner is guilty of adultery against that person (Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18; Matthew 19:9).

(6) Anyone who divorces a person will be held responsible by God for the future sexual sins that that divorced person will commit through a second marriage (directly stated, Matthew 5:32; indirectly stated, Luke 16:18; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:11).

(7) Judaism permitted divorce before marriage as well as after it. This is an anomaly, because until there is actual intercourse, the two have not become one flesh. Consequently, anyone who divorces an engaged spouse will not be held responsible by God for the future relations that that ‘divorced’ person will experience through a ‘second marriage.’ This law only applies to cultures which require a bill of divorce to break a binding marriage contract before it is consummated. Because the two persons never became ‘one flesh’ there was no consummated marriage, therefore there can be no adultery following such a ‘divorce.’

It should also be borne in mind that a marriage between Christians was the expected norm (1 Corinthians 7:39). To marry against this norm was to invite the Lord’s displeasure if not punishment. When one partner becomes a Christian the marriage is still a ‘one flesh’ union, and whether the unbeliever stays or leaves (through getting a State divorce) the marriage bond exists until one partner dies (1 Corinthians 7:12-15).

The teaching of the Lord Jesus was simple, ‘no dissolution and therefore no remarriage.’ It was so simple that it was never seriously challenged for the first five centuries. The Early Church set its face resolutely against all remarriages.

The conclusion of this section can be summed up as follows:

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Evangelicals are now deeply split over the issue of divorce and remarriage. Gordon Wenham and William Heth have argued the case for a return to the doctrine and practice of the Early Church. According to them, in the centuries following the first proclamation of the Gospel
throughout the world, the Church’s unanimous view was ‘no remarriage following divorce,’ and ‘divorce’ was interpreted as separation and not a dissolution of the marriage.\textsuperscript{402}

There are a number of difficulties with the interpretation (but not the practice) of the Early Church view as put forward by Wenham & Heth, and these will be outlined later on. First, we shall take a look at the prevailing situation in the world today.

The Early Church view was not rediscovered during the Reformation. Rather, the situation among the main denominations since the Reformation is best summed up in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) Chapter XXIV. Sections V and VI:

Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract [Matt. 1:18-20].\textsuperscript{403} In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce [Matt. 5:32],\textsuperscript{404} and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead [Matt. 19:9; Romans 7:2-3].\textsuperscript{405}

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\textsuperscript{402} Tertullian (AD 155-220), in his later writings, accepted that adultery terminated a marriage, as death does (Wenham & Heth, \textit{op cit.}, p. 37). It is interesting that Paul deliberately refuses to use the word for divorce (\textit{apolusai}) and instead goes for non-technical verbs such as \textit{aphiemi} (send away) and \textit{chorizo} (separate), even though these later may have become identified with the old vocabulary. This break with the vocabulary of the Old Covenant Law would be typical of Paul’s attitude to something which was now “obsolete” (Hebrews 8:13), and surpassed in the New Covenant Law of Christ. It was not until the sixth century that the Eastern Church permitted remarriage after divorce. The Western (Roman Catholic) Church refused to permit second marriages.

\textsuperscript{403} This sentence covers Jewish customs only. European cultures had no such contractual arrangement, therefore this provision was irrelevant to them. However, the seed was sown that ‘divorce’ \textit{per se} was not a sinful act \textit{in and of itself}. Breaking off such contractual arrangements is not the same as breaking off a consummated marriage. The former is not a sin, but the latter is. And this is where the Reformers were deceived. Breaking off such contractual arrangements looked like a sensible provision to protect the husband from marrying a non-virgin (as in the case of Joseph and Mary). The mistake came when the Reformers illegitimately carried over a purely Jewish pre-nuptial provision of ‘divorce’ into a European situation and they assumed they could apply this provision to consummated marriages in the case of (1) adultery, and (2) wilful desertion. Breaking off an engagement is not a divorce in any European culture. The bridge that led the Reformers into error was the word ‘divorce,’ which covered breaking off an engagement and breaking off a consummated marriage. Breaking off the marriage before it was consummated should not have been called ‘divorce,’ but some other term, such as ‘voided contract,’ or some such term, which is how Joseph regarded his private (\textit{kolpwa}) break with Mary. You can ‘dissolve’ a contrast, but you cannot dissolve a lawful, one-flesh union. The latter is permanent, the former is provisional. The idea of requiring a divorce certificate to break off an engagement is not found anywhere in the Bible. It cannot be attributed to Moses. It was a late Jewish invention, but it caught out the Reformers.

\textsuperscript{404} The error here was to fail to distinguish between the exemption-from-culpability clause in Matthew 5:32, and the exclusion-of-fornication clause in Matthew 19:9. They assumed that the two clauses were identical in meaning and context. They ignored the unbroken tradition of the Early Church, which was their undoing. Sections V and VI of the Westminster Confession of faith should be deleted as incompatible with Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness.

\textsuperscript{405} This provision rules out the possibility of reconciliation, which contradicts 1 Corinthians 7:11. The error here was to apply the law of ‘no reconciliation’ in Deut 24:4 to Christian marriages, which is illegitimate under Grace. The Reformers failed to spot that the ban on reconciliation was an \textit{expression of hatred} for divorce with the consequent defilement of the remarried wife. Her defilement constituted Yahweh’s abhorrence, not the reunion itself, which was encouraged under Grace (1
Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage; yet nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage[406] [Matt. 19:8-9; 1 Corinthians. 7:15; Matt. 19:6]: wherein a publick and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed, and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion in their own case [Deut. 24:1-4].

Wenham and Heth have ably exposed the weaknesses of this interpretation of Jesus’ teaching, and I’m sure they have been better exposed by many more able scholars since the Reformation. Once the differences between Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 were brought to the attention of scholars there was no going back to the Reformers’ position. They were exposed as inept, bungling, and unable to distinguish between Jewish ‘divorces’ which were inconsequential and irrelevant, and Jewish divorces which claimed to dissolve legitimate one-flesh unions. The former were granted to engaged couples who broke off their contracts for whatever reason; the latter were granted by Moses (but not by God) to hard-hearted Hebrews and Jews, who could not forgive their spouses for sins when they arbitrarily nominated these sins to divorce their wives at a moment’s notice. The former, so-called divorces, should not be called ‘divorces,’ because they do not claim to dissolve a consummated marriage. These ‘divorces’ are not sinful acts. The latter, however, do claim to dissolve marriages, and this act, in itself, is a sin, because only God can dissolve marriages, and the only means He uses is death. The attempt by any husband or wife to dissolve their own marriages is a sin. Marriage is for life.

**PART 7. PAUL ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

Key texts that reveal Paul’s foundation to the issue of divorce and remarriage.

7.1. **ROMANS 7:1-3 (ONLY DEATH ENDS A MARRIAGE)**

Romans 7:1-3, “Are you ignorant, brothers—for to those knowing law I speak—that the law[407] has lordship over the man as long as he lives? For the married woman has been bound by law to the living husband, and if the husband should die, she has been free from the law of the husband. So, then, the husband being alive, she shall be called an adulteress if she becomes another man’s wife. Now if the husband should die, she is free from the law, so that she cannot be deemed to be an adulteress, having become another man’s wife.”[408]

7.2. **1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-11**

[406] Note the false use of 1 Corinthians 7:15 to dissolve a lawful marriage. Once the idea was sown that divorce per se is not an evil (which it is not in the case of annulling engagement contracts in Judaism), then man will stoop to use it where forgiveness is not the automatic, spiritual response of the true disciple of the Lord Jesus.

[407] The ‘law’ here is ‘the law of the husband’ (not the Torah, or Dt 24:1-4), which is implicit in Gen 2:24, which upholds the permanent nature of the one-flesh union.

[408] A remarriage can only follow a death, not a divorce.
1 Corinthians 7:10–11 reads: “And to the ones having married I command—not I, but the Lord, a wife from a husband is not to separate. Now, even if, say, she may separate, let her remain unmarried to another man, or to the husband let her be reconciled. And let not a husband forsake a wife. Now, even if, say, he may forsake, let him remain unmarried to another woman, or to the wife let him be reconciled.

I have filled in the ellipsis in the case of the husband. This is an obvious case of vice versa.

Note the concern of the Lord Jesus. He deals with the case of His sisters first. This maybe because if she becomes a defiled woman, she will defile His brothers if they marry her.

FORBIDDEN DEGREES OF WOMEN

Paul, as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, would have been very familiar with the forbidden degrees of marriage, and especially the forbidden degrees of women that the high priests and ordinary priests could not marry. This information would have been in the background of Paul’s mind.

Regarding the High Priest, “He shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or a defiled woman, or a prostitute—these he shall not marry, but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife” (Lev 21:14; Ezek 44:22-23). The forbidden classes are:

1. A widow
2. A divorced woman. This woman has not yet been remarried.
3. A defiled woman. This woman has been remarried. She is an abomination (Dt 24:4).
4. A prostitute. This woman has had unions with one or more men.

Note the progression of defilement. The worst is mentioned last.

Has this list any bearing on Christian marriages today? Is the high priest the equivalent of a Christian? Or is the ordinary priest the equivalent of the Christian today? All Christians are priests to God.

Revelation 1:6 “and he did make us kings and priests to his God and Father, to him [is] the glory and the power to the ages of the ages! Amen.” Revelation 5:10, “and he did make us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign upon the earth.” Revelation 20:6, “Happy and holy [is] he who is having part in the first rising again; over these the second death has not authority, but they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Leviticus 21:7, “They [priests] shall not take a wife who is a prostitute, or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband, for the priest is holy to his God.” There are three classes of women the ordinary priest was prohibited from marrying.

1. A prostitute. This woman has had unions with one or more men.
2. A defiled woman. This woman has been remarried. She is an abomination.
3. A divorced woman. This woman has not yet been remarried.

Presumably the ordinary priest can marry a widow, because she is not mentioned.

Note the progression of defilement. The worst is mentioned first.

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409 The same verb occurs in Acts 16:18, “and this she was doing for many days, but Paul having been grieved, and having turned, said to the spirit, ‘I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her;’ and it came out the same hour.”

410 Gordon Wenham’s solution to the ban on reconciliation in Deut 24:4 is that a husband could not remarry his first wife because it would be incestuous, and come within the forbidden degrees. If so, this would mean that Mosaic divorce did sever/dissolve the bond. This is wrong. The bond is always there. It is never dissolved except on the intervention of death, hence the ban on reconciliation, because it represented Yahweh’s clear note of disapproval.
It is worth noting that after the prostitute, the remarried woman comes next in defilement, followed by the woman who is divorced but who has not yet been defiled by marrying a second ‘husband.’ She is trapped. She cannot go back to her husband because God has forbidden that. She cannot go forward by marrying a second husband, otherwise she becomes a defiled woman, and an abomination in God’s eyes (Deut 24:4). To retain her ‘clean’ status, she has to stay unmarried.

The high priest cannot marry a widow, but the ordinary priest could. The fact that a Christian widow can marry a Christian man (1 Corinthians 7:39), suggests that Christian men are not regarded as high priests, but rather as ordinary priests. Jesus Christ is the great High Priest. Under Grace, classes 2 and 3 are prohibited to Christian men. But what about class 1, the prostitute? Rahab the prostitute married Salmon and she begat Boaz (Matthew 1:5). This suggests that a prostitute who shows the same faith in Israel’s God that Rahab did can become a sister of the Lord Jesus, and as such, a Christian brother may, indeed, marry her.

Against this background of the classes of defiled women that Christian men should avoid marrying, we can see the wisdom in the extra revelation that Jesus gave to Paul, which is not contained in the Gospels. There are no exception clauses in this revelation to Paul. The aorist infinitive here for ‘separate’ (cwrizqhnai) conveys the result of the verbal action. So here it is the result or outcome that the Christian wife is to avoid: she is not to separate.

We will explore two possible meanings of this verb. First, that it means ‘divorce’ (dissolution of the marriage), and second, that it means ‘physical separation’ (no dissolution of the marriage).

If, for the moment, we assume the verb chorizo (cwrizq) to mean ‘divorce’ then she is expressly commanded not to divorce her husband. If so, the text goes on to reveal that this is not an irresistible command. She can ‘divorce,’ but if she does then she has only two choices. She must either stay unmarried (to another man), or else be reconciled to her husband. A third, possible, option of remarriage is excluded by the Lord. So far so good. But if the verb really does mean ‘divorce’ (dissolve) then this means that the one-flesh union is dissolved. In which case, if the opportunity to be reconciled to her husband becomes possible, she will have to go through a normal marriage procedure as if she were marrying him for the first time. So the reconciliation is achieved through a remarriage.411 The above scenarios are void because chorizo (cwrizq) is not a recognised legal term for divorce in the biblical literature.

If, for the moment, we assume the verb chorizo (cwrizq) to mean ‘divorce’ then after the wife ‘divorced’ her husband, and the marriage bond was severed, she is in the same category as a widow, whose marriage bond was severed by death. Both women are now, to all intents and purposes, single women again. This scenario is also void because the widow is free to marry any man, provided he is a believer, whereas the assumed divorced (dissolved marriage) woman can only remarry her former husband. She is not free to marry any man, even if he is a believer. She is shut up by the Lord to reunite with her husband, or stay single for the rest of her life. This is proof that her first marriage was not dissolved through the use of the verb chorizo (cwrizq). This verb can only mean that the marriage bond has been suspended, and that the underlying marriage bond remains intact. A very telling biblical example that the original bond is not dissolved after a divorce occurs when Matthew and Mark refer to Herodias as “Philip’s wife,” even after she had divorced Philip and was married to Herod Antipas (Matt 14:3, Mark 6:17).

We can now explore the other possibility of the meaning of ‘to separate’ (cwrizqhnai). If it means physically distancing herself from her husband, maybe because he threatened her with violence or death to renounce her faith in the Lord Jesus, or threw her out of the house with or without a ‘bill of divorcement.’ Irrespective of how the physical separation came about, this Christian wife finds herself physically separated from her husband, and has to begin living away from him. The Lord Jesus instructs her to remain unmarried to another man (because He does not

411 Now if the divorced husband in the meantime marries another woman, the Christian woman cannot be reconciled until her husband divorces his second wife, or the second wife dies.
regard her marriage as over or dissolved), or she is to go back to her husband. She has no other options. She must choose to follow one of these two options.

The theological difference between the meaning ‘divorce’ and ‘separate’ is that in the former the marriage bond is dissolved, in the latter, it is still intact. Which translation are we to adopt? Two doctrines of marriage hang on the translation of *chorizo* (χωρίζω).

Jesus, Himself, has decided which it is. He revealed that when a wife got a ‘divorce’ from her husband, it was not a dissolution of the bond, because, when she remarried, she became a defiled woman, and the man she married also became a defiled person. She is contagious in defiling every man she goes on to marry. The Samaritan woman had five such ‘husbands,’ and she defiled every one of them, except the first.

There is a simple deduction process to help us come to a conclusion here.

First, when a virgin man and virgin woman marry, the marriage is clean; the bed is undefiled.

Second, if a divorce truly dissolves the marriage bond, then the divorced wife reverts back to her single status.

Third, she remarries, but in doing so she becomes a defiled person. The marriage is unclean; the bed is defiled.

We can deduce from this that her second marriage was not the same as her first marriage. One is clean, the other is unclean. Why is the second one an unclean marriage? The answer must be because she is still married to her first husband in the eyes of God. In the eyes of man, her second marriage is clean. So man and God are in dispute over the status of the second marriage. Jesus made it explicit that if a woman got a ‘divorce’ and married another man, she was committing the sin of adultery in the eyes of God (but not in the eyes of man).

In the eyes of man, when he divorces his wife he believes that the marriage bond is broken; he believes that he is no longer married to her, and in his eyes, she is like a single woman again, as far as he is concerned. But God and Jesus have a different view of what happens when man takes it upon himself to ‘put asunder’ what they have joined together. Unfortunately for the man, what counts is not his belief but God’s assessment.

If a Christian wife, through ignorance, or bad counselling, gets a civil divorce, but she is determined to follow her Lord’s instructions, she will stay single or pray that her husband comes back to her. Either way she is not going to fall into sin. So whether her translation of the Bible reads ‘divorce’ or ‘separate’ the practical consequences are the same for her; she will not marry another man.

However, her ignorance will get her into trouble with her Lord, because by going into a human divorce court and agreeing to divorce her husband, she has been duped into believing that the marriage bond has been dissolved. Her unbelieving husband also believes this to be the case, so he goes off and marries another woman. The Christian wife now becomes liable for his sin of adultery. She has given him permission to sleep with another woman. She has no right to give him this permission. She will be held accountable for his sins of adultery (Mt 5:32). She should never have entered that divorce court, or have any dealings with solicitors, lawyers and judges who are pressuring her to release her husband from the marriage bond. She should have stood her ground and said that only death severs her marriage bond to her husband. If she has the prayer support of her local church and the assurance from her Christian leaders that she is doing the right thing, then she will not suffer mentally, physically, or spiritually.

We can conclude that in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 the correct translation of χωρίζωναι is ‘separate,’ and not ‘divorce.’ The use of ‘divorce’ is wrong because in normal parlance it conveys the meaning that the marriage bond is severed. That is how the world interprets the word divorced. But the marriage bond can only be separated by God, not by a human judge. There is no recorded case in the whole of human history where God dissolved a lawful one-flesh marriage by means of a divorce procedure. All the cases we have were done by men, and they have all been done in open defiance, in many cases, of Jesus’ warning, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”
Jesus stood up for divine rights, at the expense of human rights. He reclaimed for His Father the exclusive right to dissolve human marriages. This Paul recognised, and so this revelation dominated his whole thinking on the topic of divorce and remarriage.

The text should read: “And to the ones having married I command—not I, but the Lord, a [believing] wife from a [unbelieving] husband is not to separate. Now, even if, say, she may separate, let her remain unmarried to another man, or to the husband let her be reconciled. And let not a [believing] husband forsake a [unbelieving] wife.”

The NIV gives a misleading translation here. It should be remembered that Paul does not tell the unbeliever how to run his life. He wrote, “What business is it of mine to judge those outside [the church]? Are you not to judge those inside [the church]? God will judge those outside [the church]” (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). It is a rule of thumb when translating this chapter that where Paul gives instructions to wives and husbands, singles and marrieds, he is always talking to Christians. He will not tell the unbeliever what he is to do. Observing this simple rule will avoid a number of pitfalls.

The NIV reads, “And a [Christian] husband must not divorce his wife” (1 Corinthians 7:12). It would never occur to Paul to tell a Christian man to go to the divorce courts of this world and get a human judge to dissolve his marriage. Paul scorns the idea of Christians entering non-Christian courts to have their matters resolved by unbelievers. He has too high an opinion of Christ’s society to stoop that low (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). The text should read, “And a [Christian] husband must not forsake (ἀφίημι) his [unbelieving] wife.” A Christian husband should take the attitude that Christ must come first in his life. For did not Jesus say that any man who loves his wife more than Him is not worthy to be His disciple? He said, “If any one comes to me, and does not hate his . . . wife, . . . he is not able to be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). So Jesus encouraged His disciples to forsake (ἀφίημι) their wives for His sake, if it comes to choosing between them (Luke 18:29; cf. 14:26).

Some husbands may have taken this literally in the first flush of their new experience in Christ, speaking in tongues, and exercising their new charismatic gifts, especially if his wife was a heathen. Excesses in Christian exuberances is not confined to modern times. Excesses burst forth in all the first generation of Christian congregations. Christians were ecstatic in their joy and praise, and in their commitment to Christ and His cause.

Paul was thinking of Isaiah 52:11 when he wrote 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, “Turn aside, turn aside, go out from here. The unclean touch not. Go out from her midst. Be pure, who are bearing the vessels of Yahweh.”

Paul wrote:
Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.
And what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?
And what communion has light with darkness?
And what accord has Christ with Beliel?
Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?
And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?
For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

412 In Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:29 Nestle-Aland wrongly omit ‘wife.’ Here the verb ἀφίημι does not mean ‘divorce,’ but rather, ‘pay less attention to,’ for the sake of the Gospel.

413 There is a long succession of decrees of councils prohibiting Christians marrying non-Christians, thus the councils of Eliberis (AD 305), Arles (314), Laodicea (361), Carthage (397), 3rd of Chalcedon (451), Agde (506), and the second council of Orleans (533), and if any man refused to
Isaiah quotes God’s words, ‘Do not touch what is unclean,’ which may have been behind 1 Corinthians 7:1, ‘It is good for a man not to touch a woman,’ meaning an ‘unclean woman.’ This, along with, ‘Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers,’ and, ‘or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?’ may have given rise to the idea that Christians should separate from their ‘unclean/unbelieving’ partners.

If Christians had gone overboard in their zeal to follow the literal words of the Master to ‘hate’ their wives, and ‘hate’ any other relationship that got in the way of their fullest devotion to Him and the Gospel, Paul here reminds them of something else that Jesus said. He said, ‘let not a [believing] wife separate from an [unbelieving] husband,’ and, ‘let not a [believing] husband forsake an [unbelieving] wife.’ Both injunctions have as their aim the maintenance of the unity of the marriage bond.

7.2.1. 1 Corinthians 7:10–11 and a monogamous marriage

1 Corinthians 7:10–11 reads: “And to the ones having been married [and are still married] I command—not I, but the Lord: a wife from a husband is not TO SEPARATE. Now, if say, also she MAY HAVE SEPARATED, LET HER REMAIN like an unmarried one, or to the husband LET HER BE RECONCILED. And a husband is not TO FORSAKE a wife.”

The aorist forms are in block capitals, and the present forms are in block italic capitals to make it easier to convey the meaning of the Greek.

The Lord says nothing about believing and unbelieving spouses. The focus is simple. The wife is not to separate from her husband, and if for any reason she is [forced?] to separate [against her will?], she is to remain single, like an unmarried person, or, if she can, be reconciled to her husband. Likewise the husband is not to separate from his wife. The Lord does not say that the husband, like his wife, must remain like an unmarried person, but the assumption is that he, too, must not take a second (or a third) wife, though we cannot be absolutely sure about that. If the case with the wife is the same as the husband then the ellipsis would read: “Now, if say, also he MAY HAVE SEPARATED, LET HIM REMAIN like an unmarried one, or to the wife LET HIM BE RECONCILED.”

When discussing the versions of what Jesus said in the Gospels, 1 Corinthians 7:10b-11 must be brought into the discussion, because they are words that Jesus spoke a year or more after He ascended into heaven. This is the version that Jesus gave directly to the Apostle to the Gentiles to teach all nations, and He inserted no exception clauses in what He conveyed to Paul.

Samuel’s father had two wives, presumably Hannah was his first wife, but because she was barren, he married another wife. God approves of David having a number of wives. Indeed, God shows His concern where the wife of the firstborn is not loved by her husband. The husband is not allowed to favour the sons of the second wife whom he loves more (Deut 21:15-17). Under the Law:

If a man has two contemporary wives, the second wife does not defile him.
If a woman has two contemporary husbands, the second husband defiles her.
A man may have as many wives as he can look after and not one of them can defile him.
A woman may have only one husband at a time. A second living husband will defile her.
The husband can be polygamous, but the wife must be monogamous.
These two laws are established by God Himself.

dissolve his unlawful marriage he was excommunicated. If a Jew married a Christian woman their crime was put in the same class as adultery, that is, it was made a capital crime, but not if a Christian man married a Jewish woman in Constantius's time (see Morgan, op. cit., I. 249).

414 The same verb occurs in Acts 16:18, “and this she was doing for many days, but Paul having been grieved, and having turned, said to the spirit, ‘I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her;’ and it came out the same hour.”
But under Grace a change takes place among God’s people—the new Israel of God. The husband and the wife must both be monogamous.

In 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 Paul takes up the case a Christian wife. He does not attribute to her the sin of attempting a divorce because the options he lays before her are (1) stay single, or (2) be reconciled (καταλλαγήται). If a legal divorce had occurred, then the second option would have been changed to (2) remarry your first husband (γαμῃς τῷ σύτῳ). But if Paul regarded her as still ‘bound’ to her husband, then the advice ‘be remarried’ would have been inappropriate. His actual advice, ‘be reconciled’ (καταλλαγήται) was in keeping with his view that she is still married. So it was the correct words to use to refer to this option. If he had used the term ‘remarry’ (γαμῇς) then (χωρισθῇ) would have been a synonym for divorce in this context (which it clearly is not). So the terms χωρισθῇ and καταλλαγήτω (‘[physically] depart’ and ‘reconcile’) match each other perfectly, and the terms (ἀπολύω) and γαμῃς τῷ σύτῳ (‘[legal] divorce’ and ‘[re]marry the same’) match each other perfectly.

That marriage is a permanent union, is found only in the teaching of Jesus Christ. The unbelieving Roman or Greek husband never thought in those terms, so when he ‘divorced’ his Christian wife in 1 Corinthians 7:11, he deemed himself and his Christian wife to be unmarried. He had no intention of ever returning to her, so he would remarry. Now, according to the opinion of every man, Jew, Roman, and Greek, the Christian wife would be regarded as unmarried. OK, says Paul, if that is how you refer to her, she is to stay in her unmarried state, and await the return of her husband, or be reconciled to the fact that he will never return if he has remarried.

Some ask the question, “Why does Paul use the word ‘unmarried’ (ἄγαμος) in 1 Corinthians 7:11 if he is not thinking of divorce, but only separation? After all, they point out, the use of the same word in 1 Corinthians 7:8, 32, 34 means the unmarried state.

The logic behind the question appears to be that the adjective ‘unmarried’ means that they are not married (as is clearly the case in vv. 8, 32, 34), and so when Paul used the same word in v. 11 he was implying that the Christian woman was in an ‘unmarried’ state after her unbelieving husband ‘separated’ from her, which must imply that she was truly divorced in the true sense of that word, i.e., that her marriage was dissolved, and she was in the same category as those in vv. 8, 32, 34.

In reply it should be noted that if ‘divorce’ carried with it the right to remarry (as it did in the Graeco-Roman and Hebrew cultures), and the husband exercised that right and remarried, it seems harsh that Paul would deny the same right to the divorced Christian wife. Why did he not give her the option to marry a Christian? When advising the widows, Paul says, “but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39). For ‘dies’ read ‘divorces’ and the injustice of Paul’s advice stands out starkly if divorce, like death, truly liberates the married woman from her husband. Her culture told her that she had a right to remarry, but Paul told her in no uncertain terms she could not remarry, and the only reason why he could lay down the law in this strong manner is because she is still married to her first husband.

To avoid confusion in future, 1 Corinthians 7:11 should be translated, “let her remain unmarried to another man, or to the husband let her be reconciled.”

So Paul’s harsh command (as judged by unbelievers) becomes evidence for his belief that her marriage had not been dissolved, therefore she was not at liberty, as was the widow, to remarry. If the widow remarries she does not sin (7:28), but if the separated woman remarries she does sin because her husband is still alive (Romans 7:3).

7.3. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:11-13 (DIRECTIVE: TO ABANDON OR TO DIVORCE?)
1 Corinthians 7:12–14 reads: “And to the rest [of your queries415] I— I speak, not the Lord, if any brother has an unbelieving wife, and this one—she agrees to dwell with him, LET HIM NOT FORSAKE (ἀφίημι) her. And a wife who has an unbelieving husband, and this one— he agrees to dwell with her, LET HER NOT FORSAKE the husband. For the unbelieving husband has been made holy in the wife, and the unbelieving wife has been made holy in the husband, since conceivably your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

Paul appears to be duplicating what the Lord has said, except here Paul has applied the Lord’s teaching to church members. The issue is one of mixed marriages.

It is clear from this that there was some debate whether a Christian, who was holy and clean should be in union with someone who was unholy and unclean—the unbeliever. Maybe the example of Ezra’s mass purging of the unclean partners and children was debated among a section of the believers as something the Corinthian church should repeat, in order to keep the Christian community from becoming corrupt. The analogy was a good one. This would not be a case of mass divorce, but of kicking out invalid unions. The LXX talks about “casting out,” or “throwing out,” all the foreign wives and their children. The usual term for divorce, ἀπολύω, is not used throughout Ezra 10. Those who supported Ezra urged him on, “Let us make a covenant with our God to cast out (ἰκαλιαίνω) all the women and the issue from them, however you want. Arise, and scare them with the commandments of our God, and let it be done according to the law” (LXX, Ezra 10:3). The foreign wives, surprisingly, were descendants of the original inhabitants of Palestine. They are listed as Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites.

Yahweh debarred certain nations from ever becoming members of the Church of the Old Covenant, because of what they did to His people when they came out of Egypt. This included the Ammonites and the Moabites, and incidentally, eunuchs and all illegitimate children (presumably born to Israelite girls through rape, etc.). But Edomites and Egyptians could become members if they came under the Law of Moses for three consecutive generations (Deut 23:2–8). The horror of what the people did is expressed in the words, “so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands” (Ezra 9:2). The holy and the unholy were becoming indistinguishable. Racial purity was on the edge of being lost forever, and with it the worship of Yahweh, if Ezra had not acted when he did. Did the Christians in Corinth fear the same thing would happen to them if they allowed mixed marriages to spring up in their midst.

Paul had a neat answer to nip in the bud this potentially destructive idea getting hold of God’s people. He informed them that an unclean thing could not contaminate the clean, which goes back to Jesus’ new concept that it is not what is external (the flesh) but what is internal (in the heart) that creates the uncleanness. With that one idea He demolished all the external laws relating to clean and unclean things. All meats, clean and unclean, were now to be eaten with thanksgiving before God. Jesus had internalised the categories of clean and unclean, and holy and unholy, through union with His Body.

Christians make up the body of Christ, and if husband and wife are joined together in one flesh, and both of them joined to the body of Christ, that is the ideal situation. But what if the wife is joined to the body of Christ, but her husband is not. She is ‘clean’ and ‘holy,’ he is ‘unclean’ and ‘unholy.’ What then? On the one side, she is joined to someone who is not joined to Christ, and on the other side she is joined to Christ, and as she is one-flesh with her unholy husband and one-flesh (as it were) with Christ, it would seem that, through her body, Christ was joined to an unholy body (her husband). It was no wonder that some in Corinth may have seen the incongruity of this theology and objected to this unlikely union between the unholy and the Holy, and urge Paul to purge out the unholy flesh, just as Ezra did. On the surface they appeared to have a watertight analogy to push for this reform.

Paul’s answer was that the unholy husband was made holy through his wife, as were their children. And we have to take his word for it. It follows that children whose parents are not joined

415 This could be a reference to a list of judgments that the church requested from Paul.
to Christ are not holy children, but unholy. Should these die in infancy, then what happens to them?

At 1 Corinthians 7:11 Gola mistranslates the Greek verb ἀφίημι (ἀφίημι) as ‘divorce’ and the use of this unfortunate legal term implies a Certificate of Divorce, something that would have been the last thing on Paul’s mind (p. 92). The verb means ‘to dismiss or release someone or something from a place or one’s presence; to abandon; to neglect.’ But its most common use in the Gospels is to indicate forgiveness of sins. No Greek dictionary that I have consulted gives it the meaning of ‘divorce.’ Paul commands Christian men not to abandon or neglect/forsake their pagan or unbelieving wives. He does not use the word ‘divorce’ as if that was an option. He tells them not to abandon them, which they might have been inclined to do in their enthusiasm to devote their entire lives to serving the Lord in an undistacted manner (7:35). They might even have entertained the mistaken belief that “it is not good to touch a woman,” especially an ‘unclean’ woman, as unbelievers were (7:1).

It is clear that Paul got his teaching on marriage directly from the Lord in 7:10-11 because he makes a distinction between what he got from Jesus and what he got from the Holy Spirit. Jesus informed him that “a wife is not to separate [χωριζω] from her husband, . . . and a husband is not to abandon [μη ἄφηναι] his wife.” These were Jesus’ terms, as conveyed to Paul, and Paul takes up Jesus’ terms and applies them by extension to the situation in Corinth. He never used the term ‘divorce’ (ἀπολύω [ἀποσολύω]), which is very significant, because it means that both Jesus and Paul operated within a world in which divorce cannot occur in the eyes of God, if it refers to the dissolution of the marriage bond.

The justification for ruling out the translation ‘divorce’ (ἀφίημι) anywhere in Paul’s writing is that the same expression, “not to neglect” [μη ἄφηναι] occurs at Matthew 23:23 where Jesus warned the Pharisees, “Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you give tithe of the mint, and the dill, and the cumin, and you neglected [ἀφικατε] the weightier things of the Law — the judgment, and the kindness, and the faith; these it behoved you to do, and those not to neglect [μη ἄφηναι].” It would not make sense to change ‘neglect’ to ‘divorce’ in any of the New Testament contexts in which this verb is used.

The closest one can get to a universal, core meaning for ἀφίημι (ἀφίημι) is “to leave behind.” This verb is most frequently used in the good sense of ‘forgiveness’ of sins in the Gospels, but it can also be used in a bad sense of ‘abandonment.’ Only the context will determine which facet is uppermost in the mind of the user. In itself the term is neutral. In the case of 1 Corinthians 7:11, 12, 13, and 15, it has a bad sense, and means ‘neglect, abandonment, leave behind.’ Therefore I have translated these verses as follows:

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to separate from her husband. But even if she does separate. let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to abandon his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say:

If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not abandon her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not abandon him. . . . But if the unbeliever separates, let him separate; a brother or a sister is not under obligation in such cases, for in tranquillity God called us.

Gola almost observed the distinction Paul made between the two verbs, chorizo (χωριζω) and ἀφίημι (ἀφίημι), on page 92, where he wrote (I have interspersed brief comments throughout to aid the reader):

416 J. Murphy-O’Connor, “The Divorced Woman in 1 Cor 7:10–11,” Journal of Biblical Literature, vol. 100 (1981), pp. 601–6. This verb, like any verb involving separation, can be used in classical Greek literature to refer to divorce, but in this context it cannot mean ‘divorce’ because the wife is to remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband. So, in the eyes of Jesus, she is still married after she has ‘departed’ from her husband. This is consistent with Jesus’ view that a marriage is for life.
A wife is not to DEPART from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried OR BE RECONCILED TO HER HUSBAND. And a husband is not to divorce [LMF: Gola should have translated this verb as ‘abandon’] his wife” (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

This Scripture is NOT referring to a finalized legal divorce, but a ‘separation’ [LMF: correct] only. The Greek word used for ‘depart’ is chorizo, and it means ‘to place room between, to separate.’ This is clearly seen because the husband and wife before the separation are STILL husband and wife AFTER the separation [LMF: correct]. For the wife is to ‘. . . be reconciled to HER HUSBAND’ (1 Corinthians 7:11a), not, ‘. . . HER FORMER HUSBAND who divorced her . . . ’ (Deuteronomy 24:4a). If she were divorced, she wouldn’t have a husband [LMF: incorrect]. But when you’re just separated, you still have a husband [LMF: correct].

Where Gola went wrong in this translation of 7:11 is that he fell into the trap of assuming that ap nhi (ἀφίημι) was a legal term which meant ‘divorce/dissolution.’ And in this he agrees with many faulty English translations, such as the NKJV, ESV, NEB, but not the ASV, Moffatt, Douay, and AV. The situation is not a legal one, rather it is the social effects of families coming to terms with the success of Christian inroads into a non-Christian culture. Christ split families. Spouses had to decide whose side they were on. Christ would not allow His followers to dissolve their marriages. The initiative lay solely with the unbeliever: Did they want to stay, or did they want to depart? Christ removed this option from the believer. The nature of marriage meant that they had to stay in it. The only issue was, Would their unbelieving spouse want to stay with them? The two options open to the unbeliever was to stay or separate (depart); the option to divorce was never on, not that that would stop the unbeliever from going off and getting a State divorce and remarrying, but that remarriage would be an adulterous affair in the eyes of God, and a sin against the first spouse.

Consistency demands that the same Greek word should be translated by the same English word in the three instances where the verb ap nhi (ἀφίημι) occurs in 7:11, 12, 13. Gola is consistently wrong to translate ap nhi (ἀφίημι) as a legal term, ‘divorce,’ which he does in his translation of 7:11, “And a husband is not to [spitefully] DIVORCE HIS WIFE” (1 Corinthians 7:11)(p. 92).

Unless the reader becomes familiar with the Greek terms that the Holy Spirit guided Paul to use in 1 Corinthians 7, he can let mistranslations slip through without noticing the implications that will be absorbed subliminally, as when Gola replaced ‘abandon’ (a social term) with ‘divorce’ (a legal term), but 1 Corinthians 7 is set in the courts of the Lord, and not the courts of the law.

Gola correctly noted that chorizo (χωρίζω) as used by Jesus and Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10 can only mean ‘separate’ and it cannot mean ‘divorce.’ Now Gola has already conceded the truth that chorizo (χωρίζω) is used to speak of a divorce, without itself carrying the legal connotation itself. There might be a rare case somewhere in classical Greek literature where ap nhi (ἀφίημι) could also

Contrast this with his earlier treatment of apoluo which he divested of all legal connotation of ‘divorce’ to help his case when he needed it.

The ESV, RSV, NKJV, and The New American Bible (1970) have: ‘divorce . . . divorce . . . divorce.’

The AV correctly used non-legal language to convey the truth in 1 Corinthians 7:11-13. It used ‘put away . . . put away . . . leave.’ It is a pity its successor, the NKJV, did not retain this non-legal language. The American Standard Version (1901) has, ‘leave . . . leave . . . leave.’ Moffatt and Douay have: ‘put away . . . put away . . . put away.’ The Jerusalem Bible (1968) has: ‘leave . . . send away . . . send away.’

But if Gola had consulted some reputable Greek dictionaries he would have discovered that chorizo (χωρίζω) is used to speak of a divorce, without itself carrying the legal connotation itself.
that χορίζω (χωρίζω) cannot mean ‘divorce’ in 7:10-11, so when the same verb is used in v. 15 it cannot mean ‘divorce’ there either. So when Paul said, “But if the unbeliever separates (χορίζω/χωρίζω), let him separate . . .” Paul is not referring to a divorce, but to a separation. So when Paul continues, “… a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases [of separation], . . .” the term ‘bondage’ cannot refer to the marriage bond; it can only refer to the duty of care that all married couples are under to look after one another, which Paul reminded them of in 7:3, “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due to her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. . . . Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time.” But if the couple split up then they cannot shoulder this burden of responsibility toward one another. Hence the ‘bondage’ is the ‘bind’ of the marriage, not the ‘bond’ of the marriage. Paul reassures Christian couples who have been abandoned by their unbelieving spouses—for the split always comes from the unbeliever’s side—that they are not to be overly concerned about this upheaval in their marriage, because they have another life to live in serving their Lord without distraction.

7.4. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:14 (HOLY AND UNHOLY FLESH)

The one-flesh concept and its implications for the family unit (1 Corinthians 7:14)

Paul’s concept of the unity of the physical family unit is a difficult subject, and many believers, understandably, find Paul’s theology in 1 Corinthians 7:14 incomprehensible, especially Baptists, and other Western denominations which stress the individuality of each person to decide for themselves to be sanctified by a personal, rational decision.

In Paul’s new understanding of the coming of Christ to dwell physically among His people, each family on the earth is either unclean (unsanctified to God) or clean (sanctified to God). This goes back to his concept of the ‘lump,’ which partakes of all the attributes of the lump. He sees units—family units—not individuals. The two become one flesh, and the children partake of this one flesh, being the extension of the one flesh; so the one flesh concept envelopes the whole unit.

The immediate and obvious implication of this concept is that if two unbelievers marry then their one flesh is not sanctified, so the extensions of their one flesh, that is, their children must also be unsanctified or unclean, and it is this logic that Paul applies in 1 Corinthians 7:14, “… else were your children unclean,” to convince those in mixed marriages to stay yoked to their unbelieving spouses, provided the unbeliever wishes to remain in a Christian family under those conditions.

This new revelation of Paul must have come as a relief to all those in mixed marriages because they must have thought that if their spouses were not Christians then they were unclean, and if they were unclean then by being one flesh with them, they would be contaminated and their bodies would become unclean or unholy, and if unholy how could the Spirit of Christ dwell in an unclean/unholy body?

Most Westerners find Paul’s idea that the unclean does not pollute the clean difficult to incorporate into their Western, systematic theologies, because it is the complete reverse of all that the Jews had been brought up to believe by God (cf. Lev 10:10, “to distinguish between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean”).

If we take Haggai 2:13-14 as the contemporary situation after the Jews came back from the Babylonian exile in 536 B.C. Haggai asks the people, ‘If an unclean body comes against any of these, is it unclean?’ And the priests answer and say, ‘It is unclean.’ Haggai answered and said, ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me — an affirmation of Yahweh — and so is every work of their hands, and that which they bring near there — it is unclean.”

Gola takes up this Old Testament idea of impurity and argued from James 3:11, 12, “This is a Bible principle. When sin (salt water), is mixed with holiness (fresh water), that which was holy cover a divorce situation, but these are irrelevant because they would not affect its non-legal use in 1 Corinthians 7.
becomes corrupted and sinful. Thus, no spring yields BOTH salt water and fresh. When polluted water is mixed with clean water, the clean ALWAYS becomes polluted.” He believes a marriage partner can become unclean through alcoholism, drugs, lustful sex, or a party spirit (p. 81), and very likely through the occult and witchcraft (p. 61). The coming of Jesus changed all that. He taught that it is not what enters a man that makes him unclean, but what comes out of him; that is what makes him unclean. No matter what physical or spiritual state an unbelieving spouse is in, nothing can make the believing spouse unclean from the outside.

Gola appears to be unaware that when Christ indwells the believer, the principle of pollution that obtained under the Old Covenant is reversed. Instead of the unclean polluting the clean, the clean sanctifies the unclean/unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:14), otherwise, Paul deducted, “your children would be unclean, but now they are sanctified.” The same goes for the unbelieving spouse, and it comes about because no one can pollute Jesus, who lives in the believer. God abides in the believer, and the believer in Him. This did not happen under the Old Covenant. The Lord Jesus abolished the direction of pollution. Instead of the polluter polluting the clean believer; the clean transforms the polluted to be clean. The direction has been reversed. This was a totally new revelation given to the Church through the Apostle Paul. Christians who took seriously the revelation of Jesus that when a couple marry they become one flesh, and if they are one, then surely the Old Testament principle must apply that if part of an object or person becomes unclean then the whole lump must also be unclean. And under Old Testament law this is exactly what would have been the case. But the coming of Jesus completely altered the direction of influence.

Even the body of the unbeliever, whom we would regard as polluted by sin, cannot alter the clean status of the believer. Christ in the body of the believer is stronger than the body of the unbeliever. Can a clean thing come out of an unclean thing? asked Job (14:4), and his answer was No. But now the answer is Yes. When a believing husband has infants through the body of his unbelieving, polluted wife, the children are clean. Likewise, when a believing wife bears the seed of an unbelieving, unclean, and polluted husband, the children are clean. It takes only one spouse to be clean and the flesh of the whole family is considered clean, even though the spouse may be the only person in the family who is clean, that is, a believer. It is on the basis of this reversed principle that Paul could reassure all Christians in mixed marriages that their unclean, polluted, unbelieving spouses do not transfer their uncleanness to them, but rather the reverse happens, and so they can continue to have marital relations with unbelievers. Paul’s argument is that the unclean status of the unbelieving spouse is no ground for separation from them, let alone a divorce. Gola is adamant that Paul is wrong and he is right, and he urges all believers to get a divorce as soon as possible on the principle (p. 25):

The ‘slave’ living under the ‘master’ and the ‘fresh water’ being mixed with the ‘salt water’ is the godly spouse being polluted by the ways and actions of the ungodly spouse. The godly spouse will become a slave and polluted. Good apples in a bushel do not make the rotten apples better. The good become rotten. God is always saying, ‘come out of her my people, lest YOU share in her sins, and lest YOU receive her plagues’ (Rev 18:4). ‘DO NOT BE DECEIVED: “EVIL COMPANY CORRUPTS GOOD HABITS. AWAKE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND DO NOT SIN; FOR SOME DO NOT HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD”’ (1 COR 15:33, 34).

In his ignorance, Gola, is living as if Jesus had never come into this world and set up a new kingdom on the earth. He is living as if the coming of Jesus changed nothing, and that the unclean person contaminates the clean person. This a different Gospel to the one that Paul preached. Gola is on a crusade to persuade all mixed marriages to be terminated in divorce as soon as practicable. The new revelation that Paul brought to light is that the clean person sanctifies the unclean person. Gola has no place for this new teaching revealed by the God the Holy Spirit to Paul. Either Paul or Gola is a false teacher, for they both cannot be right.
Given Gola’s objection to mixed marriages he will always choose a translation that reinforces his point of view. Thus, in the case of 1 Corinthians 7:15, he singles out Wuest’s translation because this says what he wants the Greek text to say:

Let’s read verse 15 from the Wuest translation: ‘But assuming that the unbelieving husband departs, let him be departing. A [CHRISTIAN] BROTHER OR [CHRISTIAN] SISTER IS NOT IN THE POSITION OF A SLAVE, NAMELY, BOUND TO THE UNBELIEVING HUSBAND OR UNBELIEVING WIFE IN AN INDISSOLUABLE[sic] UNION IN CASES SUCH AS THESE; but God has called us [to live] in peace’ (1 Corinthians 7:15 WUEST)

Note his switch from the BIND to the BOND. Paul is referring to the BIND and not to the BOND.

On page 27 Gola gives another reason why a mixed marriage should be dissolved as soon as possible. Gola asks, ‘How can a person live a godly life and at the same time submit that life to someone who practices ungodliness?’ In his mind it is not possible. His solution is that you get a divorce as quickly as possible to be free from these ungodly influences. Simplistic.

Presumably he would apply the same principle to slaves, and urge them to run away from their ungodly masters. But Paul is of a different spirit. He urges the slave to stay in his master-slave relationship and not to run away. Here is Paul’s advice to Christian slaves:

Slaves, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of inheritance; for you serve the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:22-24).

Paul repeats his advice in Ephesians 6:5-9,

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.

Paul does not advise Christian slaves, who have Christian masters, to assert their right to be freed men. Rather, his advice is:

Let as many slaves as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and of His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brothers, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things. If anyone teaches otherwise . . . he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, . . . from such withdraw yourself. (1 Timothy 6:1-2)

In Titus 2:9-10 he offers the same consistent, pastoral directive:

Exhort slaves to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Paul is not alone in giving this advice. The apostle Peter wrote:

Slaves, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God (1 Pet 2:18-20).

Now slaves are in a far worse state of being abused by someone else than wives are, yet there is no hint anywhere in Paul’s theology that they are to run away. And neither does he advise
any believer to run away from their unbelieving spouse. His advice is to remain in the relationship that they are in (slave to master; wife to husband), and use it in a positive manner to the glory of God the Father.

Paul adopts the same consistent theological solution to the slave and to the wife; both are to be submissive to those who are over them. Paul instructs the wives:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything (Eph 5:22-24) Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord (Col 3:18).

Paul is not alone in giving this advice. The apostle Peter wrote:

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. . . . For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid of any terror (1 Peter 3:1-6).

Both Paul and Peter recognised that slaves and wives could have unbelievers ruling over their lives, some good and some harsh, but never do they exhort the slaves to run away, or the wives to get a divorce. They took the view that the Person of the Lord Jesus had taken up residence in their bodies and they could endure all things for the sake of the Gospel. With Christ in the vessel they could smile at the storm.

How different is this from the attitude and advice of Gola!

7.4.1. 1 Corinthians 7:14. the believing spouse confers ‘cleanliness’ on the rest of the family

If one member of the pair bond is bonded to Christ’s risen body, then the body of the unbeliever is also ‘holy,’ as are their children. This is the opposite to the way it would have worked in Ezra’s day. In that situation, only the body of the Jewish husband was ‘holy,’ and his wife and children were deemed to be ‘ unholy,’ hence Ezra’s insistence that these marriages be severed as invalid, and separation was demanded by God at that time.

Now, under Grace, if part is holy, then the whole is holy. The believing wife confers on her unbelieving husband the status of being holy, and vice versa. This was a major modification of the Law as regards the direction of transfer of the contagion of ‘clean’ and ‘unclean,’ and ‘holy’ and ‘ unholy,’ as Peter was to learn when the sheet of unclean animals was let down and he was told to eat of them.

Under the Law contamination operated at the physical level, but under Grace contamination operates at the spiritual level. It is not what goes into a man that defiles a man, but what comes out of his heart, that defiles him, Jesus pointed out. It is not the physical union of a divorced woman with a second ‘husband’ that defiles her as the sin of adultery, and she defiles how many husbands she has, not through physical intercourse with her, but through the sin of adultery. This is how she spreads her defilement. It is contagious in the sense that through the flesh the spirit is defiled, with each of her ‘husbands.’ It is extremely important that preachers let it be known throughout the world that union with a divorced woman, whose husband is still alive, is adultery. And the punishment is that such adulterers and adulteresses are excluded from the Kingdom of God.

7.5. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:15 - 24 (DEsertion: social or legal?)
Now concerning the virgins, an authoritative directive of the Lord I do not have. Now I give judgment as one having been shown mercy [in the past] by the Lord to be trustworthy. Therefore I think this to be proper because of the necessity having come about [in the past and continues to the present time], the matter to be like this. Now, if say, also you may have married [after your calling], you have not sinned. And, if say, the virgin may have married [after her calling], she has not sinned. Yet tribulation these same ones shall have in the flesh, but I—I spare you [the details].

Now this I pronounce, brothers, the remaining time [allotted to us] is having been shortened, such that even the ones having wives may be as ones not having [wives], and the ones crying as ones not crying, and the ones rejoicing as ones not rejoicing, and the ones buying [to possess] as ones not possessing, and the ones making use of the [adornment of the] cosmos as ones not making the full use of it, for the way of life of this cosmos is passing away.

This looks to me as if Paul is addressing those Christians who changed their status from being single to being married after their conversion, which they should not have done. The ‘necessity’ that he is referring to is the contract of obligation which was made before their conversion, and which they felt obliged to fulfil, and did fulfil, but now they discover that they should not have changed their status following their conversion. Here Paul reassures them that they have not sinned in fulfilling their contractual obligations.

Diversion to establish principles.

17 And in this manner I lay down in all the churches.
Was any one called having been already circumcised? Let him not uncircumcised himself.
18 In uncircumcision was any one called? Let him not circumcise himself.
19 The circumcision is nothing, and the uncircumcision is nothing, but by contrast guardianship of the commandments of God [is everything].
20 Each person, in the calling in which he/she had been called, in this let him/her remain. A slave were you when you were called? let it not be a concern to you, but by contrast if also you are able to become free, preferably utilise it [the opportunity]. 22 For the one in the Lord having been called as a slave, he is a freeman of the Messiah. Likewise the free man [in the Lord having been called as a free man], is a slave of the Messiah. 23 [For] a price you were bought; do not become slaves of men. Each man in which [circumstances] he was called, brothers, in this let him remain [as coming] from God.

End of diversion.

1 Corinthians 7:17b does not conclude vv. 10-17a, as all modern translations have it. Rather, it is the opening line of a foundation topic in which Paul explains his modus operandi—his principles of operation, or how he goes about solving problems to do with the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

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421 Was this done in ignorance of the directive to remain in the calling in which they were called?

422 In the New Testament the word ‘cosmos’ does not refer to the physical universe, but to the works of God and man that clothe the surface of the Earth (the ‘furnishings’), hence it is called ‘adornment’ in the LXX of Gen 2:1. Paul is making the point that there are some who are so poor that they cannot get out of their own countries to see the rest of the world, and there are those who are continually globe-trotting. Better to be like the former and give the time saved to the Lord’s work. It is a matter of priorities, because our time on this earth is short, so make the most of it in the service of God.
Paul's Jewish compatriots would have been astonished to hear him say that 'circumcision is nothing.' Circumcision was given to Abraham and was compulsory on every Hebrew child who was born. If a male child was not circumcised it was not a member of God's people—of God's Church. What the Jew had to come to terms with was that the race card had been superseded and replaced by the faith card—faith in Jesus as the Prophet prophesied by Moses, and as the Messiah of God. The faith of Abraham was what was required to be a member of the Kingdom of God.

The Jew may have protested that if so, then God had moved the goalposts, and Paul has to inform them that this is precisely what God has done. But he would also remind them that advance notice was given to them from the time of Moses onwards that He was going to do this, and the time had arrived: the goalposts had been shifted by the Lord Jesus Himself, the Son of God.

Circumcision meant nothing any longer. It was a sign that had passed its sell by date. It was now an empty tradition. To attempt to retain its old significance was foolish. The claim for it was now a bogus claim. It was no longer the membership card that it once was. The swipe card no longer opens the door into the Kingdom of God. Every Jew and non-Jew must apply for a new swipe card to gain entrance into the Kingdom. The new card is called, “the faith of Abraham.”

Physical descent from Abraham meant nothing any more. Spiritual descent, having the likeness of Abraham’s faith, meant everything to God. The universal invitation of God to come to Him through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was issued first to the Jews, and then to the rest of the world. But the terms and conditions of entry were the same for all. The Jew had no advantage over the non-Jew. The ground around the cross is a level playing field for all nations of the earth. There is one door, one faith, one baptism of the Holy Spirit, by which all will enter the New Covenant kingdom of God.

The other important principle that Paul laid down for the churches to abide by was that the moment a person received the invitation to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ they were to remain in that social class, or marital status. Every new disciple of the Lord Jesus was to take stock of their situation as it was at the moment of their calling to follow Him. The Lord Jesus now owned them. body, soul, and spirit. From now on everything that they are and have been gifted with must be utilised in His service. Chief among these was their marital status. If they were single at their conversion, then they were to stay single (Paul deals with a possible exception to this rule). If they were a slave, then they were to remain a slave (Paul deals with a desirable exception to this rule).

Initially, only fornication for divorce was permitted until Erasmus established another ground, namely, desertion, using 1 Corinthians 7:15. Now, it was well recognised that 1 Corinthians 7:15 on its own was ambiguous as a grounds for divorce. If Jesus was an absolutist then 1 Corinthians 7:15 had to be seen in the light of Matthew 19:9 as originally written, without Erasmus’s addition of εἰ before μὴ. In which case 1 Corinthians 7:15 would receive its natural sense that desertion was not a grounds for divorce but a grounds for giving more of one’s time to the cause of Christ.

Paul made it clear that the unmarried state was preferable because it meant more time could be given to Christ and His cause, which should be paramount in the thinking of every new disciple. He taught that if God called a person to follow Him and His appointed Messiah, then if they were single when called they should remain in that marital state, because that was the best state to be in to give everything back to God. Marriage was a distraction. Marriage meant that God could not have the full attention of each of His male followers, as it had to be divided between Him and his wife. Consequently, he was bound in this divided state for the rest of his life. Once married always married. There was no way out for the believer who wanted to be fully devoted to the Lord. He was locked into a life-long, arrangement with his wife. Only the death of his wife could release the husband to be fully devoted to the Lord.

However, Paul, through the Spirit, realised that God did not always call a man and his wife to follow Him. In the early days of evangelism, when God called one half of a marriage union to follow Him, the other half might object so strongly to the Christian’s union with Christ as to cease to live with him/her. In which case, Paul saw an advantage accruing to the believer, because instead of
waiting for death to break the marriage union, the departure of the unbeliever meant that the Christian would be able to be fully devoted to the service of Christ Jesus, which s/he would never have been had the unbeliever not departed.

So the departure becomes a blessing for the Lord in that He now has the full attention of the believing husband, and the enthusiastic husband can give full expression to his love and sense of debt and gratitude to the Lord for saving him. The last thing on his mind would be a remarriage, because that would be to shackle himself and limit his freedom to give his all to Christ. So Paul turns round the departure of the unbeliever and encourages the believer to use the new found freedom to the advantage of Jesus, and not for his own advantage. Given that the single state is the one most sought after by the Lord Jesus, it would never dawn on the mind of a true servant of God, who was ‘divorced’ by his unbelieving wife, to enter into a second marriage. That would be the last thing on his mind. “What a privilege,” Paul would point out to him, “that you are no longer enslaved in a divided state, but free, to serve the Lord without distraction!”

Jesus said, “And whoever left (ἀφίκνεται) houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or fields, on account of My name, an hundredfold he shall receive, and life age-during he shall inherit” (Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:29; Luke 18:29). So startling was this level of commitment, which included a believing man leaving (ἀφίκνεται), but not divorcing, his unbelieving wife (as per 1 Corinthians 7:15), that some Greek mss (mainly Egyptian) deleted ‘wife’ from the list, probably in the mistaken belief that they were safeguarding the indissolubility of the marriage bond. This interference in the transmission of the sacred Scriptures was carried out in Matthew and Mark, but they overlooked to delete ‘wife’ in Luke. But in the context of 1 Corinthians 7:15, Jesus’ statement makes very good sense, so that if a man’s pagan wife refused to live with the Christian husband, and left him, Jesus says to that man, “Do not worry. You can accept this loss for My sake. Let her go, so that you can follow Me more fully. That is your priority for the rest of your life. Be single-minded to do My will and all will be well with you in this life and the next.”

But Erasmus was not thinking along these lines. He was appealing to the selfish nature of unregenerate man. Sex was not to be denied to the Christian man. That was paramount in his thinking. If your unbelieving wife departed, then it was legitimate to seek an outlet for your sexual urges by remarrying. You were entitled to sex all the days of your life, and if your partner denied you this basic, human instinct, then you could divorce her for any number of reasons. This appeal to humans to have an unbroken sexual relationship, and that it was their right to have sex all the days of their life, tapped into the unregenerate nature of man and was hugely popular, as one can imagine. The appeal to ‘natural justice’ was a very strong one, and too powerful to counter, so the seed of Erasmus’s teaching fell on very receptive soil and his doctrine sprang up quickly all over Europe, until today it is taken for granted among Christians that if your partner is unfaithful, you get a divorce (if you want it), and look around for a replacement.

423 Or Paul could have been thinking of the broken relationship itself, in which case he is reassuring the abandoned Christian partners that they are “not under bondage,” or “not under an obligation [to force the unbeliever back]” into the marriage “in such cases.” Paul immediately spots the blessing that the departure opens up for the Christian, who can now be fully devoted to the Lord without distraction (7:35). And marriage to an unbeliever was certainly a big distraction. The bondage of the distraction is gone! The Christian is free! The Lord Jesus is the ultimate beneficiary of the departure of the one who hates Him, and that blessing pleases Paul enormously, as it would every pastor and evangelist. The bondage of the distraction may be severed, but the bond of the marriage remains intact.

424 All modern English translations are based on these Egyptian texts and so they also omit ‘wife’ in Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:29, but they could not delete ‘wife’ in Luke 18:29 because the Egyptian copyists overlooked to delete it there, and let it slip through.
The idea that a Christian should use the freedom that a unbeliever’s ‘divorce’ certificate gives him to use their unforeseen single, ‘unbound’ state to the advantage of the Lord Jesus, is anathema to most Christian leaders. Instead, the sexually deprived Christian man is encouraged to go out and find another sexual partner, because “you’re worth it,” or, “you’re entitled to it.” This was not Paul’s teaching. This advice feeds the appetites of the carnal body which is destined to pass away. Sex, like food for the stomach, will pass away. It belongs only to this world. This is how 1 Corinthians 7:15 had been traditionally interpreted until Erasmus saw in it a way to strengthen his introduction of divorce into Matthew 19:9.

If Erasmus could show that Jesus was not an absolutist in Matthew 19:9, through his alteration of the Greek text at Matthew 19:9, then 1 Corinthians 7:15 could become a means for further widening the breech he had created in Matthew 19:9. And this is how 1 Corinthians 7:15 is used today.

Sometimes, however, 1 Corinthians 7:15 is judged to be clearer than Matthew 19:9 about the justification for divorce and remarriage, and it is used to throw light on Matthew 19:9! But generally, it is conceded that 1 Corinthians 7:15 is totally dependent on, and derives its justification from, Matthew 19:9. If Matthew 19:9 does not permit divorce for fornication, then 1 Corinthians 7:15, on its own, cannot permit divorce and remarriage. So everything hinges on the Greek text of Matthew 19:9.

Unfortunately, most Christian leaders read 1 Corinthians 7:15 in the Erasmian way to mean that the unbeliever can get a divorce from the believer. Many such leaders believe that Christians should accede to their unbelieving spouses’ requests and “give them a divorce if they want one.” They believe that refusal to co-operate in a divorce is inappropriate behaviour. This is odd, because a Christian can never grant something that has no reality in the life of God. Divorce is a fiction. It does not exist. It has as much reality as two small children playing marriage and divorcing one another. Divorce courts are play pens. To quote Ecclesiasticus in part, “As is the lust of an eunuch to deflower a virgin,” (Eccles. 20:4) so is the divorce of a judge to decouple a marriage. Neither is able to deliver. The divorcer is like a eunuch embracing a virgin and groaning (cf. Ecclus 30:20), because God will grant neither of them what they crave for.

“And, if the unbelieving does separate himself—let him separate himself. The brother or the sister is not under servitude in such cases, and in peace has God called us.”

COMMENT: The Christian partner is not to force the unbeliever to remain, but allow the unbeliever to depart, if this is what they want to do. “Do not take them to worldly courts, or use any coercive force to maintain the physical unity” would be Paul’s advice. No consent can be given to making the separation permanent through a worldly divorce. The unbeliever may think that the marriage is dissolved, but in God’s eyes it is still in existence until He uses death to separate them.

Alternative ways of retaining Paul’s belief that only death ends a marriage when it comes to translating the second half of the verse would be, “The brother or the sister is not under an obligation [to force a return] in such cases.” Or, “The brother or the sister is not bound [to force a return] in such cases.” Or, “The brother or the sister is not under bondage [to force a return] in such cases.” All of these convey the same message, “Do not use verbal, psychological, or financial pressure to hold on to your marriage partner. You have the more important task of serving the Lord. Get on with that.”

Alternatively, if Paul has in mind that the departure of the unbelieving husband leaves the Christian wife “free to serve the Lord without distraction,” then the translation would read: “The brother or the sister has not been imprisoned [in a divided state] in such cases.” Or, “The brother or the sister has not been enslaved [in a split devotion] in such cases.”

We cannot rule out the possibility that both thoughts were in Paul’s mind. First, that the brother or sister was not under an obligation to devote time and energy to get their partner back again (saving time and nervous energy), and secondly, that in such cases, they were no longer in

425 For more on this topic see 1.10 and 2.7.
bondage to a divided state of existence in their “devotedness to the Lord” (7:35), but could now serve Him undistractedly.

From Paul’s perspective this means that the believer is absolved from the responsibility to look after the departed unbeliever. The believer cares about the things of the world, how he can please his wife, but he also cares about the things of the Lord how he may please Him, but he can’t do both in an undivided, undistracted manner. He is split between these two competing sources. But with the departure of the unbeliever there is no split.

1 Corinthians 7:15-23 reads: “Now if the unbelieving spouse separates himself, let him separate himself, the brother or the sister has not become enslaved in these situations, for in tranquillity did God call us. For what have you known, O wife, if the husband you shall save? Or what have you known, O husband, if the wife you shall save? If not [it is so], to each one as God distributed [go along with it]. According as the Lord has called each [brother and sister] so let him [and her] walk.”

Paul is attempting to encapsulate in one sentence a spouse-inclusive truth; one that would apply to both husband and wife. English is clumsy with the switch from ‘him’ to ‘brother or sister.’

If we write out in full what he has written it would read:

1 Corinthians 7:15 reads: “Now if the unbelieving spouse separates himself or herself, let him or her separate himself or herself, the brother or the sister has not become enslaved and continues as such] in these situations, for in tranquillity [of mind] did God call us [to enjoy].”

The present middle indicative verb ‘separates,’ can be masc. or fem. The middle is something that one does for one’s own benefit; again, it is masc. or fem., hence ‘himself/herself.’ The clue that Paul is thinking of both spouses at the same time comes in his use of ‘brother’ and ‘sister,’ which he could not avoid using. This was the nearest Paul could get to saying ‘vice versa,’ as he was composing the sentence.

Throughout 1 Corinthians 7 the paramount thought in Paul’s mind is that he wants every Christian to give their very best to Christ. It is from that viewpoint that I follow his spiritual logic, and I have no doubt that divorce per se was an anathema to him. If he endorsed divorce then he has failed to follow Christ’s teaching on forgiveness. I cannot see Paul falling into that trap. His position was ‘let them separate’ (χωρίζω and ἀφιήμι), not, ‘let them divorce’ (ἀπολύω). The former is in keeping with Jesus’ teaching on full forgiveness. Paul never uses the Pharisees’ verb for ‘divorce’ (ἀπολύω) in 1 Corinthians 7. That is highly significant. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke the consistent term to refer to legal divorce is ἀπολύω. It is the term consistently used by Jesus in His debates with the Pharisees. It is surprising therefore that the NIV latches on to the verb ἀφιήμι (aphiemi) to convey legal divorce (1 Corinthians 7:11, 12, 13). This is a very loaded translation, given that Paul could have used ἀπολύω had he intended to convey legal divorce.

Some make the assumption that χωρίζω is a synonym for divorce. If it is a synonym then they will need to produce examples from Greek literature where it is used unambiguously in the context of being granted a legal divorce. As it stands, it is guesswork.

Given that Paul does not use the recognised term ἀπολύω (apoluaw) for ‘divorce’ anywhere in 1 Corinthians 7, one needs to ask why he avoided using that semi-legal term. If, like Jesus, Paul hated divorce, then he would see it as an evil act in and of itself, because it is an attempt to dissolve a marriage, which is a sin.

7.6. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:27-28 (MARITAL STATUS: FREE OR DIVORCED?)

Some writers believe that Paul was addressing unmarried and divorced persons in 1 Corinthians 7:27-28 and translates accordingly, “Are you bound (married) to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed (divorced). Are you loosed (divorced) from a wife? Do not seek a wife.”
Now, given that Paul has not explicitly addressed the category of divorced spouses, as opposed to separated spouses, in the church in Corinth, and he avoided using the verb most commonly used by Jesus and the Pharisees to refer to divorce (accompanied by a Certificate of Divorce), namely, *apōluo* (ἀπολῦω), it seems arbitrary to latch on to a new verb, *luo* (λύω), which is a non-legal term, and of general purpose, and assume that it has the technical meaning of ‘divorced.’

Unfortunately for the above translation, the Greek term *luo* (λύω) is never used in the context of a divorce or of a separation in the Bible. However, a study of the 66 cases of *apōluo* (ἀπολῦω) in the New Testament, shows that *this* is the term to use when one refers to divorced persons, as the following examples will show.

A divorced wife is referred to as an *apolelumenh* (ἀπολέλυμενή) from the root *apōluo* (ἀπολῦω) ‘to release,’ in Matthew 19:9, “and whoever marries her who is released [= divorced] commits adultery.” It is used when Joseph ‘released’ Mary from her engagement to him (Matthew 1:19). It is used of divorce in Matthew 5:32, “whoever may release his wife . . . and marry her who has been released commits adultery.” It is used in Matthew 19:3 where the Pharisees asked Jesus, ‘Is it lawful to release a wife for every cause?’ It is used exclusively throughout the divorce debates in the Gospels. The same root is used when Pilate wanted to ‘release’ Jesus (John 18:39; 19:10, 12, 12). In Luke 13:12 the woman bent over for eighteen years was released by Jesus.

It is the augment of the verb, ἀπο-—that imparts to the verb *luo* (λύω) the idea of ‘release.’ On its own *luo* (λύω) means ‘loose, unite.’ Consequently, the verb *luo* (λύω) is unfit for purpose to convey the idea of ‘release.’ A study of the 42 cases of *luo* (λύω) in the New Testament shows that it is never used of divorce or of divorced persons.

At 1 Corinthians 7:27 Paul used the unaugmented form *lelusai* (λελύσαι), meaning ‘loosed,’ and not the augmented form *apolelusan* (ἀπολέλυσαν), meaning ‘released.’ But for Gola’s exegesis to be sound he requires the augmented form, but it does not exist in this place in any critical apparatus. Consequently he has no linguistic foundation to alter ‘loose’ to ‘divorce.’ Only if Paul had written *apolelusan* (ἀπολέλυσαν), meaning ‘released’ in 1 Corinthians 7:27, would Gola have had a linguistic case to change his translation to read: “Are you bound (married)[LMF: correct] to a wife? Do not seek to be released (divorced). Are you released (divorced) from a wife? Do not seek a wife.” The underlined words, ‘released,’ are what Gola could have used had Paul used the word for ‘release’ which, unfortunately, for Gola’s exegesis Paul didn’t use, and that demolishes Gola’s case.

In any case, even if Paul was addressing fully divorced persons in 7:27 he could not go on to say, “But even if you do marry, you have not sinned” (7:28), because this would have contradicted his earlier statement that those who were separated were to stay separate or be reconciled. They would have sinned if they had remarried.

Any author who presents Paul as inconsistent with himself has misunderstood Paul’s argument. Only the exegete who can bring out the full consistency of Paul’s thinking in all its parts should be trusted.

The conclusion of the matter is that the section 7:25-28 is addressed to the ‘Unmarried and Widows’ and does not include any of the ‘separated’ or ‘divorced’ spouses. In the eyes of Paul and the Lord Jesus, those who are married, but separated, are still married in their eyes, even if their unbelieving spouses have got remarried in the meantime. So these ‘separated’ spouses would not come under this section of Paul’s detailed categories of marital status. They would come under section 7:10-16, ‘Paul’s Commands to the Married.’

I conclude that Gola was wrong to translate *luo* (λύω) as ‘divorce.’ In its context it means ‘free.’ Paul’s question was, “Are you free from marriage?” and he expected the answer to be Yes; to which he responded, “then do not seek a wife.”

In 1 Corinthians 7:27 the NIV has translated the noun λύσιν as ‘divorce.’ This is not a technical term in Greek for ‘divorce.’ It is the ordinary word to describe a ‘release,’ such as untying a donkey from a post (Matthew 21:2), or loosing a cow from its stall (Luke 13:15), or untying a shoelace (Mark 1:7), or loosing Lazarus from his grave clothes (John 11:44). If it is a synonym for ‘divorce’ then its advocates will need to produce examples from Greek literature where it is used
unambiguously in the context of being loosed from the marriage bond. Until such evidence can be found it would be best not to translate it by a legal, technical term, such as divorce.

1 Corinthians 7:27 is best translated as, “Have you been bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Have you been loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.” The two verbs ‘bound’ and ‘loosed’ are in the perfect tense, so what applies to one will apply to the other. The question, “Have you been bound . . . ?” refers to the present state, resulting from a past event. “Have you been loosed . . . ?” also refers to a present state, resulting from a past event, which could be the death of his wife, or some other unknown cause. In both cases what is crucial is the present state of these two individuals; one is bound (married) and the other is unbound (unmarried). No hint is given whether the unmarried is a widower, single, or a divorcee. This will be resolved as we progress.

The translation, “Have you been bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed,” does not prejudice Paul’s position at this stage whether he is thinking of legal divorce or voluntary separation, and that is the best way to leave it. Once we have worked out his theology on marriage this will help to clarify what he means here. But for the moment the translation, “Have you been bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed,” does not prejudge Paul’s position.

On the other hand, the NIV translation, “Have you been bound to a wife? seek not a divorce,” does prejudice the options. The translator has decided to limit the verb λύειν to mean only ‘divorce’ in this context, or else he is unaware that an alternative translation is possible to the verb “to loose” (λυεῖν), namely, to separate or depart, *without divorcing*. Jesus mentions the possibility of men giving up their wives, their parents, children and fields, in order to be fully devoted to His service and cause (Luke 18:29; cf. 14:26. In Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:29 Nestle-Aland wrongly omit ‘wife’). Divorce is not the only means of separation. Why is it always assumed that *separation* must mean divorce? The Early Church agreed to separation but never to remarriage. But legal divorce in the Greco-Roman world carried with it the legal freedom to remarry. This is why the Early Church fathers avoided the use of the legal term ‘divorce.’ Or if some of them did use the term loosely, they were adamant that remarriage was not possible, which amounted to the same thing in the end.

In the context of 1 Corinthians 7 the idea of separation is closely linked to the idea of Jewish purification rites. Many Jewish converts may have thought that being married to an unbeliever polluted them. Divorce was denied them, but they could distance themselves from their polluting partner, *without divorcing them*. Paul assures them that holy flesh is contagious, so that their partners and their children were ‘holy,’ and by remaining with them they might yet even save them. Under the Law marriages with foreign women defiled their Jewish husbands and his children, see Ezra 10:2-3, and 1 Corinthians 7:14.

1 Corinthians 7:28 is best translated as, “But if you may marry, you did not sin, . . . ?” The suggestion that Paul is including divorced husbands in this permission to marry will depend on his view of the permanency of the marriage bond, and whether he accepted divorce as an alternative to death in ending a marriage. If Paul regarded marriage as a life-long union between husband and wife, then he will not have in mind divorced husbands in this statement. If, on the other hand, he accepted divorce as terminating a marriage then divorced husbands would be included in this statement. Which is it?

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426 In the case where an unbelieving husband divorced and remarried, and then both spouses became Christians, the Christian wife would not be able to live with another woman’s husband, and so their union would have to be declared invalid. She would then qualify as an unmarried woman under 1 Corinthians 7:8. Of course, all of these situations would have been resolved on joining the church, because they are dealt with by Jesus Himself. There is no room for wriggling out of His teaching in these particular situations. No one can marry a divorced person, while both spouses are alive.
The answer comes in 1 Corinthians 7:39 and Romans 7:2. Only death can separate a married couple. Therefore ‘divorced’ husbands are still in a marriage relationship. They are not unmarried. They are married men, and will be deemed to be so until their wives have died.

The principle that Paul lays down, namely, that the separated (but unable to be divorced) Christian wife must remain single or be reconciled to her husband is double-edged in that it also applies to Christian husbands who are separated from their wives; they, too, must remain single or be reconciled to their wives. “A wife has been bound by law as long as her husband lives” (7:39). The reverse must also be true, “A husband has been bound by law as long as his wife lives.” What is true for one gender must be true for the other. So when Paul asked the question, “Have you been loosed from a wife?” the separated or legally divorced man would have to answer, “No, she is still alive. I am not loosed from her (yet), even though I got a legal divorce through the courts to dissolve the marriage.”

The statement that “only the death of a partner dissolves a marriage,” should mean that one does not recognise the validity of divorce to dissolve any marriage. If this is the position then I cannot see how anyone can advocate Christians going through the sham of getting a divorce when such a divorce does not dissolve the union, and the Christian knows this in advance of the court hearing. The Christian knows that the ruling of the Judge of all the earth takes precedent over any human High Court judge.

7.7. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:32–38

In verses 32–35 Paul spells out the disadvantage to the Lord Jesus if His disciples marry.

Christ’s male disciples and marriage

32 Now I want you to be free from anxiety. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may give satisfaction to the Lord. 33 Now the man having married is anxious about the things of the cosmos, how he may give satisfaction to the wife. 34 He has already divided himself.

Christ’s female disciples and marriage

And the woman—the unmarried one—and the virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy, both in the body, and in the spirit. Now the woman having married is anxious about the things of the cosmos, how she may give satisfaction to the husband. 35 Now this I say for your advantage, not with a view to place on you a noose, but by contrast for comeliness and devotedness to the Lord undistractedly.

In verses 36–37 Paul deals with actual situations that have arisen in Corinth and need his judgment on them.

Christ’s male disciples betrothed to be married but suspended indefinitely

36 Now if anyone thinks he is behaving dishonourably over his [betrothed] virgin, if, say, she may be above prime condition, and for this reason he is indebted to be [honourable], what he wills, let him do; he does not sin, let them marry.

37 Now the man [husband to be] who had already stood firm [and continues to do so], steadfast in his heart, not having necessity, but has authority concerning his own will, and this thing he had already decided in his own heart, namely, to preserve his own virgin unmarried, he does well, as indeed also the one father giving away [his daughter] in marriage does well. But the one father not giving away [his daughter] in marriage does better.

We enter an unfamiliar world of arranged marriages in this section.

The sin mentioned in v. 36 relates to the directive that all converts to Christ are to remain in the marital status they were in when God called them. The call came after the two were betrothed to be married, but before they could marry. So the marriage was suspended for as long as possible. However, the point was reached where the betrothed wife was passing her peak condition to bear children. In this situation Paul did not regard the marriage as breaking the directive that all converts were to remain in the status (married/unmarried), or class (slave/free), or condition
(circumcised/uncircumcised) they found themselves in when God’s call to follow His Son came to them.

7.8. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:39 - 40 (PRINCIPLE: ONLY DEATH ENDS A MARRIAGE)

39 A wife had bound herself [in covenant union] so long time as her husband lives. Now if, say, the husband has fallen asleep, she is free to marry who she wills—[but she may marry] only in the Lord. 40 Now she is happier if, say, in this manner widowhood she has remained, according to my judgment. Now I think, even I, to have the Spirit of God [as well as you].

It is worthwhile noting that in the New Testament the use of the word ‘sleep’ to refer to death, is used only of righteous or innocent persons. It is not used of the death of unbelievers. Now unless 1 Corinthians 7:39 is an exception, we should assume that the wife’s husband was a disciple of Christ. Paul is referring to the death of a Christian husband here.

This directive raises some difficulties. If the directive to remain in the state in which God called you to follow Him is the rule, which all are to follow as closely as they can, why does Paul not bring the widow under the same directive, and request her not to enter into a second marriage? He would prefer that she did not remarry, but he does not rule out the possibility that she might. He even goes so far as to stipulate the kind of man her second husband must be. Did he relax the directive because widows were vulnerable? Are they exceptions to the rule? Would he have allowed widowers the same freedom to remarry?

Or are we to assume that if a woman was married when God called her, then her husband died, and because she was married when she was called she was entitled to remarry so that she could be back to the status she had when called? This is a real possibility. But given that the purpose of the Lord’s directive was to prevent marriages taking place after God’s call, in order that every disciple would work for Him without the distractions of being married, Paul would always give his advice in the interests of Christ, and not in the interests of His disciples (male and female). So, wherever God parted a Christian couple (or even a mixed couple) by death, entering into a second marriage would deprive Him of their undivided devotion and attention to His paramount needs. Everything in a Christian’s life must be made subservient to the Master’s needs, and not their own. They owe it to Him (2 Corinthians 5:15; Colossians 3:3).

If this is the correct solution, then the directive to remain in the marital state in which you were called by God was not unique to Corinth, but applies to all churches. And if it applied to the New Testament churches, then it applies to us today.

Jesus was more revolutionary than we give Him credit for. He turned things upside down. He abolished circumcision—the cornerstone of a Jew’s identity as a member of God’s chosen people. He abolished the race card. Jew and Gentile enter the new Kingdom of God on the same terms. The contagion of uncleanness is reversed so that the bodies of unbelievers are made holy through union with a Christian spouse. He prefers all His disciples to view marriage as a distraction. If they are single when called they should stay single in order that He profits from their singleness. Those who become widows or widowers, they too, should consider remaining single so that Jesus profits from their single-minded devotion to Him and the spread of the Gospel. These are just some of the

427 Two verbs are used for death. The common term is ἀποθνῄσκω, which is used 111x in the NT. The other term is τελευτάω and this refers to a lingering or slow death (king Herod, Lazarus), such as stoning, or death-bed scenes (Jacob, Joseph, David), and is better translated as ‘terminated’ (cf. espec. Mark 9:48). It is used 11x in the NT. Unrighteous men do not ‘sleep.’ They die. It is used 13x of Christians, 2x of Old Testament saints (David, Acts 13:36; 12 Patriarchs, 2 Pet 3:4). Jesus used it once of the small girl who died (Matthew 9:24 and parallels).
revolutionary new ideas that the Jews, in particular, had to come to terms with, or be shut out of the Kingdom of the Messiah.

The last sentence, “Now I think, even I, to have the Spirit of God [as well as you]” is there to make those who disagree with him pause and ponder if they should oppose Paul’s judgments. Paul, on occasions, anticipates opposition within the churches he founded, and on occasions (such as the present) he asserted his position as Jesus’ apostle to the gentiles to give his judgment greater clout than any of his opponents could muster against his Spirit-filled standing. It would be difficult for any opponent to countermand or nullify what the apostle had just written, without putting his own standing of also being Spirit-filled in jeopardy. The Spirit is unlikely to give a different judgment to the one Paul had given. And this applies also to today, to those who dispense with Paul’s directives as being his own personal opinion, and substitute his opinions with their own wiser judgments.

A wife has been bound by the law so long time as her husband should live. Now if her husband may sleep [die], she is free to be married to whom she desires—only she must marry in the Lord.

Having convinced himself that Jesus and Paul fully believed in the efficacy of divorce to dissolve any lawful marriage, when Stephen Gola came to Paul’s statement in 7:39 he put an unusual twist on it to make it appear that Paul endorsed the existence of divorce among God’s people as a natural phenomenon and, indeed, an instrument of blessing and healing at times. Paul wrote: “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.” As it stands, this is crystal clear; a wife can only remarry on the death of her first husband. This infuriated Gola, who responded abruptly:

When a person is divorced, they don’t have a husband or wife. This means they are not ‘bound’ to someone. This Scripture is for the person who is MARRIED and wants to marry someone else while they are still married to another. You can’t be married to two people at the same time. If you’re divorced, you CAN get married again because you don’t have a husband or wife. Simply, you’re single or unmarried, if divorced.428

If Gola is correct then Paul has made a serious oversight in neglecting to include the divorced woman in this summary. Paul should have said, “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives OR DIVORCES HER; but if her husband dies OR DIVORCES HER, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.” Given that the divorce rates have been high throughout human history, Paul has made a serious blunder in not including divorced wives in this all-important, principled statement. Could Paul have made such a blunder? Is this a case where, once again, Gola is the inspired writer and Paul is the uninspired (and defective) writer?

However, if you look at the same text from the standpoint of Jesus and Paul, for whom divorce was an anathema and a violation of God’s will for every marriage in the New Covenant era, then it makes perfectly good sense to leave the text as it stands. If divorce is a fiction of human society, and it has not dissolved a single, lawful marriage from Adam to the present day, then Paul is correct in his statement: “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives.” This law goes back to Genesis 2:24 where God joined Adam and Eve in marriage and that was how it was to stay until one of them died. There was no alternative.

Now that Jesus has come and restored a new nature in each of His followers, they can now live to the end of their lives in the light of this new, born-again experience. His followers have been given a new nature—the nature of Christ Himself—which enables them to live a harmonious married life just as Adam and Eve were able to do before their natures were corrupted and their world fell apart, and they began to experience disharmony, discord and disagreements through their descendants, descending ever lower and lower into the depths of depravity, murder and divorce.

Divorce belongs to the effects of sin. It is the fruit of fallen, human nature. It is as inevitable as weeds. It multiplies adultery. It leaves behind a loveless landscape. Memories are full of unforgiven wrongs. The new leaf that should have turned over, keeps turning over, and running off into the distance, blown about by the demons of doubt over whether divorce was all that it was made out to be. Divorce turns out to be a mirage in the desert. It has a lure of its own that will surely lead to the death of all who pursue it in the hope of finding happiness and peace at the end of its shimmering gleam.

7.9. DID PAUL BELIEVE THAT DIVORCE DISSOLVED A MARRIAGE BOND?

This leads me on to 1 Corinthians 7, where Stephen Gola wrote: “Paul is thinking of divorce, as well as separation (see footnote below).” His footnote reads: “Why does Paul use the word ‘unmarried’ (agamos) in 1 Corinthians 7.8, 11, 32, 34, if he is not thinking of divorce, but only separation?”

The question is puzzling because Gola believes that only death dissolves a marriage, “Divorce does not dissolve it, but the death of one partner certainly does.”429 And later he writes, “divorce does not dissolve the marriage bond.”430 I have to say that only someone who believed in the validity of divorce to dissolve a marriage would ask such a question.

The logic behind his question appears to be that the adjective ‘unmarried’ means that they are not married (in vv. 8, 32, 34), and so when Paul used the same word in v. 11 he was implying that the Christian woman was in an ‘unmarried’ state after her unbelieving husband ‘separated’ from her, which Gola thinks must imply that her marriage was dissolved, and she was in the same category as those in vv. 8, 32, 34.

Gola’s assumption that the separated wife must have been divorced to be told to stay unmarried, and the example where Joseph was about to divorce Mary, appear to have given him grounds for believing that divorce does, under some circumstances, truly dissolve lawful marriages, as surely as if death had taken away one of the partners.

One does not need to read between the lines of his book to discover that he has a definite belief in the efficacy of divorce to dissolve a marriage. It is stated explicitly (pp. 61, 87, 88, 93, 102, 127) and that is a pity.

1 Corinthians 7:11 “let her remain unmarried.” In Greco-Roman culture (which pertained in Corinth), as in Hebrew culture, the husband held the purse and the livelihood. The Hebrew man could dump his wife in the street and walk off and be remarried by nightfall. That he would remarry was taken for granted. This is where Christianity differed, and has differed, from all other cultures because remarriage was forbidden while the married partner was alive. So the command (for it is an imperative) to remain unmarried was specifically given to counter the culture she was living in.

In any case, the other option given to her was “or else be reconciled to the husband.” If she was divorced, and the marriage bond truly dissolved, then Paul would have had to say “or else be remarried to the husband.” If she was divorced, and the husband had legally been remarried to another woman, it would be a harsh option to tell her that she must wait until her husband divorced his second wife, or his second wife died, before she could remarry him.

The command, “remain unmarried (pres. imper.),” if taken literally to mean for the rest of her life, would rule out the second option, “or else be reconciled to your husband.” Common-sense indicates that she is to remain in an unmarried state in order that she can be reconciled. If she remarried, she would not be able to be reconciled. What Paul means is that she is to “remain unmarried to another man.”

If ‘divorce’ carried with it the right to remarry (as it did in the Graeco-Roman and Hebrew cultures), it seems harsh that Paul would deny the same right to the divorced Christian wife. Why

did he not give her the option to marry a Christian? When advising the widows Paul says, “but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39). For ‘dies’ read ‘divorces’ and the injustice of Paul’s advice stands out starkly if divorce, like death, truly liberates the married woman from her husband. Her culture told her that she had a right to remarry, but Paul told her in no uncertain terms she could not remarry.

So Paul’s harsh command (as judged by unbelievers) becomes evidence for his belief that her marriage had not been dissolved, therefore she was not at liberty, as was the widow, to remarry.

Stephen Gola stated that he stood firmly by the truth that only death could sever a valid marriage, but here he is suggesting that the departure of the husband constituted a divorce for both of them because she is said to be “unmarried,” which state can only follow after a divorce or death.

However, if he agreed that divorce does not dissolve the marriage bond, then this would explain why the Christian wife is told to remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband (even if he has gone off and remarried). Paul rules out remarriage for her here, which can only mean that she is still married. To avoid confusion in future 1 Corinthians 7:11 should be translated, “let her remain unmarried to another man, or to the husband let her be reconciled.”

Stephen Gola does not believe that divorce is a sin, for he wrote, “Jesus would surely see divorce as the very last resort.” The only way I have of reconciling these statements is to assume that his understanding of the word ‘divorce’ is that it is a separation that does not dissolve the marriage. After his interpretation of ‘divorce’ has taken place the marriage bond is still intact, I have to assume. And Gola confirms this:

This means that all those who have been divorced, however properly, are still married in God’s sight. The relationship is still there. It has not been dissolved. They have not been set free to marry anyone else. The first ‘covenant’ still holds. It has been betrayed not cancelled. Divorce may be recognised at the human level, but not at the divine. This cannot be said often or strongly enough, which is why we have said it in so many different ways.

This statement goes a long way toward the conservative position, if indeed, he distances himself from the definition used in civil courts, where ‘divorce’ does mean the dissolution of the bond, and the right to remarry.

However he sends out mixed signals. In one place he says the Christian should agree to give the departing, unbelieving spouse a civil divorce, which can only mean a dissolution, and in other places he denies that a divorce dissolves a marriage. If the latter is his view, then, at last, we seem to agree that his use of the term ‘divorce’ is the same as the term Paul used. Paul used ‘separate’ to mean that there is a physical separation without dissolution, and that this has been the case since the foundation of the world. Unless Gola’s makes this absolutely clear in his revised book, it is going to cause confusion. He may have to devise some spelling difference so that his definition of divorce (‘di-vorce’?) is not the standard definition (‘divorce’). I think anyone reading his book would never pick up the difference between ‘divorce’ (as he uses it) and ‘divorce’ (as lawyers would use it).

Paul received his Gospel directly from the Lord Jesus, consequently he was in full agreement with Jesus that there was no legitimacy in any divorce document, and that even when civil courts granted a divorce, divorce did not occur because the marriage union once formed cannot be reversed. The union might be likened to two glasses of blue and red liquid being poured into one glass. The process cannot be reversed. Such is the irreversible union of the one-flesh when it is lawful in the eyes of God.

Jesus should be understood to mean that all remarriages are sinful relationships if they go through a divorce procedure, for the procedure implies that the spouse is still alive. The follower of Christ must flee the divorce courts as quickly as he is told to ‘flee fornication.’ But if the unbeliever

432 Op. cit., p. 44.
wants to depart let him/her depart, but this is not divorce. That is the import of Jesus’ absolute ban on divorce ‘for any cause’ (Matthew 19:3). Paul thinks it is beneath Christians to take each other to secular courts to solve their disputes (1 Corinthians 6), how less likely should a Christian go to a secular court to dissolve a union that God had joined!

Nowhere under the Torah does God withdraw His command to kill adulterers, therefore for the Pharisees to replace it with divorce (if they did), this was to set aside God’s law for their own traditions. It is sometimes argued that under Roman rule the Jews were not able to carry out the death penalty for adultery. But Roger Aus433 has brought forward evidence that the death penalty was still being carried out under Roman rule, so that divorce was not the only option open for adultery to God-fearers. He noted, “It is also recorded that at least one daughter of a priest (still in her father’s house) was burnt to death before 66 CE because of committing adultery (in Jerusalem).” And then, in the next sentence, he says, “If the daughter of a priest was caught while engaging in such behaviour, it is very probable that those further down the social scale of priests/Levites/Israelites did so also, and certainly more frequently.”

Divorce ends nothing. Pushing a piece of paper across a courtroom table changes nothing about that relationship in the eyes of God. As far as God is concerned they are still ‘one flesh’ after the paper has been pushed across the table. Divorce is a fiction. It has no reality in God’s world.

Like Jesus, Paul regarded all marriages, Christian and non-Christian, as irreversible. Only the death of one of the partners could separate a married couple (Romans 7:1–3; 1 Corinthians 7:39). Remarriage, Jesus pointed out, only multiplies adulteries. There are no innocent parties if both spouses believe that by getting a divorce they have untied their marriage knot and are free to remarry. Jesus puts the blame on the spouse (the wife or husband) who initiates the divorce. The initiator is the guilty person, but the other spouse is just as guilty if they agree to it.

Note that New Testament Greek does not have a verb to convey the legal action ‘to divorce.’ It uses a variety of common verbs to convey the idea, such as ‘to send away,’ ‘to put away,’ ‘to send out,’ etc. Interestingly, Paul never used the verb ‘to send away’ (apologe), which is the preferred term when referring to Jewish divorces in the Gospels. Instead, he prefers to use the more neutral or descriptive term ‘to separate’ (chorizw). Paul uses it to describe the unbeliever’s action. The option is not open to the Christian. This is consistent with Jesus’ attitude toward divorce, which He explicitly abolished as having no place among His followers. Unbelievers might believe in its efficacy, but for Jesus it is a sham. It only opens the door to adultery. It is man’s way (through the State) of legalising adultery, just as the State legalises prostitution, abortion and homosexual practices.

To believe that divorce actually annuls a legitimate marriage is to oppose Jesus’ teaching on marriage. To then obtain a divorce and remarry is to sin against the Lord Jesus and God. All divorces are sinful actions if those who obtain them believe that they annul their legitimate marriages. All remarriages are adulterous relationships while both spouses are still alive.

I think that it is up to each young Christian man to investigate thoroughly whether he should marry at all, and if he cannot contain his passion then he had better make doubly sure that the woman he marries will not cripple him spiritually to serve the Lord. He should choose the most submissive-to-Christ Christian girl that he can find, who utterly abhors feminism in all its guises. His choice should be with a view to be as undivided and undistracted as he can possibly be in his devotion to Christ, while at the same time dissipating the heat of his passion in the natural use of the woman. Dissipating it through masturbation or homosexuality is shameful, and the latter can expect

to receive “in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (Romans 1:27). Paul notes that those practicing fornication are worthy of death (Romans 1:29, 32) both under Law and under Grace, because God is a righteous God under all dispensations and ages. He changes not, and the young should remember that.

Paul put great store on the fact that he did not get his Gospel from any of the twelve Apostles. He tells us that he got all his teaching directly from the Lord Jesus Himself. This included the revelation that, “the wife over her own body has not authority, but the husband; and, in like manner also, the husband over his own body has not authority, but the wife. Rob not one another, . . . ‟ (1 Cor 7:4-5). Paul and Jesus are in agreement that a wife has full authority over her husband’s body. It is hers. His semen belongs to her. It is not for him to give it to another woman, even with her permission. Likewise, the husband has full authority over his wife’s body. It is his. Her womb is his. It is not for her to give it to another man, even with his permission.

All other sins, Paul noted, are outside the body, “every sin — whatever a man may commit — is without the body, and he who is committing fornication, sins against his own body.” (1 Cor 6:18) “. . . and the body is not over fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor 6:13). “Have you not known that he who is joined to the prostitute is one body? ‘for they shall be,’ said He, ‘the two for one flesh’.ʺ (1 Cor. 6:17) The Scripture is true that, “honourable is marriage in all, and the bed undefiled, for God shall judge fornicators and adulterers” (Heb 13:4). The bed of the fornicator and the adulterer is a defiled bed.

An objection to the idea that ‘one flesh’ unions are unbreakable, comes from 1 Corinthians 6:16, where a prostitute becomes ‘one flesh’ with a married man. This union must be broken, so why may not other ‘one flesh’ unions be broken?

It is evident that the reality of the ‘one flesh’ union is set out in 1 Corinthians 6:16, ” have ye not known that he who is joined to the harlot is one body? ‘for they shall be — saith He — the two for one flesh.” Because the married man and the harlot have become ‘one flesh’ it confirms what happens when intercourse takes place. But in this case it is an illicit union, and an act of adultery against the man’s legitimate wife. He technically has two unions going at the same time. The same goes for all remarriages where both spouses are still living. They are no different in kind to a union with a harlot. Just as the ‘one flesh’ union with the harlot must be sundered, because it is inherently an adulterous act, so also must all remarriages be sundered, for they too, are likewise adulterous unions, according to Jesus’ teaching.

The lesson from the harlot in 1 Corinthians 6:16, and the lesson from the remarriages in Matthew 19:9-11, is that both are illicit ‘one flesh’ unions, which must be sundered. Jesus made the statement, “Therefore, what God joined together, let man not put asunder.” God did not join the man to the harlot (in 1 Cor 6:16). Both in the case of the harlot and the remarriage, the man went against the law of God, and entered into a ‘one flesh’ relationship with another woman while his wife was still alive. That is a ‘one flesh’ relationship that must be sundered. God demands it. No adulterer/adulteress will enter the Kingdom of God.

Some pro-divorce Christian writers believe that Jesus taught ‘you should not break asunder,’ not that ‘you cannot break asunder.’ They believe that ‘you should not break asunder,’ allows for the possibility that ‘separation’ can occur, except by ‘separation’ they assume this is the same thing as divorce. This shows ignorance of Greek grammar. Greek has a 3rd person imperative, which English does not have. Consequently when Jesus said, ‘Let not man put asunder (χωρίζω),’ this was a command, not a wish or a plea. Jesus said, ‘Man, do not separate!’ It is interesting that Jesus used the same verb, chorizw, ‘separate,’ that Paul used throughout 1 Corinthians 7, and did not use apoluo ‘to divorce’ which the Pharisees had used to denote the dissolution of a marriage.

Jesus’ teaching was revolutionary. He was a teacher come from God, and He demolished the entire Jewish system of divorce as having any place in the new Kingdom of God. The rabbinical system had its origin and roots and sustenance in the mind of hard-hearted men, who would not live by God’s law for marriage which is implicit in Genesis 2:24. It was an evil system that did not come from God. It was blatant discrimination against women. It was a system introduced by hard-
hearted men, for hard-hearted men, and kept in place by hard-hearted men. Such hard-hearted men cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

Some pastors hold that Christians should never break their marriage vows, but sometime when their spouse repeatedly and unrepentantly breaks their marriage vows, a Christian may divorce them for their 'hardness of heart' just like God did when He ‘divorced’ the Ten Tribes of Israel.

This pastoral advice is misplaced and due to ignorance. There is no sin that is not forgivable except the sin against the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, ‘Man, do not separate!’ and that is a command. No Christian can take the initiative to dissolve their marriage. It is up to the unbeliever whether to stay in the marriage or to separate. The sin of separation must be seen to come from the unbeliever, never from the believer.

The world will, undoubtedly, thumb its nose at Jesus’ view of the ‘one-flesh’ indissoluble union, and use the civil courts to dissolve the union. Then they will go on to remarry, or live with a partner. This, in the eyes of Jesus, is an adulterous relationship, and as part of becoming His disciples, these remarriages/partnerships will have to be sundered. This is what the Gospel will mean for these people.

When Jesus took His followers back to the marriage of Adam and Eve there was a beautiful unity between the two. Jesus restored the original, pre-fall situation, to all His followers, and the Spirit of Christ in Paul revealed that “the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife” (1 Cor. 7:4). What this means is that neither partner has been given authority to rob the other of what does not belong to them. But divorce requires that either one of the parties in the marriage takes their body from under the authority of the other, and so God’s original—and now restored—will for every marriage is flouted. This revelation, on its own, denies validity to every divorce that has ever taken place on this planet. The semen of every husband belongs to his wife, therefore he cannot give it to another woman. And no wife has been given authority from God to allow her husband’s semen to be given to another woman, in an agreed divorce from him; and vice versa in the case of the husband. What God has glued together in this ‘one flesh’ union can only be unglued by death.

Everything that Paul goes on to say about splitting up the one-flesh union has the rediscovered attribute of Christian marriage determining his solutions to any query that is thrown at him. When the unbelieving partner walks out of his marriage to a Christian wife, she knows that her body belongs to him, and so she cannot give it to another man while he is still alive. This is why Paul can command her to remain unmarried to another man, or wait to be reconciled, or wait until he dies.

7.10. PAUL, JESUS, HILLEL AND SHAMMAI

The births of Hillel and Shammai are unknown. It is not even known if they were contemporaries of Jesus. The general impression is that both lived before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, beyond that it is impossible to be sure about any detail of their lives. The guess is that Hillel might be dated to 30 BC and that he died about AD 10. He is supposed to have lived 120 years and ‘sustained Israel for forty years [30 BC–AD 10].”

Whatever is meant by their respective Houses or ‘schools’ there is a note in jBerakhot 1:4 [3c] that the school of Hillel triumphed over the school of Shammai at the Council of Yavneh [Jamnia] about AD 90. If this note has any historical value it would place the existence of the two opposing schools in the period following the catastrophic destruction of the Second Temple, which required immediate solutions to continue with some form of normality, or possibly Jesus’ ministry

434 How meagre the evidence is for the era in which Hillel and Shammai lived is given in Haim Shapira, “The Schools of Hillel and Shammai,” The Jewish Law Annual 17 (2007) 159-208, esp. p. 160.
had some impact on the rabbis, because thousands of Jews became followers of Jesus’ new teaching which covered a whole range of doctrines. This new ‘Way’ (as it was called) may have been the catalyst for His rabbinical enemies to reassess their divisions over doctrinal beliefs, represented by the Pharisees and the Sadducees in Jesus’ day, and which Paul exploited to his physical advantage.

There is no hint of a split within the Pharisaic ranks, in Jesus’ day, such as we see in the schools of Hillel and Shammai, so it is unlikely that these schools can be assumed to have played any part in the life of Jesus, or of His contemporaries.

The most likely time when these two, rabbinic schools flourished, as regards their disagreement over the lawful grounds for divorce was concerned, would have been (1) after Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage took hold on a sizeable proportion of the Jewish population; and (2), after the Romans degraded the Jews, following the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and the deaths of over two million Jews. Together, these two events challenged the religious authorities to find an accommodation that would allow them to form some kind of continuity with the Temple era, and replace the death penalty for adultery with some other punishment that was within their limited power to enforce. The Talmuds contain very little regarding the Sadducees, who played such a big part in Jesus’ day, yet they hardly get a mention.

The split over how strictly to manage the flow of divorce may have been triggered by Jesus’ new teaching on divorce and remarriage. Hillel represented the situation that prevailed in Moses’s day, while Shammai’s view seems to have been focused on divorce as the alternative punishment to the death penalty, once the rabbis had lost the power to apply the death penalty.

7.10.1. What precisely did the two Schools teach on the issue of divorce?

We are informed that the academy or school or House of Hillel seized on the word יָדוֹות ‘word or thing,’ and taking advantage of its all-encompassing applications justified divorce on practically any ground whatever. The school of Hillel was not teaching anything new, nor was it trivialising divorce to a ‘no fault’ situation. It was the genuine voice of the Mosaic school of hard-hearted men.

The school of Shammai, on the other hand, regarded the ervat davar of Deuteronomy 24:1 as referring to immodest behaviour on the part of the wife. This school is often misrepresented in modern treatments of the two schools as though the school of Shammai used 24:1 to obtain a divorce for fornication and adultery. However, there is no such statement anywhere in the Mishnah to support this claim. Shammai followed the literal meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1, and considered that a man may divorce his wife only if she has been guilty of indecent behaviour (but not fornication or adultery). Quoted examples of such ‘indecent behaviour’ are the wife’s going out with her hair unbound, spinning in the street, or speaking with any man (M. Gitt. 9.10). According to M. Ket. 7.6, a woman behaving in such a way would not receive the sum stipulated in her marriage contract, when her husband divorced her.

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435 See m. Nid. 4.2 (dealing with the purity of ‘the daughters of the Sadducees’) and t. Nid. 5.3 (a Sadducee woman not following the sages’ ruling). Both passages come from R. Yose (a mid-2nd cent. tanna). Only Sadducean women appear in these texts. See J. Choi, op. cit., p. 182, who remarks, ‘When and how the Pharisees and Sadducees disappeared is not clear at all’ (p. 185). He also debunks the myth that Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai made a deal with a Roman emperor to found his academy and a sanhedrin in Yavneh (p. 89).

436 See M. Gitt. 9.10. As an example of a valid reason for divorce Hillel mentions a wife who spoils her husband’s food.

What this tells us is that the school of Hillel easily swallowed up all the grounds that Shammai considered legitimate; but not vice versa. What separates the two rabbis is that Shammai used a different criteria to that used by Hillel. Shammai only allowed events that brought shame on the husband in the public arena; whereas Hillel allowed any event that upset or annoyed the husband in the private arena of his home, in addition to all the public matters that brought shame on him in the public arena. Josephus tells us that he divorced his wife because she displeased him, which suggests a domestic row that led Josephus to divorce her. This would not please the school of Shammai, but it would meet with the school of Hillel’s approval.

More than three hundred matters over which there is controversy between the two houses are mentioned in the sources.\(^{438}\) The vast majority of them are of the kind that Jesus would brush aside as trivial. For example, the two Houses got into a controversy over the number of blessings to be recited in the Amidah for festivals that coincide with the Sabbath. The House of Shammai argued it should be eight, while the House of Hillel argued it should be seven. Such petty controversies are typical of the disputes that went on between these Houses, or schools.

Much regarding the two schools is hidden and unknowable. It is speculated that that there was a strong socio-political divide between the two. The House of Shammai was affiliated with the zealots (‘carry on with the struggle’), whereas the House of Hillel was associated with the moderate, appeasement groups (‘peace in our time’).\(^{439}\) Others see a strong class division, whereby the House of Shammai represented the upper classes, elitist and aristocratic, and the House of Hillel the lower classes, plebeian and democratic. The House of Shammai said that you should only teach those who are rich, intelligent, modest, and of good lineage. The House of Hillel said that you should teach everybody so that all could become pious and decent. Another criteria is said to be that the House of Shammai favoured ‘closed knowledge,’ (passed down from teacher to pupil)/strong on tradition whereas the House of Hillel favoured ‘open knowledge’ (strong on rationality). In exegesis the House of Shammai erred on the side of strictness of interpretation, whereas the House of Hillel erred on the side of leniency and the pragmatic. These are all the musings of scholars for what they are worth.

At the end of the day, the truth emerges:

The actual picture of the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai is shrouded in mystery. We know almost nothing about the organisational structure of the Houses and the various institutions associated with them. We do not know how they arrived at their halakhic positions, nor are we familiar with the framework within which they met to debate each other.\(^{440}\)

To confuse matters the term ‘House’ may denote a family or a dynasty, but the Houses of Hillel and Shammai were neither. Descendants of one House did not necessarily identify with that House, but could adopt the views of the other House! Thus, Rabban Gamaliel II (c. AD 90) was a descendant of Hillel but he would occasionally uphold the views of the House of Shammai. The term ‘House’ could also denote a sect within Judaism. The ‘Houses’ intermarried freely. There were no rules of membership. They were just labels attached to each debateable point, like ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal.’ The same rabbi would be liberal on one issue but conservative on another.

\(^{438}\) For the lists of these, see Haim Shapira, “The Schools of Hillel and Shammai,” The Jewish Law Annual 17 (2007) 159-208, esp. 162 n 14.

\(^{439}\) On a very rare occasion this zealot versus moderates division broke out into a murderous clash inside a house in which, “The students of the House of Shammai stood below and were killing the students of the House of Hillel.” For the sources, see Haim Shapira, “The Schools of Hillel and Shammai,” The Jewish Law Annual 17 (2007) 159-208, esp. 172.

Those who have examined every debate between the two Houses in minute detail looking for clues, concluded that there is not a single instance of the meetings of these two Houses in the Temple courtyards, or the Temple Mount stairs, or the Hall of Hewn Stone, or any institutional building, such as the Sanhedrin might have used, that would prove that the Temple was still standing. Where meeting places are mentioned, which are rare, they are in scholars’ attic rooms, far from the Temple, or any other institution.  

It is thought that the pragmatic approach of the House of Hillel took into account local conditions and changing times, and in their exegesis they took account of the different temporal periods, by referring to the Temple age, and, most notably they frequently employ the phrase ‘the present time,’ which always refers to the period after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and to times of exigency.

Prior to the destruction of the Temple, the traditionalist opposed any deviation from the law. When an issue arose that was not covered by the Law of Moses and it started at the local level. If the court of the local town had no tradition to solve the problem, the complainant took his case to the nearest court to his town. If they had no tradition he took his case to court on the Temple Mount. If they had no traditional solution he, and the most distinguished member of the Temple Mount, took his case to the court in the Keep. If they had no tradition, then the man, the member of the Temple Mount, and all the members of the Keep went to the court in the Hall of Hewn Stone, and if they had no tradition they took a vote on the issue, and the outcome became the law of the land of Israel. This hierarchy of levels of acquired knowledge of what constituted ‘tradition’ shows how conservative this route must have been. But it also shows that unless the knowledge is frequently turned over and discussed and kept alive in these courts, it was under a constant struggle against the forces of time, which generate distortion, oblivion, and eventually loss of information. Rabbi Eliezer (he was a student in Rabban Johanan b. Zakai’s academy/House of Shammai) was the arch-traditionalist, and on his deathbed, he mused that the amount of tradition that he absorbed from his teacher was far less than what they knew, and what he handed on to his students was far less than what he knew. In other words, the generations inherit an ever decreasing circle of traditional knowledge unless the full range of issues keep coming up, or unless the traditions are captured in writing. The event most likely to have diminished the transmission of this store of oral tradition would have been the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of over two million male Jews in the First Revolt against the Romans, forty years after Jesus completed His oral ministry.

The point made by Eliezer is a good one, because the generation of Moses knew more than was contained in the Torah, because they had a perfect oral understanding of that law carried down alongside it, which became their ‘tradition.’ The same applies to the Gospels. The writers knew more than they have left behind. It is always so when writing contemporary history. The Mishnah, on the other, was an attempt to recall what the oral traditions were, and to preserve them in writing. In this case, they could only recall a fraction of the ‘tradition’ material, and there was more omitted than included, and what was included favoured the House of Hillel.

Unfortunately, the solutions embedded in the vast store of tradition relating to divorce and remarriage was not written down until a century or more after the time of the Lord Jesus, but more on this below.

The following baraita, taken from tSanhedrin 7:1, p. 425; tHagiga 2:9, p. 383, jSanhedrin 1:4 [19c]; bSanhedrin 88b, records the lengths that the rabbis went to, in the time of Jesus and up until

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443 See Haim Shapira, ibid. p. 204.
the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, to ensure that they were living in strict accordance to the Law of God:

Originally there were no controversies in Israel, but one court of seventy-[one] members sat in the Hall of Hewn Stone, and other courts of twenty-three sat in the towns of the land of Israel. And other courts of three [one] were in Jerusalem, one on the Temple Mount and one in the Keep. If someone needed a ruling, the local court was consulted. If there was no court in the town, he went to the nearest court. If they had a tradition, they stated it; if not, he and the most distinguished member of the court went to the court on the Temple Mount. If they had a tradition, they stated it; if not, he and the most distinguished member of the court went to the court in the Keep. If they had a tradition, they stated it, if not, both these and those went to the court in the Hall of Hewn Stone. . . . If they had a tradition, they stated it; if not, they took a vote. If those who declared it impure were in the majority, it was declared impure, if those who declared it pure were in the majority, it was declared pure. Thence was issued the law and it became widespread in Israel.

What is significant about this hierarchy of courts and its rigorous adherence to past traditional solutions to problems, is that divorce for fornication would never have been permitted by any court since the days of Moses (1446–1406 B.C.), because the issue was settled 1,400 years before Christ, and the lowest courts in the land would never have permitted it. It would have been extremely difficult for one or two rabbis to overturn 1400 years of strong, undeviating tradition, that excluded divorce for adultery, and that demanded the death penalty for it, as evidenced in the case of the woman caught in the very act of adultery in John 8.

According to the method of discovering what the right ruling was in the Temple era, local courts were authorized to rule only on the basis of tradition. They were not permitted to innovate on their own authority. Only the Great Court in the Hall of Hewn Stone had the authority to introduce a new law, but only in the absence of a tradition bearing on the problem, that is, where there was a legal lacuna. Thus the traditionalist will not, under any circumstances, deviate even slightly from received tradition. It was sacrosanct and dominated the world of the religious establishment. “Courts cannot deviate from the accepted law, and the majority has no authority to challenge tradition. . . . ‘they do not take a vote where there is a tradition’” According to this law, a matter on which there is a tradition is not put to the vote, even if just one person can claim a tradition, then no majority vote can be taken to overturn it. In all such cases, the law is decided on the basis of a long-held tradition. Where both sides can claim to have a tradition supporting their point, then these matters were not put to the vote but left unresolved.

There were so many matters left over, unresolved, stale-mated, from the era of Shammai and Hillel to the Council of Yavneh in about AD 90, that when the Council did eventually come together in the vineyard of Yavneh the Sages started by going back to the era of Shammai and Hillel. They said, ‘Let us begin with Hillel and Shammai. . . .’

444 In manuscript Vienna and the printed version. It seems that the variant readings reflect the controversy between the first Tanna and R. Judah in mSanhedrin 1:6.

445 The version in the Babylonian Talmud reads: “and two courts of twenty-three sat, one at the entrance to the Temple Mount and one at the door of the [Temple] Court.” This version seems preferable, as it is implausible that the courts of the Temple Mount were courts of three.

446 Quoted in Haim Shapira, “The Schools of Hillel and Shammai,” The Jewish Law Annual 17 (2007) 159-208, esp. 186. As a rule, a court cannot annul the decisions of another court unless it is greater in wisdom and in number (ibid. p. 198).

Some Jewish writers believe that during the Temple period controversies between the two Houses could not be resolved because there was no decision-making procedure in place that was acceptable to the House of Shammai, who lived strictly by the dicta of tradition. Majority voting was anathema to them. This rule-by-tradition characterised the House of Shammai. As far as they were concerned all the major issues had already been handled by the Sages in the past; there was nothing really new under the sun.

So while the Temple stood, the House of Hillel, had little room for manoeuvre. Only following the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 did the House of Hillel start to gain the ascendancy over the House of Shammai, and by the time of Yavneh the use of majority vote came to dominate any change in the law. Up until the Council of Yavneh, the House of Shammai refused to vote on anything if there was a tradition on the matter.448 Where there was disagreement, both Houses went their own way, and stuck by their own resolutions.

Consequently, the Council of Yavneh is an important event for it broke the log-jam that had been created while the House of Shammai dominated the period before AD 70. Heim Shapira noted:

Decision by majority rule allowed the halakha to exit the dead-end in which it had become entrapped at the end of the Second Temple period,449 and became the principal tool for the organization and clarification of the law in the post-Temple period. Indeed, the traditionalist sages offered explicit and tenacious resistance to decision by majority rule, exemplified by the conduct of Akabia b. Mahalalel, who stood by his tradition and refused to retract it despite the majority decision, and so too the conduct of R. Eliezer, student of the House of Shammai.450

It is now that we read of ‘a heavenly voice’ that said, ‘Both [Houses] are the words of the living God, but the law is in accordance with the House of Hillel.’ It was the Sages of the House of Hillel who argued against the House of Shammai that the Torah was not in heaven (meaning it was not beyond the reach of the rabbis to change). It was ironic, therefore, that it took a ‘voice from heaven’ to get the House of Shammai to go along with the House of Hillel!

The rejection of democratic rule by the House of Shammai came out during the debate over the status of the land of Ammon and Moab in the Sabbath year (at Yavneh). The leader of the House of Shammai was not present when the vote was taken.

They decided the matter by majority rule: ‘they put it to a vote and decided that [residents of] Ammon and Moab are subject to the tithe of the poor in the Sabbatical year.’ When this was made known to R. Eliezer, who was not present at the session, ‘he wept and said, “God’s secret [is revealed] to those who fear Him; and to them He makes known His covenant” (Ps. 25:14). Go and tell them: Care not about your voting! I received a tradition from R. Johanan b. Zakai, who heard it from his teacher, and his teacher from his teacher, and so on back to a law given to Moses at Sinai, that Ammon and Moab are subject to the tithe for the poor in the Sabbatical year.”451

It so happened that on this occasion, and on this issue, the majority vote and tradition spoke with one voice. But it is also clear that R. Eliezer (representing the House of Shammai) would not have accepted the majority vote if it had been different from what the tradition said on the issue.

The Babylonian Talmud records (bErivin 13b) another very rare occasion (the authenticity of which is disputed) when a vote was taken between the two Houses over the question whether it

448 There is thought to be one exception during the Second Temple period regarding the eighteen enactments, see H. Shapira, ibid. p. 201 n 132.
449 This would have been AD 30-70, which means that it post-dated the time of Jesus, 6 BC-AD 29. It is unlikely, therefore, that the view of the House of Hillel was the dominate view in Jesus’ day.
would have been better for man not to have been created. They finally took a vote and decided that it would have been better had he not been created, which was the view of the majority House of Shammai. Had it not been in their favour they would not have accepted the result! It is clear from these two rare examples (if they are genuine) that the House of Shammai were very uncomfortable in voting for what was to become the law of the land. For them, tradition held and supplied all the answers. They virtually despised the voting procedure, and would have nothing to do with it where there existed a tradition that covered the issue. In their eyes, no majority decision was binding if it did not have the backing of tradition.

On the other hand, there were those rabbis who were prepared to adopt a more rational and penetrative approach to received tradition, and to enquire why it was given in the first place, and what it was intended to safeguard against. These sages were prepared to deviate from, or move, the ancient landmarks that tradition had set up, because, they could argue, the rationale behind the ancient tradition may no longer be relevant in a new era. We see an example of the case of R. Akiba who, one hundred years after the time of Christ, ruled that it was lawful to divorce a wife if a husband found a more beautiful, younger woman, on the grounds that the text of Deuteronomy 24:2 read, “and it happens she finds no favour in his eyes.” This was good enough for him to divorce her. Such a ruling would never have got past the lowest court of the land while the Temple was still standing, and while the various courts were still in operation. Akiva’s private exegesis would have been just that, a private judgment that carried no authority that just men, like Jesus’ father, would have paid any attention to.

The milieu in which the Houses of Hillel and Shammai came to the fore suggest that they did so after the collapse of the hierarchical court system that maintained continuity back to the time of Moses, via a long chain of traditions, which means that during Jesus’ day (6 BC–AD 29) there was no way that the debates between the Houses could have had any bearing on the legal system, let alone usurp the clear teaching of Deuteronomy 24:1-3, which ruled out obtaining a divorce on the grounds of adultery. Deuteronomy 24:1-3 could only be misused to obtain a divorce for a non-fornication issue (which was the later position of the House of Shammai), because adultery and fornication were specifically dealt with under separate laws (cf. Deut 22:22). In any case, the point of Deuteronomy 24:1-3 was not to set out grounds on which a man might lawfully divorce his wife, the point was to show that such divorces did not dissolve any marriage, otherwise the divorced wife would have been ‘clean,’ or ‘undefiled,’ but Yahweh deems her to be ‘unclean,’ and ‘defiled’ through her remarriage. The same change of status applies today to every divorced wife who remarries; she is an ‘unclean’ person in the eyes of God, and no unclean person can enter the Kingdom of God: “for this you know, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous person, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph 5:5).

If a Hebrew man divorced his wife over a non-fornication issue (as described by Yahweh in Dt 24:1-3), he was punished by God in the form of a ban on a reconciliation with his first wife. In other words, he committed an unforgivable sin. In his moment of madness in divorcing his wife, he did not think through the consequences of his rash action, but God would not allow him to backtrack on his hard-hearted, selfish action, or make provision for forgiveness. The divorcer finds himself shut out by God, for, like Esau, “he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears” (Heb 12:17). It is a remarkable feature of Jesus’ teaching that a divorcer today can find a place for repentance, if he seeks it diligently with tears, but it comes with an expensive price tag, for the price is to become Christ’s slave for life (1 Cor 7:22), and return to his first wife, if possible, and if that is not possible to remain unmarried for the rest of his life. If he is in a remarriage situation, he must extract himself from it as quickly as possible, and follow the Holy Spirit’s instructions as given through the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:11.

Jesus, because He lived while the traditional hierarchy of courts was in place (and before the Houses of Hillel and Shammai took over their functions) would have felt the primacy of tradition as a heavy weight that the teachers of the Law had imposed on the people of God. These traditions were like the laws of the Medes and Persians once they had been drawn up—‘the original Mishnah
is immutable.’ Jesus condemned these extra laws: ‘And to you, lawyers, woe! because you burden men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves with one of your fingers do not touch the burdens’ (Lk 11:46; Mt 23:4).

The primacy of tradition can be illustrated in the case of a ruling concerning the laws of leprosy. R. Eliezer (of the House of Shammai) could not recall the answer to a certain question and when another rabbi asked if he might submit a solution he was told, ‘If you will thereby confirm the ruling of the Sages, well and good.’ When the rabbi presented his solution, R. Eliezer remembered the answer and commended him with the words, ‘You are a great sage, for you have sustained a ruling of the Sages.’ This shows how crucial it was to abide by the wisdom of the Sages as the first line of defence against going astray. In the academy of R. Eliezer, a great sage was not somebody who was creative, and who was academic enough to introduce novel interpretations and exegeses, but someone who used his intellect to preserve and sustain the existing law. In his academy the students concentrated on preserving the tradition and transmitting them intact to the next generation. He had a phenomenal memory and was described as ‘a plastered cistern that loses not a drop.’ He avoided any critique of the chain of traditions handed down to him. He avoided new readings of the text. The focus of his academy was to validate, not undermine, the existing tradition. In this regard his academy represented the conservative approach to the past.

Almost in direct contrast, was the outlook of the House of Hillel, in that while tradition obviously played the controlling role, there was room to question, weaken, modify, change, or abandon traditions as the nation moved forward into new eras or circumstances. For example, R. Akiva (of the House of Hillel) encouraged airing disagreements. He encouraged his students: ‘anyone who has heard a rationale that counters the view of his colleague should come and speak.’ By ‘counter his colleague,’ he meant ‘counter the House of Shammail,’ for they were the main protagonists. For Akiva, the reason that brought a law into existence must be examined carefully, because it is the original reasoning that gives it its continuing validity in the present.

It is thought that the House of Shammail had no qualms about transposing Hebrew words to bring out new meanings in the sacred text. Thus it changed round ervat davar ‘nakedness of a matter,’ to davar ervâh ‘a matter of nakedness.’ The first means ‘something that comes to light’ that is unacceptable in the eyes of her husband; the second means ‘a sexual misdemeanour’ that may or may not amount to infidelity, but it was disgraceful in the eyes of her husband, and brought him into contempt if he allowed it to pass unpunished. This kind of exegesis becomes a free for all, and in the hands of unscrupulous males, the sacred text could be used to support any new idea that could be cleverly wangled out of the text.

At this unscrupulous level it was not difficult for the House of Shammail to come up with the idea that divorce for adultery could be smuggled into Deuteronomy 24:1 by changing the word order. It was by this devious and roundabout route that it is thought the House of Shammail introduced divorce for adultery for the first time in Israel’s history, into the text of Scripture.

That this new teaching did not arise before the time of Christ can be deduced from the way Jesus answered the question of the Pharisees, if it was lawful to divorce for every cause. In His answer Jesus defined what He meant by ‘every cause’ by setting it off against the sin of fornication. He said, anything outside fornication was no longer a ground for divorce. This was how He cleverly defined what ‘every cause’ meant in His teaching on marriage and divorce.

Now the lowest courts of the land had no tradition that allowed divorce as a substitute for the death penalty for fornication. So Jesus’ definition of ‘every cause’ could not allow divorce for fornication, because the traditional punishment was death, not divorce.

This means that Jesus was totally consistent in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in ruling out divorce among all nations and cultures of the entire world. He totally abolished all past grounds for divorce among His chosen people, because such an evil act was incompatible with the new life of those who were permitted to enter into the new Kingdom of God, that He came to establish on the Earth, and into which all may enter on His terms of entry.

The Jerusalem Talmud makes the significant comment that the Elders follow the House of Shammai, and R. Kiva follows the House of Hillel. What this means is that the Elders are strictly conservative, and that changing the tradition is impossible, whereas Akiva and his like maintain a pragmatic attitude toward the written law.

Now the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds came into existence hundreds of years after the time of the Lord Jesus. The Babylonian Talmud is dated to around AD 500, and in it is a suspicious story that appears to have been concocted to give the House of Hillel supremacy over the House of Shammai. In the story (bEruvin 13b; jSuka 2:8 [53b]), “a heavenly voice went forth” directing the people to follow the law as determined by the House of Hillel. One would like to know how many heard this ‘heavenly voice’ and what was the context? It sounds suspiciously like theological propaganda by the winning side!

Both God and the Lord Jesus ‘spoke from heaven’ but neither of them would be involved with the ragbag of trivia that occupied the concerns of the Houses of Hillel and Shammai, for their house, the Temple, had been left desolate by God. Their concerns and attention were directed toward the new Israel of God—the Church of Christ.

Jewish scholars point out a distinction between the earlier halakha and the later halakha. The halakha that preceded the era of Shammai and Hillel (i.e., 1st cent. BC) is presented as anonymous and devoid of party splits. There are no Houses. The later halakha are characterised by controversy and attributed to named individuals. They concluded that the later halakha originated at the end of the Second Temple period, and developed after the destruction of the Temple. The House of Shammai generally supports the early halakha, as we would expect. This would place these later halakha after the time of Jesus who died in AD 29 (Nisan).

The evidence so far would suggest that the debates between the two Houses most likely post-dated the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and consequently the debates over divorce and remarriage may every well post-date Jesus’ time, and have no bearing on the question asked by the Pharisees in Matthew 19:9, which appears to have been a straightforward question of law, designed with the sole purpose of drawing Jesus into a trap of setting Himself above Moses. Anyone who did this was sure to be rejected by the people.

These Pharisees were not coming pleading ignorance of the law, or pretending to sit at the feet of Jesus to be educated by Him. No, they came knowing in advance the answer that Jesus must give to their question, for they had already heard His view on divorce through His Sermon on the Mount, and the Luke 16:18 incident, both of which pre-dated their question in Matthew 19:3. It was like a game of chess, where you know what your opponent’s next move must be, and you set your

454 Heim Shapira noted that the House of Hillel retracted its rulings in favour of the House of Shammai on numerous points of law, which suggests that these two Schools formulated their rulings in isolation from one another, and it was only when the two were brought together and compared that the weaker House (Hillel) recognised that the House of Shammai had been right all along. There is only one possible case where the House of Shammai accepted the ruling of the House of Hillel; see Haim Shapira, “The Schools of Hillel and Shammai,” The Jewish Law Annual 17 (2007) 159-208, esp. 194 n 118.

455 The Mishnah is earlier than the Talmuds, and if, as some Jewish writers hold, it reflects the teaching of the House of Hillel, then that victorious House was well in control of the Talmuds and what went into them.

strategy to counter it. Question 1 (19:3) was to be followed by Question 2 (in v. 7), which should have resulted in a check-mate win for them.

Paul the apostle was God’s chosen instrument to bring the good news of the New Covenant Gospel to the Jewish nation. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and sat at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem. There was nothing he did not know about Jewish doctrine, being zealous above his contemporaries.

What would Paul have known about the disputes over doctrinal points that are said to have begun before Jesus was born? We cannot be sure what he knew. Our knowledge of these disputes comes from rabbinical writings which were written hundreds of years after the death of Paul.

The focus of this section is on the debate between the two schools over the issue of divorce. It is possible that the dispute between the Pharisees and Jesus was based on the wording of Deuteronomy 24:1, and went something like this.

The School of Shammai says: A man should not divorce his wife except he found indecency in her, since he says: For he found in her an indecent matter [Deut. 24:1].

And the School of Hillel said: Even if she spoiled his dish, since it says: matter.

The School of Hillel said to the School of Shammai, since it said matter [Deut. 24:1] why did it [also] say indecency, and since it said indecency, why did it also say matter? Because if it said matter and it did not [also] say indecency I would say: She who is discharged because of a matter is permitted to remarry, but she who is discharged because of indecency may not be permitted to remarry.

And do not be surprised [that she should be forbidden to remarry]. If she is forbidden [to marry] him [her first husband] who had been permitted to her, [why should she] not be forbidden from him who had been forbidden to her?

The quotation starts off with the School of Shammai attempting to limit divorce to fornication because they understood the two words, ‘ervat dãbãr, to refer to a single cause (‘a matter of indecency’). The School of Hillel objected to this limitation and claimed that divorce could be

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457 The insertion of [Any] has been added by some to bring the translation into line with their theory, with a view to forcing a connection with Mt 5:32. This is interpretation, not translation. Hillel correctly identified dãbãr as a ‘matter/thing.’ What this amounts to is, if a man finds something objectionable in his wife, he can call it ‘a thing,’ and this would qualify it as a ground for divorce. With this kind of exegesis, the wife has no chance of escaping divorce because her husband can call anything he takes exception to as a ‘thing,’ and she is out in the street in the time it takes to write out a get and hand it to her.

458 This should not have been added. The point Hillel is making is one of either/or, not this and that. The significance is that if the Hillelites believed that ‘ervat, on its own, meant ‘nakedness’ then this would qualify as ‘fornication’ and the punishment for fornication was the same as for adultery, namely, the death penalty. If the School of Hillelites made this statement in the light of the loss of national independence, and therefore could not implement the death penalty, and divorce was the only punishment open to them, then this explains why anyone who committed an ‘ervat could not remarry, because they should be considered as being dead. But if they committed a dãbãr they could remarry after a divorce.

459 Sifré Deut. 269, ed. Finkelstein 288.

460 Some believe that Matthew 19.9 is a translation of ELA IM ERVAH (Sif.Deut.269; y.Sot.1.2.16b), which is thought to be Shammai’s position ‘nothing but indecency.’ The obstacle here is that ervah is nowhere the equivalent of Greek porneia in the LXX. When we come to Deut 24:1-4 we can say with absolute assurance that whatever ERWATH DAVAR included it did not include divorce for fornication for that was covered with the death penalty. ERWATH DAVAR could only cover all other non-capital reasons. Jesus knew that Deut 24:1-3 could never be used legitimately to obtain a divorce for fornication, so that all who had used 24:1-3 to obtain a divorce did so.
had for two causes, because two words were used in Deuteronomy 24:1. The two words were ‘dâbâr’ (word) and ‘ervat’ (nakedness). They wanted divorce for fornication (‘nakedness’) and for non-fornication (‘a matter’) issues as well, citing a spoiled dish as an example of a ‘matter.’

The School of Hillel decided that if a man divorced his wife for fornication then she could not remarry, but if he divorced her over a non-fornication ‘matter’ then she could remarry.

Here the School of Hillel recognized that if ‘indecency’ refers to a sexual matter then her punishment would have been the death penalty, which explains why she is not permitted to remarry. This solution could only have arisen when the Jews lost their independence and their right to implement the death penalty for fornication/adultery.

It would appear that this rabbinical record must date to a time well after the destruction of Jerusalem, otherwise the Jews would have enforced the death penalty for fornication as they would have done in Jesus’ day over the woman caught in the act of committing adultery (John 7:75-8:11).

If the debate between the two Schools developed after the Apostolic era, when the Jews were dispersed across the Roman empire, it makes sense that the School of Hillel would try to retain the biblical distinction between the death penalty for fornication, and a bill of divorce for non-fornication matters. The death penalty for fornication ended the life of the wife, and freed her husband to remarry. This explains why they did not permit the condemned wife to remarry. The punishment for a ‘matter’ (being a non-fornication offence) was divorce, so this permitted the divorced wife to remarry. In this way the School of Hillel was able to accommodate itself to the new environment it found itself in.

The first mistake the School of Shammai made was to read ‘ervat dâbâr as a specific offence, ‘a matter of indecency.’ Of course, in its original context, ‘ervat dâbâr was deliberately unspecific and general, because God chose the word to cover all the non-fornication grounds that the Hebrews had been using up until the time He gave them the new rules by which they were to live in the Promised Land. It was an umbrella term that included all non-capital offences. It meant anything that came to light that before had been hidden or didn’t exist.

The second mistake they made was to interpret ‘ervat dâbâr as a sexual offence, but the punishment for a sexual offence was the death penalty, but they reduced the penalty to divorce. They would not have done this had they been living in their own land and could implement the death penalty for fornication. This suggests that their ruling was made after the Jews had been dispersed abroad by the Romans.

God laid down in His Torah set penalties for sexual offences between husband and wife, in order to guarantee the legitimacy of the parentage of each son and daughter in Israel. Any sexual sin on the wife’s part would result in her death, not in a divorce. At stake was the genealogy of His Son, and His line of descent had to be above suspicion. This meant that all lines of male descent in each of the twelve tribes of Israel had to be above suspicion, and the purity of that descent ran through the womb of a man’s wife. She must be a virgin at the start of her married life, and she must not engage in any sexual activity that would bring her purity into question at any time during her child-bearing years.

Now the two terms that Yahweh used to describe the common grounds for these private divorces 1,400 years before Hillel was born, were ‘uncovering of a matter’ (‘ervat dâbâr), and ‘hate’ (sinâh). When the rabbis came to Jesus in Matthew 19:9 and used the term ‘every cause’ they were encompassing everything that Yahweh put under these two terms, so they were not including the sin of adultery or fornication, because Yahweh had already set a separate penalty for these sexual offences. It is important to note that this was the historical background to their question. They were, in effect, enticing Jesus to challenge a practice of divorcing their wives for non-sexual offences that they and their ancestors had been practicing for 1,400 years. That practice never included divorce for adultery or fornication. This is the historical background to their question in Matthew 19:9 and Mark

illegitimately. They were living in adulterous remarriages. God never gave them permission to divorce for fornication, and neither did Jesus. Mt 5:32 is thought to found in m.Git.9.10.
10:2, and it would have been a brave rabbi to challenge such a long-standing traditional practice. Its sheer longevity was thought to make it unassailable and unchallengeable. These Pharisees could only see a single human being, like themselves, in front of them, in the form of the man Christ Jesus, and if this single individual challenged a 1,400 year-old custom, he must be crazy.

It is likely that the report in the Talmuds of the disagreements between the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel over the grounds for divorce reflects the historical situation after the Jews were no longer able to implement the punishments that Yahweh had laid down in His law for adultery/fornication. The debate may well belong to a time centuries after the time of Christ. We have no way of dating the material in the Talmuds with anything like the accuracy we can date the Gospel material.

However, the School of Hillel, by a curious quirk of exegesis, found three terms, not two, in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 that justified divorce. These were ‘exposure,’ a ‘matter,’ and ‘hatred.’ They arrived at three grounds by splitting ‘exposure of a matter,’ into its constituent elements, ‘ervat and dâbâr. The term ‘ervat ‘nakedness’ was used metaphorically by God, but they decided to read it literally, and so exposure/nakedness’ came to stand for any sexual offence, and dâbâr ‘word/thing’ came to stand for any non-sexual offence, and ‘hate’ covered the situation that a wife did not find favour in his eyes. In modern language, the marriage died, and there was no love between them.

In this way the rabbis were able to smuggle into Deuteronomy 24:1-3 grounds for divorcing their wives for sexual and non-sexual causes, but Yahweh had separate punishments for sexual (death) and non-sexual offences. The need to smuggle divorce for adultery into Deuteronomy 24:1 could only have arisen after the Romans took away the power of the Jewish government to implement the death penalty.

Jesus fully endorsed the law of God that the death penalty was Yahweh’s only designated punishment for fornication or sexual immorality, or anything that cast doubt on her purity (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10). The term ‘fornication’ is broad enough to cover all acts of sexual immorality by married and unmarried persons, because the goal of that law was to ensure purity of male descent to His Son.

What God did not lay down was the punishment for petty crimes, or misdemeanours between couples, such as the squandering of family assets, either monetary, food or clothing, being wasteful, burning the family dinner, or not looking after their personal appearance or hygiene, because these did not impinge on the wife’s sexual purity. Nowhere in Scripture does God descend to make judgments in these non-sexual areas of married life. His focus was on the purity of the wife’s body to bring His sons and daughters into His world in a legitimate manner.

However, into this vacuum stepped man, and he took advantage of his designated position as the head of the woman, to arbitrarily dismiss his wife, with apparently no appeal to Yahweh to reverse her husband’s private decision to put her out in the street. Man showed how hard-hearted he was when he punished these petty grievances and disputes by divorcing his wife. Yahweh referred to these petty grounds for divorce under the single, inclusive term of ‘ervat dâbâr, ‘uncovered matter,’ and apart from this umbrella term He referred to a husband’s hatred for his wife as another ground used by hard-hearted husbands for divorcing her in Deuteronomy 24:1-3. This is naked bullying at its worse. In Deuteronomy 24:1-3 Yahweh paints the picture of life at the bottom rungs of society, but there is little He can do to curb the evil of man’s heart. The poor and the divorced were a permanent feature of Israel’s life, and nothing but a new heart, a heart of flesh, was ever going to

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461 Some so-called evangelical writers assume that Jesus endorsed all the grounds that the rabbis laid down for granting a divorce. These can be reduced to five grounds, three of them from Ex 21:10; the other two from Dt 24:1. Justification is claimed for following the teaching of the rabbis on the grounds that ‘principles’ can be extracted from these texts, which can then be applied to Christian marriages today. Concubine and slave marriages in Exodus 21:10 are not the same as marriages of freeborn women. So-called ‘principles’ derived from these extinct practices cannot be re-applied to the Church’s new life in Christ Jesus.
change the culture of divorce that pervaded Mosaic leadership. Moses consolidated the practice of
divorce by demanding that a bill of divorce must accompany every divorce. He was not given
authority from God to issue such a command.

It is not insignificant that Yahweh refused to allow the actual wording of Moses’s command
to have any place in His Scriptures, because Moses issued his command on his own authority.
Yahweh never sanctioned Moses’s command. Deuteronomy 24:1-3 does not record Moses’s
command to issue a bill of divorce. Moses’s command had to be carried down to Jesus’ day outside
the page of Scripture, and through oral tradition. God deliberately did not allow Moses’s command to
enter His Law. It is excluded, because He hates divorce, and will have nothing to do with it.

Yahweh, however, did not let these acts of bullying, beatings, and starving innocent wives
go unnoticed. He imposed what looks like an innocuous slap on the wrist of the offender by
shutting out the possibility of reconciliation with his hated wife, presumably to protect her from
further bullying, as much as to put him on notice that his cruelty would not be forgiven.

We are not told what Yahweh would have done if a husband and wife did decide to get
back together after she had remarried and divorced her second husband, or he died, and she was left
a widow. Presumably it was left up to the community to enforce the law of no reconciliation.

God respects the degree of freedom that He has granted to all men and women to do good
or to do evil. If He stepped in every time a husband or wife were about to do evil, then He would
have no grounds to send them to hell. He holds them responsible for all their actions, good or bad,
so we must expect divorce to continue among mankind until the end of the age.

It is crucial, however, that Christians do not take their eye off the Lord Jesus when it comes
to divorce, because there are many professing Christians who would turn the Christian’s eyes away
from Him and toward the rabbis, and back to Moses. To follow the rabbis is to turn away from
Christ and would be a return to the unregenerate state from which they came forth, like a washed
pig returning to wallowing in the mud, and like a dog returning to eat its own vomit (2 Peter 2:22).

The weakness in the Pharisees’ case for divorce lay in the fact that it depended on Moses’
involvement. His extra-biblical command to the Hebrews to write out a ‘roll of severance’ came from
him, and not from God. God had nothing to do with it. He disapproved of it as Deuteronomy 24:4
reveals. It was left to Jesus to analyse why Moses took it upon himself to command the Hebrews, in
his own name, and by his own authority, to issue such a ‘roll of severance,’ and He revealed that Moses
was pressurised by hard-hearted men to yield to such a device and procedure, but Jesus was quick
to point out that God had revealed His own teaching on the indissoluble nature of the marriage
union, and it was to this prior revelation and standard that Jesus was drawing attention and
bringing forward again to the Jews to follow, and to dispense with Moses’ faulty innovation.

Now it should be remembered that divorce existed in Israel while they were in Egypt, as it
existed in all human societies without exception, because it belongs to the unregenerate nature of
man. Divorce is as natural as sin. It should also be remembered that the causes of divorce
worldwide, and before Israel came out of Egypt, are the same, because all men share the same fallen
Adamic nature. Both truths are as true today as they were then. It should also be remembered that
before Israel left Egypt they divorced their wives without any bill of divorce. Each husband was
head of his own household. Jacob could exercise the death penalty against any members of his
household who committed a grievous sin against God, as in the case of his daughter-in-law who
committed fornication, or so he thought, and would have executed her legally, if she had not taken
the precaution to implicate him in her trickery. The power of the head of the household should not
be underestimated, and it would appear that God did not disapprove of it as a means of discipline,
and suppressing fornication and murder, among His chosen people.

The tradition of divorcing that Israel adopted while in Egypt did not require a bill of
divorce, and this tradition would have continued right up until Jesus’ day had not God imposed the
death penalty for fornication (including adultery). It was in the light of this new, severe, penalty that
great caution was needed not to commit adultery. It was out of fear of committing adultery that
some mechanism was needed to make it absolutely clear who was married to whom, and who was not married to whom.

Confusion could arise if the old practice of verbally dismissing a wife continued, because a husband could say some angry words to his wife, for instance, ‘to clear off,’ which she took to be a divorce. She could leave in all good faith thinking she had been divorced, and then she remarried. But if the husband claimed that she misunderstood his words and that he never dismissed her, in the sense of divorced her, then the second husband would be guilty of adultery, as would be his wife, and both would be stoned to death.

The solution was to strengthen the verbal dismissal with a written one, as this would be indisputable proof that she had been dismissed by her husband. It removed any doubt about the status of every woman. Moses turned this solution into a written command, on his own authority, as a brilliant, pragmatic solution, but God would not allow his pragmatic command to become part of His Torah. He deliberately excluded Moses’s command, but He referred to it as an integral part of an evil practice which He thoroughly disapproved of.

Yahweh could not stop divorce, any more than He could stop hate, or bullying, or domestic violence, by issuing decrees to cover every eventuality. Men had to be left to exercise their own will and make their own decisions, as we experience to this day, so that each man can be held accountable for his decisions and rewarded accordingly. However, God had other priorities, and chief among them was the purity of each man’s offspring. That He would not allow to be tampered with. That He would step in to safeguard, hence the test of the Bitter Waters, which He would be the judge of. He frightened the entire nation not to commit adultery on the pain of death. That was the greatest deterrent that He could bring to bear on the situation. We see His utter determination to safeguard each man’s offspring by threatening any woman with the death penalty should she prove unfaithful to her husband. The fact that the man who committed adultery with her also died, was the only way that God had to deter every man in the land not to sow his wild oats and think he will get away with it.

Despite protecting each marriage with the threat of death, and despite respecting the headship authority that He has given to each husband over his family, Yahweh could not prevent divorce from happening on the national level. Everyone felt he was entitled to get rid of his wife, if he could not live with her for any reason. However, despite having to accept that His people would not be deterred from divorcing their wives, He declared that any woman who remarried was a defiled or unclean woman, whom none of His priests could marry (Lev 21:7; cf. Ezek 44:22). By placing her in this unclean category, this ensured that any children she bore of a second husband would be declared to be unclean, defiled, and illegitimate, and so shut out of membership of His community.

What lay behind the question that the Pharisees brought to Jesus was their realisation that God had not given them specific permission to divorce their wives. Usually the rabbis were able to extract all sorts of queer doctrines and invent new traditions through a minute dissection of the Hebrew text. When they examined Deuteronomy 24:1-3 closely they discovered that God was not prescribing when and for what cause they could divorce their wives, but, rather, He was describing what had been their practice after Moses had taken it upon himself to introduce a compulsory bill of divorce to accompany every divorce. Now they knew the difference between prescribing and describing, and this left them with a real problem: How could they justify divorce if divorce was not prescribed in the Torah? Jesus had toured the country telling the people that divorce could not be justified on any grounds because God had not given them permission to divorce. The more sage among the rabbis would have nodded their heads in agreement, because they knew only too well that nowhere in the Torah did God give them permission to divorce their wives; it was a practice that they carried out of Egypt at the Exodus. The sage among them would have realised that Jesus had undercut their millennia-long tradition and undermined their grounds for such a practice. The truth was that the Law, the Torah, did not permit them to divorce their wives.
Consequently, when the Pharisees (and lawyers no doubt) came to Jesus they wanted to know if divorce was sanctioned anywhere in the Law, because they realised that if the Law did not explicitly sanction such a practice, then they could be doing something unlawful. They desperately needed the Law on their side. They did not come to Jesus saying, ‘We have a tradition from the time of Moses that we can divorce our wives provided we hand them a bill of divorce, is it right to continue with this tradition.’ They could predict Jesus’ answer to this question. Jesus showed nothing but disdain for their traditions. Tradition was not a proper foundation, they realised. They needed the foundation of the Law, the Torah, to legitimise the practice, so they came straight out with their question, ‘Is it lawful to divorce a wife . . . .’ The key word here is lawful. In other words they were asking Jesus, ‘Is it in accordance with the Law of God to divorce our wives?’ Jesus said it was not in accordance with the Law, because everybody knew that there was no permission from God to continue their Egyptian practice after they had committed themselves to abide by the terms of the Sinai Covenant. Divorce was a hangover from their previous way of life in Egypt. Divorce and hard-heartedness go together.

At the Exodus stage, the promise of a New Covenant was eight-hundred years in the future. Those who entered the New Covenant would have their hearts of stone replaced with hearts of flesh, and God would put His Spirit within them so that it would be a delight and a normal way of life to love Him and his neighbour (including his wife and family). But all that was still in the future. In the meantime, God had to handle a very perverse people who would be a pain in the neck to Him throughout all their generations. The Sinai Covenant was a half-way stage to the New Covenant stage. God could put up with their perverseness, which included freely divorcing their wives for every non-sexual cause, and taking advantage of God’s death penalty to stone them if they proved unfaithful to them.

What shocked those who questioned Jesus over the lawful causes for divorce, was His statement that anyone who got a divorce over a non-sexual matter, and remarried, was living in adultery. The Law had not permitted them to get a divorce for sexual issues, and now Jesus was not permitting them to get a divorce for non-sexual issues. That meant that there were now no grounds for divorce.

While Judaism has shown great tolerance towards groups with heterodox views on a number of questions, it has always been very sensitive as regards fundamental deviations from the accepted rules concerning marriage. Yet it is acknowledged by rabbinic scholars that no custom or tradition contained in the Talmud can be proved to go back to the time of Jesus. It is unknown, for instance, when the custom of marrying on the fourth day of the week in the case of virgins, and on the fifth day in the case of widows and divorcées came into being, but it would seem that it is linked to the court meeting regularly on the fifth day of each week, so that if the virginity of the bride was disputed, it could be dealt with within 24 hours.

Significantly, it is assumed that the death penalty was no longer enforced if the wife proved not to be a virgin, but no rabbinic scholar can say when this state of affairs came into existence. Did the death penalty fall into disuse in David’s time, or in the post-Exilic period, or sometime during the inter-testamental period, or after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70? Nobody knows. The evidence from the New Testament is that the death penalty was still in use in Jesus’ day, compare John 8, and this incident is very significant as regards the terminus ad quem for the continued use of the death penalty as a punishment for adultery. Of course, Jewish scholars would not want to rely on Christian Scriptures to reconstruct the Judaism in Jesus’ day.

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463 Isaksson, ibid, p. 39.
Once the central power of the Jewish State was dismantled by the Romans after AD 70, and the population decimated, the internal, judicial structure must have collapsed allowing compulsory divorce to replace the death penalty for fornication.

Philo assures us that in his time, 20 B.C.–c. A.D. 50, practically all Jewish girls were virgins when they were married\(^{464}\) and his statement is confirmed by the testimony of the rabbis.\(^{465}\) According to rabbinical lore the majority of girls were married at 12/13 years of age. This cannot reflect the era Jesus was born in, given the high level of literacy that Mary, Jesus’ mother, displayed when she heard Elizabeth’s prophecy regarding her offspring. Luke 1:46-55 was not the composition of a 12-year old girl. Mary must have been nearer twenty years of age in her development, and mature enough to give her consent to bearing the future Messiah.

It is likely that the lower age of marriage for girls reflects the dire situation when the Jews were scattered over the Roman world. Economically, the sooner their daughters became pregnant the better.

7.10.2. Extra-biblical evidence for divorce

It should be borne in mind that the rules governing divorce are geographic-specific. In other words, no woman had the right to divorce her husband while living in the land of Israel. But once she left the borders of Israel, things could be different as we learn from the Elephantine papyri. The following is contained in an Elephantine (an island in the Nile) document drawn up before the marriage took place:

Tomorrow or (the) next day, should Eshor [Miptahiah’s new husband] stand up in an assembly and say: “I hated my [wife Miptahiah,” her mohar [will be] lost . . . and she shall go away wherever she desires, without suit or without process.

This shows how easy it was to obtain a divorce. The document notes that the wife could do the same to her husband.

Tomorrow o[r] (the) next day, should Miptahiah [Eshor’s new wife] stand up in an assembly and say: “I hated Eshor my husband,” silver of hatred is on her head. She shall place upon the balance-scale and weigh out to Eshor silver, 6+[1] (=7) shekels, 2 q(arters), and all that she brought in in her hand she shall take out, from straw to string, and go away wherever she desires, without suit and without process.\(^{466}\)

Jesus was probably well aware that, as regards initiating divorce proceedings, there was greater equality between Jewish men and women outside Israel, than inside it; hence He covered all geographical locations in His Markan statement (Mk 10:12). Within Israel only the very rich and powerful women could divorce their husbands.

Note that in both hypothetical cases the wife leaves the husband’s home, which is how the law in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 was framed by men for the advantage of men. She did not get half the property. Because this Elephantine document was drawn up before a marriage took place, (it is a Wifehood Agreement), it can only deal with hypothetical grounds for divorce, and it is interesting that the global term used to cover every ground is the unqualified term ‘hate,’ as stated in Deuteronomy 24:2. So this term would include ‘an indecent thing’ within its broad scope.

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\(^{465}\) Mishnah Kidd. 4.12-14.  
So, as far back as 1446 BC, when Moses recorded Yahweh’s use of the unrestricted, global term ‘hate’ to cover all grounds for divorce, divorce in Israel was open season all the year round for hard-hearted husbands to divorce their wives for every and any cause that came under ‘hate.’ The Elephantine document is revealing in that it is a snapshot of what was happening before Jesus’ day. It shows that man’s unregenerate nature was as strong under Moses as it was in the Elephantine colony, and as it was in Jesus’ day.

‘Every Cause’ divorce originated with Moses, not with Hillel. Hillel was not saying anything new: Elephantine confirms this. And it was still going strong in the mid-second century after Christ, for something very similar to the Elephantine divorces was occurring in Palestine and was accepted as legally binding by R. Yose b. Halafta (yKet. 5.8): Said R. Yose, “In the case of those who write in the marriage settlement, ‘If he should hate;’ ‘If she should hate,’ this is a stipulation concerning a monetary matter, and such a stipulation remains in effect [despite the circumstances of the break-up of the marriage].” So prenuptial agreements were not a new thing, but such agreements are incompatible with true love.

Roger Aus brought forward evidence that God’s law was still being carried out under Roman rule, so that divorce for adultery was not the only choice open to God-fearers. Also, he wrote, “R. Yose the Galilean, a second generation Tanna notes on this passage [Num 25] that the adulterer goes in [to the woman’s home] with the intent that, if he is taken in the act, he will either kill [the enraged husband, who discovers him] or be killed.” Further down he notes that there are five major crimes to which no legal proceedings are required. Instead, ordinary citizens are entitled to take immediate action. This is how he sees the PA being a legal death (if Jesus had consented). Aus’ oldest sources seem to post-date the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, when the punishment for a married woman committing adultery was strangulation, not stoning, but he thinks strangulation goes further back in time. Since the Torah does not state (in Lev 20:10) how the married adulteress was to die, it is possible that strangulation may have been the means chosen from Moses’s time onwards. If so, it strengthens the case for the woman in the Pericope Adultery being a betrothed wife, because the demand is for stoning, not strangulation.

Regarding the Pericope Adultery. There was clearly a trap being laid to pit Jesus against the Roman authorities. If they could manoeuvre Jesus to usurp the authority of the Sanhedrin and the Roman Governor, then Pilate and the Sanhedrin could have agreed to execute Jesus, who had no position of authority to pronounce the death penalty on the woman taken in adultery. Did Jesus usurp the authority of the chief priests when He took it upon Himself to urge His hearers to listen to His new teaching rather than to them? If so, then if they could get Him to pronounce the death sentence on the woman, on his own authority, then they could take him to the Roman authorities as a self-appointed judge.

The Pharisees could reply on Jesus (or so they thought) to support the Mosaic Law. Jesus did not deny that she ought to be stoned, but He turned the tables on them by asking for the witnesses to come forward. When no qualified witnesses would come forward to cast the first stone, then she was innocent in law of the accusation. So Jesus was not going to condemn her to death, even if He knew supernaturally that she was guilty of adultery (just as he knew the Samaritan woman had five ‘husbands’). The danger for Jesus was His self-assuredness that He was the Prophet foretold by Moses, and His authority stemmed from this self-confidence, which the Pharisees thought they could exploit to get Him to over-reach Himself.

If those who brought her to Jesus had been witnesses of her sin, and were prepared to say so, and so get Jesus to signal the start of her stoning, He might still have been prosecuted by the

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Sanhedrin (because the Roman authorities gave the Sanhedrin the death penalty in religious matters) for not going through the proper procedures of examining the witnesses, etc. Jesus could have deflected giving any verdict by sending them off to the Sanhedrin to determine her case. In this way He would have put the blood of the adulteress on their hands.

In any case, if she had been caught ‘in the very act’ then the man should have been stoned as well, according to the Law of Moses. So why didn’t they bring the man forward as well? He was probably assured he would not be prosecuted, only the woman.

Chronologically, Luke 16:18 came before the PA, and Matthew 19 = Mark 10 came after the PA incident. So the chief priests would have been aware of Jesus’ position on divorce before the trap was set up.

The schools of Hillel and Shammai, after the destruction of the Temple, were up against a fait accompli situation. Hard-hearted husbands (and rabbis) were determined to retain their ancient tradition to get rid of their wives by any exegetical means possible, now that they could not implement the death penalty for adultery in the Diaspora. The school of Shammai was wrong to punish adultery with divorce, even given the political circumstances it lived under. It should have supported God’s Law, which was death, not divorce. This school bowed under the pressure of lawlessness. It became a pragmatic party, not a principled party.

The school of Hillel allowed divorce for any imaginable cause. This school opened the door, nay, it took the door off its hinges completely, and permitted divorce for anything at all. This is the liberty that Moses gave all Israelite men (but not women) as described by Yahweh in Deuteronomy 24:1-3.

The school of Hillel accepted the two grounds given by Moses for divorce, namely (A) for ‘something indecent,’ and (B) for ‘hate.’ Both grounds were not modified in any way, or restricted in any way, especially (B). ‘The sky is the limit,’ Moses conceded. ‘If you desperately want a divorce, then I’m giving you the widest possible scope to cover any grounds you wish to nominate, only, I ask you to hand your wives a Bill of Divorce so that they can have some kind of life after divorce.’ Moses bowed under the pressure of lawlessness. He became a pragmatist. He tried to regulate sin, not prevent it.

The most telling argument against Deuteronomy 24:1-4 being set up by God is that it is sexist and unjust, because the scenarios depicted in this passage are totally weighted in favour of the husband. The wife has no rights. She has no appeal. She is exploited. Would a just God set up such a one-sided divorce procedure? The answer must be a resounding No!

There is evidence that the Jews punished adultery with death, even into the time of Hillel and Shammai. Here is what Roger Aus discovered:

The origin of Mishnah Sanhedrin (m. Sanh. 9:6) is put in Maccabean times, in the 2nd cent. BC because a gemara (4th generation Palestinian Amara) states, ‘The court of the Hasmoneans decreed that one who cohabits with . . . [esheth ish = a married woman] . . . is liable to punishment on account of NaSHGA.’ Aus claims that the use of ‘esheth ish’ definitely meant adultery, punishable by death. So divorce for adultery in Hasmonean times was not an option. It had to be the death penalty. Aus makes the point that death for adultery was not questioned by Hillel and Shammai, and that the practice ‘definitely stems from a time before Jesus’ ministry.’

So whatever differences there were between Hillel and Shammai, both appear to have agreed that the death penalty was the only appropriate punishment for adultery, because this is what the Torah demanded.

In the Talmud opinions of the Schools of Shammai and Hillel are reported in M. Gitt. 9:10; and Y. Sotah 16b. Shammai interpreted the term ervat davar as sexual unchastity, while Hillel interpreted it as something that disfigured the woman, a bodily defect or something that could cause

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469 Roger Aus, Caught in the act, pp. 16-18.
disaffection on the part of the husband. Rabbi Akiba followed the School of Hillel. His interpretation went much further, in that a man could abandon his wife if he found a more beautiful one.

7.10.3. What was the situation under Roman domination?

Documentation of what transpired under Roman occupation of Judea between A.D. 70 and 135 is almost a blank. A doctoral thesis for Oxford University acknowledged that ‘the dearth of primary sources from this fascinating period make our investigation into its details frustrating. . . . Most of the available Greek and Latin sources are revolt-centred. . . . All rabbinic literature, our main source for this period, was redacted long after 135 CE. . . . The situation is like assembling a puzzle without a frame, with only a few problematic pieces.’470 This doctoral dissertation had to abandon the idea of writing up the history of this period (Josephus is virtually blank between AD 70 and 100) and instead the author picked out seven models of Jewish leadership to compare with five models of local leadership within the Roman world. This highlights the difficulty of where to place the rise of the academies of Hillel and Shammai. Are they just names that were used after the destruction of the Temple to give an air of ancienctness or respectability to the divergent views of two groups of squabbling Jews?

Our chief sources for Roman rule of Judea in the time of the Lord Jesus comes from the Mishnah, which was compiled, not from written sources dating to the time of Jesus, but purely from oral tradition by Judah ha-Nasi about A.D. 200. It was not considered to be final, because it was supplemented by the Tosefta (lit. ‘supplement’), which is a commentary on the Mishnah.471 The Tosefta was possibly redacted in the 3rd or early 4th century.472 The Mishnah and Tosefta contain discussions among the generations of the rabbis (the tannaim) after the destruction of the Temple. These included the Mekhilta and Sifres all of them dating to the 3rd century AD. The second (AD 250-280) generation of rabbis to add to the Mishnah are called amoraim.473 The culmination of this rabbinic commentary work on the text of the Mishnah was the compilation of two Talmuds. The Palestinian (c. AD 400) and the Babylonian (c. AD 500). Choi makes the observation,

. . . it is nearly impossible to prove the historical reliability of certain traditions, mainly because dating the sources is extremely difficult. Some passages have demonstrably been misremembered and even falsified in light of changes in rabbinical thoughts. . . . Now, most scholars agree that the testimonies of rabbinic literature are at best an incomplete representation of rabbinic interests, and that they cannot always be placed in a historical context. In addition, the rabbis were not necessarily witnesses to the events that they

470 Junghwa Choi, Jewish Leadership in Roman Palestine from 70 CE to 135 CE (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 1, 16. This work omits many quoted books in its bibliography, so that the details have to be got elsewhere. The index is a joke. This work deserved to be properly indexed to improve its usefulness.


473 For the chronology of the generations of rabbis see L. I. Levine, The Rabbinic Class in Palestine During the Talmudic Period (Jerusalem & New York, 1989), p. 67, who lists the 3rd (AD 280-310), 4th (310-340), and 5th (340-375) generations. More than half the rabbis named in the Talmud come from the 3rd and 4th generations (AD 280–340), according to Junghwa Choi, Jewish Leadership in Roman Palestine from 70 CE to 135 CE (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 20.
described, nor were they historians with an interest in the preservation of factual data for posterity."^474

Contrast this with Luke who compiled his Gospel directly from eyewitness accounts, which he then verified before he included them in his two books.

G. Alon pointed out how unreliable rabbinic literature was to reconstruct the history of the period. He gives the following reasons, (1) the scarcity of historical information within the rabbinical literature; (2) the difficulty in dating due to the literature having been redacted in transmission; (3) the unreliability of the existing data.^475 If this is the consensus of the experts in the field of rabbinics then what hope do we have of locating the origin and rise of the two schools of Hillel and Shammai?

It is sometimes alleged that the Jews meekly submitted to the Roman authorities and allowed them to take away their God-given right to carry out God’s judgment on heretics, adulteresses, and blasphemers. This is not so. The Jews were fanatical about their religion. The Babylonian exile had purged them from having anything to do with idols, for instance, and greater care was taken to implement the whole of God’s Torah in their daily lives.

The stubbornness of the Jews can be seen in the case where the High Priest Matthias was blamed by the Romans for allowing the golden eagle that they had placed over the Temple gate to be pulled down by the Jews (Ant. 17.164). The Jews were fearless when it came to their victor's attempting to parade any idol near their Temple. They were prepared to die in their fanatical opposition to any idol, including the standards of the victorious Roman legions. The Roman authorities knew they were sitting on a powder keg if they did not take this fanaticism into account and back off from antagonising the Jews when it came to their religious scruples.

In another case the High Priest Ishmael b. Phiabi (c. AD 59-61) refused to pull down the extension wall that blocked the view of the Roman governor from looking into the Temple area. Festus and Agrippa ordered the Jews to dismantle the offending wall but the Jews appealed to Nero and won their case (Ant. 20. 189-196). Given the fanatical defence by the Jews to safeguard their freedom to worship God in the way He prescribed for them, it is very unlikely that the Roman authorities dared to interfere with the Sanhedrin’s authority to inflict the death penalty for adultery. They saw themselves as the ‘Defenders of the Faith’ and they were determined to kill Jesus because He broke the laws relating to the Sabbath day, and also for blasphemy by calling Himself the ‘Son of God.’ The decision to kill Jesus was not made by religious fanatics or by political Zealots.

The Jews may have been physically conquered, but their spirit was never conquered. They considered themselves far superior to the pagan Romans at the spiritual level.

On the eve of the Great Revolt (AD 66) the Romans feared to lose control of Judea so Florus (AD 64-66) summoned the ‘High Priests and the council’ to grant them power to maintain order (B.J. 2.331-332). This shows how vulnerable the Romans were, but it also shows that they depended on the High Priest and the Sanhedrin to maintain law and order, because the people would side with them and not with the Romans. Given the mediating role that the High Priest and the Sanhedrin exercised, no Roman Governor dared to interfere with the implementation of the Mosaic Law, including the use of the death penalty for religious offences, such as blasphemy.

Choi has put the case for the dismantling of the sanhedrin after the destruction of the Temple when the Roman authorities refused to allow the Temple to be rebuilt, as this would only store up trouble in a repetition of the revolt if they allowed the priestly system to govern the people again. Their instincts were correct because there was another revolt under Trajan (115-117) and the

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^474 J. Choi, op. cit., p. 20. See p. 21 nn 20, 90 for a bibliography on the difficulty of using the Talmuds to recover historical facts.

final one under Bar Kokhba (132-135), which saw the complete dismantling of the nation, and 'trodden under foot.' In AD 70 the Romans opted for direct rule from Rome as the safest course to ensure absolute control of this troublesome province. From this point onwards with no recognised High Priestly rule and certainly no sanhedrin, the implementation of the judicial system of punishments must have been carried out at the local level through local priests. One-third of the tannaim at Yavneh were priests. After AD 70 it is unlikely that the High Priestly office was ever restored again. Josephus (writing A.J. in the mid-90s) reported that the last known High Priest was elected by lot by the Jewish rebels during the Great Revolt of AD 70, and that there was no High Priest after the destruction of the Temple. Rabbinic literature is silent about the office of High Priest after the Revolt.

Roger Aus points out that a source, not connected to the Mishnah, maintains that ‘the Romans took the right of capital punishment away from the Sanhedrin only 40 years before the destruction of the Temple (70 CE), i.e. ca. 30 CE.’ It was temporarily restored under Agrippa I [AD 40-44].

If the Roman authorities had allowed the Sanhedrin to handle all matters connected with the Torah Law, as Pilate permits them to do, then only political capital offences were denied them, such as the imprisonment of Barabbas, and other revolutionary leaders.

I suspect that John 18:31 should be looked at from a political standpoint, and not from a religious one. John 18:30 reads, ‘they answered and said to him, ‘If he were not an evil doer, we had not delivered him to you.’ Pilate, therefore, said to them, ‘Take ye him — ye — and according to your law judge him;’ the Jews, therefore, said to him, ‘It is not lawful to us to put any one to death [as an evil doer].’” The charge was that Jesus was ‘an evil doer’ — a civil matter. So no religious charge of blasphemy was brought against Jesus. The religious authorities wanted Jesus dead, but they wanted the Romans to take the blame, hence the charge was shifted from ‘blasphemy’ to ‘an evil doer’ and Jesus’ claim to be ‘king of the Jews’ helped in that direction. So maybe Rodger Aus’ observation can stand alongside the Jewish authorities’ refusal to meddle in political matters that rightly belonged to the Roman authorities.

Pilate clearly acknowledged the right of the religious leaders to control the people in religious matters when he said, “Take him and judge him according to your law.” But Jesus was a hot potato, and they did not want His blood on their hands if at all possible, hence they steered away from their own judgment of blasphemy, and put the focus on Jesus’ claim to be king of the Jews. This clearly put Him in political conflict with Rome. It was a clever ploy, and it worked. So there is no need to dismiss Aus’ evidence. It can be reconciled with John 18:31 if the latter is seen as a capital punishment for usurping the ‘kingship’ of Rome. In that sense the Jews were right to say that they had no authority to put a man to death for saying he was ‘king of the Jews.’ That was a political offence.

John 18:31 should not be assumed to mean that all capital punishments were taken away from them in the light of Aus’ evidence that capital punishment was common for adultery (and presumably other religious offences such as blasphemy).

It is speculated that divorce replaced the death penalty during the Roman occupation of Judah, and this has been used to justify the rabbinic departure from the punishments laid down in the law. Statements in the Talmuds (Sanh. 41a; Yer. Sanh. i. 18a, vii. 24b) indicate that the death penalty was removed from the Jews 40 years before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. Jesus died in AD 29, which was 41 years before the Temple was destroyed. Could it be that the misuse of the death penalty by the Sanhedrin in Jesus’ day resulted in the death penalty being removed from the Sanhedrin for religious crimes? Under the cloak of killing Jesus for a religious crime of blasphemy the Sanhedrin could kill off political enemies. Under a similar cloak, if a man suspected his wife of adultery but he did not have the necessary eye-witnesses to convict her (as in Jn 8), he could divorce her anyway for some other petty offence. So divorce for adultery or fornication could be got through

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476 Choi, op. cit., p. 167.
the backdoor. It was preferable to get rid of a wife this way for suspected adultery, rather than the mother of his children being publicly stoned for adultery, which might have put the legitimacy of their births in doubt.

Aus notes, “It is also recorded that at least one daughter of a priest (still in her father’s house) was burnt to death before 66 CE because of committing adultery (in Jerusalem).” And then, in the very next sentence he says, “If the daughter of a priest was caught while engaging in such behavior, it is very probable that those further down the social scale of priests/Levites/Israelites did so also, and certainly more frequently.” This does not sound to me like a one-off burning for adultery, or mob-rule, but a regular practice. I suspect that the Romans couldn’t care less what the Jews did, provided they didn’t riot and paid their taxes. If Roger Aus is correct, then I would tend to the view that the woman taken in adultery might well have been stoned to death had they not brought her to Jesus. That is what saved her, in this instance. It then means that the question put to Jesus was not just a technicality, but a real, dangerous situation to negotiate.

The citizens’ determination to kill the woman taken in adultery cannot be passed off as mob rule, as if it was unlawful in God’s sight. Jesus pointed out that the ‘scribes and Pharisees’ sat in Moses’s seat and He instructed the people to obey them. John tells us that it was the same ‘scribes and Pharisees’ who were only carrying out the death penalty that Moses commanded for adultery.

God strongly approved of citizen Phinehas, pumped up with zeal for His God, taking it into his hands to kill a fornicating Israelite (Zimri) and his Midianite prostitute (Num 25:8). God blessed this righteous citizen for taking it into his own hands to kill this law-breaker (Num 25:11). But in the case of the woman taken in adultery in John 8, the motive to execute her was different. The woman was being deliberately used as bait in a carefully crafted set up to accuse Jesus of taking the life of a citizen.

Even if she was executed by Jesus in strict accordance with the law of God (on the analogy of Phinehas’s righteous action), Jesus knew that the scribes and Pharisees would use it to hand Him over to the Roman authorities, because He was viewed by the Sanhedrin as a worse law-breaker, and someone who was more dangerous than an adulterous woman, because He had a growing popularity among the people, whom the scribes and Pharisees described as ignorant and gullible. So Jesus presented a real threat to the religious establishment, and had to be removed at all costs.

Because Jesus was fully aware of the trap set to kill Him, He exploited the situation to convict the executioners of their own law-breaking history. They recognised the hypocrisy of law-breakers condemning law-breakers, and drew back from carrying out the decision of the scribes and Pharisees who set up the trap.

The implication of Jesus’ action is that He took the execution of law-breakers out of the hands of citizens, and put it back into the hands of those who sat on Moses’s chair (Mt 23:2). Jesus upheld the judicial system that God set up to carry out His judgments (Deut 17:9; 19:17; 26:3; Mt 23:2), even though corrupt judges dominated it, and yet were responsible to implement it. It was now up to the judicial system to take over the execution of the woman taken in adultery following God’s law. In this way Jesus upheld His Father’s judicial system.

By forgiving the woman her sin, Jesus did not rule out her judicial execution, but she had the satisfaction of knowing that the High Judge Himself had forgiven her her sin of adultery.

Roger Aus has brought forward evidence that God’s law was still being carried out under Roman rule, and that adulterers were stoned, so that divorce was not the only choice open to God-fearers right up to the fall of the Temple in AD 70.

Jesus showed that His position on marriage was superior to the Pharisees. (1) It is superior in time. Their position can only be traced back to Moses; His can be traced back ‘to the beginning of the creation.’ (2) It is superior in authority. Their position has only the authority of Moses; His has the authority of His Father behind it.

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In effect Jesus had undermined their position totally by showing how *temporal* and *man-made* it was. It has its origin in Man (Moses), and it was discriminatory in that the law of divorce was drawn up by man, for man, and disregarded the right of women to the exclusive use of their husband’s sexuality (cf. 1 Cor 7:4), which is what God intended ‘from the beginning of the creation’ (no doubt).

Yahweh, in 1406 BC, mentioned ‘hate’ as a ground for divorce. Some pro-divorce Christian writers think that the verb ‘hate’ appears to have become a legal term meaning ‘to divorce’ in rabbinic literature, some 1400 years later. If so, then this is a diachronic shift, and it would have no bearing on the meaning of Deuteronomy 24:3.

Where a verb like ‘hate’ is not a *hapax legomenon*, then Scripture will provide enough contexts to discern its meaning in Deuteronomy 24:2. This is the synchronic method. It is clear that the term ‘hate’ retained its normal meaning in the mid-fifteenth century BC, when Deuteronomy was written. It would be a linguistic blunder to read the later, diachronic *new meaning* of ‘divorce’ back into Deuteronomy 24:2, in order to get rid of hatred as a grounds for divorce. These writers are embarrassed at the thought that Yahweh would nominate hatred as a legitimate grounds for divorce, and so they need to give the word ‘hate’ a new, neutral meaning. Unfortunately, they cannot read back their new meaning into the 15th century BC. So the moral problem remains, How can Yahweh nominate hatred as a legitimate grounds for divorce?

If it was not possible to implement the death penalty for divorce, the question arises, Suppose you are an Orthodox Jew, your spouse commits adultery, and the society in which you live does not enact death for adultery. Are you free to remarry on the grounds that God intends you to have that option? Luther argued that Christians could divorce and remarry on such grounds.

The question is hypothetical and obsolete, because Moses counselled the people that a prophet would arise after him, who was like him, and the people were to listen to Him. We know now that Jesus was that prophet. He abolished the Law once He had fulfilled it. He abolished the death penalty for divorce and scores of other capital offences. He introduced a new law, the law of love and sacrifice, and the permanency of the first marriage vows. The new penalty for adultery was forgiveness, so that the first marriage could continue unbroken and undisolved. This was revolutionary teaching.

7.10.3.1. *The difference between divorce among Jews and Romans*

Josephus recounts the event of the *repudium* sent by Salome to her husband, but he expressly states that this was contrary to Jewish law, which only allowed divorce to be made by husbands, in accordance with Deuteronomy 24:1-3. It is clear from this that upper class Jewish women could take advantage of Roman law to get what they wanted, while the lower classes had to abide by Jewish law. Josephus’s extract reads as follows:

Some time afterwards Salome had occasion to quarrel with Costobarus and soon sent him a document dissolving their marriage, which was not in accordance with Jewish law. For it is (only) the man who is permitted by us to do this, and not even a divorced woman may marry again on her own initiative unless her former husband consents. Salome, however, did not choose to follow her country’s law but acted on her own authority and repudiated her marriage, telling her brother Herod that she had separated from her husband out of loyalty to Herod himself.478

Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, the son of Herod the Great by Miriam the Hasmonean. She divorced her husband, Herod Philip, to marry his brother. Josephus informs us:

Their sister Herodias was married to Herod, the son of Herod the Great by Mariamme, daughter of Simon the high priest. They had a daughter Salome, after whose birth Herodias, taking it into her head to flout the way of our fathers, married Herod, her husband’s brother by the same father, who was tetrarch of Galilee; to do this she parted from a living husband.479

This marriage would have been considered incestuous by the Torah, and by the common people, and by John the Baptist (Mt 14:3-10). Josephus appears to have used desertion as the grounds for marrying his third wife. Here are his own words:

. . . and it was by his [Vespasian] command that I married one of the women taken captive at Caesarea, a virgin and a native of that place. She did not, however, remain long with me, for she left me on my obtaining my release and accompanying Vespasian to Alexandria. 480

She may have regarded Josephus as a hated traitor, and for self-preservation she abandoned him. In all, Josephus had four wives. We learn from his Vita that his fourth wife came from Crete.

Rabbi Shammai showed some concern for the ease with which his fellow-Jews could obtain a divorce for the most trivial reasons. He tried to reduce the grounds to unfaithfulness, but this was a step too far. But he had a predecessor in the time of Simon ben Shetah, about two generations earlier, at the start of the first century B.C., when there was an attempt to make it too expensive for the husband to get a divorce. Yaron summed up the situation as follows:

In the Talmudic period divorce was a unilateral, arbitrary act of the husband, but his pecuniary obligations incidental to divorce might impose restrictions upon his freedom of action. As a consequence of the dissolution of the marriage he is not only bound to restore all that the woman had brought with her as dowry (neduniah); he had also to pay all that he promised to her in her marriage contract (her kethubah). This arrangement reflects the metamorphosis of the biblical mohar (which had been a cash payment to the father of the bride, prior to marriage) into a fund designed to provide for the wife in case of the termination of the relationship (by the death of the husband, or by divorce, provided she did not bear the blame). Talmudic sources describe this postponement of payment until after the dissolution of the marriage as introduced on purpose, to make divorce more

This is a reprint of “Concerning Divorce in Jewish and Roman Law,” Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research 21 (1952) 3-34.

479 Josephus, Ant. 18.5.4. (136).
difficult. This development had been completed already in the time of Simon ben Shetah, at the beginning of the first century B.C.\(^{482}\)

Under Roman law the continued state of a marriage depended solely on both parties agreeing to live with one another. If either of them felt the time had come to part then the marriage is dissolved (\textit{divortium}). That was how fragile a Roman marriage was. If both spouses agreed it was time to divorce, then there was no problem. It happened. We are fortunate to have a definition of \textit{divortium} draw up by a lawyer called Gaius in the 2nd century A.D. He defined it as: “The term \textit{divortium} is derived either from the difference of minds (of the parties), or from the fact that the parties who are tearing the marriage asunder are going their different ways.”\(^{483}\) If only one of the spouses, be it husband or wife, it made no difference, wanted out of the marriage, then it was over. Such cases were called a \textit{repudium} (a repudiation).\(^{484}\) It was considered wrong in Roman law to exclude the possibility of a divorce, or to pay a penalty in the event of a divorce. The spouses were free to stay or go. There was no formal appearance in court to effect a divorce. All it required was that a real will to divorce should be manifested, so that it was not a case of simple abandonment in a moment of anger. Roman law did not require any special grounds for divorce. It was as easy for women as for men to demand and get a divorce. So frequent were divorces becoming that Seneca complains that there are women who do not number the years by consuls but by husbands. He complains, they divorce to marry, and they marry to divorce. Another Roman writer, Martial, remarks concerning a woman who in thirty days had married and divorced ten husbands.\(^{485}\) It is not easy to restrain immorality through the legal system, because Romans defended their liberties. Caesar Augustus had to overcome severe obstacles to secure approval for his two laws—\textit{de adulteriis} and \textit{de maritandis ordinaribus}—which favoured marriage, and the birth rate, and opposed adultery. The \textit{lex lilia de adulteris} also laid down that a divorce must be witnessed in the presence of seven Roman citizens over the age of puberty, which was no deterrent at all.

In Hellenistic Egypt both spouses could dissolve a marriage for any reason. The Jews set up a military colony on the island in the Nile (Elephantine), and it is clear from 5th century B.C. documents that wives and husbands were equal when it came to divorcing one another, which was contrary to Jewish practice in Palestine.\(^{486}\) As in Rome, so in Hellenistic Egypt, the marriage could be dissolved either by consent or unilaterally, without any formalities, or bills of divorce. Ironically, Hillel’s divorce was slightly stricter than Roman divorce, if that is possible. Fornication was commonplace throughout the Roman Empire, and this included the Jews, resulting in Jesus calling the Jewish nation a generation of adulterers. Paul had to counsel married Christian couples in Corinth, a city noted for its prostitutes, to use the natural outlet that marriage provided to avoid the temptation to give in to ‘easy sex.’ Because of the universal prevalence of fornication, when the Council of Jerusalem met, one of the four ‘necessary things’ the entire Church was to give heed to was to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:29), not some minor incestuous relationships, which were universally recognised to be unlawful marriages.

It is against the background of this universal culture of free sex that Jesus is careful to exempt the hard-hearted husband (who divorced his wife) from blame for his wife’s pre-divorce fornication, or her post-divorce fornication. She is a moral creature, and she knows right from wrong. She alone must bear the penalty for her own fornication; she cannot blame that on her husband, and neither does the Lord Jesus in His exemption clause in Matthew 5:32. However, if she believed that her divorce dissolved her marriage, and she remarried, the sin of her remarriage would be blamed on her husband, and not on her.

The culture of free sex and divorce-on-call over the flimsiest of causes, was changed with the inroads that Christianity made into the upper, ruling classes. With a clear doctrine of ‘no divorce and no remarriage’ as a dominant factor among the Christian communities throughout the Empire, this set Christianity far above the Jewish religion, which the Roman authorities would have been in contact with for a couple of centuries. Suddenly marriage was raised to a level never before seen on earth. It was to be a life-long union with no freedom to dissolve it. This made Christians, in particular, very wary to commit themselves to such a union on emotional factors alone, or good looks. The risks of being tied down and unable to serve the Lord Jesus as fully as possible was a crucial factor to consider. Those who did marry were then under an obligation never to seek a divorce on any grounds, so that the divorce rate among Christians was potentially zero.

When eventually Christianity entered Caesar’s palace, Constantinus promulgated a new constitution whose aim was to make divorce harder to obtain. Like Moses, he was in no position to ban divorce, but, like Moses, he might try to put obstacles in the way of ‘easy divorce.’ The new law that Constantinus brought in stated that a wife could only obtain a divorce if the husband had been guilty of a major crime (magna crimina), and even then, she had to wait five years before she could remarry. Her biological clock was ticking away and the loss of five years of child-bearing in a young woman was a serious deterrent to entering into a remarriage. If she divorced him for lesser crimes she could not remarry at all. If she divorced her husband without satisfying any of the grounds laid down in Constantinus’s law she suffered the loss of her dowry and the husband’s donatio, and she could be deported.

The husband could divorce his wife for a major crime (magna crimina), and remarry immediately. If he divorced for a less serious offence (morum culpa) he could remarry after two years. The following is Pharr’s translation of Constantinus new constitution (C. Th. 3.16.2):

Emperors Honorius, Theodosius, and Constantius Augustuses to Palladius, Praetorian Prefect.

If a woman should serve notice of divorce upon her husband and separate from him and if she should prove no grounds for divorce, the gifts shall be annulled which she had received when betrothed. She shall also be deprived of her dowry, and she shall be sentenced to the punishment of deportation. We deny her not only the right to a union with a subsequent husband, but even the right of postliminium [restoration to civic privileges on return from exile]. But if a woman who has revolted against her marriage should prove merely flaws of character and ordinary faults [in her husband], she shall lose her dowry and restore to her husband all gifts, and never at all shall she be associated in marriage with any man. In order that she may not defile her widowhood with wanton debauchery, We grant to the repudiated husband the right to bring an accusation.

1. It remains to say that if a woman who withdraws should prove serious grounds and a conscience involved in great crimes, she shall obtain possession of her dowry and shall also retain the betrothal bounty, and she shall regain the right to marry after a period of five years from the day of the divorce. For then it will appear that she has done this from loathing of her own husband rather than from a desire for another husband.

2 (1). Certainly if the husband should be the first to give notice of divorce and if he

487 Shades of Paul’s injunction that if a wife ‘separates’ she is to remain unmarried for the rest of her life, or else be reconciled.
should charge his wife with a grave crime, he shall prosecute the accused woman in accordance with the law, and when he has obtained his revenge, he shall both get possession of her dowry and recover his bounty to her, and he shall acquire the unrestricted right to marry another woman immediately.

3. If it is a fault of character and not of criminality, the husband shall recover his gifts but relinquish the dowry, and he shall have the right to marry another woman after a period of two years.

4. But if the husband should wish to dissolve the marriage because of a mere disagreement and should charge the repudiated woman with no vices or sins, he shall lose both his gifts and the dowry and be compelled to live in perpetual celibacy; he shall suffer punishment for his insolent divorce in the sadness of solitude; and the woman shall be granted the right to marry after the termination of a year. Moreover, We order to be preserved the guarantees of the ancient law in regard to the retentions from dowries, on account of children.

Given on the sixth day before the ides of March at Ravenna in the year of the consulship of Eustathius and Agricola. — March 10, 421.

What is significant about this new constitution is that if after a wife divorces her husband, but before she marries another man, if she commits fornication her divorced husband has the right to prosecute her even though she is divorced from him. The Jews had a law that after he divorced his wife she could not marry without his consent; so there is a residue of headship authority lingering over her until the moment she is finally married to her second husband, who then takes over the headship responsibility from the first husband.

The other thing is that if the husband divorces her for a trivial offence, say, her frivolity, he must wait two years before he can remarry. But under Hillel’s rules the husband can marry immediately.

Constantinus’s enlightened Constitution proved too rigid to those who had the political clout, and so Emperor Theodosius II abolished it in A.D. 436. However, he and Valentinian III had to revive the earlier system, prohibiting repudiation (repudium) without just cause (iusta causa), and increased the number of ‘just causes’ (iustae causae) to fourteen.

In A.D. 497 Emperor Anastasius decreed that in the case of mutual consent to divorce, the wife could remarry after one year.488

7.10.3.2. The situation reflected in the Mishnah

The Scriptures are clear that a wife and her lover are to be punished by death (Lev. 20:10; Deut 22:22). It is claimed that under Roman rule the Jewish Sanhedrin could not carry out the death penalty. Roger Aus has provided evidence that the death penalty was carried out, and it seems to have been the enlightened policy of the Roman governors to allow religious penalties to be carried out in all their far-flung provinces, as a matter of course, but for all civil matters to come under their direct control. Thus it was that Pilate gave the Sanhedrin the option of judging Jesus according to their devolved jurisdiction and put Jesus to death if He broke their religious laws.

The Mishnah was put together about two hundred years after Jesus ascended into heaven, and it was not just to be a history book. It was compiled to take into account that the Jews had lost their nationhood, their autonomy, and they had to adjust to a new environment where they came under Gentile governments. Hence we have clues in the Mishnah itself how they converted the penalties stipulated in the Law when it came to punishing adulterers and adulteresses. Scattered throughout the Diaspora the alternative to the death penalty was to bring in divorce, because that

was something a Jewish community could control and inflict.

In the Mishnah the wife who committed adultery with a secret lover was divorced by her husband, in lieu of the death penalty, and she was forbidden to marry her lover (M. Sot. 5:1). This situation was against the Law of God, but what else could they do, seeing they did not have the authority to keep to their Law? If, after a wife was divorced for adultery, and it became known that she had married her adulterous lover, then that marriage had to be divorced (M. Yeb. 2:8). In all cases of adultery, the faithless wife had to be divorced from her husband (which mirrored what would have happened had the death penalty been in force) and she lost the ketubah. In all such cases of adultery the wife was prohibited to her husband for ever. There could be no reconciliation. Lövestam noted that adultery on the part of the married woman is a compulsory ground for divorce and is fully sanctioned in the Talmud (compiled in the 5/6th cent A.D.).

It is tempting to read this Jewish accommodation to the loss of the death penalty into Judea, under Roman rule, and to see Jesus adopting this more lenient attitude toward this one-sided rule that men could impose on their wives, but leave themselves free to have extra-marital affairs on the side, without any penalties for these acts of fornication. But in Jesus’ case, He not only abolished the concept of divorce, but ruled that all remarriages, while both spouses were still alive, was an adulterous affair. The Mishnah never got that far. Jesus addresses the issue of a wife divorcing her husband. This was anathema in rabbinc circles. Only the man had the right to make out a bill of divorce. Josephus states that any other procedure was in defiance of the Jewish law (Ant. XV, 259). In Mishnah Yeb. 14:1 the principle is formulated in the following way: “A man who gives divorce is not like a woman who is divorced. For while a woman may be divorced with her consent as well as without it, a man can give divorce only with his full consent.”

In 542, under Justinian, a husband could divorce his wife if she committed adultery, or flaunted her sexuality, such as taking part in banquets, or assisting in public performances, attending the baths with other men, or taking lodgings with another without her husband’s consent and authority. There was no death penalty for adultery. All of the other offences would have come under Christian headship.

The wife, on the other hand, had recourse to the courts if her husband unjustly accused her of adultery, or had attempted to dishonour, defame, disgrace or prostitute her, or if he took another woman into his house, or habitually cohabited with another woman. In all other cases divorce was deemed to be unjust and punishable. In the case of the wife, she was sent into a convent and deprived of her possessions. However, it was possible for a husband to take back his adulterous wife from the convent after two years.

In the case of a husband, he only suffered patrimonial damages. Penalties were laid down for magistrates who did not immediately hand over the wife to the custody of the bishop, or failed to punish the husband.

Finally, in 548 the disparity of treatment before the law was eliminated when the penalties against wives were extended to husbands divorcing without cause. The State represented the furthest that man can go toward the Creator’s ideal: ‘mutual consent creates marriage, for among men whatever is bound together may be loosed [by man]’ (nuptias consensus facit mutuus nam inter homines quidquid ligatur omne dissolubile), and this God permitted man in general to get away with, but now through the Church the entire universe is being called to account, and to accept that what God has joined together man may not break apart (Quod Deus coniunxit, homo non separet). The nations can no longer go on doing what they have been doing ‘from the beginning of creation.’ A

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day of reckoning is on the horizon.

### 7.10.4. Jesus and His relationship to the Torah

To answer the question about Jesus’ attitude toward the Torah more fully we need to step back to consider Jesus’ relationship to the Law. Up until the Law was given to Moses, the way to please God was to obey His commands and ponder His statements. But when mankind became increasingly lawless and indifferent to anything God said, and they went their own way, God did not give up on His bigger vision—His long-term goal of being reconciled to all mankind through the substitutionary death of His Son (Rom 5:10). Since that part of His plan of salvation lay far in the future, God introduced the Law as a means of holding one nation in check from becoming so corrupt that the promises He made to Adam, Noah and Abraham could not be fulfilled. The Law was a temporary measure. It was never intended to replace ‘the righteousness of faith’ that remained in existence from Adam to Jesus. However, by introducing ‘the righteousness of Law’ this was intended to be in addition to, or in support of, the ‘righteousness of faith’. In other words, the man walking by faith was now required to keep the Law. This resulted in two categories of Israelites. In the first category were those who ‘lived by faith,’ who then had to obey the Mosaic Law. In the second category were the vast majority, who were not living by faith, but who set about to obey the Law as an end in itself. This obedience would not save one of them, because it was impossible to keep the Law. Theoretically, therefore, if any Israelite could keep the Law perfectly, he would have been saved through his own efforts (through works, as Paul calls it).

What Jesus did in becoming a Jew was to put Himself in the shoes of a Jew and keep the Law perfectly. In that way He obtained the righteousness that is through the Law. It is this righteousness that is on offer to all men. We please God through our proxy—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now once Jesus had kept the Mosaic Law fully, there was no need for anyone to try and keep it perfectly. Jesus effectively closed down the Law as a means of pleasing God. The way to please God was to take Jesus’ righteousness as a gift from Him, and offer that to God. In this way we can be said to have kept the Mosaic Law perfectly. We did not do it ourselves, we did it through Jesus—our proxy.

Jesus’ attitude toward the Law of His Father is that it has ceased to be an independent way to please God. But the Law itself is good, if it is used lawfully (1 Tim 1:8). The Law is spiritual (Rom. 7:14), but, as Paul put it, “We are dead to the Law” (Rom 7:4) as regards seeing it as an alternative way of pleasing God, without having to go through Jesus Christ.

Romans 7:6, “and now we have ceased from the Law, that [Law] being dead in which we were [once] held, so that we serve [God & Christ] in newness of spirit.”

It is clear from this short summary that the Law was never designed for the man of faith. It was designed specifically for sinners, not for saints. The saints before Moses’s birth were saved by faith. Hence Paul can say: “that for a righteous man law is not set, but for lawless and insubordinate persons, ungodly and sinners,” (1 Tim 1:9). He also said: “so that the law became our child-conductor — to Christ, that by faith we may be declared righteous” (Gal. 3:24). The Mosaic Law only came into existence “on account of the transgressions, . . . till the seed should come to which the Promise had been made,” (Gal 3:19). That ‘seed’ was Christ.

It is clear from reading the Mosaic Law that God introduced a lower standard of behaviour that was within the reach of the unregenerate man to abide by. It was just possible to be declared a ‘righteous person’ by God, if they could keep every single law perfectly, without one slip up.

Paul recognised that the Law contained divine wisdom, advice on all sorts of topics, and instruction on hygiene, social networking, marriage, warfare, economics, etc., etc. Consequently, there is no reason why we may not avail ourselves of this body of wisdom. What we must never do is make it a condition of salvation. That is the thing Paul is battling against all the time with Jewish Christians in Romans, Galatians and Ephesians. He wants them to take advantage of its wisdom, but he is dead set against those who see it as a condition of salvation.
Christians are confused over the Law. Are they under it, and obliged to obey its every precept? No, shouts Paul, at them. Never! never! never! Should they then ignore it altogether? Paul’s answer is the same. No. The Law is good. The Law is spiritual, but be very careful how you use it, he adds. Paul is clear that when God designed the Law, He lowered His standards to bring His ‘righteousness’ within the ability of sinners to keep. When His chosen nation of sinners found it impossible to keep certain of His standards which He had laid on to Adam in the Garden of Eden, such as ‘one wife for life’ and no option to divorce, the Israelites rejected this higher standard and forced through a system of divorce. Moses was constrained to accede to the demands of hard-hearted husbands and permit their lower standard to prevail (Deut 24:1-4). God, however, stepped in and put a rider on their lower standard and demanded that once they divorced their wives they could never be reconciled to them again, while they lived. This rider effectively sealed them in their sin, thus making it impossible for these adulterers to be saved (or enter His ‘rest,’ as the writer to the Epistle of the Hebrews put it). This was a slap in their face. God reluctantly accepted the lower level that they wanted to live at, because they were fleshly, carnal, unspiritual, and unregenerate.

But all that was done away with when Jesus fulfilled the perfect law of God. Jesus has re-introduced the pre-Mosaic standard that God had demanded of all men from Adam to Moses. This is why Jesus went back to Genesis 2:24 for the original standard that was God’s will for all mankind. And it is to this, pre-Torah, standard that all Christians are obliged to live by. It they try to do this in the flesh, then they are not born-again. If they are born-again, and the Spirit of Christ lives in their moral bodies, then it will be easy, or should be. If they are backsliding Christians then Christ’s standard becomes an oppressive burden, and they will remarriy to satisfy the flesh. If they are spiritual, and Christ truly dwells in them, then it will be a delight to abstain from all extra-marital relationships and devote their new found freedom to serving Christ (1 Cor 7:27, 37). All marriages following divorce violate the normal standard of behaviour that should characterise all born again Christians.

The danger facing every Christian is to diminish the influence of Christ’s presence within him or her, by allowing the old man to come alive again. If he does become alive again, then that Christian will quench the Holy Spirit residing within him, and things will start to disintegrate. He will become more and more worldly in his thinking, and in the end he will return to his unregenerate state, in which he will be hardened by God (2 Pet 2:22; Heb 6:1-6; 10:26).

Paul, John and Peter make the case that being ‘born again’ is such an other-worldly experience that it cannot be mimicked, though many try. It is truly a transforming experience. The expression, ‘All things become new,’ does not do justice to the experience. If a man does not experience this transformation, he will find it very difficult to follow Jesus’ teaching. This experience lifts one to a higher plane of values. It provides the Christian with an elevated platform from which he can evaluate all things, and see how he can use everything to form a very close relationship with his Saviour. To be a Christian one must have the spirit of Christ living in him, and directing all he does to the glory of God.

If he is spiritual he will never go back to the lower standard of the Mosaic Law and seek to take advantage of its lower expectations to remarry, or to avoid the explicit teaching of the Spirit in the New Testament writings on other topics that he finds a nuisance.

Now, with this as background, we can see where Martin Luther went wrong. He has gone back to something which “has become obsolete and old” (Heb 8:13). This was the first mistake. He is trying to take advantage of a pre-Christian dispensation.

The second error was to try to apply the Mosaic Law in Christ’s Church. The Lord Jesus abolished the death penalty. Independently of the Law, He introduced His own penalty for departures from standards which should be innate, and normal, in every one who claims to be born again. We see this in the case of the man who committed incest in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. Under the obsolete, Mosaic Law, this violation would have received the death penalty. Under Christ, this violation is punished by excommunication, because, for someone to stoop to such a low level of
behaviour, it is clear evidence that the Spirit of Christ does not dwell in him, therefore he is excommunicated because he is not of the Body of Christ, or if he is of the Body of Christ, and has slipped up, then this severe punishment will bring him to his senses, and produce repentance (hopefully). If no repentance comes, then his excommunication fits his unspiritual condition.

The third error is typical of those who want to get round Scripture when itstands in the way of marrying another spouse. A pseudo-principle of interpretation is invented to get round the roadblock of the wording of Scripture, namely, use the imagination of going through the court scene in Moses’ day where the adulteress is stoned to death. By assuming that a metaphorical death of the guilty party has taken place, the innocent party is granted the right to remarry. How selective is this kind of interpretation? Does one apply the law of suspicion whereby the wife is forced to undergo the ordeal of drinking the dust of the ground?

Jesus upheld the Law of the death penalty because the Law had not yet been abolished in His life-time through His death on the cross. He did not commute the death penalty to divorce during His life-time. But once the Law had been made obsolete, then His own New Covenant law replaced it. The death of Jesus severed His connection with the Mosaic Law.

7.10.4.1. The case of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53–8:11)

If Jesus was faced with the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8) after His resurrection, He would not have told the Jews to stone her. Because Jesus’ death marked the dividing line between keeping the Law and viewing it as redundant as the standard for life, this may account for the PA being omitted in some very early copies of John’s Gospel, because, as a sinless person, He was bound to keep the Law, and lift up the first stone to throw at her, because He was still living ‘under the Law.’ The fact that He didn’t suggested that He disapproved of the death penalty. This may explain why this pericope was omitted.

While Jesus waited for others to cast the first stone He occupied His time writing something in the dust. What did He write? What He wrote does not matter; that He wrote something that made sense is the significant thing.

Jesus wrote in the dust, from which He created Adam as a sinless person. Divorce was not written into the dust from which Adam derived his being. Divorce does not go back to the origin of mankind. The indissoluble nature of marriage came first. Divorce came into existence at a later time, after the entrance of original sin into the human psyche.

Christ came to restore the woman taken in adultery to the state that Eve begun her sinless life in. Out of the dust rose the sinless being of Adam, and when the Lord rose from writing in the dust a transformation had taken place in the woman’s life, and the injunction to her of ‘Go and sin no more,’ marked a new beginning in her life, so that she, like Eve, entered a state in which it was once again possible not to sin. Christ had just created a new woman, a new Eve, in His own image, as He wrote in the dust from which she was taken. He imprinted words in the dust, which gave the dust life, and meaning, and a significance that it did not have before. He gave life to dead dust, which represented the woman standing before Him. “She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” (1 Tim 5:6). Jesus regarded all humans as dead from birth: “Let the dead bury their own dead” (Mt 8:22 and Lk 9:60), hence His insistence that all men must be born again if they are to enter the Kingdom of God (Heaven). Until they experience that, they are the walking dead. She was dead. The dust was dead. But Jesus imparted life to both. One was a mirror of the other.

Luther and other Reformers took a long time to disentangle, or distance themselves from the Mosaic Law, but today we are a lot clearer on the attitude we should adopt toward the Mosaic Law, and the relationship between the Law and Gospel.

In the eyes of God all lawfully wedded couples, Christian and non-Christian, are in a one-flesh union, as the Book of Common Prayer put it, ‘till death do us part.’ We have only ‘one wife for life.’ The law of Christ is that all lawful unions are under the same law, namely, only death can separate the spouses, and any second marriage while both spouses are still alive, is an adulterous relationship, and no adulterer or adulteress will be with Him in His Kingdom. They are excluded
according to Romans 7:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of Christians in a second-marriage situation, which will prevent them from entering the Kingdom of God, but the majority of them are totally unaware of the dangerous state they are in. It is up to those who know the teaching of Christ to warn them to be separate from the unclean thing, and Jesus will welcome them back.

We can conclude this section by noting that if the Pharisees who came to Jesus (in Matthew 19:1), did so to find out whose side He was on in the debate between the two rival interpretations over what were the lawful grounds for obtaining a divorce, which might have been later on represented by the schools of Hillel (liberal) and Shammai (much stricter), they were in for a shock. To everyone’s surprise-cum-consternation He brushed aside both antagonists as irrelevant and put forward the most strict interpretation of Scripture that had ever been voiced in the entire history of Israel, for He banned divorce for any cause, small or great, venial or capital, from an indecent thing right through to adultery and fornication. In His new Kingdom divorce was incompatible with forgiveness. The eyes of the Pharisees must have widened, and their mouths opened, and their jaws dropped, in total disbelief at what they were hearing. A similar reaction of disbelief occurs when the so-called exception clauses of Matthew are revealed to point in the opposite direction and strengthen Jesus’ position that divorce under any name is unlawful in the eyes of God, and is not to have any place in His Church. This doctrine would set His people apart from the rest of the world.

7.10.5. Jesus and His relationship to the rabbis

The Gospel of Matthew was written to convince the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah; the one whom Moses prophesied would come. Matthew is fully aware of the destructive role that the rabbis played in coming between the people and God. They were Jesus’ greatest enemies and opponents during His entire four-year ministry on earth, and they eventually had Him killed to silence Him. If the doctrines of Jesus were to bring the people of God into a new covenant relationship with God, the threat that the rabbis posed had to be exposed and eliminated. Jesus had to undermine their privileged, mediatorial position between God and man. They had to be moved out of the way to allow Jesus to occupy the role of the sole mediator between God and man.

Matthew is the only Gospel to record Jesus’ utter disdain for the rabbis. The other Gospels are completely silent regarding the war that existed between the rabbis and Jesus all the days of His public ministry, because this knowledge was of no immediate relevance to their respective readerships. Mark and Luke passed over Jesus’ severe denunciation of the rabbis in silence, but not Matthew. He sets out to show that the real enemy of the Jewish people were the rabbis. He does this by mentioning the blindness of the rabbis to be fit leaders of God’s people, on six separate occasions.

John records in his Gospel numerous occasions where the religious leaders were in total control of the national religion and had the public audacity to seek to kill religious heretics, such as Jesus. They had their own Temple police force. See John 5:16, 18 (Judea); 7:1, 19, 20, 25 (Galilee); 8:22, 37, 40; 11:53; 12:10. These twelve references to assassination attempts on Jesus’ life at the instigation of the highest religious authority had strong, religious backing in the Law of Moses, where law-breakers and blasphemers were to be stoned to death. Paul was one of these zealous defenders of the Law of Moses, and he had letters of authority from the chief priests to kill any of Jesus’ followers.

The first recorded denunciation of the rabbis by Jesus occurred in His mid-third year. By this time there was open, verbal warfare between Jesus and the rabbis, who had been deeply offended by something Jesus had said, and because He called them hypocrites. When His disciples alerted Jesus to their antagonism toward Him, Jesus is disdainful of their opposition and replied, “Let them alone.” In modern parlance this would be, “Ignore them completely,” or, “Forget them!” Then He added, “Guides they are,” which looks like a compliment, until He added, “blind ones of blind ones.” In modern parlance this could translate as, “the most blind of all the blind,” or simply, “blind ones belonging to the class of blind persons.” Whichever way we read it, it was not a compliment! Its pithiness packed a powerful punch of utter disdain and total disrespect for the
rabbis as a class. This would have a tremendous impact on Matthew’s readers. Jesus is on one side, and the rabbis are on the other side, is Matthew’s message to his readers. But Matthew is not content to leave it at that. He records that Jesus then added, “Now if a blind man should lead a blind man both shall fall into a pit.” The insulting insinuation that Jesus conveyed was that the rabbis were ignorant and they were leading the ignorant into their own brand of ignorance! This kind of spirited language was not going to endear Jesus to the rabbinical class. Class mentality and group psychology would ensure that to a man the entire rabbinic class would be out to destroy Him and His reputation. But what did Jesus care? He was master of His own destiny and His own teaching. He neither sought or courted their approval. He stood alone against the entire religious establishment. He had passed the point of no return in His relationship with them. He had burnt His boats.

Matthew records that in Jesus’ mid-fourth year (about six months before His death), in quick succession on one occasion He denounced the rabbis, threatening them with a triple curse, “Woe to you . . . you hypocrites!” “Woe to you . . . you hypocrites!” “Woe to you . . . you hypocrites!” (Mt 23:13, 14, 15). We can feel the hot breath of Jesus’ indignation and denunciation here. He immediately hurls a torrent of abuse at the rabbis, “Woe to you, blind guides, . . . fools and blind, . . . fools and blind, . . . hypocrites! . . . blind guides, . . . hypocrites! . . . blind Pharisee, . . . hypocrites! . . . hypocrites! . . . Serpents! brood of vipers! How can you escape from the judgment of Gehenna?” (Mt 23:16-33).

It is an understatement to say that there was no love lost between Jesus and the debased class (‘brood’) of rabbis. They are a distinctive breed of religious academics who are destined for hell without the shadow of a doubt in Jesus’ mind. You would not want to be a follower of them, or be in any way associated with them, is Matthew’s clear message to his countrymen. Matthew knows that these are the academics who will see to it that Jesus ends up on a Roman cross, by hook or by crook, by fair or foul means.

Yet there are those today who glory in the fruits of these ‘brood of vipers,’ and promote their exegesis as if it were from God Himself!

John records a revelation from Jesus that came just before the Feast of Dedication, about three or four months before Jesus’ death, in which He said, “For judgment I came to this world, that those not seeing may see, and those seeing may become blind” (Jn 9:39). When the rabbis heard this they asked Him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus replied, “If you were blind, you were not having had sin.” By this He meant, “If blind men [you had confessed] to be, not [for]ever would you have sin [unrepented of]. But now that you say, ‘We can see,’ therefore your sin remains [unrepented of].”

The class of people that Jesus meant by “those not seeing,” were the spiritually blind, who were conscious that they were blind. The class of people that Jesus meant by “those seeing” were the spiritually sighted who were supremely conscious that they could see. These were the rabbis and the religious classes.

The physically blind came to Jesus because they wanted to see the physical world. Jesus was crucial to their heart’s desire. The sighted people had no need to come to Jesus to have their sight restored. Jesus was redundant to their requirements.

Jesus transferred the physical into the spiritual sphere. The ‘blind’ would come to Him to have their ‘sight’ restored; the ‘sighted’ would not come to Jesus because they could ‘see’ already.

This clever piece of analogy suited the spiritual state that the rabbis found themselves in. They had no need to come to Jesus to ‘see’ God’s truth, because they were not ‘blind.’ After all, they were the teachers of the nation. Jesus was redundant to their requirements.

From Jesus’ perspective, what the rabbis considered to be their ‘sight,’ was, in fact, a blindness. And, as in the physical world, the sighted people did not feel any need to go to Jesus to receive their physical sight, so the ‘sighted’ rabbis in the spiritual world did not feel any need to go

491 Luke records the same thought without mentioning who Jesus was referring to in Luke 6:39, “Is a blind one able to lead a blind one? Will they not both fall into a pit?”
to Jesus to receive their spiritual sight. So they locked themselves into their own spiritual blindness for all time to come. Jesus was surplus to their requirements and so redundant. The stone that the builders rejected, the same became head of the corner.

Jesus taught the same truth when He said that those who are well have no need of a doctor, but only those who are sick. But if the sick believe that they are well they cannot make use of the skill of the doctor to make them better. They will die in their sickness.

The rabbis were blind, but they denied it. They claimed that they could see, and so they had no need to come to Jesus to receive their sight. Because of this they would live and die in their blind condition, or as Jesus put it, their sins would remain until they came to their senses and recognised that they were ‘blind’ all along.

In the light of this cameo sketch of the utter disdain that Jesus showed toward the religious leaders of His day, it is surprising that some Christian writers present Jesus as shaking hands with such rabbis over their exegesis of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Jesus was on another level altogether from the rabbis with His teaching that any rabbi who looked on another man’s wife and only thought of adultery, he had committed adultery already in his heart, and he had broken the Seventh Commandment, which breach carried the death penalty.

To rise to the level that Jesus was at required a supernatural change in the nature of man, which Jesus called being ‘born again,’ into a different, spiritual world, while still living in this physical world. The package that Jesus was offering the world was to come to Him and take His ‘yoke’ upon themselves, and they would escape the sordid world that the rabbis were living in and advocating.

The rabbis of Jesus’ day are still alive today, and still advocating that Christians come to them for instruction on how to get out of their dreadful marriages. They offer to break the ‘yoke’ of an unwanted relationship; and they offer to lift the heavy burden that hangs over their lives. Their ‘yoke’ is easy divorce, and their ‘burden’ is slight compared to the relief. Jesus could not have illustrated the vast gulf that separated Him from the rabbis in a more telling manner than when He likened them to being blind compared to a sighted person. When rabbis come in the guise of Christian leaders, then we are seeing wolves in sheep’s clothing.
PART 8. GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN COUNSELLORS

In any counselling situation the first thing the Christian counsellor needs to do is to establish the theology of the spouses. Knowledge is crucial. On the one hand, the Christian counsellor needs to know exactly what Jesus taught about divorce and remarriage, and crucially, what the Holy Spirit has revealed about the headship of man. If the Christian counsellor has a false view of these two doctrines, or a defective one, or holds a heretical view, then his counselling will be flawed, and indeed, it may be so different from Christ’s teaching that he may advise divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances of his own choosing (claiming, of course, that they are biblical). On the other hand, the Christian counsellor must gain information about the married couple, and see where they are coming from, which will usually be from an unbiblical humanist and/or feminist point of view if they are both unbelievers.

Truth can never be termed ‘extreme.’ By its very nature, truth is what is true. And there are some things that have been predetermined by God as ‘right.’ One of these is that the marriage union is for life. A wife is for life. Adam and Eve both fell from a state of unselfish love into a state of selfish interest. From this fall emerged divorce and remarriage.

Due to the inability of fallen man to live up to the truth about marriage, divorce was introduced by man to cope with his selfish nature. His incapacity to forgive freely, as God forgives his transgressions, contributed to the emergence of divorce among mankind. It did not come from God. It is not part of truth. It opposes truth.

Jesus reintroduced mankind to the original instruction on the permanency of the one-flesh union. In doing so He abolished what man had introduced. It might seem extreme of Jesus to abolish the provision of divorce, but truth can never be termed ‘extreme.’ Truth is what God has determined is ‘right,’ and what He has determined as ‘right’ is that marriage is for life, and the union is broken only by death. If the Christian counsellor is armed with the truth that Jesus abolished divorce and remarriage, and has reinstituted the life-long, one-flesh union, then he will have a different approach to counselling broken marriages. It is not the job of any counsellor to interfere with the truth as revealed by Jesus, or tone it down, or reinterpret His words to permit what He has forbidden. The Christian counsellor should speak as if the Lord Jesus were speaking through him, as He should be. If he does, he will not have very many followers, and his counsel will not be sought after; he will be ostracised; he will not be popular; and he will certainly not be a minister of a denominational church. He will be regarded as an ‘extremist’ and side-lined.

Our Lord’s teaching on divorce does not rest solely on the absence of ei in Matthew 19:9. The nature of the life He imparts to the Christian is such that an unforgiving spirit is contrary to His spirit dwelling in the Christian. Jesus noted carefully the question the Pharisees put to Him. They asked if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife. They did not ask if it was lawful for a wife to put away her husband ‘for every cause.’ Their mind-set was sexist and discriminatory. The law in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 was written by man for man’s benefit. It was deliberately loaded against the rights of women.

In the wording of that law there was an ambiguity which the rabbis exploited to the advantage of men. The law read: “When a man takes a wife and has married her, and it transpires that she does not find favour in his eyes, because he has found in her nakedness of something, . . . and sent her out of his house. . . .” The question arose, do the words “found in her nakedness of something,” explain the phrase “she does not find favour in his eyes,” or are they two different grounds for divorce? Rabbi Hillel argued that they were two different issues. She can be divorced if “she does not find favour in his eyes;” and she can be divorced if her husband “found in her

492 For a detailed study of the love-headship relationship between God and Man, and Man and Woman, see the author’s web-page at: www.lmf12.wordpress.com/ and the work entitled, “Good Order in the Church.”
nakedness of something.” It was on this basis that if a wife burned her husband’s dinner, she would “not find favour in his eyes” and so she could be divorced instantly. Rabbi Shammai argued that there was only one ground for divorce, namely, if a man “found in her nakedness of something.” For him, that meant only sexual misdemeanours constituted grounds for divorce.

These two rabbis, no doubt, drew up their long lists of what constituted grounds for divorce. They both agreed that first on their list was divorce for fornication and adultery, then sexual misdemeanours of an embarrassing nature, such as wives bathing in a public place (Bathsheba), or being indecently dressed, or anything of a sexual nature that would embarrass their husbands. After a long list of sexual prohibitions would come Hillel’s bottomless list of non-sexual matters which could be grounds for divorce, with burning her husband’s dinner near the bottom.

Jesus knew that divorce was an evil thing, in and of itself. It was the fruit of hard-heartedness. He could see that divorce was man’s way of saying, “I will never forgive you.’

Divorce is the expression of hatred toward a fellow human being.
Divorce depraves the user of it as much as the abuser of it.
Divorce deprives the user of fellowship with God.
Divorce is the use of sin to fight sin.
Divorce multiplies sin.
Multiply divorce, and you multiply sin.
Divorce is an admission that forgiveness is impossible.
Divorce can only exist where an unforgiving spirit exists.
Divorce pollutes the innocent and the guilty parties.
Divorce is an unclean state for the innocent and the guilty parties.
There are guilty and innocent parties before divorce. After divorce, both parties are guilty.
After divorce both parties are excluded from the Kingdom of God.
There is no place for divorce in the Kingdom of God.
Where divorce abounds, sin abounds.
Where sin abounds, divorce abounds.
Love is gentle and kind. Divorce is harsh and brutal.
Love is positive. Divorce is negative.
Love is long-suffering. Divorce is short-tempered.
Love seeks not her own. Divorce seeks its own.
Love bears all things. Divorce bears nothing.
Love never fails. Divorce never wins.
Love is soft-hearted. Divorce is hard-hearted.
Love is the zenith of goodness. Divorce is the nadir of evil.
Love is the reaction of the new heart. Divorce is the reaction of the old heart.
God and love go together. Divorce and evil go together.
God and evil are incompatible. Love and divorce are incompatible.
Love is of God. Divorce is of Satan.
My enemy is my adulterous wife. “Love your enemy.”
My husband hates me. “Bless them that hate you.”
Forgive, if you want to be forgiven by God.
Forgive all, if you want to be forgiven all.
Tell me what is good about divorce, and I will tell what is good about sin.
Avoid divorce, and you avoid sin.
Flee divorce as you would flee sin, for divorce is sin.
No divorce is a good thing.

Jesus was showing the Pharisees, and His own apostles, a better way. Love and forgiveness would characterise all His followers. Truly a new thing had come into the world. A new Kingdom,
predicted by Daniel, had arrived; a rock that would fill the earth as the waters cover the seas. Many are called, but few chosen, to be privileged members of the Kingdom of God. The cost is nothing short of giving one’s all to Christ and being transformed into His likeness on a daily basis.

The very nature of Jesus was to forgive the sin of adultery. This nature should abide in every Christian. If He could tell the woman taken in adultery, “Go, and sin no more,” the Christian who has been wronged can say the same (seventy times seven). This leaves no room for divorce. The law of love excludes it. ‘If you do not forgive others their sins, then neither will your sins be forgiven,’ counselled Jesus.

How would a faithful counsellor handle the following cases? There are four guiding principles that will bear on most cases.

THE FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Unlawful sex must cease immediately
2. Reconciliation to a married partner must not be hindered
3. A Christian cannot marry a non-Christian without a cost
4. The Christian’s body belongs to Christ; remain single if possible

PRINCIPLE 1. Unlawful sex must cease immediately

The Lord’s instruction is: “Go and sin no more.” Sex is lawful only in the context of a lawful marriage as ordained by God. Sex is unlawful where God has prohibited its use.

By unlawful sex is meant fornication, which can take the form of (1) prostitution (promiscuous, casual sex), (2) adultery, (3) homosexuality, (4) bestiality, (5) incest, and (6) any other unlawful sex act offensive to God (such as having sex with a menstruous wife).

Under (1) would be prostitution by married or single persons, and not necessarily for money.

Under ‘fornication’ would be included (a) singles having sex with singles (including one night stands), or promiscuous, casual sex with no intention of marrying anyone, and (b) unmarried partners, living together as if they were married, but with no commitment to mate for life.

Under (2) would be (a) singles marrying a divorced person whose spouse is still alive, and (b) all remarriages where death has not separated lawfully married couples. Adultery is unlawful, extramarital sex which can slide between discriminate (select partners), and indiscriminate (prostitution) sex. In some cases, especially when used by the Prophets, it can be difficult to distinguish between adultery and fornication when the person is married and both terms are applied to the same married person. In linguistic terms if adultery is the marked category, then fornication is the unmarked category. As used by Yahweh the more heinous term is fornication, because it is unbridled, indiscriminate, publicly known, sex.

PRINCIPLE 2. Reconciliation to a married partner must not be hindered

This principle is paramount where divorce has occurred. A remarriage to a different partner after divorce is not a lawful marriage in the eyes of God. A remarriage is an adulterous marriage. The goal should be to get back to the original partner, and this will mean dissolving (annulling) the second marriage in order to free up the spouse to return to the original partner. A second marriage is only lawful when the original partner has died.

PRINCIPLE 3. A Christian cannot marry a non-Christian without a cost

Since the body of the Christian becomes part of Christ’s Body, which is holy and undefiled, no Christian can marry a non-Christian. This is an instruction given by the Holy Spirit to the Church.
Where, however, two non-Christians or two Christians marry, these are lawful unions in the sight of God. The single Christian cannot marry a non-Christian, but if God calls a non-Christian spouse to follow Him, but not the other spouse, their continuing marriage is still a lawful union (1 Corinthians 7:14).

So a Christian can be married to a non-Christian, but in one situation it is disapproved of (i.e., the Christian who, against advice, marries a non-Christian), and in the other case it is approved of (because God called only one of the spouses to follow Him).

PRINCIPLE 4. *The Christian’s body belongs to Christ; remain single if possible*

The Holy Spirit instructed Christ’s followers that if they were single when they were called to follow Him, then they should resolve to remain single as the first and best option. In cases where singles have indulged in unlawful sex (of any degree) and have been forgiven by the Lord Jesus, then out of a deep sense of gratitude they should seriously aim to stay single for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. “If you are unmarried, seek not a wife.”

In the following scenarios some information or advice is not repeated in every instance. It is assumed that the cases are read in the order in which they are presented and that the reader has absorbed the advice from each case and carried it forward to the next case.

**Summary of cases noted for pastoral comment.**

- Case 1. Both spouses believe divorce is legitimate once love is dead.
- Case 2. One spouse believes divorce is legitimate once love is dead (see Case 9).
- Case 3. Both Christian spouses believe divorce is ‘right’ but only for adultery.
- Case 4. Both Christian spouses do not believe divorce is legitimate but cannot live together.
- Case 5. Couples live together as man and wife but are not married.
- Case 7. One spouse becomes a Christian and is then divorced by the non-Christian.
- Case 10. A Christian divorces a Christian.
- Case 12. A Christian remarries and then repents of it.
- Case 13. Two singles have sex, should they marry?
- Case 16. Multiple partners.

**8.1. CASE 1. BOTH SPOUSES BELIEVE DIVORCE IS LEGITIMATE ONCE LOVE IS DEAD**

To have this approach to marriage, it is very likely that both spouses are non-Christians. This requires a two-part approach. (A) The counsellor needs to ask the question: Do both spouses believe that it is possible to undo a marriage union? If both of them do, then they have an unbiblical view of marriage. Their marriage has not been founded on a solid foundation.

The person who initiates a divorce will be responsible for the other’s sin of remarriage, if remarriage follows (Matthew 5:32). If, after a divorce, neither of them remarries but they have sexual partners, they have both become adulterers, and their new partners are committing adultery with them, because in Jesus’ eyes the first marriage has not ended.
(B) These couples lack true knowledge. The Christian counsellor will need to instruct the couple on what God intended for all marriages, and theirs in particular. Then take them through Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage as set out in the texts above. This, hopefully, should make the couple draw back from going to court to obtain a divorce. Then take them through the Holy Spirit’s teaching on the headship of God, Christ and Man. This is the only effective ‘medicine’ for these loveless marriages.

The world will, undoubtedly, thumb its nose at Jesus’ view of the ‘one-flesh’ indissoluble union, and use the civil courts to dissolve the union (as they think). Then they will go on to remarry or live with another partner. This, in the eyes of Jesus, is an adulterous relationship, and as part of becoming His disciples, these remarriages/partnerships will have to be sundered if they expect to be with Him in heaven.

8.2. CASE 2. ONE SPOUSE BELIEVES DIVORCE IS LEGITIMATE ONCE LOVE IS DEAD

There may be many reasons why one of the spouses does not want a divorce. The reason could be financial, family (children), emotional, religious, or elements of all of them. If the reason is theological because one spouse is a Christian, then the advice to the Christian spouse is: On no account agree to a divorce (see Case 9). If the Christian is under pressure to agree to a divorce, then s/he is under pressure to sin against God’s instructions. Resist it with prayer and through counselling with spiritual church leaders, but most importantly through hourly fellowship with Christ, and a resolve not to sin against Him.

The counsellor should then follow the procedure given in part (B) of the First Case.

8.3. CASE 3. BOTH NOMINAL CHRISTIAN SPOUSES BELIEVE DIVORCE IS ‘RIGHT’ BUT ONLY FOR ADULTERY

In this category is the Christian couple who are so ignorant of Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage, or so shallow in their knowledge, that they might be on a par with a decent, non-Christian couple.

If their reason for not seeking a divorce is because no adultery is involved, and they are under the impression that Jesus taught that divorce could only be had for fornication (i.e., adultery), then the Christian counsellor’s task is to re-establish the theological basis of their marriage, which will ensure that divorce is shut off from becoming a possibility in the future. Next, the counsellor needs to eliminate the false idea that Jesus taught that divorce was possible for adultery.

Then the counselling should move on to an examination of the incompatibilities that are driving the two apart. The issue of man’s headship will be crucial to restore harmony in the home. The husband is called upon to love his wife as Christ loves the Church; and the wife is called upon to obey her husband in everything just as the Church obeys Christ in everything. (See my web book, “Good Order in the Church,” which sets out the distinctive roles that God has ordained for male and females to follow.)

8.4. CASE 4. BOTH CHRISTIAN SPOUSES DO NOT BELIEVE DIVORCE IS LEGITIMATE BUT CANNOT LIVE TOGETHER

The Christian counsellor needs to establish: What are the reasons for believing that divorce is not legitimate? If the reasons are sound, theological reasons, and in particular that divorce per se is
a wrong act, because the union is indissoluble, and there is no adultery involved, then the
counselling moves on to an examination of the incompatibilities that are driving the two apart.
The issue of man’s headship may need to be examined thoroughly. The solution will usually
be found there. The husband is called upon to love his wife as Christ loves the Church; and the wife
is called upon to obey her husband in everything just as the Church obeys Christ in everything.

8.5. CASE 5. A COUPLE LIVE TOGETHER AS MAN AND WIFE BUT ARE NOT MARRIED

This can happen with adults coming from Christian and non-Christian homes for financial
reasons, usually connected with buying a house, which is seen as an investment for when they do
marry. Then they move in together to avoid paying separate rents, which is seen as a waste of
money when it could be going toward their mortgage.

However, if the unmarried state is a sexual state, that is, pre-marital sex occurs, then this is
fornication. All sexual activity (‘safe’ sex or not) must occur within the bounds that God has fixed for
it, which is the married state. Anything outside those bounds is a sin against Him. No fornicator or
adulterous person will be allowed to enter heaven.

The Christian counsellor will have to inform the unmarried couple that they are in a sinful
state and that either the sexual activity must stop immediately or they get married in the sight of
God and man, and regularise their one-flesh union.

8.6. CASE 6. A CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATES MARRYING A NON-CHRISTIAN

The Holy Spirit has instructed Christ’s Church that this is a situation that defiles the
Christian, and no defiled person can enter heaven. Each Christian is a member of Christ’s Body,
which is pure and holy and undefiled. While a Christian abides in Christ, Christ abides in them. The
call of Christ is total and without reserve. It is an ‘all-or-nothing’ challenge to submit totally in all
departments of one’s life to His Headship. This, more crucially, means that the physical body of the
Christian belongs to Christ as much as the spirit. How can a member of Christ become a member of
a prostitute (1 Corinthians 6), or be in union with a person who is not in union with Christ? If the
Christian chooses to be one-flesh with a member who is not a part of Christ, then s/he severs his/her
connection with Christ, for the holy and the unholy cannot be married. The Christian cannot be, at
the same time, a member of a prostitute and a member of Christ. It is one or the other. “You cannot
serve God and mammon,” or be a member of two bodies at the same time.

There is a difference between deliberately withdrawing from being a member of Christ’s
Body in order to marry someone who is not a Christian, and Christ calling husbands and wives as
individuals (and not as couples) to Himself (see the next case).

Where two non-Christians marry, this is a lawful union. Where two Christians marry, this is
a lawful union. Where a Christian marries a non-Christian, the union is not adulterous, but the
Christian ceases to be a member of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15) because s/he is a defiled
(unsanctified) person (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:14). The Christian in such a union is under an obligation to
remain married until death ends the union. If the Christian recognises that s/he has sinned against
the Lord Jesus in marrying a non-Christian, and repents of that sin, then they can be restored to
membership of the Body of Christ.

However, if the marriage with the non-Christian is done in full knowledge of the teaching of
Jesus, and against the explicit warning by the Church, it is a deliberate sin which requires a second
crucifixion of Jesus to atone for it (Hebrews 6:4-6). But Scripture teaches that “it is impossible for
those who were once enlightened . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance.
seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

8.7. CASE 7. ONE SPOUSE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN AND IS THEN DIVORCED BY THE NON-CHRISTIAN

In this case the couple got married before either of them became a Christian. The logic of this case is that the Christian partner should immediately cease being in union with an unbeliever in order to be in union with Christ’s Body. The motive is good and commendable.493

However, the Holy Spirit instructs the newly converted believer to stay married to the unbeliever, because the marriage union preceded the union with Christ. In other words, so irreversible and indestructible is the lawful, one-flesh union that once it is formed it must on no account be severed by man. God Himself will not sever it, not even for His Son’s sake.

Here we enter the significance of the idea of sanctification. Under the Old Testament laws of defilement, the defiled thing coming in contact with a clean thing defiled it. The defilement was contagious. But under the New Covenant this is not the case, but the reverse. No one can defile Christ by being a defiled member of His Body. But in the case where a Christian and a non-Christian are one-flesh (but both were non-Christians to start with), one might expect that the defilement of the non-Christian would defile the Christian, but this is not the case, but the reverse. Important here is the concept of the one-flesh state that the marriage union brings about. Because the Christian is a sanctified member of Christ’s Body and “abides in Christ,” this means that the non-Christian, through the Christian spouse, is also a member of Christ’s Body through the indissoluble nature of the one-flesh state. So the unsanctified body (but not the unsanctified spirit) of the non-Christian becomes sanctified. And the same goes for the children of that one-flesh union. The children, because of the union of one of the parents to Christ’s Body, are sanctified in their bodies, but have yet to be in their spirits (1 Corinthians 7:14).

Another reason for staying together is that the unbelieving spouse may yet be saved through the witness of the believing spouse. So Paul warns the Christian not to separate if they can, which may mean enduring moderate persecution by an unbelieving spouse for years, because he asks the question: “for what, have you known, O wife, whether the husband you shall save [by staying in the union]? or what, have you known, O husband, whether the wife you shall save [by staying in the union]?” So Paul’s advice is, ‘Stay in union with your unbelieving partner until they force you to go (on pain of death).’ But this departure should be seen as an enforced, and hopefully, temporary, separation. It is not permission to remarry. Even if the unbelieving husband goes off and remarries, he is committing adultery against his Christian wife if he does so. And if the Christian wife goes off and marries another Christian man both are adulterers.

So while I might counsel someone who is in physical danger to abandon their home, I would never advise them to abandon (through divorce) their unbelieving spouse. I have no authority to counsel that. The Master Himself advised His persecuted ones to flee to the next city, on the principle that we are to save our lives for His service.

If a Christian woman conducts her life according to the Spirit’s teaching on man’s headship of her, then it is very unlikely that her husband would hate her. It is when she refuses to recognise his headship of her that the friction occurs and she brings on herself his disapproval, and rightly so.

493 See 1.7, 1.10, and 2.8 for more on this case.
8.8. CASE 8. A NON-CHRISTIAN DIVORCES A CHRISTIAN SPOUSE

The Holy Spirit instructs the Church that where a non-Christian spouse despises the Christian spouse to the extent of divorcing them through the courts, then they are not to battle it out in the courts. Let the non-Christian have his/her way through the charade of having his/her divorce. The divorce means nothing in the eyes of God. It is not the dissolution of the marriage. It is only a separation, a temporary one, so the Christian spouse will pray.

On no account must the Christian spouse take advantage of the non-Christian’s absence to remarry a Christian. That would be an adulterous relationship leading to the loss of salvation for both of them if not broken off. Even if the unbelieving spouse remarries, it is not a legitimate marriage in God’s eyes. It is an adulterous marriage.

There are more important things in life than worrying about what we will eat, what we will wear, what we will drink, or anything to do with the physical appetites of the body, including sex, which are destined not to go with us into the next world. There is no marriage in the next life, for all who are in Christ will have a spiritual body like His.

The main concern of every Christian should be to put Christ first. He should come before wife and children, before length of life, and possessions. All of these can be sacrificed if they come between the Christian and Him. Hence Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, instructs the Church to let the unbeliever separate if they want to, because the primary concern of every spouse is to be free to serve the Lord without distraction. And it would be a huge distraction to battle to stay married if the unbeliever (who is under the control of the spirit of this age) is determined to go. “Let him/her go, because God has called you to live a life of peace with Him and in fellowship with Him. He is the all-important person in your life. Seek Him and His, and all will go well with you,” says Paul (I paraphrase). But because marriage is for life, there can be no remarriage. While enjoying a life to be free to serve the Lord undistractedly, the Christian must accept his/her unbelieving spouse back again if they so desire to return. That is a standing obligation inherent in Paul’s use of the term “separation” and the avoidance of the term “divorce.” Under the Mosaic Law, God commanded that no such reconciliation should take place.494 But this is one of the revolutionary changes that Jesus made for those living under His New Covenant law of love.

Even if during the period of separation the unbelieving spouse has been remarried or has had a sexual partner of either or both sexes, or whatever, the door to reconciliation must never be closed. This is what makes remarriage for the Christian an impossible option.

In receiving the unbelieving spouse back again, there is also the motive of evangelising them.

8.9. CASE 9. A CHRISTIAN DIVORCES A NON-CHRISTIAN SPOUSE

In this case the non-Christian has wronged the Christian spouse who feels the hurt very deeply, and it is a cause of great anguish to him or her. A Christian counsellor gave the advice that they had “to decide whether the person to be forgiven is actually repentant, or whether they are being hard-hearted.” The same counsellor taught: “Christians should never break their marriage vows, but sometime when their spouse repeatedly and unrepentantly breaks their marriage vows, a Christian may divorce them for their ‘hardness of heart’ like God did (Jer. 4.4).”

If they were not repentant and did not want to change their ways, the Christian was advised to divorce their non-Christian partner on the analogy that Yahweh waited from 1446 to 605 BC before He finally ‘divorced’ (in the metaphorical sense) His stubborn wife, Aholah (the name given to Samaria, or the Ten Tribes).

494 This is discussed fully under 2.1.1. and 2.1.4. above.
This is bad advice. Great care needs to be exercised in using this analogy. It was a Covenant, not a marriage, that God terminated, because the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional Covenant. It is highly misleading to use a metaphor in a real-life situation. No one has permission to divorce a lawfully married couple. Marriage is until death do them part. And no sin between humans is beyond forgiveness. If the Christian expects God to forgive all their sins, then this is the example they are to follow in forgiving their fellowman.

God can take up a situation or make an analogy which He knows will strike home to the men of His Covenant. They become so exasperated with their wives that they get to the point that they hate the sight of them so much that they want them out of their lives and out of their sight for good. Well, says God, that is exactly how I feel about you, and I am going to ‘divorce’ you, and send you out of My land into a foreign country, but, He adds, I will bring you back after you have learned your lesson.

The analogy of ‘divorce’ brings out the Divine longsuffering that should also characterise every Christian in their marriage relationship. Refusal to entertain a divorce focuses the Christian’s mind to accept their lot and find grace to witness to their spouse, because divorce by the non-Christian spouse, followed by a remarriage virtually condemns the unbeliever to hell. This is why Paul permits the non-Christian to ‘separate’ (but not divorce), as it makes reconciliation a permanent option for both parties. But the Christian should do nothing to break up the marriage.

Great care needs to be exercised in using ‘hard-heartedness’ as a reason for divorcing a spouse. From the moment a human being is born they are born “at enmity with God.” They reveal hard-heartedness throughout their lives and only on their death-beds do some of them repent of their hard-heartedness, yet they are forgiven and made part of the family of God. “Be merciful even as your Father is merciful.” The Christian is called upon to show the same dogged patience and put up with the same blatant hostility that God daily endured from us. “Forgive us as we forgive them,” is an abiding pastoral principle when considering hard-heartedness from those we once loved so dearly that we gave up our freedom to be with them “for better or for worse.”

Consequently, it is not for the wronged partner to make a decision “whether the person to be forgiven is actually repentant, or whether they are being hard-hearted, . . . .” This is irrelevant to the union itself. The union takes precedent over any violation of it. Forgiveness on a daily basis is the means of keeping the union in working order. Hence Jesus’ severe warning that whoever marries a divorced spouse is committing adultery.

From Jesus’ statements condemning all divorces for any cause, the Christian cannot break that union and be free from sin in so doing. The very act, however great the provocation of the unbelieving spouse, is a sinful act in and of itself. It is not a matter of “should not, unless provoked beyond endurance.” The Christian can never knowingly break a lawful union and remain a follower of Christ. If the unbeliever departs that does not constitute a dissolution of the lawful ‘one flesh’ union. That union exists until death breaks it. In such cases the Christian spouse must ‘wait’ indefinitely, and remain single, in the hope of a reunion. The door must never be shut against reconciliation.

8.10. CASE 10. A CHRISTIAN DIVORCES A CHRISTIAN

One minister taught his congregation “that a Christian can divorce a Christian partner who repeatedly breaks their marriage vows, and that a person with a divorce, based on biblical grounds, can remarry.”

The “biblical grounds” turned out to be Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Exodus 21:3. He believed that Jesus taught divorce was permissible to either spouse for (1) adultery, (2) desertion, (3) abuse, (4) hard-heartedness, and (5) neglect. Jesus only condemned the more trivial grounds for divorce that rabbis like the House of Hillel had introduced, said this minister.
This is bringing Christ down to the level of Moses. Jesus is not a second Moses bringing with Him a Second Edition of the Torah. Hard-heartedness has no place in a Christian marriage. The whole point about Jesus’ coming is that He promised to give us the Holy Spirit to live out the spiritual life. Without that Spirit it is not possible to please God. *With* that Spirit it is possible to please God and grow up to be like Him. The Law was given to lead His people to Christ. It was a holding situation. It was temporary, and it was pitched at a level that was within the reach of the unregenerate man to conform to the outward letter.

Given that we must forgive others as we expect God to forgive us, I do not see how this advice is compatible with forgiving unilaterally the one “who repeatedly breaks their marriage vows,” and keep showing love to them, just as God does with us. If we can’t forgive others, God can’t forgive us. He has made one conditional on the other.

I would also question who grants the divorce. Are Christians to take Christians to worldly courts to obtain these divorces? This, too, is incompatible with the distance Christians should keep between themselves and the world (or Satan’s kingdom) (1 Corinthians 5). So who grants these divorces to Christians? Is the Church to set up its own courts to administer these divorces? God forbid!

Given this minister’s unbiblical advice, I see no difference between an unbeliever and a believer in the way they react to their spouses who break their marriage vows. There is no couple, Christian or non-Christian, who do not break their marriage vows every day at some level, if those vows include the husband promising to love his wife, and if she promises to obey him “in everything” (which is the biblical expectation). In the end we are dressing Moses up to look like Christ, and we are looking to Moses, not to Christ, on how to get round the permanency of the ‘one flesh’ union when an unforgiving spirit enters a marriage. Instead of forgiving unilaterally, the wrong advice was given to go back to Moses to see how the union could be legally broken up.

In my opinion, this is not the direction that any pastor or minister should be pointing Christians in. Jesus teaches that there is no alternative to forgiving. It is the only solution on offer. These pastors are suggesting there is an alternative, namely, don’t forgive, fall back on Mosaic divorce certificates, and get them through worldly courts, like all the other unbelievers. This brand of Christianity is no different from how all other religions treat marriage. It is Mosaic-Christianity, or rabbinic-Christianity. It is a Spirit-less Christianity. It is Christianity lived out ‘in the flesh’ (to use Paul’s phrase), as opposed to lived out ‘in the Spirit.’

### 8.11. CASE 11. A DIVORCED SPOUSE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN

In this case two unbelievers, A and B, are married lawfully in the eyes of God. They then get a divorce. Both remarry. A becomes a Christian and learns that s/he is in an adulterous second marriage. What should A do?

The first thing is to stop sinning (“Go and sin no more.”). This means refraining from all sexual relations with the second spouse. It may be necessary, if the second spouse is an unbeliever, to go through the charade of getting a civil divorce to regularise their unmarried state in the eyes of the State.

The second thing to do is to make it possible for A’s first married spouse (who is B) to return to him/her. Nothing should be done to prevent this happening, and all should be done to facilitate it, even if B is happily remarried and has a new family. It is the responsibility of A to recognise that B is still their only lawful spouse in the sight of God, and to keep in touch with B at all times.

If A is remarried and has a second family and then becomes a Christian, then the Seventh Case will deal with this situation.
8.12. CASE 12. A CHRISTIAN REMARRIES THEN REPENTS OF IT

This is a case where a Christian (distinguished as ‘A’) married an unbeliever, through ignorance, and had children. Then they divorced. The children were left with Christian A to bring up. The non-Christian spouse went off and remarried. The Christian married another Christian (distinguished as ‘B,’ who had not been married before) and then both learned that the second marriage was, and is, an adulterous marriage, and repented of their mistake. Children were born in the second marriage. How do the Christians resolve this situation?

Jesus’ reply of, “Go, and sin no more,” must guide what happens next. He would not condone an on-going adulterous relationship. The goal of all counselling must be the restoration of the first marriage, even though, in this instance, Christian A married an unbeliever after s/he became a Christian, through ignorance. (Case Six should have prevented this situation arising.)

The first thing, therefore, is for Christian A to cease immediately having an adulterous relationship with Christian B.

The second thing is to become unmarried, to reverse the procedure that brought them into the adulterous relationship in the first place (through bad counselling, or lax oversight by their respective churches) by a private divorce agreement between the two Christians that they are no longer husband and wife. It may be necessary to go through the charade of a civil divorce in order to regularise their unmarried status in the eyes of the State.

The third decision relates to the children born to the second marriage. Do the two Christians, now no longer husband and wife, stay together, but remain celibate, for the sake of the children? What if the spouse of Christian A wants reconciliation and to get back together? This must take precedence over all other options, and Christian A must ensure that the door to reconciliation must always be left open. To shut that door, even to an unbelieving spouse, is to manifest an unforgiving spirit.

If the unbelieving spouse dies, then Christian A can marry Christian B, and regularise the status of the children born to them while they were in an adulterous marriage.

This case shows how vital it is to have the knowledge of the truth circulating at all times in the Church. This case started out through lack of knowledge. It should never have arisen. If the leadership of their local church had been alert to what was about to take place they could have prevented the marriage, or if the couple were determined to go ahead they would have had to do so against the knowledge of the truth. At this point they could not claim that they married in ignorance, and this would have a direct bearing on whether God’s blessing would rest on their disobedient decision. No Christian church should have married them, in any case. It would have to be a civil wedding, if forced through. The Christian church to which they belonged would have to excommunicate them due to their adulterous marriage (“hand them over to Satan”) with the prayer that their souls may yet be saved.

This case is not as straightforward as the others because the Christian married a non-Christian after s/he became a Christian, which is a disapproved marriage. But because it was done in ignorance and not against the instruction of the church, we have to assume that it was, and is, considered a lawful marriage in the eyes of God. It is almost on a par with the marriage of two unbelievers. However, if others reason that the marriage was unlawful in the first place and that the Christian should rejoice that they are free to remarry a Christian, then how does this fit with the motive to win the unbelieving spouse to Christ?

8.13. CASE 13. TWO SINGLES HAVE SEX, SHOULD THEY MARRY?

Two singles have sex, should they marry? Yes, otherwise they have sinned against God through fornication, and no fornicator can enter heaven. The two became one-flesh in the sexual union (1 Corinthians 6). If either or both are prostitutes, then no marriage should take place. The
past event should be viewed as a sin of fornication and forgiveness sought with the strong resolution never to repeat the sin.

Many factors can affect this case. Were either of the singles Christian at the time of the fornication? If so, there is the duty of love and respect to be shown toward their partner in sin. If both singles were unbelievers at the time of their unlawful union and subsequently one of them became a believer and has a conscience about his/her unlawful union(s) in the past, what should the Christian do about it?

If some years have elapsed since the one-night stand, or since living together as unmarried partners, and both partners are still single, and meet regularly, then, if possible, provided the other partner is not an unbeliever, they should seek to regularise their one-flesh union of the past.

If many years have elapsed since the event and one or other partner have got married in the meantime, then the initial act was a sin of fornication and forgiveness should be sought from God to erase it.

Over fifty per cent of all teenagers under the age of 16 years have unlawful sex in Britain. These are going to have serious crosses of conscience to bear in the future, should they turn to Christ to be saved from the coming Day of Judgment, which hangs over every human who has lived. All must give an account of their lives to Christ the Judge. It is incumbent on every Christian parent to instruct their sons and daughters to “Flee fornication!” in their youth. The same goes for the churches to which the parents and children belong. Knowledge of the truth is vital to the children of Christians. It must not be denied to them. But the whole congregation have a duty of care toward their teenagers in this educational process.

When Jesus came and introduced His teaching on marriage and divorce, He also opened up the option of celibacy, which He recommended in the interests of serving Him with undivided loyalty. This should be the first option that all His followers should strive for and achieve, if possible. To some it has been given and they should not marry. To others it has not been given, and they should marry, but only to a Christian. To the list of prohibited degrees of marriage in Leviticus 18, Jesus would add His own (and I paraphrase), “You must not marry one who is not part of My Body.” It is up to Christian parents and church congregations and leaders and teachers to ensure that Jesus’ will is carried through among His followers.

This document is intended to be part of this educational process, so that more and more young people will dedicate their whole body and soul to the cause of Christ and His Gospel, and avoid the distractions that marriage inherently brings with it. It is a baggage that Christ’s followers could well do without. Pray to God and the Lord Jesus not to be married, if possible.

8.14. CASE 14. ONE CHRISTIAN BULLYING ANOTHER

This is a case where both spouses were married as professing Christians but one of them loses their faith and becomes violent toward their Christian spouse. Is the bullying a ground for divorce?

The Holy Spirit’s instruction to slaves was: “be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the crooked” (1 Pet 2:18). The term ‘crooked’ includes ‘unscrupulous, dishonest, being morally bent or twisted, crooked as opposed to straight.’ The Christian slave must be subject to a master who is not a Christian for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of Christ, and for their own sake in witnessing a good profession of faith. He is further instructed: “Let as many slaves as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Timothy 6:1). “Exhort slaves to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again” (Titus 2:9). Many Christian wives have ungodly and bullying husbands, or husbands who have back-slidden, or husbands who have rejected their Christian faith altogether, but this is not a reason for divorcing them, any more than it is for slaves to run away from their cruel masters. The slave is
stuck with his master; and the wife is stuck with her non-Christian husband. The Christian wife is instructed to be subject to her husband in everything. She remains in her marriage to the end, even unto death, enduring hardship knowing that this is a powerful witness to her husband and all who know her, that she has faith in a loving God who knows best. The Christian spouse who comes under persecution from their once Christian spouse, needs to look carefully at their own pattern of life as embedded in the doctrine of Headship, to see if they have not contributed directly to the instability of their marriage relationship. A loving, obedient wife, is hardly likely to be murdered by a murderous husband, but a back-slidden, Christian wife, who refuses to submit to her husband out of hatred for him is likely to get hurt.

8.15. CASE 15. A CHRISTIAN WIFE BEING BULLIED BY A NON-CHRISTIAN HUSBAND

Domestic situations take a variety of forms, but if principles are brought to bear on these cases, then there is a clear path to a resolution.

The first principle that I would apply to every domestic situation is that I will never advocate divorce under any circumstances. Temporary separation, yes; divorce, never.

The second principle I would apply in every situation that involves a Christian and a non-Christian is that the Christian partner must be ready to forgive the non-Christian partner his/her sin of adultery or aggression if they request it. If the Christian will not forgive, then his/her sins will not be forgiven by God.

The third principle I would apply is that the Christian is to treat their unbelieving partner as if Christ were in him/her. The Christian is called upon to love their partner even if he/she hates Jesus. Love is the only means left to the Christian to win over their partner.

A fourth principle is that a Christian can never initiate a divorce. You will notice in Paul’s dealing with the issue of temporary separation in 1 Corinthians 7 that the initiative to separate always comes from the unbelieving husband, or the unbelieving wife. The reason for this is that in Paul’s theology every marriage is for life. The responsibility for a separation rests on the head of the one who initiates the separation/divorce. Sin is involved, so let not the Christian ever initiate divorce proceedings. The initiator is the sinner.

A fifth guiding principle is that innocent partners are as rare as hen’s teeth. If the Christian has contributed to the breakdown of the marriage relationship through some thoughtless words or deeds in the past then he/she must seek the forgiveness of their non-Christian spouse. If a Christian wife can truly say that she acknowledged the headship of her unbelieving husband in every department of her life, and loved her husband and submitted to him as though he were the Lord Jesus Himself, then it is hard to see how he could hate her. Likewise, if a Christian husband loved his wife as Christ loved the Church, then it is difficult to see how she could hate him. But it might happen that the hatred for the Christian partner might come from Satan in the unbelieving partner, but these situations would be extremely rare. Blame lies on both sides, and it is seldom that a break-up occurs over one single issue. Every break-up begins with a hairline crack years before the divorce is granted.

But Paul’s instruction is clear: if the unbelieving partner is determined to separate from the believing partner, then Paul’s instruction is to let them get their way, and the believing partner should use the ‘freedom’ from being yoked to an unbeliever to devote their body and spirit to serving Christ. Remarriage is out of the question. They must await the return of their unbelieving partner, however long that will take. And it might never happen. But, in the meantime, Christ benefits from the estrangement.

We can learn some valuable lessons from the way Peter and Paul handle the case of slaves and masters, and how these principles can apply to the marriage union. See the Fourteenth Case above.
8.16. CASE 16. MULTIPLE PARTNERS.

Where a single man or a single woman has had unlawful sex, once, twice or regularly, this is a sin, which will prevent that person from entering heaven unless it is forgiven by the Lord Jesus. He alone stands between God and man to forgive sins. The number of sins is immaterial. Just one sin is sufficient to lead to eternal damnation, because that one sin reveals a capacity to sin, which the Lord Jesus did not have. He was sinless. Only when He is resident in the Christian does Man’s capacity to lead a sinless life return to him as it was at the beginning, in the Garden of Eden. Until the moment Christ Jesus enters a man, he is a sinner and incapable of entering heaven.

The one seeking unlawful sex is not fully responsible for engaging a partner. Both are equally culpable for what they do with their sex, and both will be answerable to God on the Day of Judgment. 1 Corinthians 6 provides strong guidance in this case. Here we have a situation where married men had unlawful sex with prostitutes, with whom they became ‘one flesh,’ but because the union was not lawful in God’s eyes it was not a lawful union, but fornication. Scripture makes a distinction between a lawful one-flesh union (marriage), and an unlawful one-flesh union (fornication, prostitution and adultery).

What if someone who was involved in such unlawful sex becomes a Christian? The obvious reply of Jesus would be, “Go and sin no more.” So the unlawful activity should be stopped immediately by the Christian.

Should the Christian regard the first person s/he had sex with as their marriage partner? First, it is clear that the pair were not lawfully married when they had unlawful sex, therefore, although they became one-flesh, the act itself was unlawful and they were not lawfully married through the unlawful act. This is a case of fornication.

Second, if children were born of such illicit unions, every effort should be made by the Christian to lawfully marry their partner, and look after the child(ren), and protect the status of the child. (Jesus was born before His father and mother became one-flesh, but God protected the child by telling Joseph to take Mary as his wife.) No child should be called illegitimate. The parents are illegitimate begetters of the child.

Third, if no children were born of fornication, then the Christian partner is not obliged to marry the fornicator if s/he is an unbeliever. If, however, the fornicator also becomes a Christian, and if they cannot refrain from sex, then let them be married lawfully before God. But the better option is to remain single and give one’s body to the Lord.
PART 9. CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE AUTHOR

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9.1. LETTER 1. DID GOD OR MOSES INTRODUCE THE IDEA OF DIVORCE?

The origin of the divorce law did not, and does not, arise from God. It is not as if God, in the time of Moses, contemplated man’s permanent tie to one woman, and said to Himself, “It is not good that man should be tied to one woman for life. I will pass a law which will permit him to divorce his wife ‘for any cause’ so that he can have a pleasant time on the earth.” No, says Jesus, this is not the origin of the law on divorce. Its origin lies in the hardness of man’s heart. Hard men decided, thousands of years before Moses lived, that they would not live by the one-flesh law. God was not going to budge as regards His stated position. Jesus then lets us into the truth about the origin of the divorce law in Israel, “For your hard-heartedness he [Moses] wrote this command for you.” An evil law had its origin in an evil heart. This law could not have its origin in a pure, holy God. And we have Jesus express words that Moses, not God, sanctioned their law of divorce by commanding them to write out a “roll of severance” to hand to their hated wives as they dumped them on the street.

9.2. LETTER 2. GOD PERMITTED ORDINARY ISRAELITES TO REMARRY DIVORCED WIVES, SO HE ENDORSED THESE MARRIAGES

Before addressing the issued raised in the heading, it is worth saying that the concept of divorce is not an approved biblical one, in the sense that some believe it was part of God’s provision for His people under the Law, and that it was intended to be carried over into Christ’s Church. This is a lie. God never approved of divorce, and He never endorsed it.495

495 A typical expounder of this misunderstanding of God’s attitude toward divorce (“I hate divorce”, Mal 2:16) would be Jay E. Adams, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), p. 23. He writes: “Contrary to some opinions, the concept of divorce is biblical. The Bible recognises and regulates divorce. Certain provisions are made for it. This must be affirmed clearly and without hesitation. . . . There are some, nevertheless, who so conceive of divorce that, if you followed their thinking you would have to conclude that the Bible makes no
There are some who mistakenly assume that because God uses man’s innovation of divorce as a simile (Jer 3:8) for how He feels toward His people, that He therefore approved of divorce! God can take up any simile He chooses, but that does not mean He approves of the simile itself. He may liken His coming to a ‘thief in the night’ (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10), “Lo, I do come as a thief” (Rev 16:15), but that does not make Him a thief, or that He approves of thieves! God takes up the characteristics that mark out the thief par excellence, and applies their unobserved coming to His own coming.

Similarly, man invented divorce in order that he could cut himself off from his hated wife. That was its sole purpose. “Ah!” noted God, “so let me take up that analogy to describe how I feel about you! You understand the implications of what it means to be rid of your wife when you divorce her, well, that is exactly how I feel about you.” So says Jeremiah 3:1.

God takes up His own contribution to the practice of divorce when He banned any reconciliation with a remarried/polluted wife (Deut 24:4). He now uses this to argue that He cannot take her back again, because she is defiled through her fornication. But, fortunately, for Israel, the language is the language of simile, so she can be taken back.

The use of divorce was a bold simile, but a simile, nevertheless, it was and remains. God was never married to Israel through an actual ceremony, therefore there could be no divorce. In Ezekiel 23 Yahweh likens Israel’s sin to the sin of adultery. “With their idols they committed adultery” (23:37). They did not commit actual adultery. How could a nation commit adultery with another nation? But, from Yahweh’s perspective, Israel had one Lord, one Baal, one owner—Yahweh. She was to have eyes for no one else but Him, but she took her eyes off Him and began worshipping the gods of her neighbours. This was like committing adultery, because His people were in a Covenant relationship with Him. “As the uncleanness of a separated one [= prostitute] has their way been before me” (Ezek 36:17).

Staying with the marriage analogy, Judah and Israel are likened to two sisters, Aholah and Aholibah, married to Yahweh. But Yahweh says of them, “they are adulteresses” (23:45). The punishment for adultery is death, so Yahweh, consistent with His own Torah law, commands, “Bring up against them an assembly, . . . and they have cast at them the stone of the assembly, and cut them down with their swords. Their sons and their daughters they do slay and their houses with fire they do burn, . . . and the sins of your idols you [both] do bear.” This last sentence shows that the ‘sins’ are apostasy and unfaithfulness in keeping Yahweh’s Torah, and the terms of His Covenant as laid out in the Book of Deuteronomy. For these two ‘wives’ of Yahweh, there was to be no divorce for adultery, only death. Here, Yahweh confirms His own death penalty Law. Of course, the death penalty was never carried out, otherwise there would have been no people; and if there were no people, the Covenant made with Abraham would have been broken. Another indication of the use of metaphor here is that Yahweh marries two living sisters, which He strictly ruled out in His Law, in Leviticus 18:18. However, it is not unlikely that Yahweh’s action is a mirror of what was going on in the nation at that lawless period in Israel’s history.

Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham was unconditional, and so He could never be divorced from His people, nor could He extirpate them through stoning or burning. So neither the simile provisions for divorce, but (rather) only condemns and denounces it. They would lead one to believe that Scripture says nothing—absolutely nothing—positive about divorce.” Scripture says nothing positive about divorce, unless one accepts Erasmus’s addition to Scripture at Matthew 19:9. Jesus’ father was not yet one-flesh with Mary when he attempted to ‘put her away.’ The provision of ‘divorce’ for engaged couples is not a biblical concept, but was invented by the rabbis. The Bible has nothing positive to say about divorce for lawfully consummated marriages.

496 Divorce is mentioned elsewhere in Lev. 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num 30:9; Dt 22:19, 29; 24:1-4; Isa 50:1; Jer 3:1-8; Ezek 44:22; Mal 2:14, 16.

497 See 2.1.1. and 2.1.4. above, which deal with Deut 24:1-4.
of divorce nor stoning to death for adultery, can be pressed to their logical and historical conclusion, which would result in theological confusion. These are only similes that Yahweh chose to use to bring it home to Judah and Israel that Yahweh regarded them as ‘adulteresses.’

Note that in Jeremiah 3:4, Israel calls God ‘my father,’ not, ‘my husband,’ showing that Yahweh was using a simile of marriage to convey His thoughts, and Israel recognised this. In 3:6 Israel’s worship of other gods is clearly likened to her committing fornication. God continually uses the sanctity and analogy of marriage to highlight the unfaithfulness of Israel. In 3:8, the marriage analogy is taken to another level when Yahweh likens the removal of the Ten Tribes into exile to a post-divorce situation (cf. Isa 50:1). In other words, the Hebrew innovation of divorce carries within it the inflexible law that a former, divorced wife cannot, under any circumstances, be taken back. Everybody understood that law. Here, Yahweh’s use of divorce to convey His refusal to bring back the Ten Tribes (as Ten Tribes) is likened to the fixed rule that a divorced wife cannot be taken back. He did not need to use any analogy. He could have stated in words that He was not going to bring them back to His land—ever. That He is finished with them and has turned His back on them completely with no hope of reconciliation. But the analogy with divorce was so apt that He took it up as an illustration of His changed relationship to the Ten Tribes. So the analogy with human divorce becomes a very apt simile of what happened at the spiritual level between Him and the Ten Tribes.

When it suits Yahweh, He can use any analogy He cares to nominate. In Ezekiel 22:17-22, Yahweh likened Jerusalem to a furnace. He would bring the silver, brass, iron, lead and tin of the nation and throw it in to melt it, and the outcome would be just dross. It was His way of bringing it home to the nation that they were useless. It would be silly to take the simile literally.

In the case of the evil practice of divorce Yahweh saw something in it that illustrated His changed relationship to certain tribes whom He cast off. He also saw something in the evil of adultery which captured their attitude toward Him. Both are appropriate similes under appropriate conditions. The choice of adultery to represent His relationship was very appropriate, seeing that the most common sin among the people was adultery. God accused the entire nation: “Each the wife of his neighbour you have defiled” (Ezek 33:26; 22:11).

God can liken Himself to a rock (drawing on its solidity), or a horn (drawing on it as a weapon), or any inanimate thing, for the purpose of using these things to convey something about Himself. He can use institutions, good or bad, to convey something about Himself. There are no limits, any more than there are in the human world. Human affections and human weaknesses are attributed to God under certain conditions.498

God did not make it impossible for hard-hearted men to divorce their wives, but that is not the same thing as saying that He approved of their action, or legislated for it, or endorsed it. He didn’t. We have a parallel to this. God legislated that men should not see the nakedness of certain categories of women (cf. Lev 18), but we cannot infer from this that He approved of men seeing the nakedness of other categories of women. So heinous are some of the categories that the death penalty was the prescribed punishment (Lev 20:11, 17-20). God did not approve of men seeing the nakedness of any category of woman, but He does not go into minute grades of punishment. When there was only one married couple in the world (Adam & Eve), God personally hid their nakedness from one another. This action speaks volumes to the one who is seeking to understand the mind of God. Men should infer what is the mind of God from what He has revealed in the Bible of His

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498 See the range of some bold anthropomorphisms in E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech used in the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979 [orig. 1898]), pp. 871-897. According to Bullinger, the difference between a metaphor and a simile is that “the Simile gently states that one thing is like or resembles another, the Metaphor boldly and warmly declares that one thing IS the other. While the Simile says ‘All flesh is AS grass’ (1 Pet. i. 24), the Metaphor carries the figure across at once, and says ‘All flesh IS grass’ (Isa. xl. 6). This is the distinction between the two.” In Jer. 3 divorce is a simile, not a metaphor.
attitude toward certain sexual misdemeanours, and keep away from anything that borders on such disapproved actions. So it is with any action that would lead to a divorce.

God was so strongly against any divorce that He imposed a severe condition on anyone who did so, namely, they were not permitted to be reconciled to the woman they divorced during the Mosaic dispensation. They had to stay separate for the rest of their lives. Indeed, such is the sanctity of marriage in God’s eyes that when a divorced woman is remarried, at the moment she sleeps with her next husband, she becomes an abomination in His eyes. She becomes a defiled woman. She may have innocently thought that when her husband divorced her she was genuinely free to remarry. But God thinks otherwise.

To prevent a divorcee defiling His sanctuary or Temple worship—for anyone marrying her is defiled by her—God commanded that His priests should never marry a divorced woman, because that would defile him permanently as a priest and disqualify him from ever serving God in the future. His whole priestly ministry was destroyed by marrying her. He became a useless figure in God’s service.

God safeguarded His worship and He prevented anyone from polluting it. Ordinary Israelites were not permitted to come near to God. God surrounded Himself with personnel who were under stringent rules and regulations which prevented them from becoming defiled. Thus He chose the tribe of Levi to act as a buffer between Himself and His people. Thus when Nadab and Abihu offered illegitimate incense God burnt them to a cinder. Moses approved of their death quoting God’s words that “By those drawing near to Me I am sanctified” (Num 10:3).

The difference between the Church of the Old Covenant and the Church of the New Covenant is that the priestly buffer has been removed and all Christians can now approach God directly. There is no priestly caste standing between us and God. We can come boldly into the presence of God because we are His sons and daughters. But that boldness does not entitle us to come before Him in a polluted state, which an illegitimate remarriage entails. We must not assume that we can treat God like an old buddy, or an indulgent grandad, or someone who is casual about His relationship to His people. He is still the same God whom Nadab and Abihu worshipped.

God, in the beginning, ordained that a man should marry a virgin. That was to be the norm. Unfortunately, His people disregarded this when they introduced divorce and remarriage. This was totally out of character with His will. However, when it came to the personnel who would act as a buffer between Him and His polluted people, He stipulated that all His priests must marry only virgins. There were to be no exceptions. They were not permitted to married any non-virgin, not even a godly widow. It was a virgin or nothing. Moses was told: “Speak unto the priests, . . . A woman, a prostitute, or a defiled one, they do not marry, and a woman divorced from her husband they do not marry, for he is holy to his God” (Lev 21:7-8). These three categories of women covered all non-virgins. It was irrelevant whether they were godly or ungodly women. It was the fact that they were not virgins that disqualified them from being the wives of priests. Their character did not disqualify them. Their character was not taken into account by God. It was their sexual status that counted.

The clear message that God puts forth here is that He has not abandoned His original design for marriage. Where He can enforce this, He does. He has total control over the lives of His priests, and so He can impose on them His view of marriage, so that ordinary Israelites could ponder His standard, and imitate it in their own marriages.

499 This is borne out in the simile of Aholah and Aholibah, where Yahweh “gave her [Aholibah] into the hand of her [Assyrian & Babylonian] lovers,” and “they defile her with their prostitutions, and she is defiled by them” (Ezek 23:17). In keeping with the simile, her punishment is that her nose and ears would be cut off (23:25). But note that Yahweh takes up man’s innovation and uses it to bring home the reality of His changed relationship to Judah. The analogy taught them that they could not be reconciled to God, if He stuck to it. Fortunately for them, it was only a simile as far as Yahweh wanted to take it.
God reinforces His view of marriage when He commands: “. . . and he [the priest] takes a wife in her virginity. A widow, or divorcee, or a polluted one, a prostitute, these he does not marry, but a virgin from his own people he takes for a wife, and he does not pollute his seed among his people, for I am Yahweh sanctifying him” (Lev 21:13-14). Here God ensures that Israelite priests married Israelite virgins. They were not permitted to marry foreign women. Ordinary Israelites could marry godly, foreign women.

The fact that a priest was under an obligation to marry “a virgin from his own people” is taken up by Paul and applied to Christian marriages. Sometimes men came to faith after they had been married to an unbeliever. There was nothing they could do about that. A man, given the choice, should always marry “a virgin from his own people.” By the Old Testament term ‘one of his own people,’ Paul would have understood it meant ‘a worshipper of God’ in the Church of the Old Covenant, and this transfers into ‘a worshipper of the Lord Jesus’ in the Church of the New Covenant.

We noted above that all believers, male (with an uncovered head) and female (with a covered head) can now enter directly into the presence of God without a priestly mediator, for Jesus is now the only mediator between God and Man. A big difference that occurred in the transition from the Church of the Old Covenant to the Church of the New Covenant was that God’s new, male priests could marry a Christian widow. This is explicit in 1 Corinthians 7:39. Here Paul gives advice to Christian widows, and he restricts their second (or subsequent) marriage to marrying a Christian man, in other words ‘one of her own people.’ Here we have a new order of ‘priests’ who can marry a widow. This contrasts sharply with the situation in the Church of the Old Covenant.

By extension, if a Christian man can marry a Christian widow, then he can marry a converted prostitute (e.g., Rahab the harlot), but Jesus places a ban on marrying a divorcee whose first husband is still alive, even a Christian divorcee. This is consistent with His Father’s view of marriage, that a wife is for life.

Christian parents should so safeguard their children as they grow up that they enter marriage as virgins. They owe this to Christ, to ensure that His Body is not defiled with immorality among His members. God, in the beginning, ordained that a man should marry a virgin. That was to be the norm. It is incumbent on all Christian parents to bring this about in their own family and in all the families that constitute the Church.

We live in an adulterous age, and it might not be an exaggeration to say that there is hardly a marriage taking place between two virgin persons. God can and does forgive all pre-marital fornication, so that fallen persons can be forgiven, and enter their marriage as a one-flesh Christian couple. But once married, they are married until death parts that union. If for some reason they separate, then it is just that, a temporary separation, not a dissolution of the one-flesh union. They either come together again, or they stay celibate. Such is the sanctity of marriage in the eyes of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Matthew notes three foreign women in Jesus’ genealogy: Thamar the Canaanite, Rahab the harlot, and Ruth the Moabitess (Mt 1:3, 5).

Another important reversal concerns the direction of defilement. Under the Law a defiled person polluted a clean person; but now a clean person cannot be defiled by an unbelieving spouse, and the children are considered ‘clean’ (1 Corinthians 7:14). The unbelieving spouse is ‘made holy,’ or sanctified (as regards the flesh) by the believing spouse. All infants are either ‘sanctified’ or ‘unsanctified,’ depending on the spiritual state of one of their parents. Sanctified children are members of the visible Church of God.
9.3. LETTER 3. CAN A CHRISTIAN USE DEUTERONOMY 24:1-4 TO GET A DIVORCE?

The short answer is no. We are not Jews. We are Christians. We have been ‘born-from-above;’ we have been given the spirit of the Lord Jesus to dwell within us. We have His law written on our hearts (see 2.1.1. and 2.1.4. above for a closer look at Deut 24:1-4).

Most Christian marriage counsellors have assumed that because divorce is mentioned in Scripture that it comes from God and it was His provision for hard-hearted, unforgiving Hebrews to avail themselves of. But that is not how Jesus read the Scriptures. Note particularly that Jesus in Mark 10:3 did not say, “What did God command you?” but, “What did Moses command you?” He distances God from this provision by informing us that it was Moses, not Yahweh, who sanctioned this idea. That is crucial when we go back and read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in the light of Jesus’ revelation. We do not have Moses’s written statement in Scripture, but we have Yahweh referring to it in order to introduce His caveat at v.4. That is how we should approach Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Not every idea contained in Scripture comes with the approval of God. Scripture records the ideas of Satan and evil men, alongside those of righteous men seeking the best for their fellowman.

Just because Yahweh takes up Moses’s command (which has not come down to us in its original wording) with a view to putting a bridle on it, does not mean He approved of it. Three verses later (at Deut 24:7) Yahweh says: “When a man is found stealing a person, of his brothers, of the sons of Israel, and has tyrannized over him, and sold him, then has that thief died, and you have put away the evil thing out of your midst.” The statement following ‘When…,” right up to “then…,” is descriptive, not prescriptive. Yahweh is not encouraging men to make slaves any more than He is encouraging men to divorce. There is certainly a note of resignation that divorce (like sin) is going to be a permanent fixture of Hebrew society, because the Holy Spirit has not yet been poured out on God’s people.

Jesus took the attitude that the whole of the Mosaic system (oral and written law) was only temporary, until His coming. He was the prophet prophesied by Moses, who would take over the running of the nation and reinstall the original will of God for His people, and Genesis 2:24 was central to that revelation. In that original will there was no provision for divorce. The principle of one partner for life is reintroduced by Jesus. There can be no going back to the Mosaic system which tolerated sin, and divorce is a sin, like stealing.

We noted above that Moses’s command has not come down to us in its original wording in the Torah, but Matthew 5:31 reads suspiciously like it. Jesus noted, “Now it was said, . . .” and this could be a direct reference to what He heard Moses say (for was He not there as the ‘angel of the Lord’ to hear Moses say this?): “Who, say, may have put away his wife, ‘Give to her a repudiation-document.’” The departure document was the apostasia, a notice of rejection or repudiation. Jesus then takes up the exact words of the quotation (lost in NA28, which has been assimilated to Lk 16:18) and spells out the sinful implications of such an act of divorce. Jesus notes that apart from any sins of fornication which such a divorced wife might commit, the fact that the husband is inviting her to sleep with another man is an invitation to her to commit adultery against himself, though he does not realise it. But her adultery—through a second marriage—will be held against her first husband. His divorce certificate becomes his own death certificate. The same goes for all modern divorce certificates.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 can be analysed as follows. Part A: verses 1-3. Divorce was Moses’s idea. Part B, verse 4. This was God’s idea. Part A was not God’s will for His people ‘from the beginning,’ as Jesus pointed out. But hard-hearted Hebrews forced it upon Moses as a fait accompli, so he complied, and introduced an unwritten, unsanctioned, law to alleviate the confusion that would follow if men were permitted to divorce ‘for any cause.’ Divorce is an evil. God hates it. Even some advocates for divorce are forced by Christian doctrine to agree that God “hates what occasions every divorce. . . . and that although divorce is recognized, permitted and regulated in the Bible . . . , unlike marriage, it was not instituted by God. The Scriptures record no act of God, either directly, or
through His prophets and apostles, in which He established, or institutionalized, divorce. God did not originate the concept as a part of His order for society. Divorce, then, is a human innovation.\textsuperscript{502}

God will not positively initiate a law to permit the ‘one flesh’ union to be broken. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is the only case in the whole of the Pentateuch where Moses, not God, made a law for the Israelites. Not every law was good. Yahweh pointed out that when He gave them the Torah on leaving Egypt, “I have given to them statues not good; and judgments by which they do not live” (Ezek 20:25). This was because the Law was given for sinners, not saints. Having seen the unwritten, unsanctioned, law that sinners concocted for themselves in Part A, God stepped in and put a rider on it, namely, verse 4, which Moses was obliged to write down and hand on. What occasions every divorce is sin, and sin cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Where there is no sin, there can be no divorce. It is mischievous to use God’s categories of unlawful marriages to gain His support for divorcing lawfully conducted marriages. Nowhere in Scripture does God lay down any conditions for divorce. But He does lay down conditions where man, in his chosen, unregenerate, fallen world, may not take advantage of his own innovation of divorce. States throughout the world are obliged to follow Moses’s lead in instituting divorce because they cannot (or will not) abide by God’s will for every marriage. Jesus calls every one of His disciples to abide by God’s original will. They have no choice; they have no alternative.

It is right and proper to declare unlawful marriages as abominations in God’s sight, and so it was right for Ezra to break up the mixed marriages in Ezra 10. This was God’s law. It was not something invented by man. So the only reason why Part A appears in Scripture is because of Part B.

Moses had to give Part B a context, and that context is Part A. The unsanctioned, unwritten, oral law that Moses had introduced was now forced to be given a written form in order to put the rider on it. The rider could not exist on its own. It had to be given a context, which context is given in Part A.

The rider tells us that God is disgusted when a woman sleeps with two living men. He was disgusted then, and He is disgusted today, when the same thing happens. His disgust has not changed. It has remained constant ‘from the beginning.’ The difference is that today, under grace, all sins can be forgiven and reconciliation is encouraged. Under the Old Covenant, the disgust was not forgiven, and the sin stood unforgiven for all time, which is conveyed to the sinner by a road-block to any future reconciliation with his first wife. The anger of God behind 24:4 comes out very strongly when viewed in this light.

God’s new people have the gift of the Holy Spirit, and they have saving faith, and both of these take the Christian into a new realm of living, in which divorce is a violation of that Spirit-filled life. The two are incompatible for anyone living ‘in Christ.’ God has reconciled Himself to all men through the death of Jesus (Romans 5:10; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2), and that reconciliation includes the forgiveness of the sin of adultery through second marriages.

I have used the ideas that God conveyed about headship in God’s revelation in the Old Testament in my work, “Good Order in the Church.” The obvious one being that a wife cannot make a vow to God except it is first approved of by her husband. She might think that she can act independently of her husband and involve him in her vows, and alter or change his lifestyle, \emph{at her desire}, but God steps in and says, No, I will not accept any vow you make unless your head—your husband—approves of it. God does not retract the authority of headship which He gave to Adam in the beginning. This idea continues into the Kingdom of God, because it is of God. It is worth repeating, God will not renege on the powers, responsibilities, and authorities He gave to Adam (and so to man in general) ‘in the beginning.’ These powers and responsibilities are restored fully to every Christian man because they predate the Mosaic Law. This explains why man is made in the ‘image and likeness of God,’ whereas woman is made ‘in the image of God.’ She has no powers of headship, which are restricted to God, Christ, and Man. She falls short by not exercising headship.

\textsuperscript{502} Jay E. Adams, \textit{Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), pp. 23, 27.
over any other being made in the ‘image of God.’ It was how she was designed ‘from the beginning’ to function in Man’s world. So the law is good and spiritual if used lawfully. Unfortunately, Mosaic divorce has been reintroduced into Christ’s Church thus corrupting Christ’s express abolition of it.

9.4. LETTER 4. WHAT IS THE ‘NAKEDNESS OF A THING’ IN DEUTERONOMY 24:1

It is important to make a sharp distinction between the cause that led a man to divorce his wife, and the defilement that attaches to a divorced wife who remARRies. The defilement is the fact that a woman has sex with two living men. The defilement can come about before or after a divorce. It can come about before a divorce, through a one-night stand, or through prostitution while still married, and may even be condoned by her husband, or it can come about after she has been divorced. So the defilement is independent of the circumstances that led to her sleeping with two living men. To be a defiled woman it is sufficient to ask: Have you had sex with two living men? If the answer is Yes, then she is a defiled woman. It is irrelevant to ask, Was this before or after your divorce? Either way she is still a defiled woman.

The answer to what is the ‘nakedness of a thing’ is dealt with in the next Letter.

9.5. LETTER 5. DEUTERONOMY 24:1-3. THE ‘SHAMEFUL THING’ IS A PERVERTED SEXUAL ORIENTATION

One correspondent wrote:

“In context I take erwath dâbâr to mean a perverted sexual appetite. This is something that a man obedient to God could not have found out about his bride in advance of consummation. It does not invariably imply lack of virginity, which the man could have dealt with under Deut 22. Instead of loving his bride enough to keep her, pray for her and consult Israel’s holy men who might be able to help, he divorces her. He consequently bears some responsibility for what happens next. The woman needs a second husband who knows of her perversion, and he marries just the same. Now, it is not a sin to have a perverted sexual appetite — the person needs help — but it is a sin to express it; this issue is at the core of today’s debate about what the church should do with its homosexuals. It is common knowledge that expressing a perverted appetite is liable to reinforce it, and this will have taken place in the woman’s second marriage. I submit that this reinforcement is why she has been ‘defiled’ — and why God would be disgusted that the man who pushed her down that path should remarry her.

This proposal (continues the correspondent) has the merit of being very specific: it fits the reason for the first divorce, it fits the absence of a reason given for the second, and it explains why God is then so against the remarriage. Other explanations do not explain all of these, and commentaries are divided as to whether ‘defiled’ refers to the erwath dâbâr or to her post-divorce sexual experience with the second husband.»503

In reply it should be noted that she only becomes defiled after she has slept with another man. It is instructive that we also learn of this through the revelation that Jesus brought with Him from heaven. It is not the divorce per se that defiles her, but sleeping with another man. The divorce per se of the husband would also disgust God, because it violates Genesis 2:24.

The reason given by God is: “after that she has become defiled” which means that from God’s perspective, He designed a woman to experience sex with only one man at a time. This is not so with a man, where he may have fourteen wives, as in David’s case. God permitted a man to have more than one wife (Dt 21:15), but a woman could not have more than one living husband. So there is something specific about the female of the human species that God never intended her to lie with two living men during her lifetime.

One objection against the proposed interpretation is that if the woman is ‘cured’ of her perverted sexual orientation, which had delighted her second husband so much, and attracted her to him, then he, out of spite, would divorce her. Why could she not go back to her first husband as a ‘cured’ woman?

My second objection is that God makes no room for exceptions to the ‘no return’ rule. There must have been some cases where a divorced woman had been cured of her sexual perversion, much to the delight of her first husband, who had only divorced her because of her perverted sexual orientation.

In conclusion, it is irrelevant what the “exposed thing” was that brought about the divorce. Any reason would do once a hard-hearted husband is determined not to live with his wife. The remarried, defiled wife is God’s focus in 24:4. (For the reasons behind this conclusion see 2.1.1. and 2.1.4. above.)

When examining Deuteronomy 24:1-4 we should take into account the following points.

First, every man could expect to marry a virgin. God had a law in place to ensure this. So Deuteronomy 24:1-3 has nothing to do with her virginity. That we can take for granted. So what was the ‘indecent thing’ that the husband found in his wife? We are not told. We can assume that it was something unacceptable to the sensibilities of Israelite culture, at that time, as opposed to a contrived one for the purpose of divorcing a wife a man was no longer in love with. But since the wife’s crime is not in the area of her virginity (she passed that test), the ‘indecent thing’ was not covered by any law of God, any more than ‘hate’ has a law condemning it, by which her second husband divorced her (Dt 24:3). So God does not approve of husbands breaking up their ‘for life’ one-flesh unions on the basis of ‘hate’ or ‘an indecent thing.’

Second, and this is a very crucial argument in my siding with Jesus that it was Moses, not God, who consolidated the iniquitous law of divorce. If God is the same yesterday, today and forever, then I would expect Him to act in a consistent manner. And if He permitted the second husband to divorce his wife legitimately on the grounds that he hated her, then we must allow ‘hate’ to be a grounds for divorce today. This argument is irrefutable, in my judgment.

Third, once you open the door to one exception by God, then you have God on your side to legitimise divorce per se.

Fourth, since divorce is a synonym for sin and evil, I cannot see how God can legitimise divorce any more than He can legitimise sin. He hates both.

Fifth, because Jesus would have nothing to do with divorce and ruled it out completely for all men everywhere, He was never in conflict with His Father. Both had nothing to do with introducing it into the world. Because it had been sanctioned by Moses, both could show their disapproval of it. God did so by placing a rider on Moses’s law, which prevented reconciliation, no matter what the excuse was to obtain the divorce. Jesus opposed Moses’s law by placing over against it the law in Genesis 2:24. Christians are intended to go back to Genesis 2:24 and not move from it.

The majority of Christian marriage counsellors advocate leaving Genesis 2:24 and going back to Moses’s sub-standard existence. This is Judaic Christianity. That shift is a denial of the superiority of the Law of Christ and the superiority of the New Covenant. In the New Covenant all the people of God have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. Divorce belongs to the Old, obsolete Covenant. It is the old leaven.

Sixth, what these Christian marriage counsellors are constantly striving for is to legitimise divorce in some ultra-special and ultra-specific cases. The very attempt to do so, is to depart from
Genesis 2:24 and wander into Deuteronomy 24 and Exodus 21. That is, to bring the Church and the Christian back into bondage to Moses again.

Seventh, God does not guarantee that we marry a woman who is flawless, perfect, or without quirks (even sexual ones). But if we leave the choice with Him, then He knows best whether marriage is going to help His Son achieve His goals through our union with Him, or, given our sexual nature, whether He will choose a wife that we deserve (given our past sins). He told Hosea to go and marry a prostitute. Many godly men had horrible wives, and vice versa. I do not pretend to understand the way of God in these matters. Nothing is guaranteed but grace to overcome it.

If we believe that God has chosen our wife for us, then, if it turns out that she has some bizarre ideas, and maybe in the sexual realm, this is no excuse to seek to divorce her. I do not care what disabilities she has, be they in the mental, physical or spiritual spheres, nothing can justify divorce. There is no warrant in the New Testament for divorce on any grounds. To divorce is always a sin against God, Jesus pointed out.

Obviously, the vast majority of Christian marriage counsellors have not reached that point yet. They still want to play with sin (i.e., divorce) and bring it into the life of the Church. I strongly advise, do not entertain sin/divorce, and you will not have room for it in your emerging theology.

Many Christians are still wedded to hanging on to some form of divorce in the Christian’s life that is acceptable to God. Hate divorce as you hate sin. Identify them as the same thing. Make no provision for divorce under any circumstances, and you will not fall into the Devil’s temptation.

It is difficult for Christians to see divorce as sin, because they know many fine Christian friends and church leaders, and even some outstanding leaders in the past, who divorced and remarried and God blessed their ministries. There is a sneaking suspicion that if God disapproved of their sin of divorce then He would not have blessed their ministry for Him. We need to ask, Did these Christians remarry out of ignorance? Do we sin out of ignorance and experience blessing on our ministries? Can we sin deliberately and be blessed? Once we come into a knowledge of the truth, then we are under an obligation to our Lord to conform to His will for us. If we refuse, then our relationship to Him changes.

9.6. LETTER 6. CAN A CHRISTIAN USE EXODUS 21:7-11 TO GET A DIVORCE?

Some hold that, “… a woman can, in certain (polygamous) situations, demand her freedom if denied food, clothing and sex: see Exodus 21:7-11, …”

In reply, the first thing to note is that this law relates to slave women, who have no social status. They are classed as possessions. Their children belong to their master. They are not freeborn women.

Secondly, I would point out that the text actually says, “If another [woman] he takes for himself, her food, her covering, and her ointment (or oil), he does not withdraw." The same three words occur in an Old Babylonian law on the exact same topic, where it translates as "food, ointment and a garment" (in that order) (cf. E. Oren, Tarbiz 33 [1953/4]). Neither the word ‘habitation’ or ‘sex’ may be the right meaning here. Her master does not have to sleep with her under duress. God does not force a man to have sex with his second wife if “it is evil in his eyes,” as Scripture puts it. It is sufficient (God points out) that she has all the expectations that a man’s daughter should expect in a family. I suspect that personal hygiene rated high among women, but husbands controlled the purse strings so that it was impossible for a second wife to have the financial independence to buy her own perfumes. So if the second wife can keep herself clean (= oils), hide her nakedness (= clothes), and not starve (= food), then she can exist quite comfortably even if she is denied love (and sex).

The third thing to note is that no divorce is necessary in sending out a slave wife (or one bought with money). Her owner can dispense with her as if she were a possession or a commodity. He is not allowed to sell her (Ex 21:11). Alternatively, if her lord does not provide the three things
that he would provide for his own daughter, namely, food, clothing and habitation, then she can take the initiate to leave, and return to her own country and family home, without any financial penalty.

In Deuteronomy 22:10-14 God protected the women captured in battle (presumably her parents, husband, and brothers are all dead). She had no status. She was a commodity. A man may marry such a captive woman but God protected these women from abuse. If the husband lost his love and respect for her, he could send her away (no divorce would be needed, as she had no status in law) but only if she so desired. In other words, to send her out penniless would put her in grave danger of exploitation or of capture again, or of being sold on. In this case, her Hebrew husband could not ‘divorce’ her without her consent. He was obliged to look after her as his wife. The reason why God protected the captive wife is that she had no family to go back to.

The captive wife was given greater protection that a native-born wife, whose consent to a divorce was not required, because if she was divorced she always had her parents and brothers to support her. Here we see God taking special care of vulnerable slave wives. No one else was going to look after their concerns.

Another remarkable instance of God’s protection of vulnerable wives occurs in Deuteronomy 22:13-19. Here we read of a case where a wife was falsely accused of not being a freeborn virgin on her wedding night. If the accusation was upheld, she would have been stoned to death, so the allegation carried with it the death penalty. Her husband wanted her dead, so that he could be free to marry another woman. The enormity of the accusation is taken into account by God. If the accusation proved to be false, then the accuser was chastised and, significantly, he was not able to ‘send her away’ for the rest of his life. God ensured that he could not take advantage of Moses’s law of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 to get rid of her. If his intense hatred continued to be shown toward her, she could not divorce him. 504 So they were locked in to their marriage with no prospect of separation. But he was under an obligation, through law, to look after her. There would have been social pressure on him to do so. Therefore, it was not necessary for God to put the husband’s obligation into writing.

This ruling of God throws light on His view that the marriage union was for life. While the nation defiantly rejected this view, God could use His power, on occasions, to impose His view when it came to ‘natural justice,’ because most men would recognise the deadly peril a hard-hearted husband put his wife in with his allegation of not being a virgin. That his punishment was to be married for life, with no provision for divorce permitted, is a revealing glimpse into God’s view of marriage. What the man wanted most was denied him, and denied him for life. He was glued to his wife for life. This is what God wanted for every union, but He could only enforce it in cases where ‘natural justice’ gave Him the opportunity. Even hard-hearted men would sense that God’s judgment was fit and proper in such blatant attempts to kill off an unwanted wife. These husbands were trying to exploit God’s wise provisions. He drew up good and wise laws to protect the paternity of every male, but evil men were out to exploit these laws in a way they were never intended to be used. Today we see the same exploitation of the Old Testament laws to introduce divorce by the backdoor into Christ’s Kingdom and Church. As in Moses’s day, so today, evil men will entertain the idea of severing their one-flesh union, and they will go to the courts of Satan to achieve this. Among them are many misdirected and misguided Christians. Christians may be dragged into these courts but they must remember the marriage vows they took before God that the union was ‘for better or for worse, . . . till death do us part.’

504 From Aramaic documents found in the Jewish colony in Elphantine, in Egypt, dating to the fifth century B.C., it was possible for Jewish women to divorce their husbands, but there is no evidence for such a practice in Palestine; see Evald Lövestam, “Divorce and Remarriage in the New Testament,” The Jewish Law Annual 4:47-65. Ed. B. S. Jackson (Leiden: Brill, 1981), p. 48 n. 1.
9.7. LETTER 7. NO DIVORCE FOR ANY REASON IS A VERY HARSH DOCTRINE

The following letter came from a 70-year old retired Elder of a thriving evangelical church.

“You asked me to look at your paper on Divorce and I have tried to do so but I confess that I find your conclusions very harsh. This is not a subject I have studied very closely but some years ago we read David Instone-Brewer’s book and found it quite useful. Your whole argument comes down to whether the ei mh [Greek] should be in the text or not. You acknowledge that Wycliffe translated it [as in the AV] so its origins are earlier than Erasmus. I have to say that to translate your understanding of the correct reading you have had to add a lot of words and the other three ‘correct translations’ are very difficult to understand as they are translated. I know you wouldn’t go this far but the logic of your position seems to be to bring back stoning. It may not be very academic but I liked David I-B because in pastoral cases, it seems to me to be more in keeping with the gospel. E.g., when a wife is being regularly beaten for no reason, should she really stay in that relationship?”

There a large number of issues here that need to be treated separately. I have repeated each section of the letter below and given my comments on it under LMF.

RE] You asked me to look at your paper on Divorce and I have tried to do so but I confess that I find your conclusions very harsh.

LMF] The phrase “very harsh” is the reaction that Jesus’ disciples expressed, so you are in good company. But the disciples had to come to terms with Jesus’ very harsh (or should we say ‘high’) standards. Jesus was not going to soften His doctrine to please human frailty.

When you read Jesus’ teaching in Luke 16:18 (this is earlier than His statements in Matthew 19 and Mark 10:11-12), the stark simplicity of His doctrine comes across clearly. There are no ‘exception clauses’ here. It is only in Matthew 19:9 that a misunderstanding has arisen because Erasmus altered the Greek text to make it say what he wanted it to say, namely, to create a loophole for divorce, and to get Jesus to make a single concession to soften His ‘harsh’ doctrine.

All I have done is expose Erasmus’s faulty Greek text, and translated the original, Majority Text (which is supported by Sinaiticus, but not by Vaticanus, which, disastrously imported Matthew 5:32 into 19:9).

What I have attempted to do in my translation is to bring out the meaning of the Greek after I have deleted Erasmus’s addition. I have had plenty of support through many e-mails of the rightness of my translation.

In brief, Jesus’ teaching in Mark and Luke is stark: No divorce on any grounds. The implication is that any man or woman who remarries is an adulterer/adulteress. There can be no getting away from His teaching. No doubt, Jesus lost a lot of disciples once His ‘harsh’ doctrine became known.

The reason why Jesus could never allow divorce is that there is no sin which cannot be forgiven and forgiveness means reconciliation and restoration. Peter wanted to put a limit on the number of times someone could be forgiven, but Jesus said to forgive seventy times seven, which was just another way of saying ‘there is no limit’ (Matthew 18:21-22). If we insert the sin of adultery into the text, it reads: “Peter said, ‘Lord, how often shall my wife commit adultery against me, and I forgive her, till seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but to seventy times seven.’” In Luke 17:3-4 the same thought of unlimited forgiveness is expressed by Jesus. We can focus on the sin of adultery and translate as: “Jesus said, . . . Take heed to yourselves, . . . if your wife may commit adultery against you, rebuke her, and if she may reform, forgive her, and if seven times
in the day she may sin against you, and seven times in the day may return to you saying, ‘I reform,’ you shall forgive her.’”

There is no idea of stoning the one who commits adultery in Jesus’ teaching. He taught forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness, *ad infinitum*. There is no limit to His forgiveness, and this is what we should preach and practise.

What Jesus did insist upon is that men should have ‘one wife for life.’ A Christian can never go to the world to have his/her ‘one flesh’ union broken. It can never be broken by any word of man, be he an Apostle or a House of Lords’ judge. It can only be broken by death (Romans 7:1-2; 1 Corinthians 7:39). Marriage is permanent. As Jesus pointed out, this was its state “from the beginning” (in Eden). He goes back to “the beginning” (i.e., to the pre-Law situation) to recover the true doctrine of marriage. It is as if the period, or dispensation, of Law did not exist in His mind.

Jesus drew a sharp distinction between the system operating in the world and the system operating in His Kingdom. He said to the Jews living under the Mosaic Law: “you are of this world, I am not of this world” (John 8:23). The two systems are poles apart: Jesus said to His disciples: “if of the world you were, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world — but I chose out of the world — because of this the world hates you” (John 15:19). He also said: “I have given to them Your word, and the world did hate them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world; I do not ask that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them out of the evil. Of the world they are not, as I am not of the world” (John 17:15-16). Here Jesus identifies the world system as an evil system, and in opposition to Him and His Way. In Jesus’ Kingdom the law that dominates is: “let not man put asunder”; but in the world, the law that dominates is: “let us put asunder what God has joined when it suits us.”

For every doctrine of the Lord, the world has an opposite doctrine. Satan opposes the Lord at every turn. The divorce courts belong to Satan. They are his instruments for ruining mankind, and for throwing the members of Christ’s Church into disorder and disunity. He is happiest when he sees Christians coming into his divorce law courts to end their marriages. Through these courts he can continue to hurt the Lord Jesus, his bitterest enemy. We play into his hands when we enter his courts and obtain a false certificate to put asunder what God ordained should be a permanent union.

Neither God nor the Lord Jesus recognise Satan’s divorce certificate as having any validity or legitimacy. It cannot end any marriage. Satan’s courts are not part of Christ’s Kingdom, but Christians go off to Satan to obtain permission to sever their ‘one flesh’ union. At that moment, such Christians become members of the ‘world’ system, and they cannot continue to be members of Christ’s Body. A Christian cannot be a member of the world and a member of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:13-20). Membership of both is not possible, because Jesus is not a member of the world. A Christian who claims to be a member of Christ’s body cannot be a member of the world. The two systems are incompatible. The one is of the flesh, the other is of the Spirit of Christ. Satan and Christ can never be one. Their systems cannot be merged. They are diametrically opposed to each another. Enmity and hated exists between them. Jesus noted: “If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). This hatred is permanently directed at all of Christ’s followers throughout their time on this earth. The divorce courts of the god of this world are a trap to separate every Christian from Christ.

The only time I would advocate Christians using Satan’s courts is to hurt Satan. Thus, if a Christian, out of ignorance, used Satan’s court to go against Christ’s teaching and divorced his wife and remarried, and then became convicted that his second marriage was an adulterous affair, he will want to reverse that action, so let him go back into Satan’s court and reverse his divorce action and return to his first wife. This would hurt Satan enormously. But in the end, to satisfy the law of the land, every second marriage must be undone through the courts, so that the world can see clearly what is a man’s married status before the law of the land.

What Jesus did allow for was the real possibility that the unbelieving spouse in Satan’s kingdom, would not live with the Christian spouse in Christ’s Kingdom; but in these cases the Christian spouse must be ready at all times to forgive and be reconciled. If the unbeliever goes off and remarries, he is living in sin. There is no such thing as divorce in the Kingdom of God. No provision and no court was set up by the Lord Jesus to grant divorces. If anyone gets a divorce they
go to the world (not to Christ) to get it. The world reflects the values of Satan, not Christ. Paul warned Christ’s Church not to go before the courts of the ‘world of unbelievers,’ but to settle their disputes among themselves (1 Corinthians 6).

The early Church Fathers realised the strength of Jesus’ doctrine when He took His standard from the Garden of Eden situation, where God joined Adam and Eve in a permanent union. Only God, therefore, can separate what He has joined together, and Jesus has conveyed God’s will in this matter: God has made no provision for divorce under the New Covenant. This is what Jesus conveyed to His followers.

In Jesus’ day the Jews were given autonomy in the area of their religion, but not in the area of governance (politics). Here, the Roman authorities reserved the right to use the death penalty. But the Roman authorities permitted the Sanhedrin to carry out the death penalty for religious matters. It is sometimes argued that the Roman government removed this religious right, and as a consequence the Jewish authorities brought in divorce as a substitute for the death penalty. This is not so. Paul was given authority from the Sanhedrin to ‘threaten’ and ‘slaughter the disciples of the Lord’ (Acts 9:1). Paul approved of the slaughter of Stephen (Acts 8:1). The Jews expected the woman taken in adultery to be stoned (John 8). There are many incidents where Jews attempted to exercise their right to enforce the death penalty on renegade Jewish Christians (Acts 9:23; 18:14-15; 21:31; 23:29; 25:11, 25; 26:10 (with 22:4)). Under the Mosaic Law God demanded that all renegade Hebrews (later called Jews), who were deemed to be worshipping other gods, should be stoned to death (Ex 22:20), and also all those who would try to lead Jews to worship other gods (Deut 13:6-18). As far as Paul was concerned, this is what the Apostles and Stephen were doing, so in all good conscience he killed Christians, thinking he was pleasing God.

The selfsame enthusiasm drove the zealous Jews to bring the adulteress to Jesus (John 8) expecting Jesus to uphold the Mosaic Law (which He was still under), and Jesus agreed that she should be stoned, because His Father had instituted this law. But ever mindful that He was talking to hypocrites He asked the ones who were sinless to carry out His Father’s will. They all slunk away. But Jesus was sinless, so why could He not have stoned her? If He had done so, He would have upheld the law of His Father, but His Father had given Him the power to forgive sins, and so He exercised it, and commanded the woman not to sin again.

In the case of the Pharisees’ demand for the death penalty for the victim’s unfaithfulness (‘caught in the act’), Jesus was not going to play into their hands when they are living with double standards. It may well be that some of those who caught the woman ‘in the act’ had already been remarried themselves, in which case, in Jesus’ eyes, they were adulterers as much as the victim was. So why would He order the death penalty for the victim but not for some of her accusers? This would be inconsistent on His part, so He will not be a tool in their social politics. Jesus’ standards are high, in terms of fallen man’s opinion, but they are to be ‘normal’ for those entering into the New Kingdom of God. The standard never changed. God commanded the Israelites, ‘Be ye holy as I am holy.’

We now know that when Jesus lived out His life under the Law, He obtained the righteousness that is through the Law, and it is this righteousness that He offers to the world to receive by faith. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is out of bounds for all His followers. The death penalty for adultery has been abolished, and forgiveness has been put in its place in the new order/kingdom.

For Jews living under the Law, God made no provision for divorce on the grounds of adultery. Death certificates, not divorce certificates, were instituted by God for adultery. But it would appear that the Jews regarded God’s punishment as ‘harsh,’ and so they (Hillel and Shammai) commuted the death penalty to divorce for fornication. But note that it was just this man-made provision that Jesus strikes at when He inserted the exclusion clause: “not he may divorce for fornication,” (meaning, he cannot obtain a divorce for fornication) in Matthew 19:9.\footnote{Erasmus}

\footnote{Erasmus For other examples of the use of μὴ to deny permission, see Mt 5:17; Mk 10:19; and Lk 18:20.}
turned Jesus’ deliberate, exclusion clause, into an exceptive clause in order to restrict Jesus’ insistence on no divorce for any cause.

Now when we examine Matthew 5:32 in the light of Jesus’ ‘No divorce for any cause’ position, we find a consistency in His teaching (as we would expect). Here, in Matthew 5:32, Jesus informs us of the terrible consequences of divorce. He tells His audience that if a man puts his wife on to the street, then he is offering her to any man to have sex with her. Even if she is holding a divorce certificate in her hand, Jesus lays the blame for all her future, sexual sins at the door of her husband, because, as far as He is concerned, they are still married. The only exemption from responsibility for her sins is where she commits adultery before he put her out in the street. The husband is not guilty for that sexual sin, and we would heartily agree with our Saviour’s exclusion or exemption clause in this instance. That is what Jesus refers to when He said: “apart from fornication.” So the husband is held responsible for all her future adultery, apart from the case where he did not force her to have sex with another man. The divorce certificate appeared to give him immunity from responsibility. (It might have been her infidelity that drove him to divorce her in the first place.)

Jesus removed this man-instituted immunity by destroying the legitimacy of the certificate in the first place. Because hard-hearted men could not bring themselves to forgive, they invented the idea of divorce, to vent their wrath on their unfaithful or unloved wives. *Divorce has its origin in an unforgiving spirit.* That unforgiving spirit has no place in Christ or in any of His followers. We have a different spirit—the Holy Spirit, living within us to forgive all adulteries *ad infinitum.* There is no place for Christian stoning. It is incompatible with Christ abiding within us. He forgave the woman caught in the act of adultery, and so must all Christian men and women.

There is spiritual danger in getting involved in the act of divorce. It is fraught with eternal consequences. No adulterer or adulteress can enter the Kingdom of God, Jesus warned. If a Christian thinks he can take a trip into the Law that was created for the Hebrews (the Jews), and selectively choose something that Moses, not God, permitted hard-hearted men to live by, such as Moses’s law sanctioning divorce (Deut 24:1–4), then they are in for a rude awakening. If they are going to live by this sub-standard law, then they must live totally under all its laws, not just a selection from it. As Paul put it, if you want to live as a Jew, then live under the Law, in which case you will be judged by the Law, and no man living under the Law will enter the Kingdom of God. Living under the Law is a no, no, to every one who professes to have Christ living in him. As a means of salvation, the Law is obsolete, old, gone. It belongs to history. Those Christian counsellors who dabble in the Law, and import its sub-standard laws into the life of the Church, are preaching another Gospel. Selectively choosing what to import and mixing it with Christ’s pure teaching will result in a new Gospel, a Judaistic-Christianity, which is neither one thing nor the other, but a concoction of their own choosing. These counsellors will be held responsible for the lives they have ruined, and the innumerable ‘Christians’ who will not be permitted to enter the Kingdom of God. It is a fearful thing to interfere with the clear teaching of Jesus, and make Him teach that marriage is not a permanent union.

RE] This is not a subject I have studied very closely but some years ago we read David Instone-Brewer’s book and found it quite useful.

LMF] Maybe you should read my comprehensive critique of Brewer’s book, which is on my web site. He has created his own ‘good news’ as far as his provision for divorce goes. It is basically humanistic in origin and appeal. It will appeal to the flesh, and to common-sense. It is packaged to make it very attractive to the unbeliever, who would instantly go for it in his unregenerate state. It is a gospel tailor-made for him. You will not find Jesus’ solution of unlimited

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506 See Appendix C below for a shortened version of it.
forgiveness and reconciliation in it. You will not find Jesus’ total denunciation of divorce ‘for any cause’ in it. The Gospel of Grace is contaminated with rabbinic exegesis.

Those who substitute Jesus’ ‘No divorce on any grounds’ for this new doctrine, will find themselves at odds with their Saviour, which must divorce them from Him at the spiritual and psychological levels. Their prayer life will peter out (though the form will be retained). If they enter a second marriage on this humanistic, flesh-appealing package, and then discover that they are living in adultery, their last state is going to be worse than their first, for they will have to disengage with their second partner if they want to enter the Kingdom of God.

The cost to enter the Kingdom of God is nothing less that giving up all things for Christ, including one’s wife if necessary (Matthew 19:29; Luke 14:26). For the majority of Christians conned into a second marriage by this new doctrine the cost will be too great, and they will go away into everlasting separation from God.

As a faithful teacher of God’s Word I would warn every Christian not to be attracted to this new, hybrid, Rabbinic-Christianity, which advocates laying aside Jesus’ ‘harsh’ doctrine for a soft option that appeals to the flesh—to the natural man. This new doctrine is sweet to the tongue but it will have a bitter outcome. This attractive doctrine says, ‘Play now and pay later.’

Those who have read this work cannot turn away and think that they will not be held accountable for ignoring its clear warning. They have the unbroken witness of the Church right up to Erasmus (1516) and on through to the present day in the Roman Catholic church, that Jesus taught ‘No divorce on any grounds.’ Divorce is incompatible with His teaching to forgive seventy times seven. He taught that if we wanted forgiveness, then we must forgive others their sins. The one is conditional on the other. Adultery is not the unforgivable sin.

The consistent witness of the Early Church cannot be dismissed offhand. It has its roots in the practice of all the New Testament churches, and once a practice becomes universal it is difficult to change it. It gains a momentum of its own, resulting in a strong tradition, even if the doctrine that created it in the first place is lost, which, in this case never happened. The Reformers were conned into believing that Erasmus’s Greek text was a true reflection of the manuscripts he had in his possession. But being a humanist, he chose, in this instance, a reading which is not found in any early Greek manuscript, because it agreed with his humanist reasoning. It is his faulty Greek reading in Matthew 19:9 that lies at the foundation of the new, hybrid doctrine.

RE] Your whole argument comes down to whether the EI MH should be in the text or not.

LMF] No, my argument does not come down to whether ei mh should be in the text or not. If you read it again you will see that my objection is to the addition of the little word ei (‘if’) which Erasmus added to the text. You will see that I have retained the word mh (‘not’) because it alone is in all the early manuscripts, except the corrupt Codex Vaticanus.

RE] You acknowledge that Wycliffe translated it so its origins are earlier than Erasmus.

LMF] Wycliffe was not translating the Greek text, but the Latin Vulgate.507

RE] I have to say that to translate your understanding of the correct reading you have had to add a lot of words and the other three ‘correct translations’ are very difficult to understand as they are translated.

Once I removed Erasmus’s addition of *ei*, I presented the reader with the most literal translation of Matthew 19:9 that I could make, to bring out the meaning of the Greek, and also that others would see how I arrived at my understanding, and be able to approve or disapprove of it. If you care to examine my carefully expounded explanation of how I arrived at my understanding of the Greek, you will then be in a position to see that in Matthew 19:9 Jesus pointedly ruled out divorce for fornication to his Pharisaic bystanders, most of whom were probably in a second marriage situation. Rabbi Hillel advocated that a man could divorce his wife if she burnt the dinner. Rabbi Shammai, by contrast, advocated that a man could only divorce his wife on sexual grounds. Jesus’ statement ruled out even this option. He was a Rabbi of a different order altogether. He taught ‘no divorce on any grounds,’ and in this way snubbed both rabbis. While they sought to bring God’s standard down to where unregenerate man was, Jesus sought to bring regenerate man up to where God exists. “Be you perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” This cannot be achieved in the flesh. It requires faith and the Holy Spirit, both of which are the gift of God.

The rabbis operated within a once-only born experience; Jesus operated within a twice-born experience. Jesus lived in a different world to these two rabbis. They were carnal; He was spiritual. There could be no coming together of their worlds or their doctrines. But this is precisely what the new Judaistic gospel has achieved, resulting in a distortion of Jesus’ teaching, and hordes of Christians are taking advantage of this attractive package to have their cake and eat it. It is a painless Christianity. There is no cross to bear. There is no need to be ‘born again’ to enter into this new, false alternative, gospel. It permits the Christian to operate at the same level as Satan’s world system, and obtain divorces on the same grounds that Satan grants divorces to his followers, but obtaining worldly divorces fools these Christians into thinking that they are still members of Christ’s body even though they are committing adultery against their first spouses. This is what makes this new gospel so appealing, but therein lies divorce from Christ’s body and future exclusion from heaven. Divorce from a spouse, and divorce from Christ, are inseparable as two sides of the same coin. They are directly linked. They are inseparable. Therefore, flee divorce if you do not want to be divorced from Christ for all eternity.

I know you wouldn’t go this far but the logic of your position seems to be to bring back stoning.

This is not a logical reading of my carefully constructed paper. I am only the messenger. I have shown that Jesus taught that marriage was for life. I know you agree with this. I have set out how Jesus carefully took into account how far the husband’s responsibility went after he divorced his wife. He carefully excluded his wife’s sexual sins before he divorced her (Matthew 5:32). He would not be held responsible for those sins, but he would be held responsible for all her sins after he had divorced her and she remarried thinking her marriage was truly ended. In the case of Matthew 19:9, Jesus held firm to His absolute statements in Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11-12, and deliberately condemned divorce on the grounds of fornication in the form of an ‘exclusion clause.’

Jesus never advocated stoning for adultery, and neither do I. I follow my Master’s example in this regard. It is difficult to see how anyone would read into Jesus’ statements that He would advocate stoning for adultery, when clearly He forgave the woman taken in adultery.

See Appendix B of this paper.

Jesus may also have an eye on the divorced wife not remarrying but living a life of fornication after her divorce. Since she knows this style of life is sinful, she, not her husband, is blameworthy.
RE] It may not be very academic but I liked David I-B because in pastoral cases, it seems to me to be more in keeping with the gospel. E.g., when a wife is being regularly beaten for no reason, should she really stay in that relationship?

LMF] Every Christian should start off with a clear understanding of what Jesus taught about the marriage relationship. If that understanding is not in place, then you will argue from a humanist perspective, and that will not lead to the right solution. Here are four important questions.

1. Are you clear in your mind that Jesus taught that marriage was for life? (2) Are you clear in your mind that He made no exceptions to His absolute statements as recorded in Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11-12? (3) Are you clear that in Matthew 5:32 Jesus is teaching about who is responsible/culpable for the sins of adultery that precede and follow every divorce? (4) Are you clear that in Matthew 19:9 Jesus is teaching that no man can use fornication as a grounds for divorce?

If you can respond positively to these four questions then you have a foundation on which to analyse any domestic situation. If you cannot respond positively, or are unsure of your ground, then you will not be in a position to analyse any situation with any assurance that it would be in agreement with Jesus’ teaching. To analyse any situation it is imperative that you are in possession of Jesus’ mind and understanding. Only then can you hope to bring wisdom to your analysis of any domestic situation involving a threat to the marriage union.

On the specific domestic situation that you raise, see the Fourteenth and Fifteenth case studies above. Suffice to add here that the question: ‘should she really stay in that relationship?’ needs to be analysed carefully. If by ‘relationship’ you mean ‘married,’ then clearly Jesus’ answer is Yes. No divorce on any grounds is permitted. If by ‘relationship’ you mean, should she go on enduring physical abuse, then clearly I would say she should get help from her Church, from her relations, from the police, and seek help from his side of the family if the abuse is irrational, gratuitous or unacceptable in a civilised society. But married she is to him until death separates them. No Christian counsellor should ever advise a Christian to go to Satan’s divorce courts to end their lawfully ordained marriage. The most that a Christian can do in a situation where they are in physical danger of abuse or death is to separate and remain single. Divorce is out of the question.

9.8. LETTER 8. CAN A CHRISTIAN NEVER, EVER, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES GET A DIVORCE?

Most Christians on hearing that divorce is never possible under any circumstances for any human being on this planet throw up their hands in total disbelief. Immediately they cite clear instances of men and women going off with another man or another woman, and they know instinctively who the guilty party is and who is the innocent party. The innocent party is invariably the Christian. The guilty partner could also be a Christian, and they will cite many examples where this was the case. They then use ‘natural justice’ to argue that the innocent party is justified in punishing the guilty part by getting a divorce (to start off with), and would not find anything wrong with a subsequent remarriage to another Christian. In their minds divorce does what it says; it undoes the marriage vows, and both parties, guilty and innocent, are now free to find other partners or none.

When challenged, they always cite Deuteronomy 24:1-4, as God’s provision for Christians to get a lawful end to their marriages. When a marriage begins to go sour, both partners will begin looking toward each other’s pre-marriage sexual misdemeanours as a possible grounds for divorce.

We have earlier spelled out the Lord Jesus’ teaching that all sins must be forgiven, even past sexual ones. This is what distinguishes His followers from all other world religions. The Christian
must resist looking at other world religions to see how they handle divorce issues. Jesus’ attitude toward divorce is unique among all religions, cults, sects, and faiths. He stands alone against divorce. It is the Christian who can stand alone alongside Him who will experience His presence no matter what ‘hell’ they are going through with their partner.

The danger for the Christian is to take their eyes off Jesus and His clear teaching, and start hankering after an end to their marriage. That is when they will be caught, and before they know it they are heeding the voices of their friends (and the ubiquitous majority of Christian counsellors) telling them to go to the worldly courts to split their worldly goods in half and make a fresh start. The babble of the marriage counsellors is so loud in the Church that it has almost drowned out the still small voice of the Lord Jesus. But Jesus has a way of making His voice heard, and those who are His sheep will hear that voice and follow Him. Those who are not His sheep will not heed His teaching and they will wander off into a barren life.

Because over fifty per cent of all marriages end in the divorce courts, Christians have assumed that it is not a sinful thing in itself. After World War II, a German guard who witnessed hundreds of women and children being herded into the gas chambers confessed that “It is amazing what you can get used to in time.” The operative phrase is ‘in time.’ At first he was appalled, but he was slowly worn down by the constant sight of people going to certain death that he was able to live with his awful conditions. He was conditioned to accept something that was wrong.

There is a similar gulf developing between the viewpoint of God and the viewpoint of His Church. He hates divorce of any hue or colour. It is an abomination to Him. Unfortunately, that is not the experience of His so-called followers. The Christian must never allow himself to be become so used to hearing of divorce that they allow themselves to be conditioned into thinking that it is ‘normal.’ They should keep to the old paths and keep reminding themselves that God hates divorce, and they should too. This constant reminder is the best antidote to the conditioning that is evident all around us.

9.9. LETTER 9. IS DIVORCE ITSELF A SIN?

When Christians hear that other Christians regard divorce as a sinful act, and that it is on a par with abortion, or murder, they are shocked to hear this, because they have friends who have been divorced and remarried, sometimes in churches. So the anxious question is: Is divorce itself a sin? and should Christians have nothing to do with it? Most Christians would assume that it can’t be a sinful act in itself, because Moses permitted it in the Torah. But we have just noted in the previous letter that the origin of divorce did not come from God, but from man.

The short answer to the question, Is divorce itself a sin? is Yes. It originated in the mind of man, not God. God made no allowance for it from the beginning. His revealed will was that the one-flesh union of man and woman should not be severed while both are alive. Marriage was designed to be a permanent, life-long union. God hates divorce (Mal 2:16).510

In Matthew 19:9 Jesus noted three things about divorce. First, it was introduced by Moses, not by His Father. In all other cases, God used Moses as His spokesman. In this single case, Moses is attributed with sanctioning of the law on divorce. Secondly, divorce emerged out of man’s hard-hearted attitude toward the weaker sex. It did not arise out of love, but out of hate. Thirdly, we noted above the circumstances which caused Moses’s oral law to be written down (see 2.1.1. above). The divorce law was drawn up by man, for man, to satisfy man’s selfish lusts.

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The last point is worth expanding. The law of divorce was blatantly unfair. It was written up in such a way that wives were not allowed to divorce their husbands. Only husbands had the right to divorce their wives. It was not only unfair and unjust, but it was also one-sided. It was a one-way, sexist law, which was designed to operate solely in man’s favour. It has all the hallmarks of an evil provision designed to operate against the best interests of the woman. This law reeks of man’s inhumanity to woman. It legalises bullying. It legalises domestic violence against women. It legally robbed women of the rights they had ‘in the beginning.’ It empowered any husband to put his wife out on the street at a moment’s notice. He did not have to go to court. He did not have to prove her guilt. It was, to all intents and practices, the private affair of the husband. He was judge and jury. There was no appeal against his decision. He was autonomous. He behaved like a god. He made sure that all the cards were stacked in his favour when he drew up this law. Could this law possibly have come from God? The answer is a resounding No, and we have Jesus’ explicit statement that it did not come from His Father.

Jesus must often have pondered the foul nature of this law and its detrimental consequences for the lives of countless wives dumped on the streets at the whim of their husbands. It was a foul law that issued out of a foul mouth—the mouth of a hard-hearted man. This law legally abolished the woman’s right to a secure home, which she had ‘from the beginning.’ With the stroke of a pen, this law demoted and degraded her to the level of a domesticated animal. What a sad reflection on the mind-set of Hebrew men 1440 years before the birth of the woman’s Saviour. The male-orientated divorce law represents institutional bullying at its worst. It shows what evil can be passed as law, which then corrupts the entire nation into thinking that what is legal is right in the eyes of God.

However, woman’s rights have been restored to her ‘in Christ.’ Under Christ’s new rule the rights of the wife which she had in the Garden of Eden are restored. 1 Corinthians 7:2-4 reads: “Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her proper husband. To the wife let the husband the due benevolence render, and in like manner also the wife to the husband. The wife over her own body has not authority, but the husband; and, in like manner also, the husband over his own body has not authority, but the wife.” The idea that the wife had authority over her husband’s body, and that she alone had the right to all of his sexual relations, would have been anathema to those who practiced the divorce law, described by God, but not sanctioned by Him, in Deuteronomy 24:1-3. But under Christ’s new Covenant rule her rights have been restored to her, and no husband can take them away from her. He might think he can deny her her rights and give them to another woman, but in Jesus’ eyes, he is committing adultery against her. She owns the right to his body, and likewise he owns the right to her body. She cannot give her body to another man, otherwise she is committing adultery against him. These are the rights which Adam and Eve enjoyed ‘in the beginning.’

The Torah came into existence thousands of years after Adam and Eve existed in the Garden of Eden. It is to this pre-Torah era that Jesus went back to, to recover God’s teaching on marriage in Genesis 2:24. Christians are to reach behind the late introduction of the Torah, and recover the original teaching on marriage from that pre-Torah era. This is what Jesus was doing in Matthew 19:9 when he dismissed the existence of divorce among His people with the statement: “but from the beginning it hath not been so.” There was no thought or provision for divorce “from the beginning of the creation” (Mark 10:6). Jesus has taken His theology from the state of things before the Fall in the Garden of Eden, because it is into this pristine state that He takes His followers through the new birth. They can now live the life that God intended all men and women should have lived from the beginning.

Before looking at God’s reaction to Moses’s divorce law, we need to examine the term ‘abomination’ (Heb. τὸ ἁδῆ; Gk ἐρετιγμα). Certain things were so disgusting in the mind of God that He demanded the death penalty for them. One such evil was homosexual behaviour (Lev 18:22). Both men were to be killed (Dt 20:13). Other persons were also an abomination to Him (Dt 22:5; 25:16). These persons defiled the sanctity of the land in which they were living. Under the period of
Law they had to be eradicated as soon as they were discovered. Now, under Grace, while the punishment of such persons in the Church has been changed to excommunication, the disgust felt by God has not changed. Homosexuals and remarried divorced women are in the same category as persons who are an abomination to Him, and who are defiled persons. Revelation 21 envisages the redeemed nations entering the New Jerusalem (Heaven) and it notes: “there may not enter into it at all any thing that is defiling or doing abomination” (21:27).

God does not change His assessment of the relationship He has brought about through marriage. Once married, always married. His assessment is not changed by some man on the earth pronouncing that a wife and husband are no longer husband and wife. He is not in heaven updating His records to agree with the records of a human divorce court. After all, where did the human divorce courts get their authority to separate what God joined? They are self-appointed institutions.

Are not all divorce courts under the control of the ‘god of this world’ (Satan)? What agreement can God and Satan have over the status of married couples? It is Satan’s work to divorce. It is God’s work to unite permanently. They are at loggerheads over divorce. Satan will win in the world. God should win in the Church. It is a disgrace for a member of the Church to go to the divorce courts of Satan to ‘undo’ their permanent bond.

One can only understand the disgust felt in the mind of God through the revelation that Jesus gave. While the Jews had been living for centuries believing that divorce was a normal solution to family disputes, they appear to have been oblivious that it was considered a highly abnormal state in the eyes of God. No other Jewish rabbi had ever considered that divorce was an abnormal state. Jesus was the first rabbi to point this out. Now, unless God and the Lord Jesus have undergone a drastic change of mind, homosexuals and remarried divorced women are still an abomination in the eyes of God. It was left to the Lord Jesus to make the further revelation that a remarried divorced husband was also an abomination in their eyes (see below).

Even though Hebrew women were legally divorced and legally married to a second husband, according to Moses’s regulations, she has become a defiled woman in the eyes of God and Jesus, and her offspring would be regarded as unclean511 (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:14). God does not recognise Moses’s divorce law as having any legality, and neither did Jesus.

A woman might call herself a Christian, but Jesus and God call her ‘an abomination,’ a whore, a defiled person, who has no place as a member of His Body.

So God’s first reaction to Moses’s new law (on how to get rid of an unwanted wife) is to say that when a husband divorces his wife, and she remarries, he is forcing her to become a defiled person, and thereby she becomes an abomination in the eyes of God. Jesus made the same observation about the divorced woman in Matthew 19:9, but He made a telling addition. Under Moses’s law there is no explicit suggestion that the husband commits adultery when he remarries, and no suggestion that he becomes an abomination. It is left to Jesus to spell out the full implications of divorce on both partners. Both, He says, are adulterers the moment they remarry. So both are an abomination in His eyes. But in the case of the woman, Jesus rules that the responsibility for her adultery is to be laid at the feet of her husband for forcing her out of his home and on to the street (Matthew 5:31-32). It is left to Jesus to show that when a husband remarries, the abomination status transfers to him through his second marriage. But Jesus also reveals that the contagion spreads to those who marry persons who are divorced. They become abominations through their (innocent, as they thought) sexual relations. So one divorce certificate can result in four persons becoming obnoxious in the eyes of God and the Lord Jesus. Truly, divorce multiplies sin.

God’s second reaction to Moses’s discriminatory law was to step in and place a ban on reconciliation. This ban reflects His utter disgust for the husband. The implication of the ban is serious. There can be no reconciliation even if he repents of his sin toward his wife in divorcing her.

511 Whether her children would be regarded as illegitimate is not settled. Illegitimate children were not allowed into the Assembly ‘even to the tenth generation,’ which was just another way of saying ‘never’ (Dt 23:2).
God shuts the door firmly on this possibility. Does this state also reflect his relationship with God? It would appear so. God freezes him in his chosen, sinful state with no possibility of reconciliation either to his wife or to Himself. This man will not be in God’s company in the afterlife. Divorce is an evil act, in and of itself.

However, what of second marriages in the era of grace? Under the new rule of Christ, all sins can be forgiven, provided the repentant sinner obeys the injunction, “Go, and sin no more.” The clause ‘sin no more,’ implies an immediate cessation of sleeping with a second partner, while the first spouse is still alive. Under grace a man can be reconciled to his first wife and return to her, which was not possible under the rider that God placed on Moses’s bill of divorce. This shows that all of man’s attempts to ‘normalise’ divorce are disdained by God and the Lord Jesus as legal fictions. Using the legal system to legalise sin does not make it right in God’s eyes. The law of the land is not necessarily the law of God. Christians give priority to God’s law when the two are in dispute.

God never gave Moses, or any human institution, the right to end a marriage. The Church of God has not been given any authority to end a marriage. Those Christian leaders who take it upon themselves to authorise ending a marriage in divorce are usurping God’s authority. Beware of such leaders because in advocating divorce they set innocent Christians on the road to becoming abominable persons in the eyes of God and their Saviour if they remarry.

Is divorce itself a sin? The short and the long answer is, Yes, because divorce has never been authorised by God under the New Covenant. Jesus fully endorsed His Father’s view of what constitutes an abominable, defiled person. All second marriages following a divorce are abominable relationships in the eyes of God.

What constitutes a defiled, abominable person is not whether one got one’s divorce on the right or wrong grounds, but whether a wife can sleep with another man while her first husband in still alive. That is the issue. If s/he cannot sleep with a second spouse while the first spouse is alive, then the issue of divorce can never arise. It is for this reason that there is no such thing as an innocent party after a divorce has gone through. Both are now in a guilty state of having undone (in their minds) the marriage bond. The Christian must always refuse to get a divorce and must remain in a separated state until the death of their spouse. Only then can they remarry another Christian (1 Corinthians 7:39).

9.10. LETTER 10. WILL DIVORCED CHRISTIANS BE SAVED?

The implications of Jesus’ teaching, which bans all forms of divorce once a marriage has been consummated, have not been lost on many who have read this paper. No one is morally neutral, Jesus once noted. Everyone is either for Him or against Him. Those who are ‘for Him’ can be recognised by their love for Him and for all His commands. “If you love Me you will obey Me,” was one of His key sayings.

In the section that follows, I have replied to a very concerned minister of the Lord Jesus who wrote as follows:

Do you really believe that all those devout believers who have been misled by Erasmus and the Reformers and have remarried in all good conscience contrary to Matthew 19:9 are damned? Do you really believe that otherwise saintly Christians, misled by the theological failures of the contemporary Western Church, are excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven because of their remarriages in the lifetime of a former spouse? There does have to be a way of reading the loci about not inheriting the kingdom/kingship in such a way that they agree with the rest of Scripture’s teaching on saving grace. After all, none of us will die spotlessly perfect. We shall be clinging to our salvation in and through the spotless Lamb
of God who gave Himself for us and now lives in us by His Spirit. I totally agree that we must reassert the truth of Matthew 19:9 in its correct form. It is right to challenge our brethren in wrong relationships to bring them into line with Scripture. However, I myself cannot say that they have fallen from grace if they disagree because of their skewed grid of understanding. There has to be a solution whereby true believers who are wrestling with alcoholism (“drunkards”) can know saving grace even if they die in the grip of their sick, sad and sinful cravings.

I shall reply to each element of this minister’s concern.

MINISTER] Do you really believe that all those devout believers who have been misled by Erasmus and the Reformers and have remarried in all good conscience contrary to Matthew 19:9 are damned?

LMF] No, I don’t. I care deeply that they were duped and their lives were not able to be used to the glory of God after they had remarried. Their new marriage was an adulterous relationship in the eyes of God. So marrying “in all good conscience” does not change God’s attitude toward that remarriage. It is a sinful relationship whether they realise it or not. All remarriages are an abomination in His sight where both partners are still alive (Deut 24:4).

Now, who is responsible for this continuing sin in the church? You and me, who know the truth but who are not getting it out.

MINISTER] Do you really believe that otherwise saintly Christians, misled by the theological failures of the contemporary Western Church, are excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven because of their remarriages in the lifetime of a former spouse?

LMF] Others may be responsible, if back in those days, the church (lowercase ‘church,’ because it was a corrupt church) could not be trusted. The Reformers were duped, just as the Gibeonites duped Joshua, because Joshua (the inspired commentator informs us) did not consult God. If the Reformers had consulted the Lord Jesus at each stage of recovering the doctrines of Grace would He have allowed them to be duped? I don’t think so. It teaches me that I should not work out any doctrine for myself, or depart from any doctrine, until I have taken it to the Lord in prayer and discussed it with other men who likewise take everything to God in prayer, not forgetting the guidance that the Spirit gave to the Early Church Fathers. The outcome of Joshua’s deception was that God made him keep his promises to the Gibeonites, and he (and the whole Church in the wilderness [Acts 7:38]) had to live with the consequences of the collective leaders’ mistake. Let us not be guilty of making any such mistake personally or on behalf of our hearers.

I take seriously the revelation that no adulterer or fornicator will be in heaven. I also take seriously that God does not judge by a relative standard: adultery is just that—adultery, as He defines adultery. On His definition it is where a married partner has unlawful sex with another person. If God judges by His definition and standard, then all remarried persons will not stand in His presence. (See below where I have more to say on this point.)

Some try to make a case whereby adulterers and adulteresses could enter the Kingdom of God but only by the skin of their teeth. It is said that they may be the least in the Kingdom of God, which would not exclude them from being in the Kingdom of God (i.e. in heaven). But they are unaware that the Kingdom of God embraces everything and every place, for there is no place where God is not king. Jesus pointed out in His parable of the Seeds that the field is the Kingdom of God, and in the Kingdom Satan sowed weeds (Matthew 13:24–30). So, not all that is in the Kingdom of God is good seed. Evil seed is also present. This means that hell is also under God’s dominion, and being the least in the Kingdom of God, means being in the lowest hell (cf. Matthew 5:19). The Kingdom of God encompasses heaven and hell, so those who comfort unreformed sinners that if they die in their remarriages they will still go to heaven are false teachers. The weeds (unreformed
Every spouse knows that within a marriage adultery is wrong. So all these adulterers, we can be absolutely sure, will not be in heaven. It is where a divorce takes place and both partners are duped into believing that they are free to remarry that I find the most difficult to resolve. Will God take into account that they were deceived into believing that they were free, and so there was no conscience of doing wrong? Eve was deceived by the serpent, but it was counted as sin, because she disobeyed her husband.

Christians and non-Christians frequent the same, secular divorce law courts. This is wrong. Just who will be held responsible for leading other Christians astray seems to be settled in Scripture. It is the teachers. It is you and me. If we know the Truth and hide it, then we will be judged. Whether God will withdraw His grace altogether from you and me, and damn us, is entirely up to Christ. (See more on this point below.) We certainly deserve to be damned eternally for such a neglect of duty. We are inexcusable. But if we are truly ignorant of Jesus’ teaching, and can put hand on heart before God in making such a declaration of innocence then surely we can hope for His mercy, can’t we?

However, I keep hearing the ‘Woe’ of Paul – the ‘Woe of responsibility,’ and see behind that one word the disgust and displeasure of God if we hide the Gospel from those who are lost. “Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel,” hung over the whole of Paul’s life and ministry and drove him on to travel the world. “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

The Lord Jesus is looking to you and to me, this very moment, to preach His doctrines to the world (not just to one’s own nation). I have shared His teaching on Headship, on giving total respect to God and the Lord Jesus in how we approach Him with our heads uncovered and in humility. I have shared with you Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage, and it was, and is, reassuring to me that you, too, have been teaching the same thing all your ministry. If the church is not willing to listen to us, that is their problem, but we will have discharged our duty of preaching the truth. Each time we preach (or publish, or communicate) the Truth we put the person who hears it into greater safety or into greater danger. Revelation is a savour of life unto life, or death unto death.

It is clear that many have published books advocating divorce and they have done this out of ignorance and based on the mistake that Erasmus made. These books are based on a wrong Greek text. But once they have been informed of the Truth, they cannot go on as if they had not heard the truth about Erasmus’s text. If they do, they are now making a deliberate choice to ‘hold down [suppress] the truth,’ and once they do that, then they endorse their published books, and so must, from that point onwards, be held responsible if anyone follows their teaching and divorces and remarries. Paul’s comment to these authors would be, “Therefore, you are now inexcusable, O man. . . ” The damage these books will do to hundreds, if not thousands, of lives is incalculable and I would not be in their shoes for all the money in the world. They are living dangerously close to Paul’s ‘Woe.’ If Christ Jesus is disgusted with them, who knows what their eternal fate will be? They cannot hide behind the blood of Christ if their sin is deliberate. But apart from some of them admitting the single mistake of following Erasmus’s corrupted text, they have sailed on as if nothing else has changed. These authors believe that all the Early Church fathers were wrong and only they are right. They seem to rejoice in the fact that they have opened the flood gates to permit all men, Christian and non-Christian, to divorce and remarry on the grounds of adultery. Surely, this cannot be the mark of a true teacher of Christ, can it? I really do fear for their salvation.

To return to your concern about our friends, Christian and non-Christian, who have done the wrong thing and divorced (for whatever reason is irrelevant, because no reason is now valid) and remarried, I see no difference between those sins and all other sins. So in Part Three of my document, I have made it absolutely clear that just as we must repent of every sin and resolve not to repeat it again with God’s help, the same applies to every remarriage. To avoid sin we must make it a matter of conscience, so that when we repeat the sin, it will hurt and prick our consciences. The sin
of adultery must cease immediately. Until we inform the mind of all men everywhere we cannot create a conscience in them that divorce per se is wrong, and to go beyond that and remarry is a sin that will debar them from entrance into God’s presence, we leave all men with an excuse.

“Go and sin no more,” is not only relevant to adultery and fornication; it applies to all sin. “Be you holy even as I am holy,” is the new standard both to enter the Kingdom of God (Entrance Requirement), and to remain in it (Continuance Requirement). This standard cannot be kept by any man who does not have the Spirit of Christ living in him. (See more on this below.)

MINISTER] There does have to be a way of reading the loci about not inheriting the kingdom/kingship in such a way that they agree with the rest of Scripture’s teaching on saving grace.

LMF] We do not disagree over this point. See my next comment.

MINISTER] After all, none of us will die spotlessly perfect. We shall be clinging to our salvation in and through the spotless Lamb of God who gave Himself for us and now lives in us by His Spirit.

LMF] You are fully aware of the distinction between (A) Christ’s righteousness, and (B) our personal righteousness. There is a difference between passing God’s required standard of righteousness before being permitted to stand in His presence (let’s call it the Entrance Requirement = Christ’s righteousness), and pleasing God (let’s call it the Continuance Requirement = personal righteousness). In the former, the required standard is the righteousness of Christ. He reached the perfect standard, and we enter with Him into God’s presence on the strength of that standard. The entrance into heaven has nothing to do with our personal state of righteousness or perfection (except that no sin will enter heaven). You are clear in your mind about this, I’m sure, though the way you have worded your sentence about “clinging to our salvation” might be construed as if the Entrance Requirement was our own standard of perfection.

In the latter (the Continuance Requirement), if we have not deliberately flouted the will of God and refused to abide by His Son’s teaching, then we can have hope that we will receive from Him a personal “Well done, you good and faithful servant.” Jesus said, “If any one loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come into him, and we will abide with him.” If Paul could say to the Thessalonians, “and if any one does not obey our word through the letter, this one note ye, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:14), how much more should this be said of our Lord’s teaching?

Scripture informs us that if the Spirit of Christ is not in us then we are not in His Body, and consequently we have no hope of standing in the presence of God, because the Lord Jesus will categorically deny that He knows anyone in whom He did not indwell to the end of their life. So the key to salvation is the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. This is the Continuance Requirement that ensures we remain in the Body of Christ. The key, discerning criterion I have to ask myself is: Do I love Christ? If I profess that I do, then I will be found obeying Him. If I am found professing to love Him but not obeying Him, then He is not in me, and I am lost eternally, even if I have the standing of being a Bishop, or a minister of the Word.

These are two very distinct aspects of what salvation is about. The theological question is can an adulterer be said to ‘remain in Christ’ and, ‘Christ to remain in him’ if he knowingly has remarried against the teaching of Christ? If Christ refuses to indwell a man, then that man is thereby lost for all eternity. Christ is choosing here and now whom He will indwell. My concern is with those ignorant Christians who have been made to sin without being aware of it. Will, or can Jesus indwell such persons? The answer must be Yes, because there is no man living who has not sin remaining in him. But once such ignorant Christians have been fully informed (by someone speaking the truth in love) of the grave danger that they are in; namely, that no adulterer will enter
heaven, then they have a decision to make, which is to break off the remarriage relationship immediately as regards its sexual side. Not to do so would grieve the Spirit of Christ within him, and His subsequent withdrawal from abiding in him, because he no longer loves Him.

MINISTER] I totally agree that we must reassert the truth of Matthew 19:9 in its correct form. It is right to challenge our brethren in wrong relationships to bring them into line with Scripture.

LMF] It is our duty. Necessity is laid upon us, because God has blessed us to see and approve of the Truth. We have no choice.

MINISTER] However, I myself cannot say that they have fallen from grace if they disagree because of their skewed grid of understanding.

LMF] As I noted above, the requirement for continuing in Christ’s love is total obedience from the heart to all His teaching. Nothing is to be treated as trivial or secondary, or not essential to salvation, and therefore, optional. None of Christ’s commands are optional, including the head-covering commandment. Every command is a test of the genuineness of a man’s faith and love and commitment. If a minister of the Gospel is faithful in the least, he will also be faithful in the greater commandments of Christ Jesus.

For a man to ‘fall from grace,’ he has, first of all, to cease loving Christ. Then the Lord withdraws His Spirit from abiding in him. The consequence of that withdrawal is eternal death. That man will never be able to avail himself of the Entrance Requirement which Christ’s death had made available for him. No man is saved by his own deeds of righteousness, but his deeds of righteousness only flow after Christ has taken up His abode in him. No man can perform a righteous deed unless Christ be first in him, giving him the ability to please God.

If a man professes to love the Lord Jesus but because of poor teaching in his church he has a ‘skewed grid of understanding,’ then he comes under the ‘ignorant Christian’ category, and he should be quickly informed of the Truth so that he can obey the Lord whom he loves, as quickly as possible.

MINISTER] There has to be a solution whereby true believers who are wrestling with alcoholism (“drunkards”) can know saving grace even if they die in the grip of their sick, sad and sinful cravings.

LMF] I have covered this type of situation in the body of my reply above, have I not? However, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of God’s Word which says that those who commit the sin of fornication (which is a remarriage). “Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:3-5). Paul includes among the works of the flesh, the sin of fornication, and then adds, “I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, . . . none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Finally, “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, . . . . On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things, . . . .” (Colossians 3:5-8). On the wrath of God, Paul notes, “For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Fornicators will experience the wrath of God, not His salvation.

There is an obligation on every congregation not to allow the sin of remarriage (while the former spouse is still alive) to be tolerated in their life as a distinct community. Paul warns his churches “not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is a fornicator, . . . . Do not even eat with such one. . . . Drive out the wicked person from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:11-
13). The importance of keeping the community in a ‘clean’ state is crucial if the Body of Christ is not to be in union with those who are not holy. Such disciplined fornicators would not be allowed to take Communion until they had repented of their sin and dissolved the remarriage. All such discipline must be done with a view to restoration, and will require gentleness, kindness, and sound counselling with no compromising to let such off the hook.

**9.11. LETTER 11. WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO REMARRIED OUT OF IGNORANCE?**

The following comments were made by a minister of the Gospel on an earlier draft of this divorce paper:

“I still remain uneasy in my spirit that remarriage during the lifetime of a ‘previous’ spouse always functions technically as sin. If the perpetrators are genuinely totally unaware of its sinfulness because of an erroneous text and theological teaching/understanding, surely their sin does not function technically as such (cf. Jas. 4:17).

My uneasiness may indeed be subjective compromise, for the force of your logic is very compelling. It may also be the witness of the Spirit that your conclusions about exclusion from the Kingdom are somehow flawed.

Purely pragmatically, one would have to concede that some believers are in such a remarriage situation and yet continue to display the fruit of the Spirit, a passion for Christ and effectiveness in witness and service. Such evidence cannot be irrelevant to our exposition of Scripture, whilst also conceding that eisegesis is unacceptable.”

There are three points in these three paragraphs, which I will reply to in sequence.

**FIRST POINT**

**COMMENT:** “I still remain uneasy in my spirit that remarriage during the lifetime of a ‘previous’ spouse always functions technically as sin. If the perpetrators are genuinely totally unaware of its sinfulness because of an erroneous text and theological teaching/understanding, surely their sin does not function technically as such (cf. Jas. 4:17).”

LMFJ I am uneasy with the word ‘technical’ when used with ‘sin.’ Sin is sin. Sin is falling short of what one knows to be right behaviour, as James 4:17 has it. God recognises ‘sins of ignorance’ in the Torah, and has made provision for their absolution. But He made no provision for deliberate sin, or sin against right knowledge, sins of a ‘high hand.’ He made no provision for these unless (as some believe) the annual Day of Atonement was their absolution.

I suspect that the vast majority of second marriages among Christians were carried out in ignorance. To them Jesus, now says (through you and me): “Go, and sin no more.” These must break off their second marriages (as Neh & Ezra showed) immediately because they have now come into the revelation of the Truth. If these Christians refuse to “Go, and sin no more” then we cannot defend their action or extend the right hand of fellowship to them, can we? There must come a point (as Jas 4:17 puts it) where to sin against knowledge is not a technical matter, but a real sin which will threaten the security of their relationship to Christ. Eternal life is bound up in Christ. If Christ is in us, we have eternal life; if He is not in us; then eternal life is not in us.

**SECOND POINT**

**COMMENT**] “My uneasiness may indeed be subjective compromise, for the force of your logic is very compelling. It may also be the witness of the Spirit that your conclusions about exclusion from the Kingdom are somehow flawed.”
I have sought to abide by God’s Word, and I have searched it diligently, once I discovered the error that Erasmus made in altering God’s Word. We are now in a new ball game. We can put all the past discussions of the Reformers behind us as of no help, seeing that they were all based on a false understanding of the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

In recovering the true text of Matthew 19:9, we can recover the true meaning of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 19:9. We must not allow the history of past lapses into granting divorces (by the Reformed Churches) to carry over into our new understanding of Jesus’ teaching. We must make a total break with our corrupt past.

We can now see Jesus’ teaching in all its pristine clarity, uncluttered and undimmed by man’s past interference with it.

I now see the logic of Jesus’ teaching in taking us back behind Deut. 24:1-4 to Genesis 2:24. It is there that we pick up the trail again that Adam departed from when he brought us all into, and under, sin. Put Deuteronomy 24:1-3 to one side and go back to Genesis 2:24 and suddenly Jesus’ condemnation of divorce ‘for any cause’ makes perfect sense.

The trouble with us Christians is that we are unable to stay the course with Christ, and we settle for a lower standard of ‘perfection,’ and part of that sub-standard existence is to dabble in the world and conform to its alternative life-style. Divorce certificates can only be issued by Satan; not by God, and not by His Church.

It will take some time, for some Christians, before the penny drops that ‘divorce’ can never happen. Men go through the motion of issuing them but nothing is altered: the one-flesh union is still in existence, and will be until death severs it. Nothing else can sever it. Christians are living in an unreal world if they think that Satan, through the State, can sever their one-flesh unions. This logic was so clear to Jesus that He was able to declare all remarriages as adulterous relationships. And so they are, because the one-flesh union continues to exist after the granting of the Divorce Certificate. Jesus’ logic is so compelling that it is unanswerable. There is no crack in His logic. There are no exceptions in His condemnation of all grounds for divorce. I can only follow the strength of His logic and the clarity of His absolutist position. So here I stand, I can do no other.

My conclusions about exclusion from the Kingdom follow on from Jesus’ teaching that no adulterer or fornicator will enter the Kingdom. He has made this statement, not me. Those who challenge Jesus will have to face Him one day and explain where He went wrong. I would not like to be there when they make their case! It is wrong to counter Jesus’ teaching that adulterers, on His definition, will not be in His Kingdom.

There is a spiritual logic in Jesus’ teaching that men must forgive men all their sins, seventy times seven, which would rule out entertaining divorce, which would be incompatible with this teaching. The debate over whether one small Greek word should, or should not, be in Matthew 19:9, to admit or omit divorce, misses the point that the whole tenor of Jesus’ teaching is against divorce. It is a contrary teaching. He offers to come and abide in the believer; to give us a new spirit, and a new nature, and a new heart. He lifts us out of ourselves to become sons of God. We no longer live at the level of the ordinary man of the world, who lives without the Spirit of Christ. To hold back forgiveness for sexual sins within a marriage is to slip back into an unregenerate state of mind. It is to walk in darkness.

POINT THREE

“Purely pragmatically, one would have to concede that some believers are in such a remarriage situation and yet continue to display the fruit of the Spirit, a passion for Christ and effectiveness in witness and service. Such evidence cannot be irrelevant to our exposition of Scripture, whilst also conceding that eisegesis is unacceptable.”

“... Such evidence cannot be irrelevant to our exposition of Scripture.” An argument from results is never a safe argument. Satan can appear as an angel of light. Ministers can preach the Gospel for a life-time and do many miracles in Christ’s name; but the verdict is still the same,” I
never knew you. Depart from Me you workers of iniquity.” Iniquity is a state of mind. It is the refusal to humbly bow the intellect to Christ’s clear teaching; a mental reservation not to go along with Jesus in every aspect of His teaching; to hold back. To distance oneself from His more ‘extreme’ doctrines (as they would see it). This is iniquity, and this will lead to Jesus’ condemnation, “I never knew you.” We need to be one with Him, as He was with the Father.

We must throw in our lot completely on the side of Jesus, and follow the logic of His teaching, because it is good and agreeable to our renewed minds, and because He always knows best.

I’ve been aware of the need to counter the instinctive ‘natural justice’ reaction of Christians to resort to divorce when faced with horrific domestic situations. It is a knee-jerk reaction. But the reaction is due to an acceptance of divorce as a reality of life in the world, which is then wrongly imported into Christ’s Kingdom, where it is totally out of place. This is the danger of not daily distancing oneself from divorce per se, and always regarding it as the goal of Satan.

But when all is said and done, there remains a very important point in the question: What about those who remarried out of ignorance? Yahweh addressed the issue of sins of ignorance in Leviticus 4:1–6:7. Under the Law, no forgiveness is given for such sins, until the person concerned is made aware of his sin. He must then take immediate steps to be forgiven and, no doubt, heed the injunction of Jesus, “Go, and sin no more.” Once the person concerned has been made aware of his sin he cannot repeat it, as this would be a deliberate sin.

In the case of Christians living under grace, the blood of Jesus Christ will surely cover all sins of ignorance. But once the person concerned has been made aware of his sin he cannot repeat it, as this would be a deliberate sin. Divorce is such a sin. Remarriage is such a sin while both spouses are still alive.


In the Corinthian church the man who ‘had [sex] with his father’s wife’ (his mother-in-law) may have done so under the mistaken belief that the entire Mosaic Law was to be consigned to the dust-bin of history. His specific sin is condemned, and he is cursed by God in Deuteronomy 27:20, 23, and his sin remains condemned under the New Covenant (1 Corinthians 5:1). This teaches us that the moral aspect of the law of Moses was not abolished with the death of the Lord Jesus. How much of the Mosaic Law is still binding on gentile Christians?

If some Christians feel that they can truly forgive their adulterous partner but cannot take them back after they have remarried, because the idea of reconciliation is still an abomination to God, I would point out that in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 God’s abhorrence is not directed against the reconciliation. Yahweh only brought in His law because He never sanctioned divorce. His law of ‘no reconciliation after a divorce’ applied in a culture which legally assumed that divorce meant what it said, and where men could one day divorce their wives, and the next day have them back again. It is against this background of abuse that we are to read Yahweh’s law of ‘no reconciliation after divorce.’ Under the New Covenant divorce does not exist, so all remarriages are now viewed as adulterous relationships. This means that reconciliation or celibacy (abstinence) are the only options open to everyone who sues for a divorce.

Yahweh presents His relationship with Israel under the analogy or metaphor of husband and wife in the book of Hosea. God could use the term ‘divorce’ as a metaphor, because there was no literal marriage that could be divorced. But the impact of the metaphor would register deeply
because divorce was as common then as it is today, and everybody is familiar with the finality of a State divorce.\textsuperscript{512}

Yahweh’s wife, Israel, committed adultery against Him (by worshipping other gods). And true to the metaphor, He declares ‘she is not my wife and I am not her husband’ (Hos 2:2). She falls on hard times, and then remembers her kind, generous, loving Husband and resolves, “I will go and return back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now” (Hos 2:7). Yahweh does not reject her on the grounds of His ‘no reconciliation’ rider in Deuteronomy 24:4, but lovingly accepts her back again.

Yahweh uses Hosea’s domestic situation to convey the same truth that reconciliation to Him is always possible. He instructed Hosea to find his adulterous wife and forgive her and take her back. Hosea tells us that he had to buy her back for fifteen pieces of silver plus some foodstuffs, and he brought her under his roof again, yet she is called an ‘adulteress’ in 3:1. She was a defiled woman, and an abomination in the eyes of Yahweh, yet she is reconciled to her first husband, contrary to the command in Deuteronomy 24:4.

If God promises to abide in the Christian, then surely the spirit of forgiveness and a willingness to be reconciled where there is true repentance, will be present in the Christian too, and therefore reconciliation is possible. Hosea’s situation was a real, historical, domestic situation, not some unhistorical metaphor. Under Law this reconciliation could not have taken place, but under Grace, this reconciliation can take place, because a new spirit has been put in man and woman, which can overcome sin and hurt.


Often this question comes in the form of:

“Jesus did not allow divorce for fornication (adultery) because the Mosaic law already had in place a penalty for such a sin, and it was death. Since we do not practise the death penalty for adulterers, in most countries shouldn’t we regard the erring spouse as ‘dead’ in the eyes of God? The Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) Chapter XXIV. Sections V reads: “In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce [Matt. 5:32], and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead [Matt. 19:9; Romans 7:2-3].”\textsuperscript{513}

Paul wrote: ‘But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives’ (1 Timothy 5:6; cf. Luke 15:32). So why can’t I regard my erring spouse as if s/he is dead, because the marriage is over, in God’s eyes? Under the Mosaic Law, once the erring spouse has been executed the innocent party was free to remarry.”

Before I answer this question directly we need to take a step back and consider Jesus’ relationship to the Law. Up until the Law was given to Moses, the way to please God was to obey His commands and ponder His statements. But when mankind became increasingly lawless and indifferent to anything God said, and they went their own way, God did not give up on His bigger vision—His long-term goal of being reconciled to all mankind through the substitutionary death of God divorcing the northern tribes. They conveniently forget that it is a very apt metaphor to illustrate the breakdown in the relationship between God and Israel. There was no literal divorce between Yahweh and Israel because there was no literal marriage that could be divorced.

\textsuperscript{512} Those who insist and persist in introducing divorce among Christ’s followers love to point to God divorcing the northern tribes. They conveniently forget that it is a very apt metaphor to illustrate the breakdown in the relationship between God and Israel. There was no literal divorce between Yahweh and Israel because there was no literal marriage that could be divorced.

\textsuperscript{513} See 1.9. for the weakness of this Confessional statement.
His Son (Romans 5:10). Since that part of His plan of salvation lay far in the future, God introduced the Law as a means of holding His nation in check from becoming so corrupt that the promises He made to Adam, Noah and Abraham would not be able to be fulfilled through genealogical confusion.

The Torah was a temporary measure. It was never intended to replace ‘the righteousness of faith’ that remained in existence from Adam to Jesus. However, by introducing ‘the righteousness of Law’ this was intended to be in addition to, or in support of, the ‘righteousness of faith.’ In other words, the man walking by faith was now required to keep the Law. This resulted in two categories of Israelites. In the first category were those who ‘lived by faith,’ who then had to obey the Mosaic Law. In the second category were the vast majority, who were not living by faith, but who set about to obey the Law as an end in itself. This obedience would not save one of them, because it was impossible to keep the Law. Theoretically, therefore, if any Israelite could keep the Law perfectly, he would have been saved through his own efforts (through works, as Paul calls it).

What Jesus did in becoming a Jew was to put Himself in the shoes of a Jew and keep the Law perfectly. In that way He obtained the righteousness that is through the Law. It is this righteousness that is on offer to all men. We please God through our proxy—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now once Jesus had kept the Mosaic Law fully, there was no need for anyone to try and keep it perfectly. Jesus effectively closed down the Law as a means of pleasing God. The way to please God was to take Jesus’ righteousness as a gift from Him, and offer that to God. In this way we can be said to have kept the Mosaic Law perfectly. We did not do it ourselves, we did it through Jesus—our proxy.

Jesus’ attitude toward the Law of His Father is that it has ceased to be an independent way to please God. But the Law itself is good, if it is used lawfully (1 Timothy 1:8). The Law is spiritual (Romans. 7:14). But, as Paul put it, “We are dead to the Law” (Romans 7:4) as regards seeing it as an alternative way of pleasing God, without having to go through Jesus Christ. Romans 7:6, “and now we have ceased from the Law, that [Law] being dead in which we were [once] held, so that we serve [God & Christ] in newness of spirit.”

It is clear from this short summary that the Law was never designed for the man of faith. It was designed specifically for sinners, not for saints. The saints before Moses were saved by faith. Hence Paul can say: “that for a righteous man law is not set, but for lawless and insubordinate persons, ungodly and sinners” (1 Timothy 1:9). He also said: “so that the law became our child-conductor — to Christ, that by faith we may be declared righteous” (Galatians 3:24). The Mosaic Law only came into existence “on account of the transgressions, . . . till the seed should come to which the Promise had been made” (Galatians 3:19). That ‘seed’ was Christ.

It is clear from reading the Mosaic Law that God introduced a lower standard of behaviour that was within the reach of the unregenerate man to abide by. It was just possible to be declared a ‘righteous person’ by God, if they could keep every single law perfectly, without one slip up.

Paul recognised that the Law contained divine wisdom, advice on all sorts of topics, and instruction on hygiene, social networking, marriage, warfare, economics, etc., etc. Consequently, there is no reason why we may not avail ourselves of this body of wisdom. What we must never do is make it a condition of salvation or carry over Moses’s sanctioning of divorce. That is the thing Paul is battling against all the time with Jewish Christians in Romans, Galatians and Ephesians. He wants them to take advantage of its wisdom, but he is dead set against those who see it as a condition of salvation.

Christians are confused over the Law. Are they under it, and obliged to obey its every precept? No, shouts Paul, at them. Never, never, never. Should they then ignore it altogether? Paul’s answer is the same. No. The Law is good. The Law is spiritual, but be very careful how you use it, he adds. Paul is clear that when God designed the Law, He lowered His standards to bring His

See also 2 Corinthians 5:14, 18; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14, 16; Jude 3.
‘righteousness’ within the ability of sinners to keep the letter of the law. When His chosen nation of sinners found it impossible to keep certain of His standards which He had introduced to Adam in the Garden of Eden, such as ‘one wife for life’ and no option to divorce, the Israelites rejected this higher standard and forced through a system of divorce. Moses was constrained to accede to the demands of hard-hearted husbands and permit their lower standard to prevail (Dt 24:1-4).\(^{515}\) God, however, stepped in and put a rider on their lower standard and demanded that once they divorced their wives they could never be reconciled to them again, while they lived. This rider effectively sealed them in their sin, thus making it impossible for these adulterers to be saved (or enter His ‘rest,’ as the writer to the Epistle of the Hebrews put it). This was a slap in their face. God reluctantly put up with the lower level that they wanted to live by because they were fleshly, carnal, unspiritual, and unregenerate.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was done away with when Jesus fulfilled the perfect law of God. Jesus has re-introduced the pre-Mosaic standard that God had demanded of all men from Adam to Moses. This is why Jesus went back to Genesis 2:24 for the original standard that was God’s will for all mankind. And it is to this pre-Law standard that all Christians are obliged to live by. If they try to do this in the flesh, then they are not born-again. If they are born-again, and the Spirit of Christ lives in their moral bodies, then it will be easy, or should be. If they are backsliding Christians then Christ’s standard becomes an oppressive burden, and they will remarry to satisfy the flesh. If they are spiritual, and Christ truly dwells in them, then it will be a delight to abstain from all extra-marital relationships and devote their new found freedom to serving Christ (1 Corinthians 7:27, 37). All marriages following divorce violate the normal standard of behaviour that should characterise all born-again Christians.

The danger facing every Christian is to diminish the influence of Christ’s presence within him or her by allowing the ‘old man’ to come alive again. If he does come alive again, then that Christian will quench the Holy Spirit residing within him or her, and things will start to disintegrate. He will become more and more worldly in his thinking, and in the end he will return to his unregenerate state, in which he will be hardened by God (2 Pet 2:22; Hebrews 6:1-6; 10:26).

Paul, John and Peter make the case that being ‘born-again’ is such an other-worldly experience that it cannot be mimicked, though many try. It is truly a transforming experience. The expression, “All things become new,” does not do justice to the experience. If a man does not experience this transformation, he will find it very difficult to follow Jesus’ teaching. This experience lifts one to a higher plane of values. It provides the Christian with an elevated platform from which he can evaluate all things and see how he can use everything to form a very close relationship with his Saviour. To be a Christian one must have the Spirit of Christ living in him, and directing all he does to the glory of God.

If he is spiritual he will never go back to the lower standard of the Mosaic Law and seek to take advantage of its lower expectations to remarry, or to avoid the explicit teaching of the Spirit in the New Testament writings on other topics that he finds a nuisance.

Now with this as background, I come to question: “Why can’t I regard my erring spouse as if s/he is dead, because the marriage is over in God’s eyes? Under the Mosaic Law, once the erring spouse has been executed the innocent party was free to remarry.” This solution has often been given by Christian counsellors.

The error here is that such a counsellor has gone back to something which “has become obsolete and old” (Hebrews 8:13), namely, the Mosaic Law. This was the first mistake. He is trying to take advantage of a pre-Christian dispensation.

The second error was to try to apply the Mosaic Law in Christ’s Church. The Lord Jesus abolished the death penalty. Independently of the Law, He introduced His own penalty for departures from standards which should be innate, and normal, in every one who claims to be born-

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515 See section 2.1.1. above for a fuller treatment of the Christian’s use of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. See also 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; and 3.5.
again. We see this in the case of the man who committed incest in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. Under the obsolete, Mosaic Law, this violation would have received the death penalty. Under Christ, this violation is punished by excommunication, because for someone to stoop to such a low level of behaviour is clear evidence that the Spirit of Christ does not dwell in him, therefore he is excommunicated because he is not of the Body of Christ, or if he is of the Body of Christ, and has slipped up, then this severe punishment will bring him to his senses, and produce repentance (hopefully). If no repentance comes, then his excommunication fits his unspiritual condition.

The third error is typical of those who want to get round Scripture when it stands in the way of marrying another spouse. A pseudo-principle of interpretation is invented to get round the road-block of the wording of Scripture. Christians are encouraged to use their imagination of going through the court scene in Moses’ day where the adulteress is stoned to death. After her death the husband is free to remarry. And you arrive at the place where you want to be—free, to remarry.

How selective is this kind of interpretation? How does one apply the law of suspicion whereby the wife is forced to undergo the ordeal of drinking the dust of the ground (see Num 5:11-31)? How does one apply the law that if a man is ‘wounded, bruised or cut in the private member’ or is illegitimate that he can not be member of God’s Assembly (Dt 23:1-2)? Satan was not above quoting Scripture when he tempted the Lord Jesus to divert from the path God set for Him.

Jesus upheld the law of the death penalty because the Law had not yet been abolished in His life-time through His death on the cross. He did not commute the death penalty to divorce (as the Jews did) during His life-time. But once the Law had been made obsolete, then His own New Covenant law replaced it. The death of Jesus severed His connection with the Mosaic Law. If Jesus was faced with the woman taken in adultery (John 8) after His resurrection, He would not have told the Jews to stone her.

Luther and other Reformers took a long time to disentangle themselves from the Mosaic Law, but today we are a lot clearer on the attitude we should adopt toward the Mosaic Law, and the relationship between the Law and Gospel.

In the eyes of God all lawfully wedded couples, Christian and non-Christian, are in one-flesh union ‘until death severs the union.’ We have only ‘one wife for life.’ The law of Christ is that all lawful unions are under the same law, namely, only death can separate the spouses, and any second marriage, while the spouses are still alive, is an adulterous relationship, and no adulterer or adulteress will be with Him in His Kingdom. They are excluded, see Romans 7:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. There are thousands, if not tens of thousands, of Christians in a second-marriage situation, which will prevent them from entering the Kingdom of God, but the majority of them are totally unaware of the dangerous state they are in. It is up to us who know the will of God to warn them to be separate from the unclean thing, and Jesus will welcome them back.


A Christian couple, lawfully married, but childless, split up after the Christian husband sent his wife back to live with her parents after a year-long marriage, in which he grew increasingly disenchanted with his lot, having developed medical and psychological problems, and feared he was under spells and the influence of witchcraft through his wife’s family.

While they were apart he read Stephen Gola’s view on marriage. He was so convinced by Gola’s interpretation that he believed God wanted him to divorce his wife, and in this way break all the bad vibes and spells that he felt he was under. He began to attribute all his ills to his marriage to his Christian wife, who remained totally loyal to him during their separation.

The substance of Gola’s case for divorce is that God set up the institution of divorce to dissolve unworkable marriages. His key text was Malachi 2:10-16 where God says He hates divorce. According to Gola what God meant was that He hated divorces where a Certificate of Divorce was not handed to the wife. He believed that divorces made by using the Certificate of Divorce were
legal in God’s eyes, and dissolved the marriage, leaving both spouses free to remarry, should they wish to. He claimed that the Greek verb ἀπολλεῖν never means ‘divorce’ in the Bible, but only ‘separation.’ So when he came to translate Matthew 19:9 he incorporated his restricted view of the Greek verb as follows (the brackets, round and square, are his): “The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “IS IT LAWFUL for a man to separate [from] (put away) his wife [without divorcing her] for just any reason?” He comments on this:

Jesus is saying haven’t you read that if a married couple separates without an actual divorce, they are still ‘joined’ as ‘one flesh’? And if they remarry in that condition they are in adultery? In the beginning the Lord never wanted the husband and wife to separate without a divorce. Otherwise, they could not become another man’s wife or another woman’s husband (See Deuteronomy 24:1,2).

Here he assumes that remarriages were a natural part of God’s plan for mankind. He took the view that in Matthew 19:9 Jesus was referring only to those persons who ‘separated’ without getting a Certificate of Divorce. Only these people are adulterous if they remarry. But Gola runs into trouble when he comes to explain Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees’ question. Here is his way of avoiding the natural meaning of Jesus’ words (the brackets, round and square, are his):

“Why then did Moses command to give a Certificate of Divorce, and to put her away (separate)?” Jesus replied, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to separate from (put away) your wives [without a Certificate of Divorce]. But from the beginning [being separated without a Certificate of Divorce] it was not so. And I say to you, whoever separates from (puts away) his wife [without a Certificate of Divorce], except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is separated (put away) [from her husband without a Certificate of Divorce] commits adultery.

It is clear from Jesus’ reply that His use of the verb ἀπολλεῖν ‘to put [her] away’ goes hand in hand with the act of handing the woman a Certificate of Divorce, as in Deuteronomy 24:1-3. Also, Gola created a significant, but bizarre, loophole in his understanding of Jesus’ teaching, because he has Jesus teaching that a spouse can get a divorce without a Certificate of Divorce in the case of sexual immorality, which is how Gola explains Jesus’ so-called ‘exception clause,’ but not if she commits any other ‘unseemly thing.’ In this he is a disciple of rabbi Hillel, and not of the Lord Jesus.

On the strength of Gola’s interpretation of Malachi 2 and Matthew 19, the Christian husband sued for a state divorce and got it. To the credit of his Christian wife, she refused to recognise that her marriage was dissolved by God, and she resolved not to remarry, but to follow her Lord’s teaching on the indissolubility of the marriage bond.

There are many false teachers around, and there are many gullible, weak, and immature Christians who are easily lured into their net, when looking for a way out of their marriages. These false teachers preach what the weak and immature want to hear.

**CONCLUSION**

In any congregation there will be Christians whose sin is not visible. They may be committing adultery in their mind. But there are others whose sin is visible in the form of their second spouse. Many of these will have obtained their divorce through ignorance, or before they became Christians. Wise counselling will be needed to restore such persons to live a life pleasing to God. The Holy Spirit stipulates, through Paul, that the Elders in Christ’s Church must be the
husbands of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6; cf. 1 Timothy 3:12 for Deacons). And what goes for Elders must also go for all male members, as the norm.

The knowledge that Jesus has abolished divorce for all His followers is considered by many Christians to be a ‘harsh doctrine.’ But calling it ‘harsh’ or ‘soft’ makes no difference to the sinfulness of divorce. Flee the divorce courts as you would flee the brothel.

During the course of His short ministry Jesus offended many interest groups, and religious parties, and He said some harsh words of rebuke to other groups (John 6:61). He stood absolutely alone on occasions. Even His own disciples were offended by some of the things He preached (Luke 11:45). On some occasions His own disciples gave up following Him and returned to their earlier belief-system. The abolition of divorce was one such ‘hard doctrine’ to accept.

Many attempts have been made to soften His teaching, or to bring Jesus down to the level of a mere man, a new Moses, with a revised, updated version of the old Torah. Many have tried to incorporate, accommodate, or merge the old Torah into His new teaching; to mix the old, stale wine, with the new wine of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. We have seen the emergence of a rabbinic-gospel, whereby the leaven of Hillel has been mixed in with the teaching of Jesus. Jesus was aware of rabbinc teaching which he hated: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy,” He preached (Matthew 16:12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1). The new wine of Jesus’ teaching requires new wine skins to contain it. The old, rabbinic skins (doctrines) have to be discarded.

The bar has been raised that it now lies outside the ability of any human to reach it. To reach it a person would have to be ‘born again’ of the Spirit of God and have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them, transforming and renewing their mind to live by a completely new set of principles and desires. This transformation creates a widening gulf between their outlook on life and those they have left behind. This gulf grows wider the closer a person becomes like Jesus in his thinking and knowledge of God and His ways.

In the final analysis, the consensus of scholars counts for nothing, whether they are for or against Christ’s teaching on divorce. When we stand before our Lord to give an account for our lives and teaching what counts is what the Spirit has revealed. I have shown that what has been revealed in the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts, and in the unanimous witness of the early Church fathers, is that Jesus abolished divorce, as He abolished adulterers, prostitutes and homosexuals, from having any part or place in His Kingdom. Jesus does not play around with sin or make it an integral part of His system, as the rabbis did. Divorce, like stealing, is a sin against God, and no sin can enter heaven.

There is not a single doctrine in Jesus’ teaching which has come about through pressure of the hard-heartedness of His followers, or through the refusal of His disciples to accept any of His doctrines, forcing Jesus to back down, compromise, or concede to their wishes. Yet this is what happened when God introduced His Torah to Israel. They refused to stone the adulterers and fornicators, and forced Moses to regulate their demand to be able to divorce their hated wives for any cause. The response of hate is divorce; the response of love is forgiveness. It is truly astonishing that God permitted Moses to sanction and regulate divorce in order to let these hard-bitten husbands get their own way.

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516 That is, if a man is remarried and his former wife is still alive he is ineligible to be an Elder. Or if he is no longer living with his wife, for whatever reason, he, too, would be ineligible to be a model to the congregation. A man who has more than one wife, due to a polygamous past, is likewise, ineligible to be an Elder. The principle behind Paul’s teaching is to have a ‘normal’ husband and wife model up front, in a leadership position, because they will set the standard to be followed by all the members. The assumption behind Paul’s ruling is that most men will be married. However, single, mature men, would not be ruled out as model Elders, any more than married men without children would be. The statement, “having children in submission,” would apply where the married Elder had children.
It would appear that there are many Christian leaders who are attempting to do the same thing with Jesus’ teaching. Unfortunately for them, Jesus will not change His doctrines to suit their hard-heartedness. It is a case of either you forsake all and follow Him in every detail of His teaching, or you turn back and create your own denomination, or church, or sect. What you cannot do is pretend that Jesus permitted divorce for fornication, and that you are going to take advantage of some perceived loophole in His teaching to punish your wives or husbands. There is no such loophole. If Jesus permitted divorce for fornication then He destroys His own doctrine that men must forgive men all their sins. There is no exception clause for withholding forgiveness for fornication or adultery. Jesus forgave the sin of adultery with the words, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” That has to be the only response of every Christian. Jesus made no room in that statement for the setting up of divorce courts.

God the Father handed over all mankind to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it will be before Him that every individual will give an account of his words and deeds. The more a person knows of God’s teaching and will for them, the more will be expected from them.

It is a privilege to expound the teaching of Jesus clearly in this work. It has made me realise more than ever that to follow Jesus without a born-again experience is not possible. It requires a new spirit and a new heart, one that can love one’s enemy and forgive all men their trespasses in a genuine manner. Where that spirit is present, there is also the spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Divorce is man’s attempt to regulate sin, not kill it. Divorce feeds, fertilises and multiplies sin. Jesus starves, weeds out and exterminates sin in the lives of all His born-again followers. The clear message coming from Jesus’ teaching and the revelation of the Holy Spirit is to flee divorce as you would flee stealing.

The origin of divorce, or abandonment of a man’s wife, came into existence the moment Adam and Eve sinned against God. They lost their way, and they lost touch with their Maker in a way that was never restored until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to take up residence in the soul of every one of His disciples, male and female. With the loss of man’s original state of sinlessness came selfishness, and with selfishness came tyranny and bullying, and with bullying came hard-heartedness and hatred. Out of this soup of depravity emerged abandonment of wives and children. To make it appear respectable it was given the name ‘divorce.’ It was a cover-up term that solidified and entrenched their depraved natures. Divorce locks in sin and depraves the one who has anything to do with it.

One of the privileges granted to Adam was headship over his wife and over all of God’s creation. The Earth was given to Adam before Eve existed, and what was given to Adam was not going to be taken back when she came along. It is for this reason that God gave no female possession of any part of the Earth, not even in the Promised Land. The repetition of the story about Zelophehad’s daughters ensured that the point was not missed. Eve shared in Adam’s dominion over the Earth and all that is in it only when she became his wife, not as of right. As an independent being she had nothing and owned nothing. She inherits the Earth through her one-flesh union with Adam.

It was God’s intention that Eve, from the moment He brought her to Adam to be his helper, should do the will of Adam and not her own will, just as it was God’s intention from the moment He created Adam to be his co-worker, that he should do the will of God. God, personally, brought Eve to Adam. It was not an accident. It was planned. It was also God’s intention that once the union of Adam and Eve took place that a one-flesh union occurred which was not to be undone during their lifetime. It was a union only to be broken by the death of one of the partners. The abandonment of Eve was not an option. It would be an evil if carried out. For better or for worse, Eve was reunited with Adam, never to be separated again in this life.

With the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the promise of lifting mankind out of their fallen natures to live in the Spirit, came the reversal of the fall into depravity. Now, for the first time since the fall of Adam and Eve, men and women could be restored to their pre-Fall state and status, but only if the Spirit of Christ continued to indwell each of His disciples. With the return to the Garden
of Eden status came the recovery of a divorceless state between Christian men and women. Only in Christ are men and women able to return to Eden. No other religion in the world is capable of doing this. They are all human constructs, unable to change the nature of men and women. They boast much but deliver nothing.

With the recovery of the Edenic nature, nay, the gift of Christ’s nature to all His followers, comes the recovery of the love-headship that God created between Adam and Eve in the beginning, and which was to be replicated in their respective genders for all time to come. Only in Christians can the original love-headship be witnessed. No other religion can grant it to their followers. Their grant, or promise, is empty and a deception. All other religions cater and try to contain the depravity of fallen men and women. They have no cure for it. Only in Christ is there a cure, and because there is a cure there can be no divorce. Divorce is not a cure but a concession to hatred. Divorce obtains in every religion of the world because true forgiveness is no longer a natural response of all fallen, human beings. There is even a form of christianity (note the lowercase spelling) which is no different than these false world religions, because it, too, contains but cannot cure the evil response of which divorce is the inevitable outcome. Divorce and the old nature are two sides of the same coin. They are inseparable. Where divorce is, there is sin, and there is the absence of Christ in both partners if both consent to it. This goes without saying for all world religions and none, but it also goes for pseudo-christianity and every so-called Christian denomination that has sunk to the level of approving of divorce. The standard of true Christianity is the absence of divorce among its teachings. Where divorce is present, the leaven of evil is also present. They are two sides of the same coin.

In Jesus’ day the validity of all divorces was accepted, as it is today, and people assumed that their one-flesh union was completely severed and dissolved. Wives, clutching their husband’s “roll of severance,” confronted Jesus, no doubt, demanding that He accept their divorced status, and reverse His slur on their second marriages. But the words of Jesus have come down the centuries as solid as they were first uttered that no divorce has come from His Father, or approved of by Him. In effect, all divorces were a violation of the one-flesh union that took place at the moment a marriage was consummated. This is not what His generation wanted to hear, and it may well be that if Jesus’ assessment of His own generation was that it an adulterous one, because of the proliferation of divorce and remarriage, this may have been a significant factor when the crowds demanded His death by crucifixion. They had come to hate Him because of His outright opposition to their remarriages.

When any modern preacher, teacher, or leader of God’s people dares to castigate anyone’s remarriage as an adulterous relationship, he will become the target of abuse and vilification, and in some cases assassination.

We have shown in this work that the attempt to make God the creator of divorce has failed, and it has failed because of Jesus’ total disregard for those rabbis who turned Deuteronomy 24:1-4 into an excuse to institute it. These rabbis examined Scripture with the sole object of getting it to endorse and justify divorce, even going as far as to split the figurative term ‘ervat dibär (“nakedness of a matter”) into two words, and using the definition of these individual words to find as many excuses as possible to divorce their hated wives.

Today, Christ’s Church is packed with leaders doing the same thing and even using the rabbis as their guide and justification! Rabbinical exegesis is making a strong come-back in the Church, and this, along with feminism, has derailed Christ’s Church. With the proliferation of English translations, confusion has set in over what Jesus really taught on the issue of divorce and remarriage. It is for this reason that I recommend no English translation as a faithful translation of the Majority Greek New Testament text. The New King James Version is a stop-gap translation in that it fails to translate the Majority Text faithfully, because in Matthew 19:9 it replaces Jesus’ teaching on divorce with Erasmus’s teaching. It makes God the creator of divorce, which sets Him at odds with His teaching in Genesis 2:24 as brought to light by His Son in Matthew 19:3-10 and Mark 10:2-12.
Many forgeries of currency money are in the world, and look so genuine as to deceive the ordinary man in the street, who has no clue what he should be looking for to distinguish between the genuine and the false. But in the spiritual world there are also forgeries, and these, too, appear so genuine that they deceive those who do not know what they should be looking out for in order not to be duped into believing something that is of the devil and not of Christ. One such forgery is the introduction of divorce as a replacement for death as the means for dissolving a lawful marriage. In crafty hands, the fact that God spoke of divorce, which He needed to do in order to castigate it, is turned around to make Him become a supporter for it. Such is the power of crafty guile, and it has duped every Reformation church/denomination without exception.

One would have hoped that the Spirit of Christ living in the Elect people of God from the days of the Reformation to the present day would have known instinctively that not to forgive men their trespasses was an evil thing, but their minds were deceived by the Bibles they were depending on to lead them into all truth. These Bibles translated badly copied Greek manuscripts which had been cobbled together at the whim of the cobbler, chief among them being Erasmus’s five editions between 1516 and 1536. These faulty manuscripts helped Erasmus to introduce his view of divorce and remarriage, and so he poisoned the transmission of the pure water of life.

In the process of establishing the pure text of the New Testament, the Church was deceived into accepting the Nestle-Aland text, which is an even more corrupt text than the one Erasmus put together. The foundation of the Nestle-Aland text is the Greek text of Westcott and Hort (1881). This was based on two sloppy copies of the Egyptian text-type, namely, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. They were under the mistaken belief that the older a copy was the more likely it contained a purer text. We now know that there is absolutely no direct relationship at all between the date of a copy and its faithfulness as a copy of the original texts. All modern language versions of the Greek New Testament—English and European—are based on this corrupt Nestle-Aland Egyptian text. I include here the English Standard Version which is paraded as the version around which all evangelicals can unite and promote and make the basis of study from house-groups to university courses.

The Elect should shun the English Standard Version for the following reasons.

First, it is based on the wrong Greek New Testament, because it is based on the Nestle-Aland text. The only reliable base text is the Majority Greek New Testament of Robinson & Pierpont.

Second, the ESV is a feminist version. Throughout the New Testament the word ‘brother’ is replaced in the footnotes with ‘brother and sister.’ This is an attempt to appease feminist theologians.

Thirdly, inclusive language is imposed on God’s Word, especially in the New Testament. The reader is being manipulated and conditioned to accept the equality of the sexes, which is not taught in Scripture. Quality, not equality, is taught in the Bible.

Fourthly, the doctrine of the headship of Man is lost in the translation, due to points (2) and (3). The hierarchy of God, Christ, Man, and Woman, is hugely distorted, if not displaced, and in its place is the levelling out of the distinctive roles and privileges given by God to men and women separately, such that today the trend is that a woman can rule a man in any capacity including the archbishopric.

The single greatest cause of divorces among Christians is the loss of the doctrine of Headship.\(^5\) The ESV has contributed enormously to the loss of man’s headship over woman in evangelical circles. You just need to see the sea of uncovered female heads when you walk into any so-called evangelical church today. The uncovered female head is the clearest indicator of how far Christ’s sisters have spurned His teaching. If they can spurn Christ’s teaching, then it is no wonder they spurn their husband’s headship authority over them. It is no wonder that we see the wife in the pulpit and the husband in the pew. This has Satan rolling about in Church pews every Sunday. He is bursting his sides with laughter and great glee. He cannot believe his luck. He has won the battle

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\(^5\) For a comprehensive explanation of this neglected doctrine see the author’s work, Good Order in the Church, which can be downloaded from http://www.lmf12.wordpress.com/.
over Christ Jesus among His own people, and inside the Church itself, who can only stand silently by
with a crestfallen countenance, totally bewildered by the ingratitude and disrespect shown to Him
by His followers, every time they meet to ‘worship’ Him. The very act of so-called ‘worship’ is a
time of great embarrassment to Him as Satan points gleefully at the woman in the pulpit and at the
uncovered heads of His disobedient sisters. He taunts the Lord Jesus with the prophecy that he will
have a woman archbishop of Canterbury one day soon, if the trend keeps going. He is right on
course, he yells above the din of female voices to the Lord Jesus, and with those words he pumps the
air with his fists, and goes into a dance of sheer delight and jubilation.

Where the Spirit once addressed His messages directly to the men—to the brothers of the
Lord Jesus, this has been foolishly changed and obliterated by the ESV. In the ‘world’—which is the
sphere of Satan’s influence—we expect to find an upside-down world, where everything that Jesus
taught is reversed, turned on its head, and where the opposite is the norm, we do not expect this
chaotic situation to be found in Christ’s Church, but it is, and the trend has been growing strongly
since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The English Standard Version promotes this unbiblical trend by a deliberate alteration of
“brothers” into “brothers and sisters.” On this account it should be rejected as a polluted source, and
a polluting influence in the lives of the saints.

For public reading in the Church and at home I would recommend (with severe
reservations) the use of the New King James Version, but for private and academic study, the reader
should use Young’s Literal Translation until a more modern, literal translation can replace it.

The reason for promoting both of these translations is that they are based on the Majority
(Byzantine) Greek text. No future English translation should be accepted unless it is based on the
Majority Greek text. Therefore, when a new English version is advertised, the first question every
believer should ask himself or herself is: “What Greek text is this English version based on?” If the
answer comes back that it is based on a revised Nestle-Aland text, have nothing to do with it. It is a
faulty translation because it is based on a faulty Greek text. You cannot bring a clean thing out of an
unclean thing.

Peter followed behind Jesus and John, and John wanted to know “What about this man?”
Jesus’ reply to John was, “You follow me.” I do not think we are going to change other evangelicals,
who are following behind Jesus. I do not concern myself to ask, “And what about this or that
scholar? What does he think of my views on divorce?” We should care little what others think of us
as we pursue after the truth that glorifies the Lord Jesus, and may it long continue that way.

518 The NKJV rejects Jesus’ teaching on divorce in Matthew 19:9 by retaining Erasmus’s
‘exception clause,’ and using the legal term ‘divorce’ in 1 Corinthians 7:11, 12, 13. It gives the
impression of translating the Majority Greek text, but this is not fully carried through. The reader
should follow the interlinear English translation (published by Thomas Nelson, 1994) which keeps a
lot closer to the Majority Greek text. Erasmus’s ‘exception clause’ should be more accurately called
his ‘deception clause.’

519 Young’s translation follows Erasmus’s Greek text, which, while it is, on the whole, based on
Byzantine manuscripts, it is not the pure form of the Byzantine Text that Robinson & Pierpoint have
extracted from von Soden’s critical apparatuses. Even Robinson & Pierpont’s Greek text must be
considered a stop-gap version of the original autograph text, until such time as we can computerise
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APPENDIX A

THE TRANSLATION OF MATTHEW 19:9 IN THE ENGLISH VERSIONS

The object of this section is to show that while the majority of English translations are based on a Greek text which has thrown out Erasmus’s unsupported addition of εἰ in Matthew 19:9, they have not thrown out his unbiblical teaching on divorce and remarriage. In this selection there are thirty-eight translations which have retained the wrong translation, some ambiguous translations, and only three that translate the Majority Text.

21st CENTURY KING JAMES VERSION (KJ21/1994). 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 who is put away doth commit adultery.

AMERICAN KING JAMES VERSION (AKJV). And I say to you, Whoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoever marries her which is put away does commit adultery.

AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION (ASV/1901). And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.

AMPLIFIED BIBLE (AMP/1954–1987). I say to you: whoever dismisses (repudiates, divorces) his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

ANALYTICAL–LITERAL TRANSLATION (ALT). But I say to you*, whoever divorces his wife [but] not for sexual sin and takes another, commits adultery, and the one having married the one having been divorced commits adultery.

AUTHORIZED VERSION (1611). And I say unto you, Whosoeuer 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.

ARAMAIC BIBLE IN PLAIN ENGLISH. But I say to you, “Whoever divorces his wife apart from adultery and will take another, commits adultery, and whoever will take her who is divorced commits adultery.”

BIBLE IN BASIC ENGLISH (1949/1964) (BBE). And I say to you, Whoever puts away his wife for any other cause than the loss of her virtue, and takes another, is a false husband: and he who takes her as his wife when she is put away, is no true husband to her.

BIBLE IN WORLDWIDE ENGLISH (BWE). But I tell you this. No man may send his wife away unless she has committed adultery. If he does, and if he marries another woman, he commits adultery. And if a man marries a woman who has been sent away by her husband, he commits adultery.’

THE COMMON EDITION: NEW TESTAMENT (Common). And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE (CEB/2011). I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.

520 These were taken from: http://crosswire.org/study/parallelstudy.

521 This has been taken from The English Hexapla, Exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures. (London: Samuel Bagster, 1841).

522 Does the same apply to the man? If he has had sex before marriage has he lost his virtue? From the woman’s point of view the text would then read: “Whoever puts away her husband for any other cause than the loss of his virtue, and takes another, is a false wife: and she who takes him as her husband when he is put away, is no true wife to him.”
Now what I say to you is that whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery!

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION (CEV/1995). I say that if your wife has not committed some terrible sexual sin, you must not divorce her to marry someone else. If you do, you are unfaithful.

CRANMER (1539). I saye vnto you: whosoeuer putteth awaye his wyfe (except it be for fornicacion) and marieth another, breaketh wedlocke. And whoso marieth her which is deuorsed, doeth commyt aduoutry.

DARBY BIBLE TRANSLATION (Darby/1889). But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another woman, commits adultery; and he who marries one put away commits adultery.

DOUAY-RHEIMS AMERICAN EDITION (DRA/1899). And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

DOUAY-RHEIMS BIBLE, CHALLONER REVISION (DRC). And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

EASY-TO-READ VERSION (ERV/2006). I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for the problem of sexual sin, and marries another woman is guilty of adultery.

THE EMPHASIZED BIBLE by J. B. Rotherham (Rotherham). And I say unto you—Whosoever shall divorce his wife, saving for unfaithfulness, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.

THE EMPHATIC DIAGLOT (1864; ET of J. J. Griesbach Gk NT). I say but to you, that whoever may release the wife of him, except for fornication, and may marry another, commits adultery; and he her being released marrying, commits adultery.

ENGLISH JUBILEE 2000 BIBLE (Jubilee 2000). And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except [it be] for fornication, and may marry another, commits adultery, and whosoever marries her that is put away commits adultery.

ENGLISH MAJORITY TEXT VERSION (EMTV). And I say to you, that whoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever is marrying a divorcee commits adultery.

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV/2001). And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

tell you that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman ·∙is guilty of [ commits] adultery. ·∙The only reason for a man to divorce his wife is if his wife has sexual relations with another man [L ...except in the case of sexual immorality].”

EXPANDED BIBLE (EXB/2011). I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman ·∙is guilty of [ commits] adultery. ·∙The only reason for a man to divorce his wife is if his wife has sexual relations with another man [L ...except in the case of sexual immorality].”

GENEVA (1557). I say therfore vnto you, that whosoeuer shal put away his wyfe (except it be for whoredome) and marye another, committeth aduoutry. And whosoeuer marieth her which is diuorced, doth commit aduoutry.525

523 This has been taken from The English Hexapla, Exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures. (London: Samuel Bagster, 1841). The six versions are Wiclif (1380), Tyndale (1534), Cranmer (1539), Genevan (1557), Anglo-Rhemish (1582), and Authorised (1611).

524 As it stands, this is ambiguous. It could be taken to mean ‘not counting divorce for fornication,’ in which case it would allow divorce for fornication.

525 This has been taken from The English Hexapla, Exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures. (London: Samuel Bagster, 1841).
GENEVA BIBLE (1560) (Geneva 1560). I say therefore vnto you, that whosoeuer shal put aweay his wife, except it be for whoredome, and marie another, committeth adulterie: and whosoeuer marieth her which is diuorced, doeth commit adulterie.

GENEVA BIBLE (GNV/1599) (Geneva 1599). I say therefore vnto you, that whosoeuer shall put away his wife, except it be for whoredome, and marry another, committeth adulterie: and whosoeuer marrieth her which is diuorced, doeth commit adulterie.

WILLIAM BAXTER GODBEY (N.T. 1902). But I say unto you, That whosoever may send away his wife, not for fornication, and may marry another, commits adultery.

GOOD NEWS TRANSLATION (GNT/1992). I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife for any cause other than her unfaithfulness, commits adultery if he marries some other woman.”

GOOD NEWS VERSION (GNV). I say therefore unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for whoredom, and marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoeuer marrieth her which is divorced, doth commit adultery.

GOOD’S WORD TRANSLATION (GodsWord/GW/1995). I can guarantee that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than her unfaithfulness is committing adultery if he marries another woman.

GREEN’S LITERAL TRANSLATION (LITV). And I say to you, Whoever shall put away his wife, if not for fornication, and shall marry another, that one commits adultery. And the one who marries her who was put away commits adultery.

GREEN’S MODERN KING JAMES VERSION (MKJV). And I say to you, Whoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is put away commits adultery.

HEBREW NAMES VERSION OF THE WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE (HNV). I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her when she is divorced commits adultery.

HOLMAN CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE (HCSB/1999-2009). And I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD VERSION (ISV). I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.

JERUSALEM BIBLE (1966). Now I say to you: the man who divorces his wife—I am not speaking of fornication—and marries another, is guilty of adultery. [19:9b is omitted]

JUBILEE BIBLE 2000 (JUB/2000-2010). And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication and shall marry another, commits adultery, and whosoever marries her that is put away commits adultery.

KING JAMES VERSION (1769) with Strongs Numbers and Morphology (KJV). 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.

LATIN VULGATE (Vulgate). Dico autem uobis: quia quicumque dimiserit uxorem suam nisi ob fornicationem: & aliam duxerit, moechatur. Et qui dimissam duxerit: moechatur. ET: And I say to you, Whoever dismisses his wife, if not for fornication, and marries another, he commits adultery. And who marries one dismissed: he commits adultery.

ERASMUS’S LATIN (1527). Dico autem uobis, quod quicunque repudiauerit uxor suam nisi ob stuprum, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium. Et qui repudiatum duxerit: is adulterium committit.

526 Margin note: It was to avuoide the cruelite, that men wolde haue vsed towards their wiues, if they had bene forced to reteine them in their displeasure, furie and malice. The note at Matthew 5:32 reads: In that he giueth her leaue to marry another by ye [that] testimonial.
ET: And I say to you, Whosoever repudiates his wife, if not for dishonourable behaviour, and marries another, he commits adultery. And who marries one repudiated: he commits adultery.

LEXHAM ENGLISH BIBLE (LEB/2012). Now I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the basis of sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.

THE LIVING BIBLE (TLB/1971). And I tell you this, that anyone who divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. And the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” This sentence is added in some ancient manuscripts.

THE LIVING ORACLES NEW TESTAMENT (LO). Therefore, I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for whoredom, and marries another, commits adultery: and whoever marries the woman divorced, commits adultery.

THE MESSAGE (MSG/1993-2002). I’m holding you to the original plan, and holding you liable for adultery if you divorce your faithful wife and then marry someone else. I make an exception in cases where the spouse has committed adultery.

MONTGOMERY NEW TESTAMENT (Montgomery). And I tell you that any man who divorces his wife for any cause except her unfaithfulness, and marries another woman, commits adultery.

MOUNCE REVERSE-INTERLINEAR NEW TESTAMENT (MOUNCE/2011). But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality [mê epi porneia], and marries another, commits adultery.

JAMES MURDOCK’S TRANSATION OF THE SYRIAC PESHITTA (Murdock). And I say to you, That whoever leaveth his wife not being an adulteress, and taketh another, committeth adultery. And whoever taketh her that is divorced, committeth adultery.

NAMES OF GOD BIBLE (NOG/). I can guarantee that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than her unfaithfulness is committing adultery if he marries another woman.

NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE (NASB/1960-1995). And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.

NEW CENTURY VERSION (NCV/2005). I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman is guilty of adultery. The only reason for a man to divorce his wife is if his wife has sexual relations with another man.

NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NET/1996-2006). Now I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another commits adultery.

NEW HEART ENGLISH BIBLE (2010). I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

NEW INTERNATIONAL READER’S VERSION (NIRV/1996-1998). Here is what I tell you. Anyone who divorces his wife and gets married to another woman commits adultery. A man may divorce his wife only if she has not been faithful to him.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV/1969-[1978]). I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.

Note the change from “fornicationem” in the Vulgate to “stuprum” in Erasmus’s 2nd edition (1519). The difference is that “fornicationem” is a sexual sin, but “stuprum” can embrace any dishonourable or disgraceful act, either sexual or non-sexual. The term ‘stuprum’ is not used of dealings with prostitutes, according to the Oxford Latin Dictionary. It can include lewdness, debauchery, defilement and violation. Erasmus may have been attempting to include all the reasons inherent in the term ‘an indecent matter’ in Deut 24:1-4, which the rabbis believed was not confined to sexual sins. If the wife burnt the food, this was grounds for divorce, because it was a disgraceful act in the eyes of the husband. By using the term ‘stuprum’ Erasmus opened the door to divorce for ‘every reason’ which was the question the Pharisees asked Jesus in Matthew 19:3.
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV/2011). And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.

NEW LIFE VERSION (NLV/1969). And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sex sins, and marries another, is guilty of sex sins in marriage. Whoever marries her that is divorced is guilty of sex sins in marriage.

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION (NLT/1996-2007). And I tell you this, a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful.

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION (NRSV/1989). And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION, ANGLICISED CATHOLIC EDITION (NRSVACE/1989, 1995). And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.\[a\] Other ancient authorities read except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; others add at the end of the verse and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

NOYES TRANSLATION (1869). And I say to you, Whosoever putteth away his wife, except for fornication, and marrieth another, committeth adultery. \[omits 9b\]

ORTHODOX JEWISH BIBLE (OJB/2002-2011). [Mattityahu 19:9] But I [Moshiach] say to you that whoever, the case of zenut (fornication) being excepted, gives the get to his wife and marries another, is guilty of niuf (adultery).

THE ORTHODOX JEWISH BRITH CHADASHA (ET by Philip Goble. 1997). But I [Moshiach] say to you that whoever, the case of zenut (fornication) being excepted, gives the get to his wife and marries another, is guilty of ni’uf (adultery).” (Nevertheless, this is not a version for the uninformed Gentile reader, as it requires at least a basic knowledge of Jewish history and tradition.)

J. B. PHILLIPS. It was because you knew so little of the meaning of love that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives! But that was not the original principle. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife on any grounds except her unfaithfulness and marries some other woman commits adultery.

RESTORED NAME KING JAMES VERSION (RNKJV). And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

REVISED KING JAMES NEW TESTAMENT (RKJNT). And I say to you, Whoever shall divorce his wife, except for unchastity, and shall marry another, commits adultery.

REVISED STANDARD VERSION (RSV/1946-71). “And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.

REVISED STANDARD VERSION CATHOLIC EDITION (RSVCE/1965, 1966). And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery.”

REVISED WEBSTER VERSION (1833) (RWebster). And I say to you, Whoever shall put away his wife, except for immorality, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoever marrieth her who is put away committeth adultery.

RHEIMS (1582). And I say to you, that whosoever shall dimisse his wife, but for fornication, and shall mary an other, doth committe aduoutrie: and he that shal mary her that is dimissed, committeth aduoutrie.\[528\]

JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION (2013). And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her that is put away, doth commit adultery.

\[528\] This has been taken from The English Hexapla, Exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures. (London: Samuel Bagster, 1841).
And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committh adultery; and whoso marrieth her who is put away doth commit adultery."

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

TODAY'S INTERNATIONAL VERSION (TIV). I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery: and whosoever marries her which is put away does commit adultery.

THE VOICE (VOICE/2012). Listen, friends: if you leave your wife, unless there is adultery, and then marry another woman, you yourself are committing adultery. Only if there is adultery can you divorce your wife.

WEBSTER BIBLE (Webster). And I say to you, Whoever shall put away his wife, except for lewdness, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoever marrieth her who is put away, committeth adultery.

WESTCOTT-HORT (WHAC). ) [The text does not add the Greek word EI (εί). Westcott-Hort did not publish an English translation of their text.]

WEYMOUTH NEW TESTAMENT (1912) (Weymouth). And I tell you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except her unfaithfulness, and marries another woman, commits adultery."

WICLIF (Wycliff) (1380). and I seie to you that euer leue his wiif but for fornycacioun, and weddith another: doith lecherie, and he that weddith the forsakenwiif doith lecherie.530

ET: And I say to you, that whoever leaveth his wife, but for fornication, and weddeth another, doeth lechery [doeth adultery]; and he that weddeth the forsaken wife, doeth lechery [doeth adultery].

JOHN WYCLIFFE BIBLE (1395) (Wycliffe/WYC/2001). And Y seie to you, that who euer leeueth his wijf, but for fornycazioun, and weddith another, doith lecherie; and he that weddith the forsakun wijf, doith lecherie.

WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE (WEB). I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her when she is divorced commits adultery.

WORLDWIDE ENGLISH (NEW TESTAMENT) (WE/1969-1998). But I tell you this. No man may send his wife away unless she has committed adultery. If he does, and if he marries another woman, he commits adultery. And if a man marries a woman who has been sent away by her husband, he commits adultery.

YOUNG'S LITERAL TRANSLATION (YLT/1st 1862; 2nd 1887; 3rd 1898). And I say to you, that, whoever may put away his wife, if not for whoredom, and may marry another, doth commit adultery; and he who did marry her that hath been put away, doth commit adultery.

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529 This has been taken from The English Hexapla, Exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures. (London: Samuel Bagster, 1841).

530 This has been taken from The English Hexapla, Exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures. (London: Samuel Bagster, 1841).
DIVORCE PERMITTED BUT NOT A REMARRIAGE

NEW CENTURY VERSION (NCV/1987)
I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman is guilty of adultery. The only reason for a man to divorce his wife is if his wife has sexual relations with another man.

BIBLE IN WORLDWIDE ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT (BWE/1996)
But I tell you this. No man may send his wife away unless she has committed adultery. If he does, and if he marries another woman, he commits adultery. And if a man marries a woman who has been sent away by her husband, he commits adultery.

NEW INTERNATIONAL READER’S VERSION (NIRV/1998)
Here is what I tell you. Anyone who divorces his wife and gets married to another woman commits adultery. A man may divorce his wife only if she has not been faithful to him.

AMBIGUOUS TRANSLATIONS

JAMES MURDOCK (1851). And I say to you, That whoever leaveth his wife not being an adulteress, and taketh another, commiteth adultery.
Note C or, marrieth.
JOHN ETHERIDGE (1849). And I say to you, That whoever leaveth his wife not being an adulteress, and taketh another, commiteth adultery.

According to these ambiguous translations, it is still possible to get a divorce so long as it is for fornication.

CORRECT TRANSLATIONS

McFALL’S VERSION. Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication which was punished by death531—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.

APOSTOLIC BIBLE POLYGLOT (1996, 2013). And I say to you, that who ever should dismiss his wife, not for harlotry, and should marry another, commits adultery; and the one being dismissed marrying, commits adultery.

BASIC ENGLISH BIBLE. And I say to you, Whoever puts away his wife for any other cause than the loss of her virtue, and takes another, is a false husband: and he who takes her as his wife when she is put away, is no true husband to her.

CONSERVATIVE VERSION (ACV) And I say to you, that whoever may divorce his wife, not for fornication,532 and will marry another, commits adultery. And he who married her who has been divorced commits adultery.

531 The alternative translation is, ‘not he may have divorced her for fornication.’ The use of the Greek negative particle mh [MH] cannot be followed by the indicative mood. Here, the context permits the repetition of the previous subjunctive verb, ‘may have divorced.’ See Appendix B for a fuller explanation of this point.

532 This is ambiguous. It could be taken as an exception, or it could be taken as ruling out divorce specifically for fornication. If the latter, then it would be a correct translation provided the translator was aware that God’s law forbade divorce for fornication. The translator could believe
DARBY BIBLE (1889) (Darby) But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he who marries one put away commits adultery.

W. B. GODBEY (1902). But I say unto you, That whosoever may send away his wife, not for fornication, and may marry another, commits adultery.

GOD’S WORD® TRANSLATION. I can guarantee that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than her unfaithfulness is committing adultery if he marries another woman.

GOOD NEWS TRANSLATION. I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife for any cause other than her unfaithfulness, commits adultery if he marries some other woman.


I say to you, moreover, Whosoever may divorce his wife—not on [the ground of] fornication, and may marry another, is committing adultery; and he who married a divorced woman is committing adultery. [NOTE: Rotherham translates Tregelles’ Gk text which omitted Erasmus’s addition of ἔι before μή.]

WEYMOUTH NEW TESTAMENT. And I tell you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except her unfaithfulness, and marries another woman, commits adultery.

JOHN WORSLEY (N.T. 1770). and I tell you, that whosoever putteth away his wife, except for whoredom, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her so put away committeth adultery.

Historical note on English translations.

In the Anglo-Saxon period the New Testament was translated into Old English, mainly in the time of Ælfric (10th-11th cent.). In the Middle English period the translation of the entire Bible into English was accomplished by Wycliffe (c. 1382). This was based on the Latin Vulgate. The Purvey Revision of Wycliffe’s translation by John Purvey (c. 1354–c. 1421) filled the gap for the next 250 years. The Provincial Council at Oxford in 1408 prohibited English translations of the Bible on pain of excommunication and trial for heresy. From the 16th century onwards (except for Coverdale) all English translations were based on Erasmus’s Greek New Testament. Due to the 1408 ban on translations, Tyndale had to go to the continent to complete his English translation in 1525 (using Erasmus’s 3rd edition). Tyndale and Erasmus died in the same year, in 1536. In 1549 the Book of Common Prayer was published in English, and a revised edition of the Great Bible placed in every church in England.

Geneva in the 1550s was a centre for biblical textual scholarship, from whence came the Greek New Testament of Robert and Henry Stephanus [Estienne] and Theodore Beza (1556). The leaders of the English church in Geneva produced the Geneva Bible in April/May 1560 after two years work on it. This translation was heavily dependant on Tyndale’s translation published by Richard Jugge in 1552, and the Great Bible.

Queen Elizabeth came to the throne on 17 November, 1558, and many Protestant church leaders flocked back to England. The Great Bible was the official Bible placed in all the churches in England. The Geneva Bible was intended for the ordinary man, hence it was divided into verses for convenience, with brief marginal comments ‘on all the hard places.’ It had five maps, also a

that the consequences that Jesus spelled out for divorcing for a cause other than fornication/adultery, did not apply when the divorce was due to fornication/adultery.

533 As it stands, this is ambiguous. It could be taken to mean ‘not counting divorce for fornication,’ in which case it would allow divorce for fornication. Much will depend on Darby’s theology.
chronology from Adam to Christ. The Great Bible was revised to become the Bishop’s Bible in 1568. In statistical terms the amount of material carried over into the AV is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wycliffe versions, including English Sermons</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyndale’s work, including the Matthew Bible</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverdale’s work, including the Great Bible</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva Bible and Geneva New Testament</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop’s Bible and its revision</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other versions before 1611</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King James Bible, new material</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is much evidence that both the unlettered clergy and the laity relied on the notes in the Geneva Bible for the ‘correct’ interpretation of Scripture.

The first English translation was that of John Wycliff in 1380. This was not a translation of the Greek but of Jerome’s Latin text. Jerome appears to have used a Greek text closer to the Caesarean Text. Both Codex Vaticanus and Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69) replaced the so-called exception clause in Matthew 19:9 with the so-called exception clause in 5:32. This has been recognised by all critical editions of the Greek New Testament from the days of Erasmus as a blunder.

Jerome translated the Greek text of Matthew 19:9 as nisi ob fornicationem (‘if not for fornication’), which Wycliffe translated as, ‘but for fornyacioun,’ which is ambiguous. Now Jerome supported the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching that there were no grounds for divorce, so that in using nisi ob fornicationem in the mid-fifth century he did not view the words as creating an exception for divorce, but clearly by the beginning of the sixteenth century Erasmus read the same Latin words as creating an exception clause because he altered the Latin of Matthew 5:32 to agree with 19:9.

If Jerome understood his Latin to convey the meaning ‘if not for fornication,’ meaning ‘for all causes’ apart from fornication’ then he, too, must have been aware that the Jews could not get a divorce for fornication, as it was a capital offence. In this way, the Roman Catholic Church always realised that Jesus had done away with all the non-fornication causes that it was customary for the Jews to use to obtain a divorce.

Erasmus took over Jerome’s Latin translation of Matthew 19:9 (nisi ob fornicationem) and he chanced upon a Greek text that seemed to represent Jerome’s Latin translation in the text of Codex Leicestrensis. Erasmus must have been delighted to find that the main text of Leicestrensis, which had wrongly substituted the ‘exception’ clause that is found in 5:32 (‘apart from the matter of fornication’) with the ‘exception’ clause he found in 19:9. So out of the combination of two corruptions of the Greek text, Erasmus found confirmation of his instinct that fornication was a true exception to Jesus teaching on marriage and divorce. He appeared to have Jerome on his side. No wonder he never altered the text of 19:9 in any of his next four editions. It should be pointed out

534 From Adam to Noah’s Flood was 1656 years; from the Flood to Abraham was 363 years and 10 days; from Abraham’s departure from Ur to the Exodus was 430 years [so only 220 years in Egypt]; from the Exodus to Solomon’s Temple was 480 years; from the Temple to the Babylonian captivity was 419 years and a half; from then to the rebuilding of Jerusalem was 143 years; from then to Christ was 483 years. The total from Adam to Christ was 3974 years 6 months, and 10 days.


536 In Latin nisi is from ni-si, where ni means ‘not,’ and si means ‘if.’ Nisi can mean: than, but, unless, if not and except. Jerome could have used the Latin term excepta in place of nisi, but he didn’t.
h\r

here that Erasmus did not see the marginal correction of ει μη επι πορνεια in Codex Leicestrensis, because this correction was added in the margin from John Mill’s 1675 printed edition, which had Erasmus text.

Erasmus had no scruples to bring his Greek text into line with Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, of which this was one clear example our of scores.

It was a clever move on the part of Erasmus to import Jerome’s Latin translation of Matthew 19:9 into 5:32, because the Greek of 5:32 was unambiguous in its wording and it appeared to point to an ‘exception’ for fornication. Erasmus relied on ignorance of the true meaning of the so-called exception clause in 5:32, but by cleverly using the exact same Latin translation in both places, the reader would be convinced that both places supported his case for an exception to the Catholic Church’s ban on divorce for any cause. If Erasmus had taken Jerome’s translation of the exemption clause in 5:32, which read, excepta fornicationis causa (‘except for the cause of fornication’), and had imported it into 19:9, this would have shown up in his 1519 edition, which had three columns, with Jerome’s Vulgate alongside Erasmus’s Latin, and the Greek in the third column. The same would have shown up in his 1516 column if anyone was comparing the independently published Vulgate against Erasmus’s Latin translation. So it was expedient to harmonise the Latin translations of 5:32 (which was unambiguous) and 19:9 (which was ambiguous, until Erasmus added τι before μή) to bring out a perceived exception to the Roman Catholic Church’s dogmatic position against divorce.

The English translations that followed Wycliffe (and were influenced by it) claimed to be a translation based on the Greek text, which, of course, was Erasmus’s faulty Greek text. So the exception for divorce was carried over from Wycliffe’s English translation into all subsequent English translations up to the present day. The ‘exception’ clause will never be allowed to be removed from any future English translation, because hard-hearted Christians need it to remain in Scripture so that they can fall back upon it when they cannot find room for forgiveness.

It is a strange irony that scholarship that worked so hard to recover every single word, particle, and letter of the original Greek writing, and in this thoroughgoing process threw out Erasmus’s addition of τι in Matthew 19:9, refused to do the same to the English translations that were based on Erasmus’s faulty Greek text! They refused to accept his ‘exception’ clause in the Greek, but they accepted it in the English!

The reason for this mismatch is not hard to find. The momentum that swept across Europe for divorce in the wake of the Protestant Reformation became embedded in the Confessions of Faiths and Creeds that sprang into existence in opposition to the Roman Catholic teaching on marriage and divorce. Once divorce entered the creeds, men ceased to question its newness because ‘newness’ characterised so many Protestant doctrines in the early days of the reformation.

By the time scholarship began to question Erasmus’s Greek text it was too late—the horse had bolted, and it is still on the run to this day. There is not a single modern, English translation today that faithfully translates the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, or the Majority (Byzantine) Greek New Testament. Not even the New King James Version translates the Majority Text. Erasmus’s ‘exception’ clause is still there. Why this dishonesty when it comes to a faithful translation of God’s inerrant Word?

Creeds and Confessions were the instruments used to propagate Christian doctrine to the laity and children. The clergy were set on course to absorb without question what had been formulated in the creeds and confessions of faith. After four hundred years of unquestioning submission to these creeds and Articles of Faith, an unstoppable momentum has set in, and divorce has become an indispensable part of European culture. All the major denominations are set on course not to let go of their 400-year tradition. If they hint of going back to the teaching and practice of the Early Church (not to mention Jesus’ own teaching) or refuse to remarry divorced persons, or adopt an English version that rules out divorce for any cause, they will soon lose their congregations with a consequent loss of revenue, and soon they will be unable to pay the salary of their leaders. They will be ostracised and castigated for their narrowness and inflexibility, and they will surely
dwindle to a remnant of their glory days, when they preached only what their congregations wanted to hear.

We asked the question, “Why this dishonesty when it comes to a faithful translation of God’s inerrant Word?” The answer is—money. Big publishing houses can’t take the risk of offending their paymasters with versions that would be instantly held up as being ‘novel’ and ‘preaching another Gospel. other than we one we have received these past four hundred years.’ Another answer would be—popularity, or lack of it. No one likes to be unpopular, and there is no quicker way to lose friends and not influence people, than by denouncing all remarriages as adulterous relationships. Half our leaders, half our congregations, and half our translation committees are in such adulterous relationships. They will rise up and crucify anyone who points this out to them. Unpopularity and poverty are the wages of remaining faithful to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, and most prefer to follow Him afar off, so as not to be identified too clearly as one of His truly faithful disciples. How true is the saying, ‘You cannot serve God and money.’
APPENDIX B

AN EXPLANATION FOR THE AUTHOR’S LITERAL TRANSLATION OF MATTHEW 19:9

The author’s fairly literal translation of Matthew 19:9 reads: “Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—he may not have divorced her for fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.” Grammatically, this is one way to translate the Greek.

The negative here is MH, which is the one used to negate the subjunctive, optative, infinitive, participle, and the imperative. All other moods and tenses are negated using OU. So the fact that Jesus used MH allows the ellipsis of the preceding verb ‘he_may_have_divorced’ (one word in Greek) to be carried forward into the next clause, which then reads: “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have put away his wife—not he may put away for fornication (because, by law, that offence was punished by death)—and may have married another commits adultery.” On this reading of the grammar, Jesus made it very clear that divorce could not be had for any sexual sin (fornication) that would cast doubt on the paternity of a man’s offspring through his own virgin wife. God safeguarded the legitimacy of each man’s sons by using the death penalty to rid Himself of unfaithful wives. Divorce was not good enough for these flirtatious wives. He wanted them dead, because they were a threat to the purity of the line of descent to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, if we leave the translation as it is, it is possible to argue that Jesus fully endorsed His Father’s death penalty for fornication/adultery, but this would not exclude the possibility that a man could legitimately divorce his wife for a non-fornication (or non-sexual) cause. This would yield the bizarre situation where Jesus would have taught that a man could not get a divorce for adultery (or any sexual offence), but could get a divorce for any non-sexual offence, such as burning the husband’s dinner. This interpretation would endorse divorce for an ‘ervat dãbãr (Deut 24:1) which was the teaching of the School of Hillel. When an interpretation leads to a foolish conclusion like this, the spiritual man will quickly discard it and re-examine the text to uncover the meaning Jesus intended His words to have that would be in keeping with His doctrine of forgiveness.

A.1. The most likely interpretation

If we take the most literal translation another meaning comes to light. The translation reads: “Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication which was punished by death— and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

Jesus and the lawyers knew that for capital offences, such as fornication, divorce was out of the question. So why did Jesus mention ‘fornication’? He was asked if it was lawful to divorce ‘for every cause.’ So it was a case of what did the law say, not what did tradition say, or what did expediency demand under Roman rule. Now, the language of law is very precise. Jesus appeared to lay down one limitation on a universal provision for divorce, and that was that a man could not divorce his wife for fornication (‘not over fornication’), but we know this cannot be the case. The solution is simple. By using the negative Jesus was positively identifying everything else as grounds for divorce.

When Israel came out of Egypt, it, along with all other human societies, granted divorce for fornication and for non-fornication issues alike, with no distinction between sexual and non-sexual

537 The small Greek particle (an) means, ‘for example,’ ‘suppose,’ ‘let us say,’ ‘for instance’. It introduces a hypothetical situation.
categories, as it was in Roman and Greek times, and is still current to this day. All offences ended in divorce; divorce could be had ‘for fornication,’ and divorce could be had ‘not over fornication.’

God abolished divorce ‘for fornication,’ and in its place He demanded the death penalty (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10; 7th Commandment). It was now no longer possible in Israel to get a divorce ‘for fornication,’538 from the time of the Conquest (1406 B.C.) to the time of Jesus. This left the category ‘not over fornication’ to persist among God’s people. God did not directly legislate to ban the practice of divorce for non-fornication issues.

It was as if Jesus had divided all sins into two punishment groups, capital and non-capital offences, which aligned with (a) fornication, and (b) non-fornication (= ‘not over fornication’). In effect, Jesus ruled out divorce for all non-capital offences, because death, not divorce, took care of all the capital offences.

So when Jesus used the term ‘not over fornication,’ He was encompassing a universal category of offences that excluded fornication. The Jewish Sanhedrin would have recognised the legal distinction that Jesus made between divorce for fornication and divorce for non-fornication offences. The former were unlawful in the eyes of Jesus and the Sanhedrin, so there was no dispute between Jesus and the Sanhedrin on this point. This left the Sanhedrin approving of divorce for non-fornication offences, which fell within their traditional erva dăbær category. It was here that Jesus and the Sanhedrin had a fundamental disagreement.

We must understand that when the Pharisees used the phrase ‘for any cause’ they had in mind only non-capital offences, or non-fornication offences, or ‘not over fornication’ offences. This means that ‘for any cause’ is the same as ‘not over fornication.’

Jesus informed the nation that if any Jew got a divorce on the basis of a non-fornication offence, that divorce was worthless, ineffectual, and left the marriage bond intact. Anyone who remarried after such a divorce was guilty of adultery, and adultery was a death penalty offence.

In the above translation words in italic font have been supplied to bring out the sense of the Greek. A word of explanation is required for the awkwardness of this English translation. When the English reader, who has no knowledge of Greek, first comes across a literal translation of the Greek subjunctive mood, he is taken aback by the awkwardness of the English, as in the above translation of the aorist subjunctive: “he may have divorced his wife,” or, “he may not have divorced his wife.” The reason for this is that English rarely uses the subjunctive, and it is this rarity that produces the problem. There is no way round this except to familiarise oneself with the Greek until such translations become natural and essential to bring out the meaning of the Greek subjunctive mood. Once that stage has been reached then it is possible to proceed with a like translation for all Greek subjunctive verbs.

However, the Greek subjunctive mood will always cause problems for the English reader because it is used in different contexts. For instance, the aorist subjunctive is used for negative commands, such as the Greek μὴ θεμασίας (John 3:7), which literally reads: ‘Not you may have marvelled.’ This is normally translated as the imperative mood in English: ‘Do not marvel.’

Further complications occur because the Greek aorist subjunctive is used when deliberating possible options. Thus: δοῦμεν ἢ μὴ δοῦμεν, ‘May/should we give, or may/should we not give [taxes to Caesar]?’ Because this deals with future action, most English versions prefer to use the English future tense: ‘Shall we give, or shall we not give?’

Another complication is the use of the Greek aorist subjunctive to convey a strong or emphatic negative, such as, ‘And I give to them eternal life and they shall never perish’ (John 10:28). This translates: οὐ μὴ ἀπολογουμαι, which literally reads: ‘no not they may have perished,’ and the double negative ‘no not’ is translated as ‘never’ in English versions.

In ‘whoever clauses’ such as, ‘Whoever drinks out of the water . . . ’ the English present tense is used in place of the aorist subjunctive, because a literal translation would be too awkward for English readers. This replacement of moods is the only way we have to convey the sense of the

538 The Bitter Waters test was there to insure that a man’s sons were truly his own.
Greek in these cases. The Greek reads: ὃς δ’ ἄν πὴ ἐκ τοῦ ὑδατος οὐ ἔγω δῶσαι αὐτῷ οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ ἐἰς τὸν αἷμα. Literally the translation would be: ‘Now who, say, may have drunk out of the water . . . ’ The word ‘say’ translates the Greek particle ὅν, which adds uncertainty or probability, and is very appropriate to use with the Greek subjunctive mood.

The rest of the verse reads: ‘. . . which I shall give [Gk. fut.] to him shall never thirst’ (John 4:14). However, the verb, ‘shall never thirst’ is not in the future tense in Greek, but is the aorist subjunctive verb διψάση which reads: ‘. . . which I shall give [Gk. fut.] to him, he may never have thirsted.’ What is a natural construction in Greek, is an unnatural one in English, hence our translators preferred to use the future tense, ‘shall never thirst.’

The significance of this preamble will become apparent in what follows.

Matthew has an addition, which Mark has left out. Matthew noted that in the question put to Jesus the Pharisees asked ‘if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause.’ Mark omitted ‘for every cause,’ and he omitted the so-called exception clause. It would appear that both are connected. Mark rightly understood Jesus’ absolutist position on the issue of divorce, as one that denied ‘any cause,’ so he omitted ‘for every cause,’ and omitted ‘not over fornication’ because it was redundant.

Matthew, on the other hand, is fully aware of the trap in the words ‘for every cause,’ and he is sharp to notice that Jesus replied directly to the query by equating their phrase ‘for every cause’ with His own equivalent, ‘not over fornication which was punished by death.’ Every Jew knew the law that he could not get a divorce if his wife committed fornication or adultery. He had to have her killed. For fornication, the rabbis of Jesus’ day should not have been issuing Divorce Certificates, but Death Certificates (Lev. 20:10).

It was out of a disturbed conscience that they asked Jesus the question: “Is it lawful to divorce for every cause?” because nowhere in the Torah is divorce authorised by God. To the Pharisees’ question: “Can a man divorce his wife for every cause?” Jesus’ devastating answer was, No! Jesus’ three words, ‘not over fornication,’ spelt the end of the Mosaic Era and the emergence of the Kingdom of God—the Church Age. As Jesus Himself put it: ‘The Kingdom of God has arrived.’ A completely new life-style had been introduced to planet Earth. A higher level of existence, of life, is now attainable for those seeking after God. Consequently, Matthew and Mark are united in presenting Jesus as ruling out divorce ‘for every cause,’ not even for fornication or adultery.

This new teaching lifted marriage to a level of sanctity and purity it had never attained since the marriage of Adam and Eve in their unfallen state. Christian marriage has reintroduced that original marriage state into the world, where it is now a picture of the betrothal relationship that exists between Christ and His bride Church (Ephesians 5:32-33). The reestablishment and re-emergence of the original state of marriage was one of the gifts that Jesus the Messiah brought with Him (cf. Ephesians 4:8).

The Lord’s reintroduction of God’s original intention for a ‘holy and unblemished’ marriage among His followers was truly a new thing in the earth. It could only exist among His followers, not in the ‘world.’ It is to the shame of the Church that it has allowed itself to lose sight of the high calling inherent in its distinctive view of marriage, and has dragged Jesus’ teaching down to the level of the ‘world,’ where it is dissected and killed off through divorce among Christians. Christian marriage should be an insight into the unbreakable, one-flesh, marriage relationship that now exists between the Lord and His Church.

The verb, ‘may have divorced,’ is in the subjunctive mood, which I have conveyed using ‘may’ to convey the idea of potential, possible, or contingency. To understand the text one needs to identify the main clause first, which is here stated using the subjunctive mood: ‘Now I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife . . . and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.’ This is the main clause, and it agrees with Mark 10:12.

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539 Probably under Latin influence, the Egyptian text-type changed the aorist subjunctive into a Greek future tense, but the universal (Byzantine) text retained the aorist subjunctive.
A2. A less likely translation of ‘not over fornication’

At the beginning of this appendix we looked at the fairly literal translation of Matthew 19:9:

“Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—he may not have divorced her for fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.

Another position of the negative would read:

Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—not he may have divorced for fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.

If Jesus denied the possibility of divorce for fornication, then He denied the possibility of divorce for any other cause, because what could be more serious and damaging to a marriage than adulterous behaviour? Either of the above positions of the negative would bring Jesus’ teaching into line with His teaching in Mark and Luke.

Why would Jesus select out ‘fornication’ as a cause, only to deny it as a ground for divorce, if the Jews were not using it? This assumes that Jesus has conceded that divorce for fornication is valid, but it is not valid for any other cause. But we have no evidence that the Jews ever commuted the death penalty to a divorce penalty, and the incident of the woman taken in adultery in John 8 confirms their practice of enforcing the death penalty for adultery. It is for this reason that the above translation is unlikely, even though it leads to the same result as the preferred translation.

This translation rules out Erasmus’s exception clause, because the phrase ‘not over fornication’ turns out to be a denial clause, and a denial clause that rules out the prime cause, namely, fornication, must consequently and logically rule out all the lesser causes. That is one way of reconciling Jesus’ absolute denial of divorce with His clear statements elsewhere.

If Jesus’ statement ‘not over fornication’ is lifted out of its historical context and made to leave open the possibility of divorce for fornication, this can only be done at the expense of isolating His words from the legal context in which the Pharisees asked their question.

Unlike Moses and the rabbis, Jesus was not in the business of facilitating, or managing sinful relationships. He was out to abolish all sinful relationships by taking up His abode in the life of each of His followers. The transformation can be likened to living underground, living and crawling in darkness, to suddenly coming to the surface, and walking in the light of the sun. Jesus likened it to a baby living in the darkness of the womb. The act of birth extrudes it into the light of the world, and there can be no way back to the darkness of the womb. Similarly, the one who has been born-again of the Spirit cannot go back to Moses or the rabbis, who belong to a by-gone way of life, which is now as obsolete as a bride attempting to get into her schoolgirl dress. The future is to walk in the light as Jesus walked in the light. Divorce belongs to Moses and the rabbis. Divorce belongs to those living underground, who have not seen the light that Jesus brought with Him. Divorce belongs to man’s old nature.

However, Jesus was not ignorant of the arrogance of man (ancient and modern, ‘Christian’ and non-Christian) to brush aside God’s revealed will and dissolve the union. His awareness of the realities is countered with a warning that Matthew and Mark both record for their readers: “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” By ‘man’ here, Jesus includes all modern divorce judges. The act of divorce (attempted dissolution) is itself a sin, even if both parties do not remarry. The warning was intended to convey the message, ‘Hands off separating what God has joined.’ To counter, or reverse, something that God has done is to set oneself up in opposition to God. And those who oppose God are His enemies.

Neither God nor Jesus will tolerate any deviation from that revelation. Those who are not part of His Kingdom will fall back on the pre-Mosaic culture of divorce. That is to be expected. But for Christians, divorce is not an option. It belongs to the discontinued Torah, not to Grace. It belongs to the flesh, not to the Spirit-led life. There was no need to discuss exceptions for hard-heartedness, because hard-heartedness, is a sinful condition.
A.3. The significance of an ellipsis in Matthew 19:9

The key feature of the above translation is that it assumes there is an ellipsis of the main verb. Now ellipsis is a very common feature in all languages. It occurs when a writer wishes to avoid being pedantic. Thus in Romans 7:25 Paul states: “So then myself, I, with the mind, I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin.” Paul omitted to repeat the main verb “I serve” before “the law of sin,” because his readers would supply it. If we supply the omission of the main verb in square brackets, the text would read: “So then myself, I, with the mind, I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, [I serve] the law of sin.” It would not be grammatically correct to repeat the verb in a modified form, or in some sense different from its first use. So, for instance, it would be taking a liberty with Paul’s thought to add ‘sometimes’ before ‘I serve’ in the second half of his thought. “So then myself, I, with the mind, I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, [I sometimes serve] the law of sin.” In supplying any ellipsis, care should be taken to repeat the main verb with the exact same meaning as its explicit use has in the first part of the sentence.

In Greek grammar there are many situations where an ellipsis of the main verb often occurs in a qualifying clause, and especially in exceptive clauses, as in Matthew 11:27, ‘which it is not lawful to him to eat, nor to those with him [to eat], except to the priests alone [to eat].’ The words in brackets [to eat], are repeated from the main clause. Closer parallels to Matthew 19:9 occur in Romans 14:1 and 1 Corinthians 5:8.

Romans 14:1, ‘And the one weak in the faith receive you—not [receive you] in determinations of reasonings.’ By adding ‘receive you’ after the negative, this brings out the force of the positive imperative. Nevertheless, there is a negative imperative implied after the particle MH, so, to be absolutely clear, the verb should be repeated to bring out the sense Paul intended his hearers/readers to get.

1 Corinthians 5:8, ‘. . . so that we may keep the feast—not [we may keep] with old leaven, not [we may keep] with the leaven of evil and wickedness, but [we may keep] with unleavened food of sincerity and truth.’ To get absolute clarity about what Paul wrote we need to re-supply the main verb “we may keep” three times in this one verse. There is a positive and a negative ‘keeping.’

Since these repetitions are redundant or pedantic, they are usually omitted, as in these two examples, and also in the following examples.

Matthew 12:4, ‘This one does not cast out demons, except [he casts out] by Beelzeboul, ruler of the demons.’ Matthew 12:39, ‘A generation, evil and adulterous, seeks a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it, except [it shall be given] the sign of Jonah the prophet.’ Matthew 17:8 ‘and having lifted up their eyes, they saw no one, except [they saw] Jesus only.’

Grammatically, there are dozens of cases in Greek New Testament where ellipsis is natural, and expected. By supplying the ellipsis, the force of the main idea is not disturbed.

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G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed., trans. by W. F. Moulton; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), p. 726, defines ellipsis as: “Ellipsis . . . consists in the omission of a word which—absent itself from the sentence—yet in its idea must necessarily (for completeness of the sentence) be present to the thought. Such omission of the words to be supplied by the mind (whether it be occasioned by convenience, or by a desire for conciseness) can take place only when the language used contains a clear intimation of what has been suppressed, —either by means of the build of the particular sentence, or in consequence of some conventional usage. As there are three constituent parts of the simple sentence, ellipsis would range themselves under the three main heads of ellipsis [1] of the subject, [2] of the predicate, and [3] of the copula.” An example is Eph 5:24 (Winer, 728).
A.4. Erasmus’s addition of ei

Grammatically, the ellipsis of ‘if’ (Greek εἰ), is a hard sell, because nothing in the context prepares you for this significant modification of the main thought. Indeed, there is no qualification if εἰ is not present. And it is present only in the margin of a very late 15th century manuscript (Codex Leicestrensis). But Erasmus never saw it there because it was inserted only after the invention of verse numbers in Robert Stephens’ royal edition of 1550, and it was inserted from a printed text of the seventeenth century, which has been traced to John Fell’s Oxford edition of 1675. There is no manuscript in existence among the 900 MSS of the Gospel of Matthew which has εἰ in the main text.

Following on from this, there is no case that I know of where the ellipsis of εἰ must be supplied to make sense of any sentence in biblical Greek literature. If a number of examples could be brought forward then maybe a case could be made out for the inclusion of εἰ in Matthew 19:9, but it would be based on a very rare example (if such could be shown to exist unambiguously).

Suppose that Matthew 19:9 is an exclusion clause, (‘Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—not [he may have divorced] for fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.’), it would be a mistake to modify the main verb when it is added in the ellipsis, by inserting the word ‘including,’ as some unscrupulous person could do, in order to force the text to read as an exemption clause, which it would do in the following translation: ‘Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—not [including] he may have divorced for fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.’ The addition of the word ‘including’ is a deliberate attempt to force Jesus to make an exception for fornication.

Or, if the ellipsis is left out, it could be made to read: ‘Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—not [including] fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.’ This arbitrary insertion of ‘including’ is effective in changing the grammar into an exemption clause. But what is to stop some other unscrupulous person from adding ‘excluding’ to replace ‘including’? The sentence would then read: ‘Now I say to you that who, for example, may have divorced his wife—not [excluding] fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.’ This would agree with the school of Hillel’s practice! Unscrupulous interference with the normal rules of grammar does not make for a sure or safe foundation for a biblical doctrine of marriage and divorce.

It is sometimes asked, If you divorce your wife not for ‘porneia’ (i.e. for some other reason) and marry another, you commit adultery; and if you divorce your wife ‘except for’ (i.e. for another reason other than ‘porneia’) and marry another, you commit adultery, don’t both translations add up to the same thing? The short answer is Yes, but there are two categories of offences to take into account. First, there are punishments ‘for fornication,’ and second, there are punishments for ‘not over fornication.’

In the first case above, this means that the wife is not guilty of fornication when she was divorced. Divorces on the basis that the offence was ‘not over fornication’ would come under the term ‘ἐρωταί δῆμος of Deuteronomy 24:1.

In the second case, Erasmus’s text tells us explicitly that it is lawful to divorce for fornication, but this is totally dependent on Erasmus’s addition of EI before MH. No textual scholar worthy of the name can accept Erasmus’s addition, so we must revert to the second choice given at the beginning of this section. Divorces on the basis that the offence was ‘for fornication’ would not come under the term ‘ἐρωταί δῆμος of Deuteronomy 24:1. In the second case, Jesus would have agreed with Scripture that the punishment for fornication/adultery was death and not divorce (Deut 22:22; Lev 20:10; cf. Ezek 16:40; 23:47). So the issue of divorce does not arise.

A good English paraphrase would be: ‘Now I say to you that who, for example, divorced his wife—not on the grounds of fornication which bore the death penalty, but on some other grounds—and married another woman, he is an adulterer.’
Jesus chose to take up the case where the wife was not guilty of fornication, but her husband had, nevertheless, decided he wanted to divorce her. Jesus then pointed out the dire consequences of divorcing a faithful wife. Not only did the husband become an adulterer himself through his remarriage (and so guilty of the death penalty), but his second wife became an adulteress, but he also turned his first wife into an adulteress through her remarriage, and the man who married her also became an adulterer. So the one divorce certificate produced two adulterers and two adulteresses.

A.5. The two textual choices

THE FIRST CHOICE (ERASMUS’S CHOICE)
If Jesus was making one exception to His teaching on divorce, and if He had used εἰ before μὴ then the translation would be: “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—except he may have divorced for fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

THE SECOND CHOICE (McFALL’S CHOICE)
If Jesus was making no exception to His teaching on divorce, and if He had not used εἰ before μὴ then the translation would be: “Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication which bore the death penalty—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.”

The overwhelming textual evidence supports the second choice, which means that from the time the Reformation Churches broke away from the Roman Catholic church in the sixteenth century, the Protestant denominations have been teaching the opposite to what the Head of the Church taught His apostles. Matthew, Mark, and Luke had been saying the same thing all along. There never had been an exception to Jesus’ teaching of ‘No divorce for any cause,’ not even for fornication or adultery.

Luke states Jesus’ teaching using the indicative mood, His text reads: “all [=collectively/sg masc]—the man putting away (pres act ptc) his woman, and marrying a different-woman—he commits adultery against her [‘against’ his first wife; cf. Mark 10:11]. And all [=collectively/sg masc]—the man marrying her having been previously put away (perf pass ptc acc fem sg) from a man—he commits adultery with her [i.e., with another man’s wife].” (Note the use of the parenthetical clause in Luke and Mark by Jesus to explain what He means by ‘all.’)

What Jesus added in Matthew 19:9 is not an exception to His total ban, but a warning (in the form of a parenthetical clause) to His Jewish audience that divorce for adultery was not permitted by God in the Torah. The Torah demanded the death penalty, not divorce.

Is it possible that Jesus had observed Jews obtaining a divorce on the grounds of adultery, which was an unlawful thing to do? Jesus knew the entire sexual history of the woman at the well (John 4), so maybe He knew that many of His audience had obtained their divorces on allegations of fornication/adultery, which did not amount to being ‘caught in the act,’ but there was the suspicion of unfaithfulness, and this was used by men to divorce their unwanted and unloved wives.

Jesus specifically condemned divorce for adultery in His content-identity phrase, ‘not over fornication.’ And, by the way, we have no direct evidence that either Shammai or Hillel, or their respective ‘Houses,’ ever gave permission to use divorce in place of the death penalty. We have only statements from hundreds of years later—after the dispersion of the nation following the Second Jewish Revolt in AD 132-135—that they might have done so, but these statements may represent the practice of a later age. But Christian doctrine, by contrast, does not rest on such a shaky and uncertain transmission of ‘truth.’

541 See 1.7. for a less literal English translation.
In translating the Greek aorist subjunctive in Matthew 19:9, the two terms ‘subjunctive’ and ‘aorist’ will be treated separately, because the verb used in Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:11-12 is the aorist subjunctive.

First, the ‘subjunctive’ is used for hypothetical, possible, uncertain, doubtful, or non-factual events or actions, by using ‘can, could, would, might, etc.’, and the verb is negated with MH (not OU). The subjunctive is generally preceded by the particle AN, as in this instance, which I have translated, as ‘say’ or ‘suppose,’ ‘for instance,’ or ‘for example,’ to bring out the hypothetical situation Jesus is envisaging. (Note that the hypothetical nature is inherent in the verb form itself and not only in the particle AN used in conjunction with it, or the inclusion of ‘if,’ or ‘unless.’)

Second, the term ‘aorist’ refers to an action in its finished (result) form, as opposed to on-going or incomplete action or state, hence I have used ‘have’ followed by the Past Tense to distinguish the aorist from the Imperfect, Perfect, or Pluperfect tenses. There is nothing in English which corresponds exactly to the aorist, but if one thinks of an action which is completed in the mind of the speaker, even though it may still be in the future or the present, or it happened in the past, this is the essence of the aorist. It is tenseless, or timeless, which throws the attention on to the verbal result itself as one which is ‘done and dusted.’ The aorist tells us nothing about the nature of the action itself, whether it was durative, punctiliar, drawn out, swift, slow, repeated, a one-off action, etc. The nature of the verbal action will convey this information.

Third, negation in Greek. There are specific rules governing the grammatical use of OU and MH with the different moods in Greek. The basic rule is: OU stands where something is to be directly denied (as a matter of fact); MH, where something is to be denied as mere matter of thought (in conception and conditionally): the former is the objective, the latter the subjective negative. There is nothing in English which corresponds to these two negatives in Greek, but, when used, they are a clear indicator which mood is intended to go with it. In the case of Matthew 19:9, the mood is set by the preceding verb, ‘he may have put away,’ which can be repeated after MH. The indicative mood is not an option in this context.

Fourth, negative commands in Greek. In Greek the negative command is made up of MH plus the subjunctive (present or aorist). It is not made up of OU plus the indicative (present or aorist). The subjunctive would normally be in the 2nd pers, ‘You may not have divorced your wife.’ But in a 3rd person situation, as in Matthew 19:9, the negative imperative would still be MH+subjunctive, ‘He may not have divorced his wife.’

I have brought out the two main elements of the aorist subjunctive, namely, (1) its doubtful or hypothetical nature, by the use of ‘say . . . may’; and (2) the ‘result’ of the aorist verb by using ‘have’ + past tense. Consequently, my translation reads: “Now I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous.”

However, if we remove the hypothetical nature of Jesus’ use of the subjunctive mood to frame His teaching, here is a paraphrased version. “Now I declare to you that any person who has divorced his wife (note, he may not divorce for porneia) and has married another woman, he becomes an adulterer.” This is what Jesus had already stated in Luke 16 and Mark 10, but without the parenthetical reminder that it was against the Law of God to obtain a divorce for adultery. This exegesis is predicated on an omitted ellipsis, which is not the preferred solution of the author.

Matthew’s Gospel, of course, was written for a Jewish audience worldwide. Matthew’s audience would have known that both partners in an adulterous act had to be stoned to death. Even if it is claimed that the Jews could not apply the death penalty for religious matters, which is

incorrect, their legal mind would know that an adulterer would be deemed to be dead in the eyes of God and man, and you do not marry a ‘dead’ person. S/he is cut off from the community.

Second marriages were probably as common in Jesus’ day as they are today. He lived in an adulterous generation, but He did not shrink from calling all second marriages, while both spouses were still alive, adulterous relationships. He suffered the penalty for upsetting the majority, and the same thing will happen to any preacher who follows Jesus’ daring Gospel. For the majority of Christian leaders the cost of following Jesus is too great, so they say nothing and collect their monthly salary from His Church with no qualms.

A.6. The difference between the Christian and the unbeliever

Adam Clarke, in his Commentary under Matthew 5:31, makes a very perceptive comment. Rabbi Akiba said, “If any man saw a woman handsomer than his own wife, he might put his wife away; because it is said in the Law, *if she find not favour in his eyes*.” Deut. xxiv. 1. Josephus, the celebrated Jewish historian, in his Life, tells us, with the utmost coolness and indifference, “About this time I put away my wife, *who had borne me three children*, not being pleased with her manners.”

A. Clarke then cites a full Bill of Divorce, part of which reads, “. . . I . . . with entire consent of mind, and without any compulsion, have divorced, dismissed, and expelled thee – thee, I say, M. the daughter of M. . . who wast heretofore my wife: but now I have dismissed thee . . . so as to be free, and at thine own disposal, to marry whomsoever thou pleasest, without hindrance from any one, from this day for ever. Thou art therefore free for any man. Let this be thy bill of divorce from me, a writing of separation and expulsion, according to the law of Moses and Israel. . . .”

A. Clarke adds: “A real Christian ought rather to beg of God the grace to bear patiently and quietly the imperfections of his wife, than to think of the means of being parted from her.” He notes that “what was permitted to an uncircumcised heart among the Jews, should not serve for a rule to a heart in which the love of God has been shed abroad by the Holy Spirit.” However, Clarke did permit divorce in the statement: “It does not appear that there is any other case in which Jesus Christ admits of divorce.” This was understandable since he was following the TR. However, he failed to understand the significant difference between what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:3-12.

In his comments on Matthew 19:3-12, he notes that Jesus does not answer them from Shammai or Hillel, but from Moses. He wrote:

To answer a case of conscience, a man should act as Christ does here; pay no regard to that which the corruption of manners has introduced into divine ordinances, but go back to the original *will, purpose and institution* of God. Christ will never accommodate his morality to the *times*, nor to the inclination of men. What was done at the *beginning* is what God judged most worthy of his *glory*, most profitable for *man*, and most suitable to *nature*.

According to the Mishnah Gitt. 9:3, the essence of the get are the words ‘Behold you are permitted to any man.’ Among the Dead Sea cave finds was a bill of divorce, dated about A.D. 71, whose wording is said to reflect what is said in Deut 24:2.

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543 See Section 1.9. Paul on divorce and remarriage.
APPENDIX C

CRITIQUE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE


SUMMARY OF MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH THIS NEW TEACHING

This book departs from the Apostolic and Early Church practice of refusing to remarry separated or divorced couples. Instead, the author falls back on rabbinical practices and exegesis of the text (particularly Deut 24:1-4, and Exod 21:1-10), in order to press for a change in the Church’s universal and consistent teaching on divorce and remarriage. He believes that Jesus taught divorce was permissible to either spouse for (1) adultery, (2) desertion, (3) abuse, (4) hard-heartedness, and (5) neglect.

The author advocates that the Church can legitimately return to following the Jewish teaching on divorce and remarriage. He believes that Jesus only condemned a special ‘Any Cause’ divorce that Rabbi Hillel introduced before Jesus was born, and which, he claims, came to dominate Jewish life by the time Jesus commenced His ministry. He believes that the question put to Jesus in Matthew 19:3, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” was a tester to see if Jesus approved of Rabbi Hillel’s new ‘easy divorce’ procedure. Everything hinges around the author’s interpretation of ‘every cause’ in Matthew 19:3, which he thinks should be viewed as a special kind of legal divorce, which should be put in quotation marks and translated as ‘Any Cause,’ meaning ‘Hillel’s Any Cause Certificate.’

He believes (because he has no evidence) that the Early Church practised divorce for adultery from the start, so that there was continuity between Jesus and Moses over the issuing of divorce certificates. The Church only departed from this continuity in the second-century when it misread the legal term ‘Any Cause’ in Matthew 19:3, as a non-legal phrase.

This is the biggest claim of the book, closely followed by the claim that when the Pharisees asked the question in Matthew 19:3, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” this was really a tester to find out what Jesus thought about the new ‘Any Cause’ divorce certificate recently introduced by Rabbi Hillel. The author claims that this Hillel-style divorce was rejected by Rabbi Shammai and Jesus. The entire work hangs on these two claims.

These two pivotal claims will need to be examined closely before a single church leader would even begin to entertain the possibility that it presents a serious understanding of Jesus’ teaching, let alone a proficient understanding of the rabbinic material itself.

If the author is correct that the Early Church departed quickly and universally from Jesus’ teaching then the church is guilty of having inflicted pain on millions of men and women. It is also guilty of misrepresenting what Jesus really taught on the subject of divorce. This is a serious allegation to make against godly men.

The practical effect of this book is not to point the Christian ‘Back to the Bible’ but to point him ‘Back to the Jew,’ and rediscover his original roots in an old form of Judaistic Christianity which the author claims the Apostles followed. The pastoral outworking of this book would, in the eyes of the reviewer, lead many into the sin of adultery through a second marriage while the first spouse was still alive. The author must bear the moral and practical responsibility for his new doctrine which he wants to substitute for the unanimous teaching of the Church from Apostolic times. It is irresponsible to publish a new doctrine leading to the proliferation of adultery and then blame those who follow it for not examining it for themselves. Having examined the claims made by the author

546 A larger, 67-page critique of this book can be read on my web site:
http://www.lmf12.wordpress.com/
to have uncovered the real teaching of Jesus on divorce, I have to conclude that this claim is false, bogus and misleading and based on poor exegesis of a corrupt Greek text.

First, the author claims to have read the passages on divorce through the eyes of contemporary Jews. A claim is not the same as a demonstration. The author has failed to read Jesus’ teaching through the eyes of His contemporaries. They clearly recognised that Jesus had abolished divorce completely, and this astonished them so greatly that they were impelled to ask the question, “Why, therefore, did Moses permit . . . ?” Consequently, in this book there is no engagement with Jesus’ own statements in which He refuses to allow divorce on any grounds in the Kingdom of God.

When Jesus was asked the question about permitting divorce in Matthew 19:3, He replied by asking them a question. And the question expresses His surprise that they have not read what His Father had said about marriage in Genesis 2:24. They ought to have read it, is his rebuke to them. Instead, they had focused on Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

Following Jesus’ rebuke for not concentrating on Genesis 2:24, He then quotes it. But it is His deduction from this text that really surprised them. The lesson Jesus drew from this proof text was that it was illegal for any man to divorce his wife. That they understood Jesus correctly comes out in their second question: “(If you are right) Why, therefore, did Moses command to give a bill of departure and to divorce her?” They evidently saw a clear contradiction between what Moses commanded and what Jesus commanded. Jesus had overridden Moses and side-lined his teaching as obsolete and irrelevant for His followers. Jesus then undercuts their own position by pointing out that the endorsement of divorce did not come from His Father, but from Moses. And to press home His case, Jesus points out that the law regarding the practice of divorce did not so much come from Moses as from themselves. They demanded it. They pressed Moses to endorse their age-old practice of divorce, because they were not prepared to forgive their wives. They hardened their hearts. Moses simply gave in to their demand. So the origin for the law of divorce sprang from the unregenerate heart of man, and not from God. It originates from sin.

Second, the author makes a bold claim, which he cannot substantiate with any evidence, that the phrase ‘every cause’ in Matthew 19:9 is a ‘highly specialised legal term,’ and refers to a particular kind of divorce created by Rabbi Hillel prior to the birth of Jesus. This is pure conjecture.

Third, the author overlooked the important word ‘all’ in the Greek in Matthew 19:9. He has mistranslated it as ‘any,’ with the consequent error of identifying Matthew’s ‘every cause’ with the House of Hillel’s presumed ‘Any Cause’ (which he should have translated as ‘A Cause’). The author has created the fiction of a legal divorce procedure called the ‘Any Cause’ divorce. Nowhere in rabbinic literature is the House of Hillel’s difference of exegesis with Shammai over the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, captured in a slogan or catch-word phrase. The author, himself, has created the fiction of a legal divorce called ‘Any Cause.’ The author has allowed himself to be misled by his own creation of the phrase ‘Any Cause,’ and when he then identified it with Matthew’s ‘every cause.’

Fourth, throughout his work the author refers to ‘Any Cause’ as if it was known by every Jew living in Jesus’ day. Indeed, the author claims that so well-known was the legal term that Mark felt he could omit it without confusing his readers. This conjecture and claim comes out of the imagination of the author. There is no evidence for such a claim.

Fifth, another claim without any evidence is that the House of Hillel’s interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 was universally accepted by all Jews everywhere, and that all divorces from the second century onwards were based on the House of Hillel’s interpretation. We simply have no evidence for this. This, too, emanates from the imagination of the author. The Mishnah makes no such claim.

Sixth, the House of Hillel argued that the Hebrew term dābār in Deuteronomy 24:1 meant ‘a thing,’ which is correct. The author, however, has subtly altered ‘a thing’ to mean ‘any thing,’ and from there he created the legal fiction of an ‘Any Cause’ style of divorce. If he had kept to what the House of Hillel had said, he should have conjectured that the House of Hillel created ‘A matter’ divorce. So that if someone wanted to use some fault he found in his wife, he could call it a ‘matter,’
a dābār, and he could obtain a dissolution under this single word term. But the author was drawn to the translation of ‘any cause’ in the English translations, and assumed that it might refer to the House of Hillel’s ‘matter/thing/word.’

The author attributes to rabbi Hillel and rabbi Shammai (who both lived before the time of the Lord Jesus) teachings and viewpoints which the Mishnah attributes to the ‘House of Hillel’ and the ‘House of Shammai’ respectively. They are not the same thing. We have no evidence that Hillel or Shammai said anything about divorce.

Seventh, the above instance of following English translations of the primary material, led the author to make two more similar errors. He noticed that Josephus was translated as: ‘for whatsoever cause (καθ’ ἀδήτητον αἰτίαν).’ The similarly with Matthew 19:9 is obvious in the English, but not in the Greek. The author clearly did not consult the Greek. The same methodological error was repeated when he noticed that Philo was translated as: “for any cause whatever [καθ’ ἣν].”

Eighth, the similarity in the English translations, led the author to make a fundamental error. He made the following false steps. First, he took the House of Hillel’s ‘matter’ and added ‘any’ to it, to give ‘any matter.’ Why? because he wanted to connect it with the words, ‘every cause,’ in Matthew 19:9. He then converted his newly created ‘any matter’ into a legal phrase with initial capital letters—‘Any Cause.’ Why? because the question in Mark asked if it was lawful to divorce which, he says, was a nonsensical question to ask, given that Moses authorised divorce. By altering ‘every cause’ in the parallel in Matthew 19:9 to ‘Any Cause,’ he could then claim that he had found a connection between Hillel’s legal term and the, allegedly, very popular ‘Any Cause’ divorce which Hillel introduced into Judean life. From this conjecture he then needed to explain why ‘every cause’ (which he misread as ‘any cause’) was omitted in Mark, so he conjured up the scenario that everyone was so familiar with the term that it could be left out. The ‘evidence’ he needed, he found in the English translations of Josephus and Philo, but this is not found in their Greek texts.

It is clear from this catalogue of errors, and from the fact that they are all connected through English translations, that the author is either slap-dash in his approach or he is unable to work with the primary material itself. This work is totally based on English translations, and this has proved its downfall.

Ninth, the author has a low view of the integrity, inspiration, and infallibility of Scripture when it suits his argument. This comes out clearly in Chapter 12 with his imaginative scenario of a series of ‘barriers’ through which Jesus’ teaching had to pass to reach us. However, these were no barriers to the Church because Greek was the universal language at that time. But the author needed ‘barriers’ in order to explain why Jesus’ original teaching (which the author claims to have just rediscovered) could have got lost. If one has to lessen the integrity of Scripture, and the integrity of the Apostles and the leaders who followed them, in order to facilitate the acceptance of a new doctrine, this constitutes a weakness in itself. It has the appearance of being contrived for the purpose of raising its chances of being accepted by those who are not in a position to examine its exaggerated claims.

Tenth, one marvels at the extent to which a writer will go to distort in order to gain a place for his view. The author makes the surprising assertion that: “In the context of this emphasis against sex, it was natural that the second century Church would assume that Jesus taught remarriage was

547 See the longer critique on this point at: www.lmf12.wordpress.com. A betrothed ‘wife’ is regarded as a wife, by Philo, because she is his wife in all but deed. Betrothal is the equivalent of marriage, he says, and therefore if she willingly or unwillingly has intercourse with another man it ‘is a form of adultery’ (III.72, cf. Decal. 121–31). ‘And therefore the law ordains that both should be stoned to death.’ Here Philo [20 B.C.–c. A.D. 50], a contemporary of Jesus and Josephus, agrees with the demand for stoning the woman taken in adultery in John 8. Philo agrees that the set punishment decreed for adultery is death, not divorce (III.58).

548 Note the errors in his translation of the Aramaic texts in chap. 13.
equivalent to sexual immorality and would not be surprised when he [Jesus] appeared to identify remarriage with ‘adultery’” (p. 145). He also states, “The stand which the second century church took against sexual immorality made their new emphasis against remarriage (a misinterpretation of Jesus’ teaching) seem normal. Once this new interpretation had become church doctrine it was difficult for the church to come to terms with the fact that a misunderstanding had taken place” (p. 154).

This illustrates compartmental thinking. No regard is taken for a full century of abiding by Jesus’ teaching on ‘no divorce, and no remarriage.’ Instead, the author begins the second century as if the Church had no past history, and no tradition, and no memory of what Jesus taught. The author conjures up a scenario in which the Church was faced with promiscuous sex all around it, and it reacted so strongly against this free sex that it assumed that Jesus taught that remarriage was equivalent to sexual immorality or adultery. Even if the Church took a stand against sexual immorality, how did it get from that position to condemning all remarriages as adulterous relationships, unless they were already regarded as adulterous unions? As early as the first Council of Jerusalem, the Church took its stand against sexual immorality (Acts 15:29, ‘to abstain from fornication’), and this was before AD 70! The second century was no different from the first century in this regard.

Eleventh, there is the assumption throughout the book that the rabbis, particularly Shammai and Hillel, permitted divorce for adultery, and that in Jesus’ day the death penalty was no longer applied. (This is incorrect, see 7.10.)

First, Jesus said, ‘And I say to you, that, whoever may put away his wife, except for adultery, and may marry another, commits adultery; and he who did marry her that has been put away, commits adultery.’ (Here I have retained the mistranslation of all major English translations.) If Jesus is making provision for divorce for adultery, then He is in direct conflict with the Law of God and with His Father.

Second, even the Mishnah upheld the death penalty for adultery (Mish. Sanh. 7.3, 9; B. Sanh. 52b, 55b, 66b). The tractate Sota gives its own interpretation of the Num 5 passage, stating that the bitter water test ceased when adultery became common (Mish. Sota 9.9). The spirit of adultery (Sota 4b) and lust were also censured (Yoma 29a, Nid. 13b), which Jesus took from His own teaching.

We simply have no evidence at all that the Jews up to the time of the codification of their laws in the Mishnah (2nd, possibly 3rd cent. AD) and the Talmuds (5th and 6th cent. AD) ever permitted divorce for adultery. It is unlikely that Jesus was the first rabbi to change the Torah Law and substitute divorce for the death penalty in the case of adultery. Indeed, the most natural translation of Matthew 19:9 shows that Jesus reinforced the Law that divorce could not be had for fornication. ‘And I say to you that who, say, may put away his wife—not [he may put away] for fornication—and may marry another, commits adultery.’

That Jesus did not demand the penalty of stoning the adulterer (cf. NIDNTT 2:582–84) can be explained on a number of levels. (1) Two witnesses were required to put anyone to death (Dt 17:6). These would need to be examined by judges, not by an ordinary citizen who was shunned by the religious establishment, as Jesus was. (2) According to the Law (Dt 22:22), the man who committed adultery with the woman also had to be stoned. If she was caught in the ‘every act’ then the man should have been too. Why was he not brought before Jesus? (3) He did not come to judge the world or individual adulterers. He was an ordinary citizen of the Jewish nation. He had no position of authority within the leadership of His nation. Besides, a trap could have been laid for Jesus by bringing forward an innocent woman and getting His permission to stone her, only to discover that He had condemned an innocent woman to death. (4) Jesus stood between the two Covenants, fulfilling the Old and introducing the New. He gave priority to the New, while fulfilling the Old in His lifestyle. He lived ‘under the Law’ to redeem those under the Law. (5) God would judge those outside the Church who committed adultery, while Christ would judge those inside the Church, who made up His Body (1 Corinthians 5:1; cf. Dt 27:20), the new Israel of God. All capital offences in the Old were commuted to excommunication from His Body by being ‘handed over to Satan,’
resulting in a spiritual death penalty if repentance did not follow. In this higher and deeper sense Jesus affirmed the death penalty for adultery.

Twelfth, A surprising methodological defect is the absence of a detailed study of the divorce texts themselves. This might have been done elsewhere, but in a work designed to be read by the ordinary Christian, and where the author has put forward a minority interpretation to advocate a complete break with the clear teaching of the Early Church fathers and the Catholic and Protestant Churches, one would at least expect a summary of how he now translates Matthew 5:32 and 19:9-10. Most of his work is done away from the text itself.

Thirteenth, another surprising defect about this book is that the author is so intent on reading the text through the eyes of Jesus’ contemporaries that he failed to notice that even if Matthew 19:3 was a direct reference to the House of Hillel’s teaching on divorce, and that Matthew 5:32 was a direct reference to Shammai’s teaching on divorce, the references are irrelevant to Jesus’ new teaching on divorce. Jesus dismissed in one sentence all Pharisaic teaching on the subject because they bypassed the teaching in Genesis 2:24 and settled for something less than His Father expected from all human beings. This teaching, Jesus intimated, preceded Moses’s teaching, therefore they should go back to the first thing God taught about marriage and focus on Genesis 2:24 and forget about Deuteronomy 24:1-3 completely as a sub-standard, debased and degrading level of existence, which was introduced by men for men. No wonder Jesus threw the lot out as vigorously as He threw out the money-changers in the Temple.

By abolishing divorce altogether, Jesus made it clear that a power outside man—the Holy Spirit—was needed to come in and lift man out of the sordid, hard-hearted world into which all men are born, and enable them to rise to a level of spirituality that could forgive seventy times seven. This power is what distinguishes Jesus’ followers from all other religions of the world. And Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce distinguishes His true followers from all other religions. No other religion can rise above the fleshly level of the Mosaic divorce law, for all, without exception, practise divorce with hard, unregenerate hearts. They all share in a theology of accommodation and compromise from the spiritual law written in Genesis 2:24. The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ stands head and shoulders above all other religions, because it alone makes no allowance for hard-hearted and unforgiving individuals. Many attempts have been made to bring Christ down to the level of Moses, and this book, sadly, is in this category.
APPENDIX D

TEXTUAL NOTES ON MATTHEW 5:32 & 19:9

The purpose of this Appendix is twofold, first, to show that one cannot trust either Codex Vaticanus (B) or Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph, א), or both, in Matthew 5:32 and 19:1-10, and second, to use the English language to bring out the sense of the Greek. Literal translations are a necessary procedure to get a one-on-one consistent representation of each Greek word. To object to a literal translation as being tortuous (a common complaint by those who are not familiar with the original languages) indicates a lack of concern to bring out the precise meaning that was in the writer’s mind.

D.1. Assimilation in Matthew 5:32

The Nestle-Aland 27th edition at Matthew 5:32 reads: ποιεῖς οἱ απολύουν. This has the support of B L Δ 1. 33. K M Vulg c. f. ff1. g². l. m. Syr pal, hcl Goth Arm Eth. But the rest of the evidence, including the versions, support the MT reading οἱ απολυόντα which includes: ₫ D U 2 579 28 346 Syr, Syr, Sahidic and Bohairic. Nestle-Aland adds “pm” to this list.

The use of “pm” in the critical apparatus to represent the MT reading here is misleading, because the MT is not “divided in fairly equal strength between two (rarely three) variant reading” as pm has been designated to convey.

Von Soden’s apparatus shows that the MT reading is undivided, though, strangely, Hodges & Farstad’s siglum indicates that the Majority Text witnesses are about three-quarters in support of their printed text, for they use M (not M-pt) instead of the Gothic M (('<?), yet Hodges and Farstads’s text was created from von Soden’s apparatus. This shows up the weakness of constructing a Text-type from a critical apparatus. We know there is a very definite Byzantine Text-type which rivals the Egyptian/Alexandrian Text-type, but we need the full resources of scholars to produce the Byzantine Text-type based directly on the 5,500 MSS of the four Gospels, and not extracted from critical apparatuses. In the meantime, where is the ‘even split’ in the MT witnesses to justify the Nestle-Aland ‘permulti’ evaluation?

Some scholars see a slight ethical difference between the Majority and the minority Egyptian text, in that the Egyptian text alters the aorist subjunctive οἱ απολυόντα ('who, for instance, may have divorced') to a present tense participial construction, ποιεῖς οἱ απολύουσας ('everyone divorcing'). If the present participle indicates action which is contemporaneous with the action of the main verb ('makes her to adulterate'), then the ‘divorcing’ (ptc) and the ‘making’ (pres. ind.) are viewed as a single action, as one merges out of the other. The translation would then read, ‘The one divorcing . . . is the one making her adulterous.’ There is no gap between the ‘divorcing’ and the ‘making,’ whereas in the Majority text, the ‘making’ is viewed as a separate action, albeit as a direct consequence of the preceding action. We might translate the two text-types separately, with the differences underlined.


550 pm = permulti, which means “a large number of manuscripts, when the Majority Text is divided;” see Nestle’s Introduction p. 56*)
Maj (Byz) Text: “Now I say to you that who, say, may have divorced[or subj] his wife, apart from a report[matter] of fornication, he makes her to adulterate[or subj ind] and who, if, say, may have married one having been divorced[or subj ind] he is adulterous[or subj ind].”

Egy. text (NA28): “Now I say to you that everyone divorcing[or subj ind] his wife, apart from a report[matter] of fornication, he makes her to be adulterated[or subj ind] and who, if, say, may have married one having been divorced, he is adulterous[or subj ind].”

Some writers were unable to think through the Greek voices, and they overrode the aorist passive infinitive (moikeuthanai), which is not deponent,553 to turn it into an active infinitive: ‘to commit adultery.’554 However, retaining the present middle infinitive meaning allows us to see that the divorced woman brings the adultery on herself once she is put out of her family home. The middle voice indicates that she does something to or for herself (akin to the Hebrew Niphal theme).555 The present passive infinitive meaning would read: ‘he makes her to be adulterate.’ This would only happen if she remarried, which is not inevitable, but very likely, as God has not allowed her to be reconciled to her first husband (as a punishment for his cruelty); so that Jesus is presenting the worse case scenario (a likely logical outcome) to deter any husband from divorcing his wife. Eventually, one of these divorced wives will remarry, and then her adultery will be blamed on him, is what Jesus is saying here.

Leviticus 20:10 should be translated as, “A man, who, say, has committed adultery[or subj ind] [mated himself with] a husband’s wife, or who, say, has committed adultery[or subj ind] [mated himself with] a neighbour’s wife, to die, let them be put to death, the one adulterating [mating] and the one being adulterated [being mated].” Close attention to the grammatical voices draws attention to the moment itself, whereby the male is the active agent, and the female is the passive subject.

Given that moicheuthanai is middle/passive in form, and is not a deponent verb, then it should be translated with a middle or passive sense. The burden of proof rests with the translator who departs from this sense in order to make it fit his case.

So universal is the AV/Erasmus doctrine of divorce that even Jewish scholars are carried away with it. Thus E. Lövestam translates Matthew 5:32 as, “I say to you that every one who

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551 The words καὶ σὲ ἡ τοῦ are found only here and at 12:32 and 18:5. In all three places Jesus introduces a likely hypothetical situation, creating a conditional sentence, “if . . . then” (protasis . . . apodosis), as in Deut 24:1-4.


553 Deponent is what grammarians call a verb which had lost its active form during its linguistic evolution in preference for the middle. The form changed, but the active function did not, and so only a passive form is to be found in the language. It looks passive/middle, but is active in meaning. William F. Luke started out denying that this verb was a deponent verb, but slipped into viewing it as a deponent verb in Divorce and Remarriage. Recovering the Biblical View (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), which undermined the exegesis he built on it. He translated Mt 5:32b as, ‘And if someone marries a woman who herself has divorced he himself is committing adultery.’ Here the mid/pass form of the verb has been ignored. He believed that in Mt 5:32b Jesus speaks of a woman who has initiated her own divorce, as in the case of Herodias.

554 Murray, Divorce, p. 22 n.

555 The middle voice conveys the ideas of reflexive, intensification, or reciprocal action. The object (accusative) of the verbal action is usually the subject, or doer of the verb. Deponent verbs are those whose active meaning is conveyed using the middle form of that verb. Morphologically they are middle, but semantically they are active in meaning.
divorces his wife for any cause other than unchastity involves her in adultery.” He translates Matthew 19:9 as, “And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.” Both texts are forced toward one another to say the same thing, when, in fact, Jesus was teaching two distinct points in these two places.

Jesus comments on six teachings of the ancients. The first three religious regulations point to the need to keep the tradition of the ancients at the thought-level, not just the physical level. The last three are all commands which overturn the tradition of the ancients. It would appear that the Nestle-Aland 27th preference at Matthew 5:32 is due to assimilation with 5:22 and 28 (πατ + participle; cf. Luke 16:18).

It is interesting that Jesus does not introduce the third teaching as coming from the ancients but just simply says, “Now it was said.” This could reflect knowledge He had that the third teaching was more recent than the other five. Where is the line to be drawn time-wise? Does the third only go back as far as Moses, and are the rest pre-Mosaic teachings?

Conclusion: Here is a case where the Egyptian text-type is split. MS B is clearly not the autograph text. It shows evidence of assimilation to the style of the first two challenges that Jesus makes to the teaching of the ancients. Despite this evidence, the Nestle-Aland text accepts B as the likely original text.

D.2. Assimilation in Matthew 19:9

Another example of assimilation in MS B occurs at Matthew 19:9. Here MS B reads: παρεκτός λόγον πορνείας ποιεῖ αυτήν μοιχεύθηκαι. This has been imported directly from Matthew 5:32 without any changes and replaces the autograph text at this point.

MS D, 33, το Sahidic, and possibly Syrcur, plus some lesser known Greek MSS have a hybrid text. These have the first three words in agreement with MS B (παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας) but accept the MT text in place of the rest of MS B. This hybrid text is unlikely to be the autograph text.

If we combine the textual evidence from Tischendorf and Tregelles for the replacement of μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείας with παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας, and ignore the surrounding context, the evidence is as follows:

BDC: 1. 1582. 33. 13. 69*. 124. 788. 346. a.b.c.e.ff. g. l. m. n. o. p. q.r.s.t.u. v. w. x. y. z. [=Old Latin MSS] (c d ff): m = excepta causa adulterii; MS e = praefer causam fornicationis; MSS a b ff: g: h q = nisi ob causam fornic. Item Aug excepta causa fornicat., nisi ex causa forn., nisi ob causam forn.; Tertius above om μὴ επὶ πορν., item Athenag̣g. 33) syrur sah boh cop Orig. iii. 647c. 648a. 649b. (Clem 333 χορις λόγου πορν.) Basench Chr (et. 50 b).

The autograph text is that represented by all the other manuscript and versional evidence. This evidence will include: 8 A W C Θ Ζ Λ Π K L N U 2 28 (69mas) 118 157 565 579 700 1071 1424 plus some versional evidence not recorded in the apparatuses, such as Eth Goth Arm Syrmas. In this case the Nestle-Aland text agrees with the MT as the reading of the original text.

D.3. The omission of Matthew 19:9b

MT reads: ‘And the one having married one having been divorced is being adulterous with her.’ This is omitted by Nestle-Aland. (The words in italics need to be supplied in English.)

Combining the evidence from Nestle-Aland, Tischendorf and Tregelles for the omission, this comes to: C5 D5 S 2* 69 1241 pc it a.b.eff.g.h. syv sa bo.

The evidence for including the text is: B Z (EFGMYΩ) K U 078 700 28 157 1071 Vulg. c.f.g.m.q. sybal hd sybr bo Arm Eth Bas Dam (Tert potius ad 5:32).

The evidence for a very slight variation in the text (reading γαμών for γαμήσας but keeping the rest of the verse the same) is: W C N Θ Δ Π 33 1424 565 1 2 118 1582 13 124 788 346 (579). This evidence should be added to B Z making a very strong case for including verse 9b, otherwise how does one explain the wide diversity of manuscripts and versions (Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic and Bohairic) in support of it?

The most obvious cause of the omission was homoioteleuton (h.t.) for which Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph) is famous (or rather, infamous). A homoioteleuton error can occur when two words, phrases, or sentences, have similar endings, and the term is now used for similar beginnings as well.

εἶτι πορνία καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται (32 letters)
καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσας μοιχᾶται (31 letters, omitted by h.t.)

Αὔγουστος αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ ᾧ αὐτοῦ ἐί

Here two lines end with the same Greek word μοιχᾶται. The underlined text has accidentally dropped out of the manuscript. The length of line would be no problem. P46 has 51 letters per line; P66 has 25 letters per line; and P75 has 30 letters per line.

To counter the strong evidence of the Majority Text the theory put forward is that the fact that B reads ‘μοιχᾶται only once (at the conclusion of the combined clauses) makes it more probable that the text was expanded by copyists who accommodated the saying to the prevailing text of 5.32.’ This, of course, is special pleading.

καὶ δὲ ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ μοιχᾶται (Mt 19:9b)

is said to have been derived from:
καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσας μοιχᾶται (Mt 5:32)

There are two difficulties with this explanation. If copyists borrowed a line from Matthew 5:32 and inserted it into 19:9 why did not some of them copy it exactly as it is (see above)? Why do they all agree on one version of it? Why did some of them not borrow Luke’s version? Luke 16:18 reads:

καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀπολελυμένην ἀπὸ ἀνδρός γαμῶν μοιχεύει

There is no unequivocal example where the Majority Text has imported lines of text from anywhere in the Gospels, whereas we have a clear example where the Egyptian text has done so. Compare the importation of John 19:34 into Matthew 27:49 where it has created an historical blunder (9BCLUF pc vg ma)(see the next section on this blunder). Compare also the importation of Matthew 5:32b into Matthew 19:9a by B which no printed text has adopted as the original text.

Secondly, in Aleph there is a section break at the end of v. 9 which ends with MOIXATAI, which may have facilitated the homoioteleuton error. Also v.9a is complete as a sense unit, which would facilitate the same error, especially if a scribe is moving between Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 seeking to reconcile the two passages by using the same text (as in B’s case).


LESSON 1: The Alexandrian Text was a local text, confined to Egypt, whereas the Majority Text has been found throughout the Christian world, which means throughout the Roman Byzantine Empire (hence the alternative name for the Majority Text is the Byzantine Text).

MS Aleph (or Codex Sinaiticus) is not to be trusted. It errs, and errs badly on occasions. Unfortunately the pool of MSS making up its Text-type (Alexandrian/Egyptian) is too small to know where it has departed from its text-type. For this reason, and in contradistinction to the Majority Text, it is sometimes referred to as the Minority Text. It is in a minority as regards extant manuscript witnesses and geographical spread. This small base of manuscripts constitutes an inherent weakness in establishing what is the Egyptian/Alexandrian Text-type. The Majority Text, on the other hand, does not have this inherent weakness because of the multiplicity of MSS in its pool, and its unbounded geographical spread. However, we lack a critical edition of both Text-types.

The NU\textsuperscript{558} text is basically the text of two manuscripts, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. It is the direct descendant of Westcott and Hort’s 1881 edition. This can be proved by the observation that in the Gospel of John the NU has altered the Westcott-Hort text in only 167 places (most of them spelling differences), and in every instance it has replaced those readings with the Majority Text. Westcott & Hort worked on the simple rule that where B and Θ agreed, that was the original text. They departed from this rule on only eight occasions (all of them spelling differences).\textsuperscript{559}

An exact copy of the original text which had been accurately recopied for ten generations and is dated to 1000 years after Christ, is to be preferred to a first copy which was carelessly copied and which can be dated to 100 years after Christ. It is, therefore, a sound principle of textual criticism that the date of a manuscript has absolutely no bearing on its faithfulness to the original text. The date of a manuscript is meaningless and irrelevant. It is a common error among text-critics to assume that the older a manuscript is, the more faithful it is to the original text. The two concepts are unrelated.

LESSON 2: Bruce Metzger’s \textit{A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament} illustrates how we can all find a way of justifying our preferred reading. He was not making his comments from a neutral position. He made it known that he regarded the Aleph-B text as the nearest thing to the original text and he regarded the Byzantine Text as an inferior Text-type because he uncritically followed Hort’s subjective opinion (not based on facts) that the Majority Text was the creation of the Byzantine Church in the fifth century. This overriding, flawed assumption influenced every decision he made in his \textit{Commentary}.

We need a neutral commentary, not one whose set aim is to produce an eclectic text, but one which will explain how the Text-types come to differ from each other at each point of disagreement. In the end, scholarship must choose between Text-types, not between MSS, and certainly not a pick-and-mix approach to establish the autograph text, as is done in all modern attempts to reconstruct the original text. The significance of the Majority Text is that it is not an eclectic text. Because of this feature it stands apart from all previous editions, revisions, and reconstructions of the Greek text of the New Testament.

\textsuperscript{558} NU stands for the combined witness of the two dominant printed texts of the NT, namely, N = Nestle-Aland 27th edition, and U = United Bible Societies edition.

\textsuperscript{559} The 8 are at John 1:9; 3:20, 23; 10:14; 13:12; 14:17; 15:23; and 16:16. NU agrees with Westcott-Hort in all these departures.
APPENDIX E

ERASMUS’S LATIN TRANSLATION OF THE DIVORCE TEXTS

Erasmus never altered the Greek text of the divorce texts once he printed his first edition. It is instructive to see the alterations he made to his Latin translations. Jerome’s Latin Vulgate is given on the top line, and below this I have given Erasmus’s Latin translations of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

MATTHEW 5:32

VULGATE  Ego autem dico uobis: quia omnis qui dimiserit uxorem suam excepta
1516  At ego dico uobis quod quisquis repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi ob
1519  At ego dico uobis, quod quisquis repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi
1522  At ego dico uobis, quod quisquis repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi
1527  At ego dico uobis, quod quisquis repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi
1535  At ego dico uobis, qui quisquis repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi

VULGATE  fornicationis causa: facit eam moechari: & qui dimissam duxerit,
1516  fornicationem, efficit ut illa sit adultera, & quicun qui repudiatam duxerit,
1519  causa stupri, efficit ut illa sit adultera, & quicunqui repudiatam duxerit,
1522: causa stupri, efficit ut illa sit adultera: & quicunqui repudiatam duxerit,
1527: causa stupri, efficit ut illa sit adultera: & quicunqui repudiatam duxerit,
1535: causa stupri, efficit ut illa sit adultera: & quicunqui repudiatam duxerit,

VULGATE  adulterat.
1516  adulterium committit.
1519  adulterium committit.
1522  adulterium committit.
1527  adulterium committit.
1535  adulterium committit.

MATTHEW 19:9

VULGATE  Dico autem uobis: quia quicunque dimiserit uxorem suam nisi ob
1516: Dico autem uobis, quod quicunque dueretit ab uxore sua, nisi ob
1519: Dico autem uobis, quod quicunque repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi ob
1522: Dico autem uobis, qui quicunque repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi ob
1527: Dico autem uobis, quod quicunque repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi ob
1535: Dico autem uobis, quod quicunque repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi ob

VULGATE  fornicationem: & aliam duxerit, moechatur.
1516: fornicationem, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.
1519: struprum, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.
1522: struprum, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.
1527: struprum, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.
1535: struprum, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.

VULGATE  Et qui dimissam duxerit: moechatur.
1516: Et qui repudiatam duxerit, adulterium committit.
1519: Et qui repudiatam duxerit, is adulterium committit.
1522: Et qui repudiatam duxerit, is adulterium committit.
1527: Et qui repudiatam duxerit: is adulterium committit.
1535: Et qui repudiatam duxerit, is adulterium committit.
A little background knowledge is necessary to understand the Greek text of Matthew 19:9, and how it was translated into Latin. First, there are basically two competing Greek texts, the Majority Text versus the Minority Text. The former is the universal, or Byzantine text, used continuously throughout Christendom with the possible exception of Egypt. The latter, in this instance, consists of Vaticanus, Bezae, Family 1, Family 13, which includes Codex Leicestrensis. Sinaiticus, however, in this instance, supports the Majority Text. First, I shall give the two competing Greek texts, and then give their Latin and English translations.

Matthew 5:32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINORITY EGYPTIAN TEXT</th>
<th>ERASMUS 1516 LATIN TEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parektos logos porneias</td>
<td>nisi ob forationem,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, moechatur,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VULGATE (EGYPTIAN TEXT)</td>
<td>Erasmus 1516 LATIN TEXT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excepta fornicationis causa:</td>
<td>nisi ob forationem,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERASMUS 1516 LATIN TEXT</td>
<td>Erasmus 1516 LATIN TEXT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nisi ob forationem,</td>
<td>nisi ob forationem,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERASMUS 1516 GREEK TEXT</td>
<td>MAJORITY BYZANTINE TEXT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parektos logos porneias</td>
<td>parektos logos porneias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from this layout that Erasmus has followed the Greek Text in Part A, but his Latin text in Part A has been taken from Part A of Matthew 19:9! So there is a mismatch here. In Part B Erasmus has translated the Byzantine Text, whereas the Vulgate has translated the Egyptian Text. So there is a mismatch here in the Vulgate text.

Matthew 19:9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINORITY EGYPTIAN TEXT</th>
<th>PART A</th>
<th>PART B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parektos logos porneias</td>
<td>parektos logos porneias</td>
<td>parektos logos porneias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VULGATE (CAES/BYZ):</td>
<td>nis ob forationem,</td>
<td>nis ob forationem,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nisi ob forationem,</td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERASMUS 1516 LATIN TEXT</td>
<td>nis ob forationem,</td>
<td>nis ob forationem,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERASMUS 1516 GREEK TEXT</td>
<td>ei iho epit porneia</td>
<td>ei iho epit porneia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJORITY BYZANTINE TEXT</td>
<td>nis ob forationem,</td>
<td>nis ob forationem,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from this layout that Erasmus followed the Byzantine Greek Text in Part A, except for the addition of ei, but his Latin text follows Jerome’s Vulgate which was also translating the Byzantine Text in Part A, which shows that Jerome switched from following the Egyptian Text in Matthew 5:32 to following the Byzantine Text in Part A of Matthew 19:9, which Greek text happens to agree with the Caesarean Text. Other studies will show that Jerome’s Greek text was closer to the Caesarean Text than to the other two. So, while Jerome’s translation probably followed a Caesarean Greek text very closely, Erasmus’s Latin translation is inconsistent.

The confusion in Erasmus’s Latin translations is that he has rendered parektos logos porneias (in Matthew 5:32) and ei iho epit porneia (in Matthew 19:9) by the same Latin, namely, nisi ob forationem! Harmonisation was uppermost in his mind. Erasmus clearly did not understand the difference between what Jesus was teaching in Matthew 5:31-32 and what He was teaching in Matthew 19:3-11.

A translation is only as good as the translator’s grasp and understanding of the language he is translating. In the case of the above translations Erasmus failed to grasp the difference Jesus was making in His use of two different ‘exception’ clauses. One was an exemption clause, the other was an exclusion clause. He made the facile assumption that they were both exception clauses, and this influenced his translation of Jesus’ teaching to the degree that he distorted it. So he replaced the exemption clause in 5:32 with the exclusion clause in 19:9, and in this way he achieved consistency in words and meaning and practical theology at the level of the Latin text, but this was at the expense of the Greek text and Jesus’ teaching.

It is clear that he understood nisi ob forationem to be an exception clause, because he regarded it as having the same meaning as excepta fornicationis causa. However, ei iho porneia is not an exception clause as it stands, but this was easily rectified by adding ei before iho, which
Erasmus did. There was no Greek text known to Erasmus in 1515 which had εἰ in the main text, as opposed to being a marginal reading, which it is in Codex Leicestrensensis. The fact that Codex Sinaiticus agrees with the Majority Text has persuaded the majority of textual critics to see harmonisation as the corrupting factor in Vaticanus, in this case.  

THE LATIN TEXTS OF MATTHEW 19:9

This is how the Latin Vulgate should have translated the Majority Byzantine Greek text.

Dico autem uobis: quia quicunque dimiserit uxorem suam non super fornicatione, & aliam duxerit, moechatur. Et qui dimissam duxerit: moechatur.

This is how the Latin Vulgate should have translated the Minority Egyptian Greek text.

Dico autem uobis: quia quicunque dimiserit uxorem suam excepta fornicationis causa, facit eam moechari, & aliam duxerit, moechatur; et qui dismissam duxerit, moecharur, & quicunque repudiatam duxerit, adulterium committit.

What, in fact, has happened is that Codex Vaticanus is a mixture of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. The Latin Vulgate reads 19:9 as: Dico autem uobis: quia quicunque dimiserit uxorem suam nisi ob fornicationem; & aliam duxerit, moechatur. Erasmus’ 1516 Latin reads: Dico autem uobis, quod quicunque diuerterit ab uxor e sua, nisi ob fornicationem, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium. Et qui repudiatam duxerit, adulterium committit.

Erasmus’ 1519 Latin reads: Dico autem uobis, quod quicunque repudiauerit uxorem suam, nisi ob stuprum, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium. Et qui repudiatam duxerit: is adulterium committit.

Both the Vulgate and Erasmus appear to have been under the impression that Jesus was talking about the same exception in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, hence nisi ob fornicationem was used in both places to achieve consistency. Vaticanus went further and actually harmonised the Greek texts.

560 The exception was Carolus Lachmann, Novvm Testamentum Graece et Latina (Berlin, 1842)(CUL. 1.25.56). He made Vaticanus his main text, and he translated 19:9 as excepta causa fornicationes.

561 So reads Ben. Ariae Montani, Novvm Testamentum Graece cum Vulgata interpretatione Latina Graeci contextus lineis inserta (Antverpiae: Christophori Plantini, 1583). (CUL bk ref. 1.33.8)

562 In 1519 Erasmus changed ‘diuerterit ab uxor e sua’ (‘diverts from his wife’) to ‘repudiauerit uxorem suam’ (‘repudiates his wife’). The likely reason was to be consistent in translating the same Greek word with the same Latin word, so that ‘repudiates’ translates the Greek ‘puts away’ in both halves of the verse. Note that Erasmus avoided the word ‘divorce’. This was because the Catholic hierarchy and theologians did not permit divorce, but only allowed separation, following Paul’s teaching.

563 Note the change from “fornicationem” in the Vulgate to “stuprum” in Erasmus. The difference is that “fornicationem” is a sexual sin, but “stuprum” can embrace any dishonourable or disgraceful act, either sexual or non-sexual. The term ‘stuprum’ is not used of dealings with prostitutes, according to the Oxford Latin Dictionary. It can include lewdness, debauchery, defilement and violation. Erasmus may have been attempting to include all the reasons inherent in the term ‘an indecent matter’ in Deut 24:1-4, which the rabbis believed was not confined to sexual sins. If the wife burnt the food, this was grounds for divorce, because it was a disgraceful act in the eyes of the husband. By using the term ‘stuprum’ Erasmus opened the door to divorce for ‘every reason’ which was the question the Pharisees asked Jesus in Matthew 19:3.
The outcome is this: The translation nisi ob fornicationem is not a translation of parektos logou porneias (Matthew 5:32) but a translation of μη ἐπὶ πορνεία (Matthew 19:9), which has been imported from Matthew 19:9 into Matthew 5:32! The correct translation of parektos logou porneias is excepta causa fornicationis, or, nisi ob causam fornicationis;564 or, excepta ratione adulterii.565

Clement apparently read: πλὴν εἰ μη ἐπὶ λογῳ πορνειας,566 which reads: ‘nevertheless,’567 except for the matter of fornication.’ It is more likely that in place of πλὴν he read ἐκτὸς as in 1 Timothy 5:19.

According to Souter’s apparatus, the Latin and Syriac versions lacked εἰ in their Greek texts.568

THE EARLIEST INTERLINEAR GREEK-LATIN NEW TESTAMENT

Benedictus Arias Montanus Hispanicis, Novum Testamentum Graece, cum vulgata interpretatione Latina Graeci contextus lineis inserta (Antverpiae: Ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1583).569

Another edition: Ex officina Commeliniana, 1599.

This is a literal supra-interlinear Latin translation of the Greek. It does not have Erasmus’s addition of εἰ at Matthew 19:9. The translation of μη ἐπὶ πορνεια is given as: non super fornicatione, ‘not over fornication,’ which is precisely what the Greek conveys.

MATTHEW 5:31-32

Pronuntiatum est autem, quicumque absolverit uxorem suam det (5:31) ἐὰν ἐρέθη δὲ ὅτι ὅσ ἀν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, δὸτω illi libellum repudii. αὐτή ἀποστάσιων.

The sigla point to Jerome’s Latin readings in the margin, as follows:

dictum

dimiserit

Ego autem dico vobis quia * quicumque absolverit (5:32) ἕξω δὲ λέγω υμῖν, ὅτι ὅσ ἀν ἀπολύσῃ uxorem suam, excepta ratione fornicationis, facit eam

564 Carolus Lachmann, Novum Testamentum Graece et Latina (Berlin, 1842)(CUL. 1.25.56).
565 Ioannis Millii, Novum Testamentum Graecum (Roterodami, 1710)(CUL. 1.30.2)
566 According to I. Mart. Augustinus Scholz, Novum Testamentum Graece (Lipsiae, 1830)(CUL. 1.28.28) under Matthew 19:9. Also cited by C. Tischendorf, Novum Testamentum Graece (3 vols.; Lipsiae, 1869), who also gives χωρὶς λογου πορνειας
567 See Matthew 11:22, 24; 18:7; 26:39, 44; Luke 6:24, 35; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Ephesians 5:33, where it has the force of ‘nevertheless’; ‘except’ in Mark 12:32; Acts 8:1; 15:28; 17:22; Phil 3:16; 4:14; Rev 2:25; and ‘save (that),’ in Acts 20:23. Πλὴν covers the need to say, ‘apart from what has gone before . . .’
569 Cambridge University Library, England, shelf no. 1.33.8.
Matthew 19:9

(19:9) Dico autem vobis: Quia quicunque *absoluerit vxorum suam, non
super fornicatione, & duxerit aliam, moechatur: & † dimissam

† ducens, moechatur.

The sigla point to Jerome’s Latin readings in the margin, as follows:
* omnis qui dimiserit
† causa
† dimissam

Mark 10:11-12

(10:11) Et ait illis: Quicunque † absoluerit uxorem
Kai légæi autōs, ὡς ἐὰν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, μὴ

† duxerit aliam, & adulterat in eam.

The sigla point to Jerome’s Latin readings in the margin, as follows:
† dimiserit
† adulterium committit super

(10:12) Et si uxor * absoluerit virum suum & nupserit alii,
καὶ ἐὰν γυνὴ ἀπολέσῃ τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλον,
moechatur.

The sigla point to Jerome’s Latin readings in the margin, as follows:
* dimiserit

Luke 16:18

Omnis ‡ absolvens
Πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων
The sigla point to Jerome’s Latin readings in the margin, as follows:

\* qui dimittit
\† qui ducit
\‡ add ‘qui’ here

The significance of this 1583 interlinear New Testament is that it rejected Erasmus’s addition of εἰ at Matthew 19:9. Within half a century of Erasmus’s faulty Greek New Testament flooding the places of learning across Europe, educated men of the sixteenth century had access to another Greek text other than Erasmus’s. This was because this interlinear New Testament took the Greek text of the Roman Catholic Church, the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, and used it as the base for the supralinear Latin translation.

E.1. Could Jerome’s Latin Vulgate have influenced Erasmus’s Greek text of Matthew 19:9?

We noted above that Jerome’s translation of nisi ob fornicationem. “unless for fornication,” suggests that he understood Matthew 19:9 and 5:32 to refer to the same exception. Jerome read 5:32 as excepta fornicationis causa “except for the cause of fornication,” and he read 19:9 as nisi ob fornicationem “unless for fornication,” and this difference in the Latin is reflected in the difference in the Greek. However, Erasmus decided to harmonise his two Latin translations (19:9 & 5:32) and he chose nisi ob fornicationem to represent two different Greek texts.

We must assume that Jerome’s Greek read μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία, at 19:9, but because he was under the assumption that these words must repeat the ‘exception clause’ in 5:32 (unless, except for) in 19:9. Erasmus was under the same assumption as Jerome (or he assumed Jerome was correct) and so he took over Jerome’s translation in 19:9. However, in Erasmus’s case, in order to make it absolutely clear that 5:32 and 19:9 were referring to the same ‘exception clause’ he removed Jerome’s excepta fornicationis causa, and replaced it with Jerome’s nisi ob fornicationem from 19:9. In this way, anyone reading Erasmus’s Latin at 5:32 and 19:9 would see that the ‘exception’ clauses were identical in the Latin.

Once Erasmus was convinced that the ‘exception’ clauses in 5:32 and 19:9 referred to the same thing, it was as trivial matter to add εἰ before μὴ, and so place the matter beyond dispute that 5:32 and 19:9 referred to fornication as a legal grounds for divorce. He had the support of Jerome’s Vulgate at 19:9 for his nisi ob fornicationem, and he found εἰ μὴ in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis, which perfectly matched Jerome’s translation. Discovering εἰ μὴ in MS 69 must have given Erasmus complete assurance that he (and Jerome) were on the right track.

We must assume that between 1516 and 1519 Erasmus became acquainted with the Jewish understanding of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which permitted divorce for any cause that brought shame on the husband, which was how ērav dābār was understood, because in his second, and subsequent, editions, he changed the single cause of divorce from ‘fornication’ to stuprum or ‘anything giving rise to dishonour or disgrace.’ This brought his theology into line with the rabbis of his day. As a consequence of this, Erasmus took the Roman Catholic Church, the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, and used it as the base for the supralinear Latin translation.

We saw above that the majority of modern divorce counsellors will grant divorces for the following five categories (1) adultery, (2) desertion, (3) abuse, (4) hard-heartedness, and (5) neglect. These would all come under Erasmus’s all-embracing term stuprum, but not under Jerome’s fornicationem. If Jerome represented Shammai’s position, then Erasmus represented Hillel’s position.

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All modern-day grounds for divorce can be traced back to a misunderstanding of what Jesus was teaching in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:3-11. It came about as follows. Noting that there was an ‘exception clause’ in both places, and the ‘exception’ related to fornication, the assumption arose that the ‘exception’ clauses were identical and referred to fornication as the only grounds for divorce.

As early as the fourth century this mistaken interpretation was imposed on the Greek text when Codex Vaticanus, Codex Bezae, and the Caesarean texts of Family 12 and Family 13 altered 19:9 to agree with 5:32 in their Greek texts. So the alteration was deliberate, not accidental.

This deliberate interference in the transmission of the original writings is inexcusable and brings these copies into disrepute. Fortunately, Codex Sinaiticus escaped this deliberate interference. Erasmus deliberately used one Latin translation for the two distinct Greek clauses in 5:32 and 19:9, to make it appear that both texts were referring to the same exception.

Harmonisations are dangerous, but when they are used to obliterate distinct aspects of Jesus’ teaching, they become very dangerous in the hands of manipulators, ancient and modern.
APPENDIX F

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE MAJORITY TEXT

The object of this Appendix is to show that the Reformation Churches were misled in 1881 into giving up the Majority Text (also called the Byzantine text, the Koine Text, the Textus Receptus, or simply MT\textsuperscript{570}) in favour of a local Egyptian Text. The Egyptian text came into prominence through Westcott and Hort in the late nineteenth century. Their text was based mainly (if not solely) on two manuscripts, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. The criterion used was, where these two manuscripts agreed against the MT, their text was to be preferred every time. This criterion still dominates all modern Greek texts of the New Testament.

Westcott and Hort succeeded in replacing the Majority Text with a local, Egyptian text using three false assumptions, namely, that the older a manuscript was the nearer it was to the original text. Secondly, that scribes were more likely to add words here and there in the copying process, than omit them. The latter criterion can be double-edged, in that if a copyist thinks this has happened to the copy he is about to re-copy and sets out to omit what he regards as redundancies, then he will end up with a shorter text, which is the case with the Egyptian text. It is about 3% shorter overall when compared to the MT. All modern English translations are based on this local, Egyptian text, which is a corrupt form of the Majority Text.

Their third assumption was that the Majority Text did not exist before the fifth century. They believed that it was created by an individual called Lucian. It is then postulated that his text was then taken up by the major centres of Christianity, particularly Constantinople, where it became the official text of the Church, resulting in the loss of almost all other text-types. There is no evidence for this conjecture. No modern scholar now accepts this concocted scenario, but it was accepted in 1881 as a probable fact, and the damage was done before it could be challenged. As a result the Revised Version of 1881 was not the revision of the Authorized Version that it was intended to be, but a version heavily influenced by Westcott and Hort’s new Greek text.

WHY SHOULD CONSERVATIVE SCHolars BE SUSPICIOUS OF THE EGYPTIAN TEXT?

The reason why the Egyptian text should not be accepted is that it is a corrupt text.\textsuperscript{571} There are two blunders in the Egyptian Text that should alert all conservative-evangelical ministers of the Gospel to the nature of that corrupt text. In Matthew 27:49 Vaticanus and Sinaiticus have transported part of John 19:34 to this place. Their addition, which appears to have come from memory as the Greek words are in a different order, reads: “Now another taking a spear he plunged into his side and out came water and blood.” What betrays this addition as a blunder is the position where it was added in Matthew’s narrative. In John, it occurs after Jesus is dead, and the spear

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\textsuperscript{570} Erasmus’s text and the Complutensian text were both based on a combination of Byzantine and Caesarean manuscripts, not on Egyptian or Western texts.

thrust was to make sure Jesus was dead. But in Matthew, it is added at a point where Jesus was still alive.

The second blunder in the Egyptian text occurs in Luke 4:44, where “Galilee” was replaced with “Judaea” in the Egyptian text, resulting in Jesus conducting two major preaching tours in two places at the same time. The error is found mainly in the local, Egyptian text. Apart from these obvious blunders, there are over 200 instances in the Gospels where the Egyptian text has omitted words due to homoioteleuthon (‘similar ending’). This clerical error occurs when the same word occurs nearby and the scribe’s eye shifts forward to the same or similar word, resulting in an omission. The sheer volume of these clerical errors in the Egyptian text suggests that it goes back to an early, sloppy copy, or made by a scribe who had an eye for eliminating redundancies or verboseness. There is also internal evidence that the copy from which all the Egyptian manuscripts are descended was made from an old, worn copy, which was unreadable in places. In these instances the scribe had to guess what the text read.

On top of these obvious blunders and scribal mistakes, there are, in addition, thousands of minor changes to the Majority Text, hundreds of which do not affect the translation, but the fact that these alterations were made at all should make one suspicious of following a scribe who is that careless in copying out the Word of God for the next generation.

In the following section it can be shown that: Wherever Vaticanus differs from Sinaiticus, Sinaiticus agrees with the MT, and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, Vaticanus agrees with the MT. This means that all disagreements between Vaticanus and Sinaiticus came about because one or other has departed from the Majority Text. The MT lies behind both manuscripts, and their differences are due entirely to their failure to reproduce it.

We can illustrate this by comparing the two versions of the MT which we find in the printed text of Erasmus and the Complutensian Polyglot. Lines 5 and 6 compare the Complutensian and Erasmus over against the MT.

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**TABLE OF DEVIATIONS FROM THE MAJORITY TEXT IN ERASMUS’S FIRST EDITION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS (1516)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF ERROR</th>
<th>MATTHEW</th>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>LUKE</th>
<th>JOHN</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OMISSIONS</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDITIONS</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBSTITUTIONS</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSPOSITIONS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+CP AGAINST MAJ. TEXT</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL (CP, ERAS, MT) DISAGREE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOSPEL TOTALS</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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572 There are about 9,166 differences between the Majority Text and the combined errors in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in the four Gospels alone.

573 A glaring error occurs in MS B which contradicts itself at Acts 10:19. There it states that two men came to visit Peter in Joppa, but in 11:11 it states there were three. It is the only manuscript to contain this contradiction.
## TABLE OF DEVIATIONS FROM THE MAJORITY TEXT IN THE FOUR GOSPELS OF THE COMPLUTENSE POLYGLOT (1514)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF ERROR</th>
<th>MATTHEW</th>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>LUKE</th>
<th>JOHN</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OMISSIONS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDITIONS</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBSTITUTIONS</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSPOSITIONS</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ERASMUS AGAINST MAJ. TEXT</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL (CP, ERAS, MT) DISAGREE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOSPEL TOTALS</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A COMPARISON OF TRANSLATABLE DEVIATIONS IN ERASMUS AND THE COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT FROM THE MAJORITY TEXT IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Erasmus</th>
<th>Complutensian</th>
<th>Majority Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omissions</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitutions</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transpositions</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ERASMUS AND COMPLUTENSIAN AGREE AGAINST THE MAJORITY TEXT

ERASMUS' TEXT IS **98.62%** IN AGREEMENT WITH THE MAJORITY TEXT
THE COMPLUTENSIAN TEXT IS **99.44%** IN AGREEMENT WITH THE MAJORITY TEXT
ERASMUS’S FIRST GREEK NEW TESTAMENT (1516) COLLATED AGAINST THE MAJORITY TEXT (904 TRANSLATABLE DEVIATIONS)

THE NUMBER OF DEVIATIONS STEADILY INCREASES THROUGHOUT THE GOSPEL

THE NUMBER OF DEVIATIONS STEADILY INCREASES

PERICOPE ADULTERY
In every category the Complutensian proves to be a more faithful copy of the Majority Text, but it is not an exact copy.

If the Pope in 1514 had released the Greek New Testament, Erasmus would never have published his inferior text. And, significantly, there would have been no “exception clause” in Matthew 19:9, and no grounds for divorce among the Reformation Churches.

There are two important facts that emerge from a comparison of the texts of Eras, CP and MT. The first remarkable fact is that in only six cases do Eras, CP and MT all disagree. The second remarkable fact is the figure of 82 agreements between Eras and CP against the Majority Text. This shows that the Greek MSS consulted by Eras and CP came from a common ancestor, albeit probably an ancestor four or five generations back, when these 82 divergences from the MT were introduced.

From these two totals we can make the following important observation: *Wherever Erasmus differs from CP, CP agrees with the MT, and wherever CP differs from Erasmus, Erasmus agrees with the MT.* This means that all disagreements between Erasmus and the Complutensian come about because one or other departs from the Majority Text.

Why is this important? The answer is that we find an identical situation between MS B (Codex Vaticanus), MS 8 (Codex Sinaiticus) and the Majority Text. This can be demonstrated from a comparison between Vaticanus (B), Sinaiticus (Sin.) and the Majority Text (MT) in the Gospel of John. Three important facts emerge. The first is that in only 29 cases do Vat., Sin., and MT all disagree. The second fact is that Vat. and Sin. agree against the Majority Text in 666 cases. This shows that the text copied by Vat. and Sin. came from a common ancestor, albeit probably an ancestor four or five generations back. If we deduct the 666 divergences from the MT—plus the 29 where they each disagree—from their combined disagreements with the MT, which is 1529 variants, we can make the following important observation: *Wherever Vaticanus differs from Sinaiticus, which happens 610 times, Sinaiticus agrees with the MT; and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, which happens 890 times, Vaticanus agrees with the MT.*

In other words, there are 610 cases where Sinaiticus agrees with Byzantine against Vaticanus, and there are 890 cases where Vaticanus agrees with Byzantine against Sinaiticus.

An identical study was carried out on Luke’s Gospel which produced the same pattern. There are 14 cases where Vat., Sin., and MT all disagree. The second fact is that Vat. and Sin. agree against the Majority Text in 1157 cases. It is this large number of shared disagreements that constitutes the Egyptian Text as a distinct text-type, and so distinguishes it from the MT. These shared disagreements are found in the local Egyptian text.\(^{574}\) It was never a universal text, like the MT. This shows that the text copied by Vat. and Sin. came from a local, Egyptian common ancestor, albeit probably an ancestor going back to the second century.

If in Luke we deduct the figure of 643 divergences of Vaticanus from the MT—plus the 14 where they each disagree—from their (B+ 8) combined disagreements with the MT, which is 1425 variants, we can make the following significant observation: *Wherever Vaticanus differs from Sinaiticus, which happens 643 times in Luke, Sinaiticus always agrees with the MT, and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, which happens 768 times, Vaticanus always agrees with the MT.* The conclusion is inescapable, namely, all disagreements between Vaticanus and Sinaiticus come about because one or other departs from the Majority Text. In the copying of Luke, Sinaiticus has moved further way from the text of Vaticanus, which is closer to the MT. It is the same in the copying of John. Sinaiticus has moved further way from the text of Vaticanus, which is closer to the MT. The same goes for Matthew and Mark; Vaticanus is closer to the Majority Text.

What this study shows is that if the Roman Catholic church had published its Greek New Testament as soon as it was printed, there would not have been the need to produce Erasmus’ Greek New Testament. But the delay between printing the New Testament in 1514 and its release to the public in 1522, allowed an inferior version to swamp the market. Also, the Complutensian was

\(^{574}\) The so-called Western Text is a mixture of MT + Egyptian + arbitrary changes.
limited to 600 copies. It was expensive, and it was never revised. Its text is much superior to Erasmus’s both in the use of clear fonts, its pleasing layout, and the complete lack of abbreviations and ligatures which spoil Erasmus’s text, but more importantly, as the diagram above shows, its text of the four Gospels was closer to the Majority Text, and, crucially, it did not have Erasmus’s addition of ει in Matthew 19:9.

The only English version I would recommend at the present time is the New King James Version (NKJV), but it can only be a stop gap translation because it does not translate the Majority Text as its main text. We need to lay the TR aside and give a straight translation of the Majority Text to the next generation.

TEXTUAL GUIDELINES TO THE RECOVERY OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT

The following notes are the result of analysing all the variants in the Gospel of Matthew between the following text-types: Byzantine, Caesarean, Egyptian, and Western. As a result of this analysis the following guidelines of textual research emerged.

ORIENTATION OBSERVATIONS

There is absolutely no connection, direct or indirect, between the date of a manuscript and its relationship to the original text. They are two, unconnected, and unrelated facts. Only the untaught assume that the closer a copy is to the original writing the closer must it be to the original text itself. The age of the manuscript is irrelevant in the recovery of the original text; the origin of the reading is what matters.

All extant copies of the Greek New Testament writings reflect the text of the original writing. Some are more faithful than others. Some text-types have been more accurately copied than others. Some have been tampered with more than others. The goal of textual research is to discover which copies have a track record of containing the least number of copying errors.

The supreme mark of faithful copying is the honest attempt of each scribe to reproduce an exact copy of the exemplar in front of him with no intention to depart from the exemplar either to correct obvious errors or to ‘improve’ the readability of the text.

Where evidence can be produced of deliberate interference in the copying process the resultant copy can no longer be trusted to reflect the exact wording of the original text, and must be laid to one side as a secondary witness to the original writing. The decision to place defective manuscripts in the category of unreliable witnesses does not rule out the possibility that these might contribute to resolving the rare occasion when the reliable witnesses are split.

It can be presumed that multiple copies were made directly from the original text before the parchment of the original writing disintegrated and turned to dust. The fact that multiple copies were made of each New Testament writing, it can be presumed that these direct copies were made by different scribes, at different times, and possibly in different locations. It can be presumed that there was no collusion between all the first copyists to change a single word or doctrine of the original text when they made their copy. The presumption of independent copyists, producing independent copies of the original writings is the foundation to the recovery of the original text itself.

575 The New Testament portion of the Complutensian Polyglot was reprinted by Christopher Plantin in the Antwerp Polyglot in 1564, 1573, 1574, 1584, 1590, and in Geneva in 1609, 1619, 1620, 1628 and 1632. This disseminated Cardinal Ximenes’ Greek text throughout Europe for a century following his death in 1517.
It can be presumed that once an independent copy of the original writings was made it did not remain in the same geographical location as the original text. It can be presumed that the multiple, first copies of the original writings were taken into every geographical location in the Roman Empire where Christian communities were established and where Greek was still the dominant language of the region.

The presumption that first copies of the original writing were taken to the ‘ends of the earth’ is a factor in the recovery of the original text itself. The geographical spread of the multiple, first copies, rules out the possibility that there could be collusion later on to alter the wording of these first copies, before each of these distant copies were themselves copied in their far-flung local areas.

It can be presumed that first copies of the original writings were highly prized by the communities that received them, either by request from a neighbouring church, or by commission of the local bishop, or at the expense of rich, local patrons.

It can be presumed that scores, if not hundreds, of direct copies of the four Gospels were made before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, given the explosion of church planting that occurred before the deaths of Peter and Paul in Rome. With the dispersal of the Jewish nation, including the first generation of Jewish Christians who had joined the Church of the apostles in Jerusalem, it can be presumed that they took their copies of the Gospels (especially Matthew’s Gospel) with them into the Dispersion.

Evangelism and persecutions would have contributed directly to the geographical spread of the original writings. The geographical spread of these first copies prevented a global contamination occurring in which a single word in every known copy could be altered in these first copies. These ‘first witnesses’ to the original writings, having been dispersed over the Greek-speaking world, become a guarantee that the Gospels could not be successfully tampered with by any central authority.

It can be presumed that the dispersal of the Gospel to the ends of the known world (for the Gospel went out into all the world during the lifetime of Peter and Paul) created a zealous demand to know more about the Lord Jesus, His words and His deeds, and that this zeal would have contributed directly to the production of multiple copies of any of the first copies that came within geographical reach of every Christian church.

ORIENTATION FACTORS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

Now, given the following factors, it should be possible to recover the wording of the original text no matter how quickly clerical errors came into the stream of transmission, due to the well-understood phenomenon that a clerical error by one scribe has no chance of entering every contemporary copy. It is a well understood phenomenon that applies to all original works, be they secular or religious, that scribes can only depart from the original text. Where a scribe produces a perfect copy of the original then this becomes the original for the next scribe. If a chain of such perfect copies is maintained for the first 500 years of copying, and all its predecessors have disintegrated through constant use, then the sixth-century copy appears to be a late copy.

On the other hand, if a scribe produces a sloppy copy of the original text in the second century, and that copy is taken out of circulation because it is known to be a sloppy copy, it may survive in a secluded monastery for centuries before being discovered.

When the second-century, sloppy copy is compared to the sixth-century perfect copy, discrepancies will soon emerge. There is a clear difference in date between the two copies. There is a natural presumption that the second-century copy, because it is closer to the time when the original was written, could not have deviated much from the original text. This could be a false assumption. This is where textual research comes into its own.

Textual research will be aware that multiple copies, ranging from perfect to sloppy, would have been made of the original documents before they disintegrated, on the analogy of Hebrew scrolls becoming worn out through constant use by a living community using the scroll. It can be
presumed that the multiple copies made directly from the original Christian documents were used constantly and became worn out through that use, but a faithful copy would have been made of it before the community was in danger of losing any of its text.

Researches would be well aware that there is doubling in the number of copies being made as the first generation of direct copies became the exemplar for a second generation of copies, and so on, producing hundreds of copies as each becomes a link in a long line of transmission.

The issue is not settled by comparing a second-century copy with a sixth-century copy, but by tracing the hundreds of lines of independent transmission of the multiple, direct copies that were made before the original documents disintegrated.

The error that Fenton J. A. Hort made was to presume that a fourth-century copy, because it was the oldest it must also be the best copy of the original text. This is the natural presumption that we noted above. Hort was unaware of the danger in this natural presumption, but because it was a presumption that could easily be grasped by the man in the street, it had an appearance of truth about it that Hort exploited to the full. To this day it is common to find footnotes in modern English translations noting that the ‘oldest and best copies’ do not have such and such a reading. This is an appeal to the same natural presumption. But textual research has moved on from this simplistic approach to the presence of variants.

Once scholars realised that there were agreements in divergent readings it soon became obvious that manuscripts could be grouped according to these divergent readings. These groupings became families, and families could be grouped in regional text (or local texts), and regional texts could be grouped into text-types, and in this way genealogical trees could be constructed which traced the transmission of every extant manuscript back to its source text-type.

In textual research it is no longer tenable to pick on a single manuscript and make that the ‘oldest and best’ copy of the original text. Each manuscript has been located within its family, then within its local text, and then, finally, allocated to its text-type, before its true value can be assessed. This means that the thousands of manuscripts that have survived can all be grouped into four text-types. These are, in order of closeness to the original text, the Byzantine, Caesarean, Egyptian and Western. Of these four text-types the only one in continuous use in the Church is the Byzantine. The others all virtually died out, and were rescued from total oblivion by accident.

The discovery of papyri in the sands of the Egyptian deserts uncovered fragmentary and incomplete copies of the Gospels centuries older than those used by Hort to reconstruct his ‘original text.’ But sadly, these papyri reveal a chaotic text, with each scribe producing a very different text to that produced by Hort. Detailed studies of the text of these papyri show that they all spring from a local Egyptian text that was badly copied, so much so that it is not possible to draw up a genealogical tree showing their relationship to each other.

The lesson scholars learned from these much older copies was that the presumption that oldest is synonymous with best does not hold in the case of these Egyptian copies, out of which emerged the text of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, as both of these codices share the same local Egyptian text. Both codices have a text very close to Papyrus 66, dated to A.D. 200, and to Papyrus 75, dated to the 3rd century, in John’s Gospel. Papyrus 75 is also extant for Luke’s Gospel (chaps 6-18) and it, too, finds supports in these two codices.

FACTORS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT TO RECOVER THE ORIGINAL TEXT

Factor 1. There was only one composition of each Gospel, and each canonical writing, which is the original writing.

Factor 2. Multiple copies of this one writing were made before the original document disintegrated.

Factor 3. These first copies were taken out into all the known world, wherever Christian churches had been established.
Factor 4. Zeal for knowledge of Jesus, His teaching and His deeds, would have contributed directly to multiple copies being produced in every geographical location where evangelists had established Christian churches. Such copies would, on the whole, be highly prized possessions.

Factor 5. Despite the most rigorous attention given to produce an exact copy of an exemplar, clerical errors were an inevitable part of the transmission process.

Factor 6. No clerical error by one scribe, in one location, can enter any other copy in another location, in the exact same place, except by a deliberate act of the will, or sheer coincidence.

Factor 7. No local text can be promoted to the position of being a flawless copy of the original text at the expense of all other local texts.

Factor 8. It can be presumed that in the copying process literary productions were copied in their entirely each time. A completed text must not be dissected into its separate words as if they were transmitted on their own. All variants have a context that must be respected.

Factor 9. All local texts will have their own internal history of transmission, which can be established genealogically. The task of textual research is to establish the text of the earliest copy from which they can all be traced back. Agreement in error will establish a genealogical tree of descent. ‘Agreement in error’ can only be established when the transmission history of each local text has been arrived at, and a comparison made across the board between all the different genealogical lines of every local text and every text-type.

Factor 10. By ‘text-types’ is meant the grouping of local texts into a larger group of closely related texts, from which it may be presumed (or demonstrated) they have all descended from a single copy. At present these text-types comprise the Byzantine, Caesarean, Egyptian, and Western.

Factor 11. The degree of difficulty in establishing a genealogical tree for any local text is a reflection on the lack of care in its overall transmission. The greater the degree of this disharmony among its witnesses the less likely can these loosely connected manuscripts be considered a direct witness to the original text. These badly corrupted, local texts drop down into the category of secondary witnesses, as being erratic and unreliable. Factor 7 must then be taken into account.

Factor 12. Given the assumption that clerical errors will be a factor in the transmission of all local texts, and that all individual manuscripts within each local text will be flawed with these errors, the first task of textual research is to undo these simple and explainable clerical errors right across the board, noting the exact number of clerical error and its probable cause in every extant manuscript. This meticulous collation for each manuscript (irrespective of its text-type or affiliation to a local text) will contribute to establishing the ‘personality’ of the scribe who made the copy. In many cases, the scribe may have faithfully reproduced the clerical errors of his exemplar, but even this says something about his care (or carelessness) in the production of his copy.

Factor 13. The process of establishing what is a clerical error, will also show up what is not a clerical error, namely, by direct comparison with all known lines of transmission. See Factor 9 above.

Factor 14. In establishing the original wording of any text of the New Testament writings, the word in doubt must not be compared with isolated manuscripts, but each manuscript must itself be subject to its own line of transmission, in case it is not representative of its local text. If it is not representative of its own line of transmission, but is an ‘outsider’ reading, then it does not carry the authority or witness of its own local text. It becomes a suspect witness as regards its reading having being carried down by its own stream. This inner-variant reading—as regards its own local text—if it is found in a different local text, may indicate an assimilation to a different local text. In which case, a careful examination must be carried out to identify the other local text from which it was taken, and the extent to which the rival local text has further influenced the individual manuscript. Sometimes blocks of text can be taken from rival local texts to patch missing quires or pages in a different local text. Great care must be exercised to identifying cases where one local text has been assimilated to another local text, even to individual manuscripts within those rival local texts coming under the influence of rival texts.
Factor 15. In establishing the original wording of any New Testament writing, the issue should not be decided on the witness of individual manuscripts, or a collection of individual manuscripts, but at the text-type level. It will generally be found that at the text-type level there are only two competing variants, and the four text-types will be aligned with one or other of these two competing readings.

A potted history of the transmission of the original text of the New Testament would read as follows. Multiple copies of the original writings were made, such as recommended by Paul that his letters be read in other local churches, who would have retained a copy for their own edification and instruction. Multiple copies of the original writings were made and widely distributed by evangelists who took it into all the world, before the original writings disintegrated. We may call this initial copying, the Universal Text, which was distributed across the Roman Empire.

A very early copy of this Universal Text contained some errors, which can be called the proto-Caesarean Text. This slightly corrupted copy was then copied out twice, but both copies added a sizeable number of deviations of their own to those that were in their exemplar, so that the proto-Caesarean Text was accumulating more and more deviations from the original, Universal Text that had gone out into all the world.

From these two copies of the proto-Caesarean Text came two lines of transmission, known today as Family 1 and Family 13. However, we must call them f1* and f13* because at this stage neither included the hundreds of extra deviations that each accumulated in their own history of transmission.

In the mean time, another very early copy of the Universal Text was made, which also contained some errors, different from those that entered the proto-Caesarean Text (now divided into f1* and f13*). This deviant copy of the Universal Text formed the foundation of the proto-Egyptian Text. This proto-Egyptian Text absorbed all the deviations from the Universal Text that it found in Family 1* and Family 13*. This explains why, on occasions, the extant, local Egyptian Text (created out of Vat. and Sin.) has almost all the combined deviations that are found only in f1* and f13*.

Once the proto-Egyptian Text absorbed all the Caesarean Text-type deviations this then became the ancestor of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.

After the emergence of the proto-Egyptian+Caesarean text (the E+C text), this text descended by means of two distinct lines of transmission to end up as Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. It is clear that these two codices do not come from the same exemplar, but from the more distant proto-Egyptian+Caesarean exemplar. This would explain how Vaticanus and Sinaiticus have each lost a small number of the Caesarean deviations that have survived in the extant f1 and f13 local texts.

The Western Text (so called because of its closeness to the Old Latin text) is the Universal Text selectively corrected toward the proto-Egyptian+Caesarean Text, plus its own peculiar deviations from both sources.

It is very probable that all the above developments occurred within the first one hundred years after the completion of the present canonical text of the New Testament.

What this means is that the Caesarean text-type split into f1* and f13* before the exemplar behind the Egyptian text-type came into being, because the proto-Egyptian+Caesarean exemplar that lies behind Vaticanus and Sinaiticus had already absorbed the combined deviations that f1* and f13* had undergone. After the deviations of f1* and f13* had been absorbed into the E+C text, they each went on to accumulate further deviations which never entered the Egyptian text-type, or the Byzantine (Universal) text-type.
APPENDIX G

CONTENTS OF CODEX LEICESTRENSIS

Cover with Title (now missing)
Kephalia of Matthew (now missing) (Probably one folio.)
Matthew 1:1–18:15a (now missing) (This was equivalent to 9 folios.)
Matthew 18:15b–28:20 f1r–f13v
Kephalia of Mark f14r
Mark (1:1–16:20) f14v–f35v
Kephalia of Luke f35r–f35v
Luke (1:1–24:53) f36r–f72r
Kephalia of John f72r
John (1:1–21:25) f72v–f96v
Romans (1:1–16:24) f97r–f108r
1 Corinthians (1:1–16:24) f108v–f118r
2 Corinthians (1:1–13:13) f119r–f125v
Galatians (1:1–6:18) f126v–f130r
Ephesians (1:1–6:24) f130r–f133v Eph. begins on the page that Gal. ends on
Philippians (1:1–4:23) f134r–f136v
Colossians (1:1–4:18) f136v–f139r Col. begins on the page that Phil. ends on
1 Thessalonians (1:1–5:28) f139r–f141v 1 Thess. begins on the page that Col. ends on
2 Thessalonians (1:1–3:18) f141v–f143r 2 Thess. begins on the page that 1 Thess. ends on
1 Timothy (1:1–6:21) f143r–f146r 1 Tim. begins on the page that 2 Thess. ends on
2 Timothy (1:1–4:22) f146r–f148r 2 Tim. begins on the page that 1 Tim. ends on
Titus (1:1–3:15) f148r–f149r Titus begins on the page that 2 Tim. ends on
Philemon (1–25 verses) f149v–f150r Philemon begins on a new page
Prologue to Hebrews f150r Prologue begins on the page that Phil. ends on
Hebrews (1:1–13:25) f150v–f159v
Nicene Creed f159v This begins on the page that Heb. ends on

(Acts 10:45b–14:17a is missing due to the loss of four folios at this point in the exemplar.)\(^{577}\)
James (1:1–5:20) f190r–f192v (ends with 12 blank lines)
1 Peter (1:1–5:14) f193r–f195v
2 Peter (1:1–3:18) f196r–f197v
1 John (1:1–5:21) f198r–f200v
2 John (1–13 verses) f201r
3 John (1–14 verses) f201r–f201v 3 John begins on the page 2 John ends on
Jude (1–7a verses) f201v Jude begins on the page that 3 John ends on
(7b–25 verses are missing due to the loss of a folio at this point in the exemplar.)
Revelation (1:1–19:10a) f202r–f213v
(Revelation 19:10b–22:21 is missing due to the loss of text since the text was completed. The missing text would have occupied three folios.)

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\(^{576}\) Swanson assumed that 2 Corinthians 1:15b–3:15a was missing in MS 69. It is present.

\(^{577}\) The four folios made up one quire and were missing in the exemplar of which Codex Leicestrensis is an exact copy in layout and lines per page.
The above diagram shows that the exemplar behind Codex Leicestrensis had already lost some text before it was copied. The loss of text at Acts 10:45–14:17a is very revealing. The total loss
of text amounts to 11,778 letters (using Robinson and Pierpont’s Greek NT). The number of letters on the first extant page following this loss is 1,478 letters. The total letters, 11,778, divided by 1478 letters per page, gives 7.97 pages, or four complete folios. The significance of this is that MS 69 is a replica of its exemplar (Stage 1 in the diagram above).

The scribe who copied out Codex Leicestrensis did not realise that four folios were missing in his exemplar containing Acts 10:45b–14:17a, and so he added 14:17b (and the following text) on to the end of 10:45a as if there was no gap!

The replica solution is confirmed when we look at the loss of the Matthew 1:1 to 18:15a, which amounts to 10,744 words (using Robinson & Pierpont’s Greek NT). A count of the number of words on the first and second pages after this loss gives 301 and 286 words respectively, or an average of 293.5 words per page. The total words missing are 10,744, divided by 293.5 words per page, gives 36.6 pages, or just over 18 folios. If we add a folio for the book title, and another folio for the Kephalia to Matthew, this would give a total of 20 missing folios at the beginning of the present Codex. Ten folios constitute one quire, so two complete quires became detached after the present Codex left the scriptorium. At the present time there are 213 leaves or 426 pages of text.

A further three losses of text occurred to Codex Leicestrensis in the course of its turbulent history. First, when the Codex was presented to Leicester Town Council in 1640 it had already lost two quires of Matthew’s Gospel (1:1–18:15a). We can be certain of this because the donor’s name appears on the first extant page, which is Matthew 18:15b–31a.

Second, the loss of Jude 7b-25 may be accounted for when the Codex fell into disrepute and became a source of wastepaper. The missing text would have occupied 28 lines of one side of a folio. The other side of the folio would have been blank, because Revelation begins on a new folio. This large blank space would have been vulnerable to being cut out, which appears to be what happened to it. I have not been able to establish if a stub still remains in the present Codex. If so, then it was removed after the Codex was bound. The Leicester Record Office has no information on when the Codex was bound.

Third, the loss of the end of the Book of Revelation may have happened in two stages. In its present state the Codex ends on folio 213, but when it was collated by John Jackson in 1728, folio 214 was extant. Some time after he collated the Codex folio 214 was lost. Folio 213 is in a bad condition. Half of the folio is missing due to vandalism. Folio 201 has suffered damage in that a large corner slice of the page has been cut away with a sharp knife, severely damaging the first eleven lines on both sides.

In the present layout, the concern is economic. It was too expensive to write the Codex on animal skins (parchment or vellum), so a compromise was made to have just two sheets of parchment and three sheets of paper to make up each 10-folio quire. The parchment sheets enclosed the three paper ones. This is one evidence of economic frugality influencing the final product. The other, and more significant evidence of economics playing a large part in the present layout of the text is that the entire text is written in continuous lines with left and right justification. This allowed the maximum amount of text to be on each page. Yet the error at folio 173 (Acts 10:34–14:20) shows that this was not the original layout of the text. The layout was in stichos-fashion, where each line made sense as it stood.

NOTES BY TREGELLES


In the Prolegomena (p. xxv) Tregelles gives an account of his collation of Codex Leicestrensis.
In speaking of the MSS. which I have myself collated, I may now mention the latest which I have thus examined;—the Codex Leicestrensis (69 Gospels, 31 Acts and Cath. Epp., 37 Paul, 14 Apoc.), which, though not older than the fourteenth century, contains a text in many respects ancient; and it was the desire of several scholars that I should recollate this MS., which is the most important of those in cursive letters which we have in this country. Application was made to the Town Council of Leicester, to whom it belongs, on my behalf; and through the kind exertions of George Toller, Esq., then the Mayor of that place, this manuscript was transmitted to me, in the autumn of the year 1852, to use in my own study. (Due security was, of course, given for its safety and restoration.) Through this particular act of courtesy, which deserves my fullest acknowledgment, I was able without inconvenience to collate this valuable MS. 578

Further on in the Prolegomena he added:

92. Codex Montfortianus in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. The MS. was written by different hands. The Revelation agrees, as Dr. Barrett showed, in such a manner with the Codex Leicestrensis [14] of that book, as to prove that it was transcribed from that MS.; and as both codices were once in the possession of the same William Chark, it is probable in the highest degree that the Revelation was copied to complete this MS., [i.e., Codex Montfortianus] which must have seemed so far deficient in his time, i.e., in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This is confirmed by the corrections, etc., in the margin of Codex Montfortianus having been made from the Leicestrensis by the same hand. As the Codex Leicestrensis is defective at the end, this transcript from it . . . has been the means of preserving the readings of that part which is now defective (Tregelles, Horne, 213, 216).

Dr Tregelles has therefore given the readings of 92 (doubtless following Barrett’s collation appended to his edition of Z) from [Revelation] xviii. 7, where {codex} 14 begins to be defective. The transcription of 92 from 14, formerly questioned by Dr. Scrivener (Codex Augiensis xlii. f., 1859), is now held by him to be ‘very maintainable, though not quite certain’ (Plain Introd. ed. 2.246 [cf. 174]: 1874).

This would explain how Tregelles could have variants for the missing portion of Revelation (18:7—end). Because the page containing Rev 18:7 is torn in half (top to bottom), this means this was the state of MS 69 in 1852 when Tregelles consulted it, but it does not explain his variant readings in Jude. It is not known where he got these from. It is clear that when Mill (1675) collated MS 69 Jude 7b-25 was missing, because he has registered no variants in this portion of the text. It is possible that Tregelles consulted Codex Montfortianus, whose margins are said by him to contain variants from MS 69.

ABSTRACT FROM HORNE


This MS. belongs to the town council of Leicester (69 Gospels; Acts and Catholic Epistles 31; St. Paul’s Epistles 37; Apoc. 14). It formerly belonged to William Chark or Charc (who was deprived of his fellowship at Peterhouse, Cambridge, for Presbyterianism), and then to Thomas Hayne, who in 1640 (not 1669 as stated by Wetstein579) gave it to its present owners. It is defective as far as Matt. xviii, and besides other injuries (possible reference to 2 John, 3 John, and Jude?), it has lost the latter part of Revelation: this part must have been injured in recent years; for while others have described the deficiency as being only from Revelation xxii. 1. to the end, now all is lost after chap. 19:10, and of this last leaf part is gone [torn in half lengthwise]. A further collation was made by [John] Jackson and Tiffin (which had passed into the hands of Caesar de Missy), and was used by Wetstein; and a more complete collation made by Jackson has remained in MS. in the library of Jesus College, Cambridge.

The librarian of Jesus College informed the author that she has no record of Jackson’s collation. Tregelles consulted Jackson’s collation when he produced his Greek New Testament (1856-79) as his critical apparatus bears witness to.580 Tregelles had information that the owner (William Chark) of MS 69 also owned Codex Montfortianus which evidently lacked the book of Revelation, so Chark (it is assumed) copied the book of Revelation out of MS 69 into Montfortianus and then, when MS 69 lost its last two leaves of Revelation, Tregelles went back to Montfortianus and used it to find the variants in MS 69 for the missing two pages. It would appear that he has done the same for the missing portions of 2 John, 3 John, and Jude, because these parts were also missing when he made his collation in 1852.

Scrivener has pencilled on the front cover page of Codex Leicestrensis the words: “Collatus integer hic Codex Prid. Kal Jun 1855.” The date the Codex left the scriptorium has been narrowed down to around 1468.

**CORRECTIONS TO CODEX LEICESTRENSIS**

The object of Appendix G is to list all the corrections made to Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69) with the object to date their insertion into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis. There would appear to be two periods when the corrections were added to the Codex. The first period is represented by Corrector 1 (hereafter 69C1) who was the scribe who wrote the Codex. These amount to 40 self-corrections. The second period was in 1728 when Rev. John Jackson employed a number of friends to help him make a full collation of the Codex. These are collectively referred to as Corrector 2 (hereafter 69C2). They inserted 154 corrections in the margins. Corrector 3 (hereafter 69C3) made just one correction. He may be one of Jackson’s helpers.

That a number of men helped Rev. John Jackson compile his collation of MS 69 with John Fell’s printed edition of 1675 is mentioned in a letter by Jackson. The following information is taken from A Catalogue of the Books in the Town Library, Leicester (Leicester: Thomas Combe, Junior, [1835], 48pp.). See page 45 for a transcription of Jackson’s letter and the catalogue entry for John Fell’s volume, which reads:

Novi Testamenti Libri Omnes, Gr. 8vo. Oxon. 1675

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579 John Jackson possessed a copy of John Mill’s Greek N.T. dated 1675 (which is now in the library of Jesus College, Cambridge) in which he states (in his own handwriting) that MS Leicester was donated in A.D. 1669 with many other books to Leicester library by Thomas Hayne.

This edition was edited by Bishop Fell, and was pronounced by Michaelis to be the most important of all other persons engaged in the critical study of the Holy Scriptures.

In this copy is the following MS. letter from the Rev. John Jackson, the learned editor of Novatian’s works, who collated it [Fell’s edition] with the Leicester MS. and also notices by Wasse and other scholars who assisted him: their marginal readings are numerous, and fairly written. Mr. Jackson’s letter is as follows:—

“The N.T. herewith sent contains all the Readings of the Leic. MS. the many Transpositions are marked with numeral Letters set over the words, as 1, 2, 3, &c. The readings were taken out of the MS. itself, by the Gentlemen who assisted me in collating it. I desire you to take care of the Book, and to return it at your convenient opportunity, as I directed in my letter to you.” (Signed) “J. Jackson.”

The collation in the margin of Fell’s 1675 edition appears to have been abstracted from it because in the catalogue of the library of Cesar de Missy, whose library was sold in 1776, there was the following article—

Nº. 1617, Collatio codicis Leicestrensis per Rev. Joh. Jackson adscripta margini N. T. Graece impressi Oxonii 1675. Hoc est originałe, e quo variantes lectiones suo N. T. inseruit Wetstenius. It is not known what happened to this first collation, which was made by John Jackson (1686–1763) and William Tiffin (1695/6–1754).

Marsh wrote:

The collation, which Wetstein procured, was taken from the margin of the Oxford edition, printed in 1675, in which however not all the readings were noted, but those only which had been omitted, or falsely quoted by Mill. The collation was made by Jackson, the editor of Novatianus, and Lee, a clergyman in Leicester. Joseph Wasse, who afterwards had it in his possession, added new remarks, which consisted partly in comparison with the Coptic version, and partly in doubts and conjectures. From his hands it came into those of William Tiffin, who revised the notes of his predecessors, and made several alterations. In this state it was purchased by Cesar de Missy, and this collation was used by Wetstein, though he has not accurately described it.

The note 207 is in vol. II. Pt. II. p. 744, where he wrote:

207. Wetstein, who had his accounts from de Missy himself, relates very circumstantially that the extracts from the Codex Leicestrensis, were made by Jackson and Tiffin, that these extracts were written by [Rev.] Gee in the margin of the octavo Oxford edition of the Greek Testament, that this copy was purchased by de Missy who lent it to Wetstein in 1748. See his Prolegomena, p. 53. But there is a much more complete collection of readings from the Codex Leicestrensis than those given by Wetstein.

Jackson who lived at Leicester, spent a great part of his life in making extracts from this manuscript which he wrote in red ink in the margin of his copy of Mill’s Greek Testament [Amstel. 1710]. This copy is now preserved in Jesus College Library in Cambridge, where it is marked O, 0, 1. [modern shelf no. A.2.12]. On the first of the blank leaves which are prefixed to the title page, Jackson has written, In hoc exemplari excuso N. T. habentur omnes var. lect. Cod. MS. Leicestrensis post Millium denuo cum diligentia collati. This copy of Mill’s Greek Testament with Jackson’s marginal readings is a treasure of

See the Orient. Bibl. Vol. X. Nº. 161, and 169105. The series consists of 9 vols whose main author is Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791), Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek (Göttingen: Im Verlag der Wittwe Vandenhoeck, 1786-1793). The 9 vols cover XXIII parts.

This must be the 1710 Oxford edition, which is presently in Jesus Collage, Cambridge, shelf no. A.2.12. (which had been O.Θ.1. but this was changed to A.2.24, and then changed to A.2.12). It has Jackson’s collation in red ink in the margins.
sacred criticism, which deserves to be communicated to the public. It contains the result of all his labours in that branch of literature, it supplies many of the defects of Mill, and corrects many of his errors: and beside quotations from manuscripts and ancient versions, a copious collection of readings from many of the fathers which have been hitherto very imperfectly collated or wholly neglected.

Some time after 1835 Fell’s 1675 volume disappeared from the Leicester Town Library. However, John Jackson made another collation of Codex Leicestrensis which was written in red ink in the margin of Kuster’s Novum Testamentum Graecum, cum lectionibus variantibus . . . Joannis Millii [and] Ludolphus Kusterus. Amstelodami, 1710.

John David Michaelis became aware of the existence of this second collation and published an introduction to it.583 The Mill/Kuster 1710 collation was donated by John Jackson’s surviving daughter to Jesus College Library, Cambridge, in November 1788, where it was consulted by the present author under the book reference number A.2.12. Jackson died on 12 May 1763.

The earliest reference to the marginal correction in Codex Leicestrensis in Matthew 19:9 comes from Johann Jacob Wetstein’s 1751 critical apparatus.584 Under Matt. 19:9 his main text reads: εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία. Wetstein assumed that his text was correct, so he then listed the manuscripts which disagreed with it, starting with the largest disagreement and then moving on to the lesser disagreements. So, for instance, he gives παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας, and the evidence for this reading as: D. 1. 13. 25. a prima manu 33. 69. Versio Copta, Codicies Latini, Augustinus de Adult. Conjug. 11. nisi ob fornicationem, vel hoc, quod magis in Graecis legitur, praeter causam fornicationis. Chrysostomus.

Wetstein then moves on to the omission of εἰ, he lists all the mss which omit it, which are: CEFHK 2.4.5.6.7.8.9.10. 12.14.15.27.29. 32.35.36.37.38.39. 40.42.47.48. 51.52.53.54. 55.56.57. 58.59. 60.61.62.63.65.66.67.68. 70.71.72.76. 83.86.87.89.90.106. Evang. 1.3.4.5. 15.16.17.18.19. 20.21.22.24. Editio Complu. Genev. duae priores Stephani, Wechelii, Bengelii. Versio Syra posterior. Damascenus, Theophylactus. probante H. Grotio [omission approved by Hugo Grotius] & J. Millio prol. 1230. 1373.

The proof that the marginal corrections were made before 1751 lies in Wetstein’s lack of reference to ‘a prima manu,’ the ‘first hand’ of 69, to distinguish it from the marginal correction at Matthew 19:9 by the second corrector. There are only two oblique hints to the presence of the second corrector’s corrections in the margin of MS 69 in Wetstein’s apparatus (List B). The two cases are:

Mark 10:19. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: μη ἀποστρεπτοσις] — (= missing) 69. a prima manu.

Luke 6:1. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: δευτεροπρωτω] — (= missing) 69. a prima manu. By recording ‘a prima manu’ this implies that another hand had inserted the missing text, which could only have been what was added by Rev. John Jackson or one of his co-collators. This means that all the marginal corrections were in place by 1751 when Wetstein records these two.

However, the fact that only two of the 154 corrections are mentioned, and that indirectly, by Wetstein, could be significant, because he used John Jackson’s collated lists of deviations from John Fell’s text. That so few of the 154 marginal corrections are not recorded in Wetstein’s apparatus suggests that the 154 corrections were known to be late. Wetstein’s apparatus contains scores of Jackson’s fuller collation of Codex Leicestrensis with John Fell’s text, showing that the 154 are only the tip of an iceberg.


584 Johann Jacob Wetstein, H KAINH DIAQHKH Novum Testamentum Graecum. 2 vols. (Amstelaedami, 1751).
Conclusion

If the 154 corrections in List B pre-dated Jackson’s collation, then Jackson would have included the 154 corrections in the collation that he made available to Wetstein. Why are there only two indirect references to these 154 corrections to MS 69? The solution must be that they were the work of Jackson himself or a later collator. Unfortunately, the actual collation that Jackson sent to Wetstein has not survived.

A comparison between MS 69 and Fell’s 1675 edition for Matthew 18:15 to the end yielded 545 differences for all classes of differences. By far were spelling differences and these are seldom recorded by Wetstein in his critical apparatus. Of these 545 differences, 63 were a plus in Fell. It is assumed that if Fell was the collating text, then these plusses should have been recorded in John Jackson’s collation of 1728.

A comparison between Curcellus (1658) and Fell (1675) for Matthew 18:15 to the end yielded just 12 differences for all classes of differences between them.

Format of the following lists of corrections.

Each correction in the two lists below has a number, followed by the New Testament reference, followed by the folio number and r (recto) and v (verso) in the Codex. Then follows the text of MS 69, which is followed by /Yes/ or /No/ which relate to Reuben Swanson’s collation. If he recorded the text it is /Yes/; if not, it is /No/. The correction comes next followed by /Yes/ or /No/. If he collated the correction it is /Yes/; if not, it is /No/. The Yes and No indicate whether the text and the correction have been correctly collated in Swanson’s volumes, New Testament Greek Manuscripts (Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, England/William Carey International University Press, Pasadena, CA, USA). Lastly, support is noted only for whichever (text or correction) has the least support, using Swanson’s volumes. This will narrow down the manuscript(s) used by the correctors of MS 69.

LIST A. CORRECTIONS BY THE FIRST HAND  (C1 or 69C1)

*not available* = means that Swanson has not published this volume

VS = Von Soden’s critical apparatus

Note: When a manuscript number is followed by round brackets, this identifies the family to which it belongs, and not that the whole family supports the reading, as in 124(\textsuperscript{13}).\textsuperscript{585}

An asterisk against a number indicates that Wetstein does not record the first-hand correction or the first-hand reading. There are 22 cases.

A number in round brackets (11) indicates a rewriting of the main text by the first-hand, due to a physical flaw in the manuscript. There are 7 cases.

01 Matthew 27:1 (f11v) ματωσαι not underlined/Yes/correction in margin: ματωσουσιν/No/.

Support for correction in Swanson and VS: only D (see Mark 4:15). Fell ματωσαι = Curcellus. Neither Fell nor Curcellus record the correction [ματωσουσιν] in MS 69. Correction recorded in Wetstein as: οντε αυτον ματωσαι & in m. ματωσουσιν. Here Wetstein has recorded the correction by the first hand, as we would expect him to do.

\textsuperscript{585} Swanson frequently uses \textsuperscript{13} for the single manuscript 13 in Matthew’s Gospel, hence great care must be exercised to look for the other members of Family 13, which comprises 13, 69, 124, 346 [MS 346 was wrongly numbered throughout the four Gospels as 1346 by Swanson] and 788.
Matthew 27:6 (f11v) γελοθανει not underlined, but an umlaut appears over the second γ. /Yes/ correction: κορβομαν/No/. Von Soden ignores the correction. Fell κορβομαν = Curcellus.

Neither, Fell, Curcellus, Mill nor Wetstein record γελοθανει for MS 69.

Mark 14:30 (f31v) τρις No underlining but there is a δ over τρις by 69ći (self-correction)/Yes/ correction: δις in margin/Yes/. Support for text: none. Fell δις = Curcellus, with no notice of a correction to δις. Wetstein gives 69 as: αλεκτορα δις φωνησεωι with no notice of the original τρις.

Luke 3:18 (f40r) αλλα not underlined/Yes/ correction: ετερα/No/. Support for text: none. Fell = Curcellus. Wetstein does not record the correction to ετερα. Also in 3:18 Fell has ευαγγελιζεωι, and Curcellus has ευηγγελιζεωι. Codex Leicestrensis agrees with Curcellus.

Wetstein does not record the difference in spelling.

Luke 7:49 (f46r) αυτος no underlining/Yes/ correction: εν εαυτος/No/. The letters ενε (followed by an umlaut) are written above αυτος and the full correction is placed in the margin. Support for text: none. Fell = Curcellus. Wetstein does not record the correction in 69.

Luke 7:49 (f46r). 69 reads: εστιν αυτος, but Fell, Curcellus, and Wetstein read: αυτος εστιν. There is no correction in 69, or even a mark in the margin to indicate that there is a transposition in 69, but Wetstein records the transposition in 69. This shows that he had a collation that did not leave a mark on the page of 69.

Luke 9:22 (f49r) αναστηρια no underlining/Yes/correction: εμερηθηαι/No/. Swanson support for text: DACKII. 157 565.586 Fell εμερηθηαι = Curcellus. Wetstein notes that: εμερηθηαι αναστηρια is the reading of "69. a prima manu." He leaves εμερηθηαι to be inferred as the corrected reading, which it is.

Luke 9:22 (f49r) Wetstein records 69 as: αρχιερεωι και περισσωτερωι. Fell and Curcellus transpose the words, but there is no mark in the margin of 69 to indicate the transposition. This, again, shows that Wetstein had a collation that did not leave any hint in the margin of 69 that the transposition had been recorded on a separate document.

Luke 9:30 (f49r) ακτυσεις no underlining/Yes/ correction: ου τινες. It is not clear if ου was intended to replace ακ, but the correction by 69ći is not noted by Swanson. Support for the correction: none. VS ignores the correction of MS 69. The more likely alternative is that the correction is αυτος and this was to replace αυτοι, so that the meaning was changed from: "And behold two men were talking to him [αυτοι]," to read: "And behold two men were talking of him [αυτοι]." Fell ακτυσεις = Curcellus. The correction in 69 is not recorded by Wetstein or Fell.

Luke 9:43 (f50r) αυτω no underlining but an umlaut appears above αυτω/Yes [69iciary]/correction: τον θεου/Yes (under roll). Support for text: none. VS ignores the correction of MS 69. Fell τον θεου = Curcellus. Wetstein records the correction as: τον θεου αυτω 69. a prima manu.

(11) Luke 12:4 (f54r) λεγω. Due to a defect in the writing material λεγω was smudged so it was written again in the margin.

(12) Luke 12:4 (f54r) περισσωτερουν. Due to a defect in the writing material περι-- was smudged so it was written again in the margin.

(13) Luke 12:6 (f54r) του θεου. Due to a defect in the writing material θεου was smudged so it was written again in the margin του θεου.

586 This is a case where f1킴 broke away from the Egyptian, Byzantine and Caesarean texts, therefore it is a very late variant. Swanson gives εμερηθηαι as the reading of θεου, but von Soden gives αναστηρια, which is the correct reading. Swanson is correct because his small group of Byz. MSS all belong to von Soden’s K’ group, and this group supports εμερηθηαι. This shows that it is important to check Swanson against von Soden every time, or else consult Robinson & Pierpont’s Greek text to obtain the θεου reading.

Luke 18:9 (f61v) οι συω no underlining but an umlaut appears above συω and above the correction in the margin to link them/Yes/correction: ειοη/No/. Support for text: none. Fell ειοη = Curcellus. Wetstein does not record οι συω for 69*, nor the correction. Was this because neither was recorded in his collation document?

Luke 18:25 (f62r) καιμηλον no underlining/No/καιμηλον/Yes/. The scribe attempted to correct the text itself by writing λ on top of i. He then rewrote the correct spelling in the margin, which Wetstein ignored. Support for text: none. VS ignores the text of MS 69. Fell καιμηλον = Curcellus. Wetstein does not record καιμηλον for 69*, nor the correction. Was this because neither was recorded in his collation document?

Luke 18:25 (f62r) Omission of η πλουσιον no underlining but an umlaut marks where the omission occurs, and an equals sign (=) is placed before the correction in the margin/Yes/correction: η πλουσιον/No/. Support for omission: none. VS ignores the omission in MS 69. Fell η πλουσιον = Curcellus. Wetstein does not record that 69 omits η πλουσιον, yet it is in Fell = Curcellus.

Luke 18:31 (f62r) υπο no underlining but an umlaut appears over it and over the correction in the margin to link them/Yes/υπο/No/. Support for text: none. VS ignores the text of MS 69. Fell υπο = Curcellus. Wetstein’s apparatus reads: δια [υπο] & edita in margin 69.

Luke 19:15 (f63r) άα. Due to a defect in the writing material άα was smudged so it was written again in the margin.


John 2:15 (f74r) κατορθωσε an umlaut appears above it and above the correction in the margin to link them/Yes/κατεστρεψει/Yes/. Support for correction: Νς13]|157. VS supports the correction of MS 69. Wetstein records the correction as: ανεστρεψει κατεστρεψει 69 in ora. (Since 69* is κατορθωσε and not ανεστρεψε, the siglum “in ora.” must mean “in place of (ανεστρεψε)” here.)

John 11:2 (f85r) προθενησει no underlining/Yes/correction: προθενησει/Yes, under f13|. Swanson support for correction: none. Wetstein does not record the correction in 69.

John 11:27 (f85v) omit κοσμου. The omission is marked with a vertical line in the text but there is no corresponding sign in the margin, just the correction./Yes/correction: κοσμου/Yes, under rel/. Swanson support for omission: none. Wetstein does not record the omission or the correction in 69.

John 20:23 (f95v) αφετει (not clear). There is no underlining or other indication which word is to be corrected/No/correction: αφετει/No/. Support for text: none. VS ignores the text of MS 69. Wetstein does not record the omission or the correction in 69.

Romans 8:7 (f101v) διωναι underlined, with an umlaut on the text word and on the correction, to link them. In addition the correction has a cross against it. The correction is διωναι, which is ignored by Wetstein. The correction is a mistake by 69C because it has been applied to the wrong word (διωναι in v.7)! The h.t. error can account for this mistake.

Romans 10:5 (f103v) ταυτα an umlaut is over the word, but not over the correction in the margin, which has only a single dot./Yes/correction: αυτα/No/. Support for text: 33. Wetstein used the number 37 in place of 69 throughout Paul’s Epistles. He gives: “ταυτα a prima manu 37.” This implies that he knew of the correction, even though he does not record it in his apparatus.

2 Corinthians 1:8 (f119r) υπερ there is no siglum linking υπερ to περι in the margin/Yes/περι/Yes/. Support for the correction: ΡΑΣPDFG 075 33 104 326 365 440 999
are smudged. The correction is put in the margin for clarification.

James 1:9 (f190r)

thus:

This is a good example of independent convergent variants. Wetstein records the correction.

Acts 28:30 (f189v)

2147. Swanson support for "mellonte".

Acts 20:7 (f180r.l28) MS 69 "mellon" (pres act ptcp nom sg masc)/Yes/correction: "mellon". Swanson support for "mellon": 049 618 1245 1505 2147. Swanson support for "mellon": none. Wetstein ignored the spelling difference.

Acts 28:30 (f189v) εἰς has an umlaut above it and a corresponding umlaut before the marginal correction./Yes/correction: πρὸς/No/. Support for the text: 33 618 1738 1828 2492. This is a good example of independent convergent variants. Wetstein records the correction thus: πρὸς εἰς 31. a prima manu.

James 1:9 (f190r) αὐτοῦ is split over two lines, and αὐ has dots under it because the letters are smudged. The correction is put in the margin for clarification.
The text of MS 69 reads: υποταγήτε πασή κτισει ανθρωπίνη τον Κήρ. Wetstein’s main text reads: υποταγήτε ούν πασή ανθρωπίνη κτισει διὰ τον Κυριον. The omission of διὰ in MS 69 is not noted by Wetstein or Mill.

MS 69 has a dotted underlined addition (by the first hand) of των νικολαί before των νικώτων which is ignored by Wetstein.

Underlined are the words μυριάδες μυριάδων, και χιλίαδες χιλιάδων. Von Soden shows that these words are missing in the Vulgate, which would explain the underlining. The underlining shows that one of the owners of the Codex was collating Leicester against the Vulgate.

LIST B. 154 CORRECTIONS IN CODEX LEICESTRENISIS

CORRECTIONS BY THE SECOND GROUP OF HANDS (C2 or 69C2)

The text of MS 69 is given first, and the correction is given next. There are two lists of corrections. Those by the first hand (C1), and those by the second hand (C2). It is clear that List B (154 corrections) were inserted in the margin of MS 69 by the second hand who lived after the editions of the Greek New Testament of Simon Curcellus (1658) and John Fell (1675) were published, because the corrector has used the same ligatures as printed in those editions.

/Yes/ = means that Swanson has correctly collated Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69)
/No/ = means that Swanson has incorrectly collated Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69). For example: MS 69 reads: δανιεν and it is underlined/No ‘/No’ this means that Swanson incorrectly collated Codex Leicestrensis] /correction: δανειν/No ‘/No’ this means that Swanson incorrectly collated Codex Leicestrensis/)

NA = Swanson not available indicates that Swanson did not publish a volume on this NT book.

Note that J. J. Wetstein (1751) in his critical apparatus used different numbers for Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69) throughout the New Testament. He used no. 69 in the Gospels, no. 37 in Paul’s Epistles; no. 31 in the Acts & Catholic Epistles; and no. 14 in the Book of Revelation.

Note when a manuscript is followed by brackets this identifies the family to which it belongs, and not that the whole family supports the reading, as in 124(â13).587

Matthew 18:27 (Hr) δανιεν underlined/No/correction: δανειν/No/. Swanson incorrectly gives 69 (under rell588) as: δανειν. This is the corrected form in the margin, taken from John Fell’s 1675 text, which agrees with Curcellus (1658). However, the correction used a ligature for -ει- which is used by Curcellus (1658), but not by Fell. Swanson support for text: δανιεν: ΝDWEΛΔ62* 124(f1) 788(f13). The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 18:28 (Hr) ει τι οφειλεις underlined/Yes/ correction: ο, τι οφειλεις/No/. Support for 69c1: TR, and Erasmus’s text (all editions). The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Erasmus appears to have taken οτι οφειλεις from 69c3 in his first edition, by removing the comma after ο to give οτι.

587 Swanson frequently uses $^{13}$ for the single manuscript 13, hence great care must be exercised to look for the other members of Family 13, which comprises 13, 69, 124, 346 [wrongly numbered throughout the four Gospels as 1346] and 788.
588 The siglum rell means ‘all the other witnesses.’
18:28 εἰ τι δόθηλες RP, NA27. Wet. δ, τι δόθηλες (note the grave accent over δ, and the comma separating it from τι). Wetstein followed John Mill’s 1710 text, which read δ, τι δόθηλες (note the acute accent over δ, and the comma separating it from τι). Mill, in turn, followed John Fell’s 1675 text exactly. And Fell, in turn, followed Stephen Curcellus’s 1658, and 1675 texts. Curellus noted εἰ τι as the alternative text, as did Fell, Mill, and Wetstein. Even though εἰ τι was the only attested reading in the Greek MSS available to Erasmus in 1516, he preferred to replace it with his own conjecture. The literal translation is, “pay back if a thing you owe.” The awkwardness of this was felt by Erasmus, so he translated the Vulgate redde quod debes “pay back what you owe,” into Greek as δτι δόθηλες. He made an exception in his 2nd edition where he used δ, τι, but reverted to δτι in all his future editions. No edition by any other editor followed Erasmus’s δτι reading. Of course, there was no Greek manuscript with the δτι reading available to Erasmus before 1516, but it was a policy decision of Erasmus to bring clarity to the Greek text he was editing, and since the Vulgate and the Greek now made sense, his adjustment of the Greek to reflect the clarity of the Latin seemed justified in his eyes.

Now the correction in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis (δ, τι δόθηλες) is the same as that found in Curellus, and Mill, but not Fell and Wetstein who have the grave accent over δ. This suggests that the corrector of MS 69 was using a printed text to correct the text of Codex Leicestrensis. H. J. Vogels (1922) makes no mention of δ, τι as a recognised variant. John Fell gave εἰ τι as the alternative reading to δ, τι with the support of W. E. B. 8. Here W. stands for Wechelius sive Fr. Junii Lect. E = Ep. D. Pauli, Col. Emmanuel. Cantab. [Emmanuel College, Cambridge]. B = Mss Biblioth. Bodleian. OXON. He gives no support for his own reading of δ, τι. The introduction of the comma ensures that the reader would read δτι as two words, thus, δ, τι.

Matthew 19:3 (f1v) autω underlined/No/correction: autω/No/. Swanson incorrectly gives 69 (under f^e^) as autω. All his mss give autω. There is no support for the text (autω), which must be a singular error by 69^. The underlining may be the work of 69^3, as the correction is in his hand-writing. However, the underlining has been done with a nib much coarser than the nib of the correction. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus and written as autω, but the ligature form in the correction agrees with Erasmus’s 4th edition (1527), which has τ with two slanted strokes above it. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 19:5 (f1v) καταληφεi underlined/No/correction: καταληφει/No/. The correction is given as 69 (under rell, which includes TR). Swanson support for the text: 579 1424. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 19:9 (f1v) παρεκτος λογου πορειας underlined/Yes/correction: ει μη επι πορειας/No/. Swanson gives only the TR for ει, but it appears as a correction in the margin of 69, which agrees with Erasmus’s text as transmitted through Curcellus and Fell. Swanson support for the text: BD f'(but not 118) f^13. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John Mill (1710, p. 42) critical edition gives the following data:

Matthew 19:24 (f2r) πλουσιος underlined/No/correction: πλουσιον/No/. Swanson incorrectly gives 69 (under f15) as πλουσιον. Swanson support for the text comes only from f15 (but not 13 124). Fell and Curcellus read πλουσιον. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 19:28 (f2r) καθηροεθε underlined/Yes/correction: καθωροεθε/Yes/. Swanson support for the correction: 66CK 33 118(f15) 565 1424 TR. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 19:29 (f2r.I38) οτις is not underlined but there is dot in the r.h. margin, with the correction ὅς, which is found in Fell and Curcellus. Swanson incorrectly gave ὅτις as the reading of MS 69 (under f15). The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 19:30 (f2v) The margin correction is εσχατοι, which appears to be a misspelling of εσχατοι. It would appear that the corrector wanted to delete οи before εσχατοι, which would agree with the text of Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein. The correction was added after the margin had been strengthened by a patch. But it would appear that another strengthening patch was added after the correction was added, because it overlies it, and it also overlies κατ at the start of line 17. This gives us a relative sequence in which the corrections took place between the two stages of strengthening the outer edges of the Codex. Folio 7 was strengthened after the numbered kephalia had been inserted, because the second phase strengthening paper partly covers the kephalia. The kephalia follow the Latin Vulgate chapters divisions. Folio 12 has what appears to be a folio number in the bottom r.h. corner (see also f25). It was added after the second phase strengthening had been completed as it is written on the new patch. At folio 32 a patch has been added in such a way that it did not cover the folio number in the bottom r.h. corner, which suggests that this strengthening came later than the addition of the folio numbers..

Matthew 20:15 (f2v) μου underlined/Yes/correction: σου/No/. Support for text: none. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus, and both editors and the corrector use the same ligature for σου. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 20:18 (f2v) κρινουσιν two letters are underlined/Yes/correction: κρινουσιν/No/. Swanson support for correction: none. Fell and Curcellus have used the same ligature for -ου- (υ is placed above ο) and this is reproduced in the margin. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 20:33 (f3r) ανοιγθωσιν underlined/Yes/correction: ανοιγθωσιν/Yes/. Swanson support for text: 8BDLθ f15ωb. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Matthew 27:35b (f12v) There is no mark against v. 35b in MS 69, this is because the collating text, Fell’s text, had these words. It could be assumed that these words were retained in the Caesarean text-type, and were lost in all other text-types through an h.t. error (κληρον . . . κληρον). The words are: μου πληρωθη το ρηθαι υπο του προφητου Δεμειραστον τα μιατια μου εαυτοις και επι των ιματισιον μου εβαλον κληρον. Wetstein’s support for the omission is very strong: ADEFGHKLM 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 16. 24. 26. 27. 29. 32. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 76. 78. 80. 81. Hieronymus, Rabanus, Graeci, & multi alii non habent: solus Joannes hoc 18. 19. 21. 22. 24. Editio Complut. Plant. cum obelo. Versio Copt. Codices Latini plurimi. Aethiop. Arab. Versio Syra posterior in margine: Haec . . . probantibus Erasmo, T. Beza in annotatt. Edit. 3. 4. 5. H. Gratio, J. Millio prologue 1195. D. Whitbyo. vid. supra Prologom. p. 85.

However, the 19 words are present in: — all editions of Erasmus, Simon Colin (1534), Froschouiana (1547), R. Stephens (1551), Arius Montanus (1585), Henry Stephens (1587), Th. Bezae (1598), Scaliger (1620), Elzevir (1633), Curcellaeus (1658), whose apparatus reads: “v. 35. totus hic locus deest in veteribus libris, Complut. editione, & Syriaca versione.” E. Schmideri (1658), John Fell (1675), John Mill (1710), who noted that the 19 words are taken from John 19:24; and J. J. Wetstein (1751). Fell = Curcellus.
This is not a case of an h.t. error because CP, RP and NA27 omit these words. The words were present in the Vulgate (Clement) that Erasmus used, and he had access to MS 69, so this would have been an incentive to include the words. It is likely that these words were imported from John 19:24 in the archetype of the Caesarean text-type, so the addition is very old.

Mark 4:15 (f18r) ὀπου underlined faintly/Yes, under rel/correction: ὀς is preceded by an abbreviated γαρ, which means ’replace with’/No/. Swanson support for correction: only D (see Matthew 27:1). See Romans 1:27 for the use of this ligature for γαρ at 197v. The correction in the margin of 69 has been taken from the brief critical apparatus in Fell (footnote: ὀς Ca. s. 1. [Ca. = Exam. Cantab. quod Bezae fuerat]) and Curcellus (footnote has ὀς, but no source). The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Mark 10:19 (f26r) omits text through h.t./Yes/correction: μη ἀποστρεπηται/Yes/. Swanson support for text: B*WKΙΨΔ f'(αυτ') 28 579 700 788(ifice). The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. However, the epsilon indicates that a different hand wrote this correction. That a number of men helped Rev. John Jackson compile his collation of MS 69 with John Fell’s printed edition of 1675 is mentioned in a letter by Jackson. The following information is taken from A Catalogue of the Books in the Town Library, Leicester (Leicester: Thomas Combe, Junior, [1835], 48pp.). See page 45 for a transcription of Jackson’s letter and the catalogue entry for John Fell’s volume. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: μη ἀποστρεπηται (= missing) 69. a prima manu. By recording “a prima manu” this implies that another hand had inserted the missing text, which could only have been what was added by John Jackson or one of his co-collators. This means that all the marginal corrections were in place by 1751 when Wetstein records this one.

Luke 6:1 (f43r) omit δευτεροπρωτω, but εν σαββατου preceding it is underlined/Yes/correction: δευτεροπρωτω/Possibly noted under f'15. Swanson support for omission: ῬBLW f'(αυτ') 33 157 579 788(f'15). The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: δευτεροπρωτω (= missing) 69. a prima manu. By recording “a prima manu” this implies that another hand had inserted the missing text, which could only have been what was added by John Jackson or one of his co-collators. This means that all the marginal corrections were in place by 1751 when Wetstein records this one.

The corrector has written the sigma of σαββατω with a large capital C, which is found very frequently in Scaliger’s text (1620) and Colin (1534), but rarely, if ever, in Fell, Mill, Wetstein or Bezae (1598). However, the ligature for σου is a feature of the text of Fell and Curcellus. The correction was made after the strengthening patch had been added because it straddles the old and the new paper. But it appears that the patch may have covered a previous kephalia notice because just below εν [σαββατω] is a partially extant letter. At folio 59 a new patch has been added and a different hand has reinstated the 16th kephalia (Luke chap. 16).

Luke 18:25 (f62r) Wetstein records that 69 omits γαρ, but there is no mark in the margin of 69 to note the omission, and there is no first-hand correction. Fell γαρ = Curcellus. This shows that Wetstein had a collation document that recorded this omission.

Luke 18:25 (f62r) Wetstein records that 69 reads βελονης, which is not corrected in the margin. Fell ραφδος = Curcellus & Wetstein. There is no hint in the margin of 69 to indicate this difference of reading.

Luke 18:31 (f62r) Wetstein records 69 as περι του υλου, but Fell reads του υλου = Curcellus & Wetstein. There is no hint of this difference in the margin of 69. So not every difference between Fell’s text and MS 69 are noted in the margins of 69.

Luke 21:38 (f66v). There is a marginal note that the Pericope Adultery (John 7:52–8:11) has been inserted here from John’s Gospel. See folio 81v for the reverse notice.

Luke 22:42 (f68r) omits μη before το, underlining marks where the omission occurs, and a cross occurs before the marginal correction μη το/Yes/correction: μη/Yes/. Support for text:
none. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Luke 22:43-44 (f68r) omits vv. 43-44. The Greek letter Λ surmounted with a pyramid of three dots marks where the omission occurs in the text. A similar letter in the margin is followed by “λέπιτε. cf. mat. c. 26:” meaning: “missing. cf. Matthew chapter 26.” The colon following 26 is intriguing. If a verse number (v. 39) had followed 26 then we would have been able to date corrector 2 (69) to a time after 1550 when Robert Stephens introduced verse numbers into the Greek New Testament for the first time (cf. Acts 10:45). As it is, the absence of a verse number in the margin is inconclusive for dating purposes. Swanson notes that 69 lacks vv.43-44. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Luke 23:38 (70r) omits text καὶ ἐβραίκοιζ through h.t. The Greek letter Λ surmounted with a pyramid of three dots marks where the omission occurs in the text. There is no corresponding sign in the margin. /Yes/correction: καὶ ἐβραίκοιζ/Yes, but gives the correction as καὶ ἐβραίκοιζ, which is incorrect. I have not been able to find a single text between 1516 and 1751589 which reads ἐβραίκοιζ in place of ἐβραίκοιζ/. Swanson support for omission: C which lacks six words here. The ligature of -κο- in ἐβραίκοιζ is the same only in Curcellus, Fell, Scaliger and Schmigli. Curcellus and Fell use the same ligature for καὶ, as it is in the correction. Fell καὶ ἐβραίκοιζ = Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, he notes only its omission, even though the correction was in the margin.

John 1:5 (f72v) κατελεβη underlined/Yes, in Swanson under Section A/correction: κατελεβη/Yes/. Swanson support for text: none. The margin has just -βεν. However -β- has a peculiar shape (a large C with a small circle at each end) which occurs in Fell, Bezae, Curcellus, Elzevir, H. Stephens, Montanus, R. Stephens, Erasmus, and Mill. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 1:13 (f72v) εγενηθησαν underlined/No/correction: εγενηθησαν/Yes, under rell/. Support for the text: B,D,Π,ΑΣΔΘ 28 346 1071. The corrected text (–ν–) is found in Fell and Curcellus, and all the other texts. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 1:28 (f73r) βηθβαρα underlined/Yes/correction: βηθβαρα/No/. Swanson support for text: Λ f13 (but not 124). Support for correction: Κ:CU(P) f (but not 118) 2: 33 TR. Fell and Curcellus have: βηθβαρα. The correction is -αβ which does not help to decide if the corrector used Curcellus or Fell. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 1:28 (f73r) ην omitted. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and in the margin/Yes/correction: ην/No/. Swanson support for text: none. The correction is in the form of a ligature which is found in Curcellus, Fell, Bezae, Colin, H. Stephens, Elzevir, Montanus, R. Stephens, Mill, but not in Erasmus, Wetstein, or Schmigli. The omission of ην is noted by Wetstein but not its correction.

John 2:15 (f74r) Wetstein records that 69 adds καὶ after ἐντευθεν, but there is no hint in the margin that this is an addition, because it is not in Fell = Curcellus & Wetstein. The addition of καὶ is noted in Fell’s apparatus as being in MS A. This is another case where not every difference between Fell and 69 is noted in the margin of 69.

John 6:6 (f78r) ολ δε underlined/No/correction: ηδει/Yes, under rell/. Swanson support for text: none. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 6:23 (f78v) omits 3 words. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but there is no corresponding sign in the margin, just the correction./Yes/correction: ευχαριστησαντος του κυριου/Yes, under rell/. Swanson support for omission: D 788(f13). The corrected text is found

589 Erasmus 1516; Simon Colin 1534; R. Stephens 1551; Montanus 1583; H. Stephens 1587; Th. Bezae 1598; Scaliger 1620; Elzevir 1633; Curcellus 1658; Schmigli 1658; John Fell 1675; John Mill 1710; and Wetstein 1751.
in Fell and Curcellus, with all the same ligatures. The omission of εὐχαριστηματος του κυριου is noted by Wetstein but not its correction.

John 7:52–8:11 (f81v) The Greek letter Λ surmounted with a pyramid of three dots marks where the omission occurs in the text. A similar letter in the margin is followed by Δείτε (‘missing’). There is a marginal note (Greek and Latin) that the Pericope Adultery (John 7:52–8:11) has been omitted here from John’s Gospel. See folio f68r for the reverse notice. The 7-line note in the margin has displaced the Kephalia number (κεφ. η) upwards by two lines. This suggests that the kephalias were inserted after the corrector had done his work, or, more likely, they are his work also.

John 8:29 (f82r) omit με. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but not in the margin./Yes/correction: με/No/. Swanson support for omission: none. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 8:29 (f82r) Wetstein records: πολυ a prima manu. 69. This suggests that there must be a correction to it, but there is no correction in the margin of 69.

John 8:36 (f82r.l28) underlined/Yes/correction: ouτος/No/. Swanson support for text: E* 565. Fell and Curcellus agree. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 8:36 (f82r.l28) Wetstein records: oν/ — (= missing), but there is no correction in the margin of 69. The collator missed out the presence of oν after εις at the beginning of v. 36.

John 8:39 (f82v) omit 5 words through h.t. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but not in the margin. Yes/ correction: τα εργα του Αβρααμ εποιειτε/Yes/. Swanson support for omission: none. Fell adds δι’ after εποιειτε, which is also in Curcellus, R. Stephens (1551), Bezae (1598), Schmid, Matthaei, Wetstein, Mill, Lachmann, but it is not found in Erasmus (1516, 1527), Colin (1534), Frouschoiana (1547), H. Stephens (1587), and Elzevir (1633). Both Griesbach (1777) and Scotz (1836) omit δι’ in their main text but note it in their apparatuses. The introduction of δι’ after εποιειτε appears to have begun with R. Stephens (1551). It is not found in the Complutensian edition, or in Montanus (1585) and Scaliger (1620), which were influenced by CP. This is the one case where the corrector does not follow Curcellus and Fell. It is possible he used Elzevir’s text (1633), which does not have δι’ after εποιειτε.

The omission of τα εργα του Αβρααμ εποιειτε δι’ is noted by Wetstein but not its correction.

John 8:40 (f82r) ἀνθρωπος underlined/Yes/ correction: ἀνθρωπος/No/. Swanson support for text: 1071. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus as ἀνθρωπος. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 10:42 (f85r) εἰς αὐτον εκεί underlined/Yes, under f13/correction: εκεί εἰς αὐτον/No/. Swanson support for correction: Ἑρας 2 700 1424 Erasmus (TR). The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 11:6 (f85r) ηκου occurs at the end of a line, so the corrector added -σει to complete it. He also underlined -σει to connect it to ηκου./No/correction: ηκουσει/No/. Swanson support for the text: none. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus.

John 12:1 (f86v) omits 3 words. No indication of the place of omission, except that the correction in the margin adds προ εξ, which places the location of insertion/No/correction: о ον/ηκουσει/No/. Swanson support for the omission: Λ*. The following is a scan of the margin of MS 69.

The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus, but Curcellus used an unusual ligature to write ον, and this is how the correction has been written, showing that the correction was taken from his text, and not from Fell. However, the situation is reversed in Romans 16:19 (see below). The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

John 13:2 (f88r) omit τουσα. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but not in the margin./Yes/correction: τουσα/No/. Swanson support for omission: f13[all]. Wetstein for the
omission: 13. 47. 56. 58. 59. 61. 69 (69 = Leicestrensis). The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. Both use the same ligature to write οὐ. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

035 John 13:34 (f89r) omit 8 words through h.t. The Greek letter Λ surmounted with a pyramid of three dots marks where the omission occurs in the text, with the same sign in the margin./Yes/correction: καθὼς ἡγατήρα ἤμαι ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπήσετε ἀλλήλους/Yes, under roll/. Swanson support for omission: f13 (but not 124) C. The corrector prefers to use the uncial form for gamma (Γ). The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

036 John 18:15 (f92v) omits 2 words. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but not in the margin./Yes/correction: δὲ τῷ Ἰησοῦ/No. Swanson support for the omission of δὲ...Ἰησοῦ: none. Noted in Wetstein. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. Both use the same ligature to write οὐ- as in the correction. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

037 John 18:20 (f93v) omits εἰδᾶξεν. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but not in the margin, except that the correction in the margin adds εν τῷ, which locates the place of insertion./Yes/correction: εἰδᾶξεν/Yes/. Swanson support for omission: none. The omission is not noted in Wetstein, nor the correction. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. Neither the omission nor the correction is recorded in Wetstein.

038 John 18:21 (f93r) omit δαςιν. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin with the correction./No/correction: δαςιν/No/. Swanson support for omission: none. Noted in Wetstein. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. Neither the omission nor the correction is recorded in Wetstein.

039 Romans 1:12 (f97r) omits 5 words. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin with the correction./Yes/correction: διὰ τῆς εν ἀλλήλοις πιστεύσεως/Yes/. Swanson support for omission: none. Noted in Wetstein. The form of ε in ἐν is found in Curcellaeus, Fell, and Mill, but not in Wetstein, who gives Codex Leicestrensis the MS no. 37 (not 69) throughout Paul’s Epistles. The script of Curcellus and Fell is identical, even to their ligatures, but the correction has a different script. However, it does use the -στι- ligature which is found elsewhere in Curcellus and Fell. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, only the omission.

040 Romans 1:21 (f97r.138) γινώσκεις. Above -ος- the corrector has put -ον-. Not noted in Wetstein. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

041 Romans 1:27 (f97v) αὐτῶν (pers pron gen pl). The first two letters are underlined./Yes/correction: αὐτῶν (dem pron gen pl) which is preceded by a ligatured γαρ, which means ‘replace with’/No/. Swanson support for the correction: none. See Mark 4:15 (f18r) for another example of a ligatured γαρ before a correction. The same ligature γαρ is found in the long correction at f101v (Romans 8:8). Now the form αὐτῶν is a printer’s error. It first appeared in Simon Colin (1534), then in R. Stephens (1551), Montanus (1585), Bezae (1598), Scaliger (1620), Elzevir (1633), Curcellaeus (1658), Fell (1675), Mill, and Wetstein. The correct form is found in Erasmus (1516), Bulgarian Froschouiana (1547), H. Stephens (1587), and in Codex Leicestrensis, where the corrector changed it back to the wrong word — αὐτῶν. Because the wrong word dominated the editions of the Greek N.T.

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590 It may be an alternative reading tradition. Tischendorf rejected the form αὐτῶν (rough breathing) and always used αὐτῶν (smooth breathing); also αὐτῶν. It appears that he came across these forms frequently enough to make a policy decision about them. See Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament: with remarks on its revision upon critical principles. Together with a collation of the critical texts of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf, with that in common use. (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1854), p. 126.
the correction does not help to date the corrector’s work. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Romans 2:8 (f98r) τῆς underlined/Yes/τοις/Yes. Swanson support for text: none. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Romans 3:21 (f98v) omit και. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but not in the margin. /Yes/correction: και/Yes. Swanson support for omission: none. Noted in Wetstein, where Codex Leicestrensis has been given the no. 37 (not 69). The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

Romans 4:10b-11a (f99r) omission of 19 words (102 letters) through h.t./Yes/correction: υπερ περιτομή άλλ’ εν ακροβυστία (v.11) και στίγμα χείλειας περιτομής (περιτομής) σφαγία τῆς δικαίους τῆς πίστεως τῆς εν τῇ ακροβυστία. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, on ly the omission.

The corrector has incorporated an alternative reading (περιτομή) inside his correction! If a manuscript can be found which has this correction then this would be the manuscript used to correct Codex Leicestrensis. The correction within the correction, i.e., περιτομή, is found in 6 424 1739 1881 (Swanson’s evidence), but none of these mss would have been available in England while the Codex was in Leicester.


It is possible that the corrector had a copy of Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill, or Wetstein, because only in these four printed texts is there a footnote giving περιτομή as an alternative reading, which the corrector has noted in his marginal correction in MS 69 (= no 37 in Wetstein). The variant is not noted in Bezae (1598), or Schmidi (1658). But we can narrow down the choice to Curcellus, Fell, and Wetstein because in these three editions does the corrector follow their exact ligatures, especially the triple use of τ with a superscript ς which stands for τῆς, and the peculiar ligature for writing περι- in περιτομής (twice).

Romans 4:12 (f99r) τυχούσα underlined. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin with the correction./Swanson has misread 69*, which reads: τοις τυχούσα. The correction is στοιχούσα/Yes/. Swanson support for the text: 6 131 1330 1241 1243 1735 1836 (and possibly 1 104 1319* 1424 1646 P if Swanson has misread this group of mss.). The error came about because of -σ- in τοις τυχούσα. Interestingly, the marginal correction is written with the same ligature letters as appears in Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill, and Wetstein. Once again we can narrow down the source text used by the corrector of MS 69 to one of these four printed texts. The misspelling and the correction are not recorded in Wetstein.

Romans 7:8b-9a κατεργάσατο ἐν ἐμοί πᾶσαι ἐπιθυμίαις· χωρίς γὰρ νόμου ἀμαρτία νεκρά· ἕγετο δὲ ἐξων χωρίς νόμου [ποτέ]· ἐλθόσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολής, . . . The bracketed word, [ποτέ], has been omitted by the corrector by mistake as there is no printed text that omits it, nor is there any apparatus that records it as missing. The correction has been written on a patch which predates the correction. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, only the omission.

The printed text that comes closest to the handwriting of the corrector is Curcellaeus, as they agree on the ligature for γαρ and the ligature of τ in κατεργάσατο. On the other hand the corrector and Fell agree on not using the ligature for τῆς, which is written τ with a
superscript Ζ in Curcellus. The corrector used the large uncial C for σ, in κατεγράφατο which is not found in any of the printed texts at this place. Strangely, Mill used Codex Leicestrensis in 1707/1710, but he failed to note this 19-word omission in MS 69.

Romans 7:25 (f101v) τοῦ μετα τοῦ No/. Swanson support for correction: none, but he notes two mss (1881 1739) which read τοῦ μετα τοῦ, which looks like a conflation. Both Curcellaeus and Fell have the correction in their footnotes but agree with MS 69 in their main text. Mill agrees with MS 69 in his main text, and ignores the correction. Wetstein records only one manuscript (no. 11 = Stephani τα) and one version, Syriac, which has the marginal correction as its main text. None of the ten printed editions examined in this work have the order: τοῦ μετα τοῦ, which means that the corrector took his reading from the apparatus of either Curcellaeus or Fell. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, nor the omission.

Romans 8:8 (f101v) omit 10 words (38 letters) through h.t. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin with the correction. The same ligature γαι occurs here, and in Mark 4:15 (f18r) and in Romans 1:27 (f97v), confirming 69c2 as the scribe behind these corrections. Swanson support for the omission: none. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, only the omission.

The handwriting of the corrector has a few features found more often in Simon Colin’s text (1534), particularly σ (initial and middle letters), which takes the form of a capital C. Also the ending -ται, which takes the form of a back-the-front capital C with a small suspended line from the top curve. This form occurs very frequently in Fell (36 times in Matthew 18-28), and less frequently in Wetstein (6x in Matthew 18-28). But both forms (σ and -ται) occur most often in Colin’s text, where examples of both ligatures occur on every page, it seems. The corrector has spelled ες in ωντες with a ligature which occurs in Colin, Fell & Mill, where it clearly always means εςω, but here, it must mean ες. A similar ligature is used again by the corrector at Romans 10:16, but there it means εςω just as it does in Colin’s text and in Fell’s text (see Romans 10:16 επιστευμενε). Crucial in this instance is that the corrector agrees with Fell in the -ται ligature. This particular ligature does not occur in Curcellus.

Romans 8:12 (f102r) τη before κατα is underlined. Swanson support for text: none. The corrector did not follow the ligature as given by Curcellus (which is τ written on top of ου which is written with υ on top of ο). The corrector followed the ligature of Fell and Wetstein, which is τ alongside υ on top of ο. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, nor the omission.

Romans 10:16 (f104r) επιστευκαν a diagonal slash with a dot on either side occurs in the text and before the correction in the margin to link them. This is the first time this sign has been used. Swanson support for the text: none. The ligatures (espec. εςω) of the corrector matches the printed texts of Curcellus, Fell and Mill, but not Wetstein or Colin. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, nor the omission.

Romans 13:1 (f105v) ἐπο before θεο is underlined, with a single dot over the text word. Swanson support for the correction: DFG 88 323 796 945 1352 1506 1573 1827 1982 2125 Erasmus TR. The support for ἐπο is: Erasmus (1516), Curcellaeus, Bulgarian Froschouiana, R. Stephens, Bezae, H. Stephens, Elzevir, Fell, Mill, Wetstein. The correction is not recorded in Wetstein, which is unexpected. The support for ἐπο is: Scaliger and Montanus (both influenced by CP). Wetstein gives the following support for ἐπο: AD ex emendatione E ex emendatione FG. 1. 2. 18. 19. 21. 22. 23. a prima manu 26. 29. 30. 31. 36. 37 [= MS 69]. 38. 43. 46. 52. 55. Editio Complut. Plantin. Origens c. Cels. p. 421. Basilius Eth. 79. Isidorus II 216. Occumenius. probante J. A. Bengelio.

Romans 16:19 (f108r) το εφ ον και χαλω there is no linking sigla between the text and the correction. Swanson support for the text: B8*ACL 365 1243 1319+ 1573. The ligature for ον matches Fell and Mill more than
Samples of the handwriting of S. P. Tregelles and O. T. Dobbin can be seen on folio 203r.  

On the left is the scan of the correction in MS 69, which agrees with Fell’s printed text, but not with Curcellus’ text.

However, the situation is reversed in John 12:1 (see above).

053 Romans 16:20 (f108r) omit αὐτήν. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin with the correction. Yes/correction: αὐτήν/Yes. Swanson support for the correction: 104 330 2400 2815. Support for αὐτήν: Erasmus (1516), Curcellaeus, Fell, Colin, Froschouiana, H. Stephens, Bezae, Elzevir, Mill, Wetstein. Αὐτήν not in R. Stephens (1551), Montanus (1583), or Scaliger (1620). The correction is not recorded in Wetstein.

054 Romans 16:25-27 (f108r) There is a marginal note in Greek recognizing the omission of the Doxology here. Linking the note with the place in the text where the Doxology should be entered is a small, elongated ‘S’ surmounted with a pyramid of three dots. The note commences with Λειπέτοι (‘missing’) and then gives the first five words of the Doxology. Following this is a Latin note that the Doxology can be found at ch. 14 (v. 23). The Doxology (16:25-27) is found in Curcellus, Fell, Mill, and Wetstein. Wetstein notes that the Doxology is placed at 14:23 in D, and ex emendatione FG, except for Alexandrinus which has it in both places.

055 1 Corinthians 4:8 (f110r) four words omitted through h.t./Yes/correction: καὶ ὀφελὸν γε ἐβασιλεύσατε/Yes/. Swanson support for the omission: Ψ1241 1836 2147. The letter Λ with a dot over it appears in the text and in the margin. The correction has been written over a patch which deliberately avoided the fourth kephalia (chap.4), which means that the kephalia pre-dates the patch, and the correction post-dates the patch and the kephalia. Spatially, below the visible correction, more writing (by the same hand) has been partially rubbed out. It appears to be a continuation of the text of MS 69 after the correction words had been entered. The writing of gamma as a small uncial is characteristic of the corrector. The ligature for -ευ- in ἐβασιλεύσατε is the same in Curcellus, Fell and Mill, but not in Wetstein. Mill notes that the four words are missing in Leicester, as does Wetstein, who adds MSS 30, 44. The ligature writing of καὶ in the correction agrees with Curcellus. Fell uses a different ligature (a large C with a smaller c inside it). Both Curcellus and Fell use the modern horizontal hyphen, whereas Erasmus used a slash hyphen.

056 1 Corinthians 9:11 (f113r) ηδὸν before ήδὸν is underlined/Yes/correction: ηδὸν/Yes. This is the first example where the correction is written above the faulty text/Yes/. Swanson support for the text: none (but 1241 reads: ρεμιδον). Mill noted that MS 69 has καὶ before έστειλαίμενον, but the corrector of MS 69 has no mark against this καὶ, which suggests that whoever made up the list of differences (which were sent to Mill and Wetstein) did so without leaving any indication in MS 69 that there was a problem here.

057 1 Corinthians 9:17 (f113r) οὐκ before ἐχθα in the text is enclosed in square L-brackets. This is the first occurrence of these L-brackets. At Acts 19:40 (f180r.18) a modern collator (Scrivener?) has written a pencilled note in the margin objecting to these brackets. It reads: “a stupid alteration by some modern reader.” These brackets are found in other places, see f140v (1 Thessalonians 4:1); f148v (Titus 1:12); and f180r (Acts 19:40); 1 John 1:6b-7a (f198r). Wetstein noted that οὐκ is found in MSS 13, 37 (= MS 69). MS 13 is Jacobi Fabri Stapulensis c. There is no marginal correction. Swanson support for the retention of οὐκ is 440 1505 1646 2400 2495. There is no οὐκ before ἐχθα in Curcellus or Fell., and this would account for the L-brackets.

Samples of the handwriting of S. P. Tregelles and O. T. Dobbin can be seen on folio 203r.
1 Corinthians 9:27 (f113r) MS 69 reads ὑπομενεῖς. There is a pyramid of three dots in the text and in the margin. Above ‘‘’ is ‘‘’, and above ‘‘’ is ‘‘’. This reads ὑπομενεῖς. This is the reading of Curcellus, Fell, Mill, and Wetstein, who noted the variant in MS 69, which has the support of BF. 1. 2. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 20. 21. 23. 26. 30. 34. 39. Edito Complut. Erasm i 1. Ald. Colinaei, Bogardi, Stephani 1. Plantin. Eusebius in Psalm. MS. Ephrem p. 329. . . probante J. Millio prologue §1204. Wetstein’s support for the text of MS 69 is D. a prima manu E. 22. 28. 29. a prima manu 31. 36. 37. 41. 42. 46. plus some church fathers. There is an unreadable correction in ligature form in the margin, which appears to begin ὑπομενεῖς. . . . It would appear to be written by a different person to corrector 2.

2 Corinthians 2:3 (f119v) omission of διά to the end of εγραφα. This is a scribal mistake. There is a cross in the margin opposite the place of the correction. The omission is marked with Δ in the text. There is no corresponding sign in the margin because the correction is placed above the text word (supralinear), thus διά. Swanson indicates that 1:15b to 3:15a (which is all of f119v.) is missing in MS 69. This is incorrect. All the text is extant in the Codex.

2 Corinthians 7:7 (f122r) MS 69 omits με. The omission is marked with Δ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin with the correction. Yes/correction: με/Yes/. Swanson support for the omission: KFG 049 104 323 326 460 618 796 1738 1837 1854 1874*. The correction is in Curcellus and Fell. Strangely, Mill does not note this omission in MS 69, but Wetstein noted its omission in MSS 31. 35. 37 (= MS 69). 39.

2 Corinthians 10:8 (f124r) MS 69 omits τι after περισσότερον. The omission is marked with Δ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin with the correction. Yes/correction: τι/No/. Swanson support for omission: FG 1175. Fell and Curcellus agree. Strangely, Mill does not note this omission in MS 69. Wetstein noted its omission in MS 37 (= MS 69).

Galatians 1:8, 9 (f126v) Two cases of παρά (both underlined) have been clarified by the corrector to read παρά Δι, which is the reading of Curcellus and Fell.

Galatians 5:1 (f129r) omit η. There is a pyramid of three dots in the text (but no corresponding sign in the margin) to mark where the omission is to be inserted. Yes/correction: η/Yes/. Swanson support for the omission: 8BC/ADFGPY 33 330 1175 1241* 1319 1573 1739 2400. Mill notes the omission in MS 69, as does Wetstein as follows: ACD a prima manu. EFG. 2. 5. 6. 10. 31. 37. 43. 47. 52. Editio Colinaei. Versio Vulg. Copt. and some church fathers (all named). The correction is in Curcellus and Fell.

Ephesians 1:11 (f130r) MS 69 reads θελεματος άυτου. Note that θελεματος is a misspelling of θελεματος. The omission is marked with Δ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin (both surmounted with an umlaut) before the correction. Yes/correction: κατά την βουλήν του θελεματος άυτου/Swanson not available/. Wetstein ignored the omission. Mill made the mistake of reading του θεου after προθεους in MS 69, and Wetstein copied this into his apparatus. He gives in support of του θεου: DEFG 10. 31 (= MS 69). 46. 47. 59. Versions: Coptic, Hilarius, Euthalius. But it should be noted that Codex Leicestrensis is no. 37 in Paul’s Epistles. It is no. 31 in Acts & Catholic Epistles. The corrector did not use Curellaeus, Fell, Mill, or Wetstein who have άυτοι in place of άυτοι. In terms of ligatures, Wetstein is closer to των, but Fell is closer than Curcellus. The corrector used a unique ligature for the ending θελεματος.

Ephesians 3:9 (f131r) οἰκονομία is underlined by 69c2/Swanson not available/correction: κοινωνία/Swanson not available/. The main text of Erasmus (all editions), Curcellus, Fell, and Wetstein have κοινωνία. Fell’s apparatus gives οἰκονομία with support from Cp. E. L. M. I. N.

Montanus (1583) and Scaliger (1620) read οἰκονομία, which is the Complutensian reading.

Colossians 1:24 (f137r.l25) MS 69 omits μου following οτε. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin before the correction, which is by the first hand. /Swanson not available/correction: μου/Swanson not available/. There is a correction to this correction by 69C, who has underlined μου in the margin and written μου οτε. The omission is underlined by the corrector. He preferred to give the evidence for the omission of μου, which is: ADEFG. 1. 2. 3. 13. 17. 28. 30. 31. 34. 37 [Leicester]. 43. 46. 52. 55. Editions: Colinaei. Versions: Vigil. Syr. Copt. Theodoretus, Damascenus, Hilarius. By default all the other MSS support the inclusion of μου: C. 4. 5. 6. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 14. 16. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 26. 27. 29. 32. 33. 35. 36. 39. 41. 44. 45. 47. 56. 57. 58. Erasmus. The correction μου is written as a ligature (μη with ‘m’ superscript), which occurs at Colossians 1:24 and 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (see above). It is closest to Montanus (1585), H. Stephens (1587), Bezae (1598), and Scaliger (1620). It occurs again at 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (f142r). The ligature is clearly not taken from Curcellus or Fell.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (f139r.l35) Εγενηθη underlined. /Swanson not available/correction: Εγενηθη. /Swanson not available/. The text has a line through the letters μω creating doubt, so the corrector re-wrote the word in the margin for clarification. Note the small uncial γαμμα in the correction, which is characteristic of the corrector. The corrector did not copy the ligatures in Curcellus and Fell, especially for γενεθη.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (f139r.l37) οτε before οκολ has been underlined and a small ‘v’ placed in the margin by C2, presumably to indicate it should be omitted, as Wetstein gives only MS 37 in support of it, following Mill, who gives only ‘L’ in support, which stands for ‘Leicestrensis Codex.’ Neither Curcellus nor Fell have οτε.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 (f139v.l10) επτε before τωι is underlined by the corrector. /Swanson not available/ The corrector has placed απο in the margin with an ‘X’ preceding it. /Swanson not available/. Mill and Wetstein ignored επτε in 37 [= MS 69]. The correction is present in Curcellus and Fell.

1 Thessalonians 2:15 (f140r.l15) εναυταος is underlined by the corrector/Swanson not available. /correction: εναυταος/Swanson not available/. Wetstein (and Mill) overlooked 37 [Leicester] when he gave ‘D a prima manu’ as the only witness to εναυταος. The ligature for ττ- is found in Fell, R. Stephens, Elzevir, Scaliger, Colin, but not in Curcellus, Mill or Wetstein.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 (f140r.l) The sequence in 69 is: verse 19a, 20, 19b. The corrector has put full square brackets around 20 and indicated with the use of Λ (surmounted with a single

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dot) that it should be transferred to follow 19b./Swanson not available/. The transferred text is: v. 20: ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐστε ἡ δοξά ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χάρα /Swanson not available/. The corrected new sequence follows the text of Curcellus, Fell, Mill, Scaliger, and Wetstein. Wetstein’s only support for the verse sequence in MS 69 is MS 19 (Codex Coislinianus 26).

072 1 Thessalonians 3:2 (f140r.l32) omit ἐπιστατά /Swanson not available/. An upside down pyramid of dots occurs in the text and with the correction in the margin, showing where the omitted word is to be inserted. Wetstein support for the omission: AD a prima manu. FG. 23. 37 [Leicester]. 39. Versions: Vulg. Copt. Theodoretus in praef. Epist. Pauli. Damascenus. Mill gives L [= Leicester]. Lin. as the only two MSS which omit ἐπιστατά. The correction is in Curcellus and Fell.

073 1 Thessalonians 3:4 (f140r.l37) an unreadable word is underlined and in the margin appears what appears to be καὶ (in ligature form) before ὀλίγατε, which is what is required, and found in Curcellus and Fell. But the ink is not the same that C2 has used on the same page, who also inserted Κεφ. Γ /Swanson not available/. Wetstein’s text has καὶ ὀλίγατε where the text is unreadable in MS 69. This is also the text of Curcellus and Fell.

074 1 Thessalonians 3:12 (f140v.l16) omit ἐκ. The omission is marked with Δ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin before the correction /Swanson not available/. Fell and Curcellus agree on the correction. Wetstein wrongly gives ἐκ as missing in 3:11, following Mill, but correctly gives ἐκ as missing in 3:12, which Mill overlooked.

075 1 Thessalonians 3:13 (f140v.l22) αἱμὺν is underlined, and the marginal comment is: Αἱμὺν λειπεῖ v. c. To λοιπὸν (Amen lacking/ before chapter: To λοιπὸν) which suggests that Αἱμὺν was lacking (λειπεῖ) in the collating manuscript, which is omitted in Erasmus, Curcellus, Fell, and Wetstein. Wetstein’s support for αἱμὺν is: ADE. 37. 43. Versions: Vulg. Copt. (Corrector. Biblioth. Graecus non habet) Armen. Pelagius.

076 1 Thessalonians 3:13 (f140v.l21) MS 69 omits Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, but there is no mark in the text to indicate its omission. Wetstein gives only 37 for the omission of Ἰησοῦ, but he gives some support for the omission of Χριστοῦ: ADE. 3. 14. 21. 29. 30. 32. 33. 37 [Leicester]. 39. 41. 46. 47. The correction Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is present in Curcellus and Fell.

077 1 Thessalonians 4:1 (f140v.l22) λοιπὸν is underlined, and the marginal correction is: To λοιπὸν οὐ/ Swanson not available/. Wetstein’s support for the omitted text is: ADEFG. 1. 2. 3. 21. 23. 26. 37. 46. 52. Codices plurimi, teste Millio. Versions: Copt. Damascenus, probante J. Millio prologue §991. The correction To λοιπὸν οὐ is present in Curcellus and Fell.

078 1 Thessalonians 4:1 (f140v.l23) There are square L-brackets around Ιωάννου before καθος which has the support of: D a prima manu. EFG. 17. 37. 52. Versions: Vulg. Syr. Hilarius, Pelagius (according to Wetstein). Wetstein omits Ιωάννου before καθος in his main text, as do Erasmus, Curcellus, Fell and Mill; the latter notes the presence of Ιωάννου in MS L [Leicester]. L-brackets are used at 1 Corinthians 9:17 (f113r); Titus 1:12 (f148v); 1 John 1:6b-7a (f189r) and Acts 19:40 (f180r.l18).

079 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (f141r.l19) MS 69 omits οἱ νεκροί. The omission is marked with Δ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin before the correction /Swanson not available/. The correction is grammatically incorrect as it reads: οἱ νεκροί/Swanon not available/. Wetstein notes that only 37 omits οἱ νεκροί. Curcellus and Fell read οἱ νεκροί.

080 1 Thessalonians 5:1 (f141r.l25) δειλήφων is underlined as a misspelling, and the corrector has prefixed it with α-. /Swanson not available/. Wetstein ignored the correction, as expected. Curcellus and Fell read αδειλήφων.

081 1 Thessalonians 5:3 (f141r) εἴσταται is underlined as a misspelling, and the corrector has corrected it to εἴσταται with a supralinear α-/Swanson not available/. Wetstein gives just MSS 4. 37. in support for εἴσταται. It clearly is a scribal error. Curcellus and Fell read εἴσταται.

082 1 Thessalonians 5:8 (f141r) ηφισμένων is underlined as a misspelling, and the corrector has corrected it to ηφισμένων with a supralinear α-/Swanson not available/. The corrected spelling
occurs in Colin (1534), Curcellus, Fell, Mill, and Wetstein who ignores the misspelling in MS 69.

1 Thessalonians 5:10 (f141v) καθεδωμεν is not underlined as a misspelling, but the corrector has corrected it to καθεδωμεν with a supralinear -ν/-Swanson not available. The corrected spelling occurs in Colin, who has departed from Erasmus's 1522 edition which (supposedly) read γρηγορωμεν, ειτε καθεδωμεν, which has the support of 2, 3, 4, 33, 38. Edition Erasmi 3. Colin's text of γρηγορωμεν, ειτε καθεδωμεν is followed by Froschouiana (1547), R. Stephens (1551), Montanus (1583), H. Stephens (1587), Bezae (1598), Scaliger (1620), Elzevir (1633), Curcellus (1658), Schmidi (1658), Fell (1675), Mill (1710), and Wetstein (1751). According to Wetstein's apparatus, Erasmus had γρηγορωμεν, ειτε καθεδωμεν in his 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th, but not in his 3rd. On checking Erasmus's 3rd edition (1522), I found it read: γρηγορωμεν, ειτε καθεδωμεν (and not as Wetstein has it). In his 4th and 5th editions Erasmus reverted to his 2nd edition spelling (checked). Nevertheless, this rules out Erasmus's 3rd edition as the text used by the corrector of MS 69.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 (f141v) απεχεσθαι is not underlined as a misspelling, and the corrector has corrected it to απεχεσθε with a supralinear -ε- over -α-. /Swanson not available. The correction agrees with Curcellus, Fell, and Wetstein, who, following Mill, ignores MS 69.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 (f141v) παρακαλων is underlined, and corrected to καλων/Swanson not available. Παρακαλων has only the support of MS 69 in Wetstein (= no. 37) and Mill (= L). Curcellus and Fell read καλων.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 (f142r) ημων before καλ τας is underlined by the corrector, and corrected in the margin to ημων. /Swanson not available. Support for ημων in Wetstein is 37 [Leicester]. 39, which is L. and Lin. in Mill. The correction has the support of Erasmus's editions, Colin (1534), Curcellus and Fell. The correction ημων is written as a ligature (υμ with 'm' superscript), which occurs at Colossians 1:24 (see above) and at Acts 1:11 (see below).

In 1:4 MS 69 reads αυτους ημας but Erasmus, Curcellus and Fell read ημας αυτους. The corrector has not noticed this difference, and there are many such omissions.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 (f142r) θροεσθη the last letters are underlined by the corrector, and corrected in the margin to θαι, to read θροεσθαι. /Swanson not available. Wetstein's support for θροεσθη is 31, 37, 39, 43. However, Wetstein overlooked Erasmus, who used θροεσθη in his 4th and 5th editions, but not in his 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. This rules out the use of Erasmus's 4th and 5th editions as the collating/correcting text. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:10 above for the conclusion that Erasmus's 3rd edition was not the collating/correcting text.) The ligature of the correction for θαι is found in Colin (1534), Montanus (1583), Elzevir (1633), Curcellaeus (1658), and Mill (1710), but not in Fell or in the other printed editions. The corrector has followed the ligature in Curcellus as follows.

2 Thessalonians 2:17 (f142v) παρακαλε, the ending -σαι is missing. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin before the correction παρακαλεσαι. /Swanson not available. Mill and Wetstein ignore MS 69. The correction παρακαλεσαι is present in Curcellus and Fell.

1 Timothy 6:9 (f145v) ομιλουει του διαβολου. The omission is marked with a vertical bar topped with a pyramid of three dots in the text, and there is a corresponding sign in the margin before the correction του διαβολου which is followed by χρυσος. γαρ. which is a mystery.593 Χρυσος means ‘gold,’ or anything precious. Χρυσος is followed by a ligature for γαρ, which normally means ‘replace with,’ but not here. (Could the ligature also be for γεν.?) /Swanson not available. Support for the addition of του διαβολου in NA27 is: D*FG (629). With the

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593 The letters χρους are found frequently in the margin of Codex Vaticanus, where they seem to indicate a passage (or thought) that struck the reader as priceless (‘gold’).
addition, the text reads: “Now the ones desiring to be rich fall into temptation and a snare of the devil and many senseless and harmful desires.” The phrase “of the devil” has been imported from 1 Timothy 3:7 (cf. also Ephesians 6:11; 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 John 3:8, 10).

Wetstein’s support for the addition of του διαβόλου is D. a prima manu. FG. Versio. Vulg. Antiochus H. 9. & 13. Theodoretus. Correctorium bibliorum: Graecus non habet. It is not found in Colin (1534), or any of the other printed editions until it appears in the apparatus of Curcellaeus (1658) for the first time, and then in Fell. Schmidl’s apparatus ignores the addition. The printed form of the addition in Fell’s apparatus is almost identical to Curcellus’s. Fell’s text is based on that of Curcellaeus, as the use of his ligatures reveal, and certainly Mill based his form of the Greek addition on Fell’s printed form (and was aware of Curcellus’s text, see Mill under Hebrews 7:24). The corrector’s written form of the Greek could reflect the printed form of Curcellaeus, Fell or Mill (or even Wetstein). These are the only sources for this correction in MS 69.

Titus 1:2 (f148r) omit ἐπε’. The place of the omission is marked by underlining, and the addition is placed in the margin followed by ελ, which is the start of the following word (ελπίδα). Swanson not available. Mill notes that ἐπε’ is missing in Colb. 7. Wetstein notes that it is missing in 17. 37. This shows how incomplete Mill’s collaboration with MS 69 was. The correction is found in Curcellus and Fell.

Titus 1:12 (f148v) There is a dittography of three words, which are enclosed in square brackets and marked with an ‘X’ in the margin. The dittography is: ἐλογζ αυτῶν προφήτης. Swanson not available. The dittography is ignored by Mill and Wetstein. L-brackets are used at 1 Corinthians 9:17 (f113r); 1 Thessalonians 4:1 (f140v); 1 John 1:6b-7a (f198r), and Acts 19:40 (f180r.18).

Titus 2:7 (f148v) ἐαυτῶν is underlined. The correction is σε– (for σεαυτῶν) but the σ has been partially erased. Swanson not available. Mill’s support for ἐαυτῶν is Clar. L. Chrysost. Wetstein’s support is D. 1. 37. Chrysostomus. All other texts and printed editions, including Curcellus and Fell, read σεαυτῶν.

Phlm 16 (f149v.26) ἐμοί is underlined, but there is no marginal correction. Neither Mill nor Wetstein note an alternative reading in their apparatuses. It so happens that Fell, uniquely, has ἐμοί which is a misprint. It would appear that this is the reason for the underlining of ἐμοί in MS 69. If so, then this would identify Fell’s printed text as the one being used to correct MS 69.

Phil 20 (f149v) σοῦ is underlined faintly, and corrected to μου in the margin. Swanson not available. Mill and Wetstein note the error in MS 69 (L.). Curcellus, Fell, Mill and Wetstein use the same ligature for the correct text, where v is written above o. The correction straddles a patch, which may pre-date the writing of the text.

Hebrews 3:8 (f151v) omit οζ. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but there is no corresponding sign in the margin before the correction. Swanson not available. Mill ignores the omission, but Wetstein notes only 37 for its omission. The correct text is in Curcellus and Fell.

Hebrews 3:10 (f151v) πλανωμένω ἔλαω has been corrected with a superscript ταί to read πλανωμένωταί. There is no mark in the margin to note that a correction has taken place. The correct text is in Curcellus and Fell.

Hebrews 7:17 (f153v) omit ς. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign (both topped with a single dot) in the margin before the correction. Swanson not available. Both Mill and Wetstein note the omission in MS 69. The correct text is in Curcellus and Fell.

Hebrews 7:24 (f154r) omit το following δέ δια. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign with its dot in the margin before the correction το, which is in the form of a ligature. Swanson not available. The correct text is in Curcellus and Fell.
The patch on the outer edge is in two parts to avoid pasting over Kephalia 8 (chap. 8). It also skirts around the main text.

Hebrews 8:9 (f154v) omit μου. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but there is no corresponding sign in the margin before the correction. /Swanson not available/. The ligature for μου is the same in Fell, Mill, and Wetstein. The omission may be due to h.t. with the ending of the preceding word (…ου μου).

Hebrews 13:11 (f159r) κατά is underlined and there is an 'X' in the margin but there is no correction. The correction is probably κατάκαιεται. Fell and Wetstein use the same ligature for the ending -ται (which is in the form of a large C back-the-front). The misspelling is ignored by Mill and Wetstein, but not by Tregelles (MS 69 is noted by the number 37 in Hebrews).

Hebrews 13:19 (f159r) ἀποκαταστῶ underlined and corrected to -ταστάθω in the margin, which does not follow the ligature for -στ- followed by Curcellus and Fell. /Swanson not available/. The misspelling is ignored by Mill and Wetstein, but not by Tregelles (MS 69 is noted by the number 37 in Hebrews).

Hebrews 13:20 (f159r) omit των before πολλές. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign (both topped with a single dot) in the margin before the correction (των πολ.-). /Swanson not available/. The correction uses a ligature to write των, which is not found in the one common to Curcellus, Fell, and Wetstein.

Hebrews 13:21 (f159r.l30) omit των αλουφω. The omission is marked with Λ in the text (topped with a single dot), but there is no corresponding sign in the margin before the correction. /Swanson not available/. The correction ligature for των (τ with 'm' above it) is identical in Erasmus's 3rd edition (1522), Scaliger, Elzevir, Curcellaeus, Fell and Mill, but not in Wetstein or Erasmus's 1st (1516); 4th (1527); or 5th (1535) editions.

Acts 1:11 (f162r.l27) omit 10 words through h.t. /Yes/correction: ο Ἰησοῦς ο αναλήψεις αφ’ μι’ εἰς τον οὐρανόν οὕτως/Yes/. Swanson support for omission: 33 323 330. Wetstein notes that from οὐτος to οὕτως is missing only in 31 "a prima manu" (by the first hand, which hints at a correction) [no. 31 = Leicestrensis in Acts & Catholic Epistles in Wetstein's notation]. All other MSS apparently have the missing text. The ligature for οὐρανόν before οὗτος is found in Mill and Wetstein, but not in Fell. The correction μι’ is written as a ligature (μι with 'm' superscript), which occurs at Colossians 1:24 and 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (see above). The correction of τον as a ligature (i.e., τ with two slanted marks above it) is found in Curcellus, but not in Fell.

Acts 2:45 (f164r.l23) omit 5 words due to h.t. /…καθό καθό/Yes/correction: καθότι αὐ τις χειταν εἰπὲ/Yes/. Swanson support for omission: none. Wetstein notes that only 31 [Leicester] omits the words. The writing of εἰπὲ in MS 69 uses two forms of epsilon (ε ε) exactly as they printed in Curcellus and Fell (cf. Matthew 19:9).

Acts 8:14 (f170r.l31) MS 69 omits ολ’ before εν ίεροσολυμοῖς. The omission is marked by underlining the text where the addition is to be inserted. /Yes/correction: ολ’ before εν/Yes/. Swanson support for omission: none. Wetstein notes that only 31 [Leicester] omits the word. The correction is found in Curcellus and Fell.

Acts 9:5b-6a (f171r.l23) omit 20 words. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign (both are topped with a single dot) in the margin before the correction. /Yes/correction: σκληρον σοι προς κειντρα λακτιζειν. Τρεμω τε και θαμβων ειπε, κυριε, τι με θελεις ποιησαι και ο κυριος προς αυτου/Yes/. Swanson support for addition: none. The following words of the AV should be removed: "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will you have me to do? And the Lord said to him, . . ." Wetstein’s main text is: σκληρον σοι προς κειντρα λακτιζειν. Τρεμω τε και θαμβων ειπε, κυριε, τι με θελεις ποιησαι; Και ο κυριος προς αυτου. All of these words are replaced with ἀλλα in: ACE. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28.
The addition is found in Colin (1534), Froschouiana (1547), and all the other printed editions. Curcellaeus (1658) is the first (or second) to draw attention to the lack of testimony for it. In his apparatus he wrote: V. 5.6. Haec omnia desunt in multis codicibus: postea sequitur ἄλλα ἁναστήρια. Mill’s apparatus reads: v. 6. — B. I Cp. L. S. 2. The m-dash means that the MSS following omit v. 6. These are Vaticanus, Leicester, Stephani Coddis. But the addition is found in R. Stephens (1551), and H. Stephens (1587), Elzevir (1633), Scaliger (1620), Schmidii (1658), Bezae (1598), and Montanus (1585).

The three printed editions closest to the script of the corrector are Curcellaeus (closest), Fell and Mill (but not Wetstein). Erasmus had εὑρέθη in 1516 and 1522, but this was changed to εἶπεν in 1527 and changed back again to εὑρέθη in 1535.

Acts 10:6 (f173v.111) omit six words (not an h.t. error). The omission is marked with Λ in the text (topped with a single dot), but there is no corresponding sign in the margin before the correction. /Yes/correction: οὔτος λαλήσει τι σε δει τοιευθεῖ /Yes/. Swanson support for the correction: none, except Erasmus (TR) has the addition, with the addition of οὐλακάλησεν after λαλήσει. Note that the handwritten correction in MS 69 uses both styles of writing εἰπέν, namely, ϵ and ε. The printed texts that come closest to the ligatures of the corrector are Curcellaeus (1658), then Fell, and Scaliger, Elzevir, and Mill. Note that the corrector has omitted οὐλακάλησεν after λαλήσει. There is no printed text which omits οὐλακάλησεν; these include Erasmus’s editions, Colin (1534), Froschouiana (1547), R. Stephens (1551), Montanus (1585), H. Stephens (1587), Bezae (1598), Scaliger (1620), Elzevir (1633), Curcellus (1658), Schmidii (1658), Fell (1675), Mill (1710), and Wetstein (1751). Wetstein’s main text is: οὔτος λαλήσει τι σε δει τοιευθεῖ. These words are omitted in: ACDE. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 9. 10. 11. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 24. 25. 28. 29. 31 [= MS 69]. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 40. 42. 43. 45. 46. 47. 56. Leccionar. 2. Edito Complut. Bengallii. Codices Latini. Versions: Syr utraque. Arab. Chrysostomus, Theophylactus, probante Erasmo et J. Millio 970. Alternative variant: ος λαλήσαι ρηματα προς σε σαφεις ου, και πας ο ους σου. 4. in orae 8. 26. 27. ex Acts XI. 14. Wetstein does not give the reading of 12. 13. 44. The following MSS omit the six words according to Mill: Steph. d. e. l. g. Alex. Laud. 2. 3. Sin. Magd. Mont. Lin. N. 1. 2. Barb. MSS. 7. Cant. 2. Pet. 1. 3. Genev. Cov. 2. B. 2. Vien. Comp. Copt. He makes no mention of MS 69, which is surprising.

Acts 10:45 — 14:17 (f173v) does not exist in MS 69. The lost text consists of 11,778 letters (in Robinson & Pierpont’s Gk NT), which, at 38.9 letters per line and 38 lines per page (total, 1478 letters per page), amounts to 7.97 pages of MS 69, which is four leaves (or folios) in MS 69. The scribe did not realise that four pages were missing. The error shows that Codex Leicestrensis has the same amount of text per page as the lost exemplar had.

There are no references to MS 69 [L in Mill] between Acts 10:45 and 14:17. The last reference before 10:45 is at 10:40 and the first reference after 14:17 is at 14:18. This is evidence that when Mill made his own collation of MS 69, some time before 1675, this portion of Acts was missing. This collation was so badly done that Rev. John Jackson made a more exact one in manuscript form, but I have not been able to trace it. All that remains is an earlier collation made in the margins of John Fell’s 1675 Oxford edition, which is held in Jesus College, Cambridge University, but, on inspection, this work is not a full collation.

There is a marginal note in Greek against 14:17 which reads: λείπειν. ηκ του κεφ. ὅδ. σχ. ις. “Missing. Out of chap. [κεφαλία] 14, verse [στίχοι] 17.” Here σχ. ις refers to verse 17, but since verse numbers did not appear until 1550, this gives us the earliest possible date when the marginal corrections were added, which, in turn, rules out the possibility that
Erasmus saw the present corrections in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis, when he examined the manuscript. Note that the corrector has used the two forms of epsilon in this note, which also occur in the exception clause of Matthew 19:9.

Acts 15:5 (f174r.l33) πρεσβυτερων underlined, with dots under the line./Yes/correction: φαρσαλων/Yes/. Swanson support for the correction: none. Wetstein has φαρσαλων/πρεσβυτερων with only MS 69 in support of πρεσβυτερων. Curcellus and Fell have the corrected text, but neither of them follows the corrector in the use of his large uncial C to represent α in φαρσαλων.

Acts 15:17 (f174v.l22) καταλογοι underlined /Yes/correction: καταλογοι/Yes/. Swanson support for text: 049 1270. Wetstein ignores the spelling. Curcellus and Fell have the corrected text.

Acts 15:17 (f174v.l24) omit παντα through h.t. The omission is marked with Λ in the text, but there is no corresponding sign in the margin before the correction./Yes/correction: παντα/Yes/. Swanson’s support for omission: ΑΒΔΞΨ528. 33 81 323 1175 1245 1505.

Wetstein’s support for the omission is: ACD. 3. 27. 28. 29. 31. 40. Versions: Vulgate, Coptic, Constitut. Apostl. Irenaeus, Ambrosius, Hieronymus l.c. probante J. Millio prologue §1408, J. A. Bengelio. By default the other printed editions support the inclusion of παντα, which includes Curcellus and Fell, both of whom use the same ligature for the ending –τα that the corrector has used.

Acts 16:27 (f176r.l21) aυτων is underlined, with dots under the line/Yes/correction: εαυτων/Yes/. Support for text: 1241 1837. Wetstein ignored the spelling difference. However, the correction in MS 69 employs a ligature for the ending –ου, which is found in printed editions of the Greek text to write the Greek article τον as τ. It consists of two near vertical bars directly over the last consonant, thus εαυτων. It is not used in this place by Curcellus or Fell. This ubiquitous Greek ligature (used for the article τον) is found in the printed texts of Erasmus (1516), Froschouiana (1547), Montanus (1585), H. Stephens (1587), Scaliger (1620), Elzevir (1633), John Fell (1675), John Mill (1710), and Wetstein (1751), but not in Colin (1534), nor in Curcellus.

Acts 19:40 (f180r.l8) ου ου/Yes/correction: ου has been placed in square L-brackets leaving just ου, which Swanson has not noted. A modern collator594 has written a pencilled note objecting to the brackets here. It reads: “a stupid alteration by some modern reader.” This implies that the person who wrote the note regarded ου ου as the original text. However, L-brackets are used at 1 Corinthians 9:17 (f113r); Titus 1:12 (f148v); 1 John 1:6b-7a (f198r), and 1 Thessalonians 4:1. It happens that there is support in Swanson for the omission of ου after ου such as: DEΨ 33 547 1270 927 945 1175 1891 2344, which is the text of Erasmus (TR).

Wetstein’s support for the addition of ου (i.e., the reading ου ου) is: A. 1. 3. 4. 10. 11. 14. ex emendatione. 16. 17. 19. 21. 23. 27. 28. 29. 31 (= MS 69). 33. 34. 35. 43. 45. 46. 47. 56.

Versions: Syr. utraque, Athiop. Arab. Theophylactus, probante J. A. Bengelio. This is 25 MSS, out of a total of 65. By default the rest of Wetstein’s manuscripts (40 MSS), presumably, support the omission of ου. The following editions omit ου: Erasmus (all editions), Colin, Froschouiana, Montanus, R. Stephens, H. Stephens, Bezae, Schmidi, Scaliger, Curcellus, Fell, Griesbach, Wetstein, Elzevir, Scholz, Lachmann (1850). Only Matthaei (1792) and Tregelles (1852) support the reading of MS 69 (ου ου).

The loss of ου could be a h.t. error. Fell leaves ου out in the text but in his apparatus he includes it with the support of Alexandrinus, Lin. MSS in Magdal. OXON. Montforti. MS 1 in New Coll. OXON. Mill does not have ου in his main text, only ου. Support for after ου is Alex. Mont. Lin. N. 2. Laud. 2. Baroc. Genev. Cov. 4. L. [= MS 69], Sin. Codd. alic. teste Erasmo.

594 Samples of the handwriting of S. P. Tregelles and O. T. Dobbin can be seen on folio 203r. The ‘modern scholar’ was not Tregelles because his text agrees with MS 69.
NA27 reads οὐ [οὐ], while RP read οὐ οὐ. The corrector has followed the main text of Curcellus and Fell, and omitted οὐ after οὐ.

Because no printed edition before Wetstein (1751) has οὐ οὐ as its main text, Scrivener’s note that the square brackets are the work of a ‘modern reader’ is correct. Scrivener would have supported οὐ οὐ as the TR reading. Just when did οὐ οὐ enter the TR? It was later than Wetstein (1751), but before Scrivener did his collation of MS 69 in 1855, and the L-brackets were to bring MS 69 into line with the text of Curcellus/Fell.

Acts 23:12 (f184r.l16) παρεν underlined/Yes/correction: παρεν/Yes/. Swanson support for text: 88; but also Curcellaeus and Fell. Mill and Wetstein ignored the spelling difference. No printed text has the same ligature as the correction.

Acts 25:11 (f185r.l36) μου is underlined and has a small ‘x’ above it/Yes/correction: με is in the margin, but very messy. It would appear that it is the intended correction./No/. Swanson support for the text: none. Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill and Wetstein ignored the spelling difference.

Acts 25:26 (f186r.l36) ουν is underlined/Yes/correction: ου/Yes/. The corrector has given in the margin the word before and after ουν to indicate the correct reading, Swanson support for text: none. Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill and Wetstein ignored the spelling difference in their apparatuses, but Tregelles noted it.

Acts 26:31 (f187r.l35) ἐκάλουν is underlined/Yes/correction: ἐκαλου/Yes/. Swanson support for text: none. Wetstein gives only 31 [MS 69] in support of ἐκάλουν. The corrector used the same ligature for -ου- that is found in Curcellus and Fell.

Acts 27:3 (f187v.l7) φιλανθρωπος, underlined and corrected to φιλανθρωπος./No/correction: φιλανθρωπος/No/. Swanson gives the correction as the only reading of MS 69, which is a misreading of MS 69. Swanson support for text: 2147 330 104. Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill and Wetstein ignored the spelling difference, but Tregelles did not. At the beginning of 27:3 MS 69 reads δε after τη, it should be τε; but, as frequently happened, the corrector overlooked many such differences.

Jas 2:6 (f190v.υπαυστι) The letter ι- is nonsense here/Swanson not available/correction: οι πλοσιοι/Swanson not available/. Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill and Wetstein ignored the spelling difference.

Jas 2:10 (f190v.εν) (including the comma) meaning ‘one,’ appears to have been altered to εν meaning ‘in.’ The underlined text is noted in the margin with an ‘X’. /Swanson not available/ The correction should have been εν ενι, so that MS 69 is not just a pointing error; it has lost εν before εν, which is the reading of Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill and Wetstein. This is a case where the corrector has noted a problem (by underlining) but he has not indicated what the problem is.

Jas 5:12 (f192v.θεται) is not underlined/Swanson not available/correction: /θεται/Swanson not available/. Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill, Wetstein, and Tregelles ignored the spelling difference.

Jas 5:14 (f192v.ωρο) is underlined/Swanson not available/correction: ωρο/Swanson not available/. Fell and Curcellus agree on the correction. Wetstein and Tregelles give only 31 [MS 69] in support of ωρο.

1 Pet 1:1 (f195r.l3) Βιβας underlined but not corrected to Βιβας, which is the reading of Curcellus and Fell. This is a case where the corrector has noted a problem (by underlining)

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but he has not indicated what the problem is. Tregelles has noted the misspelling in MS 69, which is numbered 31 in the Catholic Epistles.

1 Pet 1:2 (f193r.14) ῥατισμὸν underlined but not corrected to ῥατισμόν, which is the reading of Curcellus and Fell. This is a case where the corrector has noted a problem (by underlining) but he has not indicated what the problem is. Tregelles has not noted this misspelling in MS 69, which is numbered 31 in the Catholic Epistles.

1 Pet 1:12 (f193r.128) αὐγηγέλλη underlined but not corrected to αὐγηγέλλη, which is the reading of Curcellus and Fell. This is a case where the corrector has noted a problem (by underlining) but he has not indicated what the problem is. Tregelles has noted the misspelling in MS 69.

1 Pet 2:13 (f194r.17) The text reads: ὑποστάγητε παση κτισει ἀνθρώπων ἐκ τῶν Κ. The η belongs to the end of ἀνθρώπων (ἀνθρώπων). The ς is the subscript iota. Just before this, MS 69 reads: παση κτισει ἀνθρώπων, Curcellus and Fell transpose the words to read: παση ἀνθρώπων κτισει, but the corrector ignores the transposition, as he does the omission of ὑποστάγητε.

There is a short vertical mark with single dots on either side of it over τῶν and this relates to the omission of δια in the margin, which also has the same mark over it. Wetstein’s main text reads: ὑποστάγητε ὑποστάγητε ὑποστάγητε ὑποστάγητε ὑποστάγητε ὑποστάγητε. The η belongs to the end of ἀνθρώπων (ἀνθρώπων). The ς is the subscript iota. Just before this, MS 69 reads: παση κτισει δια τῶν Κ. The omission of δια in MS 69 is not noted by Wetstein or Mill, probably because it was corrected by the first hand. Wetstein and Tregelles note the different word order in 31 (κτισει ἀνθρώπων), and that ς has been omitted by A. 13. 31. Versions: Vulg. Syr. Capt. Aeth. Anglic. probante J. A. Bengelio. This case shows that the corrector was not concerned to make a full collation of all the differences between MS 69 and the texts of Curcellus and Fell.

1 Pet 2:18 (f194r.117) ἀλλὰ τοὺς κολοσσὺς one letter has been underlined and an umlaut placed overς of τοὺς, but there is no correction to ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς κολοσσὺς. The focus of the corrector is on the missing ι before κολοσσὺς, and not on the missing word καὶ before τοὺς. This is a case where the corrector has noted a problem (by underlining) but he has not indicated what the problem is. Curcellus and Fell read ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς κολοσσὺς.

2 Pet 1:15 (f196r.130) εἰκάστωτε underlined and corrected to εἰκάστωτε with a superscript ιο-. The corrector/collater failed to change σποῦδαζω to σποῦδασω in the same verse. This case shows that the corrector was not concerned to make a full collation of all the differences between MS 69 and the texts of Curcellus and Fell.

2 Pet 3:3 (f197r.135) ἐλευθερωμένοι is underlined. /Swanson not available/correction: ἐλευθερωμένοι/Swanson not available/. In Wetstein the marginal correction is – σον followed by a large back-the-front C, which is shorthand for ταλ. Neither Erasmus nor Mill use this ligature in their editions. It is found in Wetstein exactly as the corrector has it in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis. Although Fell does not use this ligature in this place, he uses it more often than Wetstein. I counted 6 occurrences in Wetstein against 36 in Fell between Matthew 18 and 28.

2 Pet 3:3 (f197r.136) MS 69 reads: κατὰ τας ἰδιας ἐπιθύμιας αὐτῶν [smooth breathing] πορευομένοι. The underlining points to a different word order, as well as small marks above both words in MS 69. Wetstein’s support for MS 69 is: C. 1. 4. 22. 31. 40. 45. 46. Printed editions: Complut. Plant. Genev. Pseudo-Hippolytus. The rest of the MS evidence supports Wetstein’s word order. The reading ἐπιθύμιας αὐτῶν [rough breathing] is not supported by any of the printed editions used for this study. The reading ἐπιθύμιας αὐτῶν [smooth breathing] is supported by Matthaei, Lachmann, Scholz, and Tregelles. The reading αὐτῶν ἐπιθύμιας [rough breathing] is supported by Erasmus (1527 checked), Curcellus, Fell, Elzevir, Wetstein, and Griesbach.

After θημερα MS 69 reads ἰν ("which") in the text is underlined, but the margin has Κ (κοριον, cf. v. 15) which Wetstein has as his main text. /Swanson not
available]. Wetstein and Tregelles have ignored the correction in MS 69. Curcellus and Fell have the corrected text (ἱμηρα κυριου).

1 John 1:6b-7a (f198r) 13 words omitted through h.t. (περιπατωμεν . . . περιπατωμεν). These 13 words constitute two lines in the exemplar, showing that the mistake was made by the first hand. Two corrections were made at the point of the h.t. error. First, the omission is marked with a large 'ʹXʹ, and then with L in the text and in the margin (both topped with a single dot). Second, the letter o (before autou) is bracketed with square L-brackets, as this should have been ως. The correction reads: ψευδομεθα και ου πολουμεν την αλαθειαν (v.7) εαυν δε ει τω φυτι περιπατωμεν ως αυ-/Swanson not available/. Note the misspelling of αλαθειαν.

Wetstein notes the h.t. omission only for 31 [MS 69]. There are seven ligatures in the correction which come closest to the printed editions of Curcellus and Fell, though Mill and Wetstein also share common ligatures with Curcellus and Fell.

1 John 1:8 (f198r.l19) en um underlined with a small superscript hook above the gap. These words should have followed the words ouk estin. A case of transposition, which is noted by Wetstein. MS 69 has the support of AC.

Jude 7b-end is missing (following f201v), and the corrector has written Λειψει (ʹmissingʹ) at the foot of the page. This shows that when the corrector did his work [John Jackson in 1728], the Codex had already lost a single leaf. The lost sheet had writing on one side. The blank side may have attracted the attention of someone who needed writing material, and this may account for it loss.

Note that J. J. Wetstein used different numbers for Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69) throughout the New Testament. He used no. 69 in the Gospels, no. 37 in Paul’s Epistles; no. 31 in the Acts & Catholic Epistles; and no. 14 in the Book of Revelation.

Vandalism has resulted in a large corner piece of folio 201 having been cut off. This affects the first twelve lines on both sides of the page. The two portions affected by this cut are parts of 2 John 1-5, and parts of 3 John 5-10.

2 John 1 (f201r) has a variant in MS 69, which consists of τη before κυρια. MS 69 is alone in having this variant. Immediately after τη comes the cut so that κυρια is missing.

2 John 2. Mill and Wetstein record MS 69 as reading οςτι (before εις τον αιωνα) in place of οςται.

2 John 5 (f201r). Mill has misread MS 69 as εχαμεν. It reads εχομεν, as Wetstein and Tregelles have it.

MS 69 verse 5 reads καινηρα γραφων σοι, which has the support of Codex Alexandrinus. The missing text is bracketed, due to the text having been cut at this point, but it clearly reveals a transposition, as Curcellus and Fell read γραφων σοι καινηρα. The rest of Wetstein’s MSS read γραφων σοι καινηρα. Neither Mill nor Wetstein record any variants in the cut off text (2 John 1-4, and 3 John 5-10), so that it is likely that the damage was done before Mill’s collation (before 1707).

2 John 8 (f201r). Mill and Wetstein record MS 69 as reading αυτους in place of έαυτους. MS 69, in fact, reads έαυτους.

3 John 12 (f201v). Wetstein records a transposition here which is not in Mill’s apparatus. MS 69 reads: αληθης εστιν η μαρτυρα ημων, in place of word order 34512.

3 John 13 (f201v). Wetstein records two variants in this verse which are not in Mill’s apparatus. MS 69 reads γραφαι in place of γραφευν (first occurrence), which has the support of AC. 17. 27. 33. 40. MS 69 reads γραφευν in place of γραφαι (last word in the verse), which has the support of C. The third variant in this verse is recorded by Mill and Wetstein. Here MS 69 adds σοι after γραφαι, which has the support of A. 17. 27. 33. 40, instead of before it (σοι γραφαι) as in Curcellus and Fell.
Jude 7b–25 (end) (following f201v) is not extant. Mill does not record a single variant for the missing text. However, Wetstein records one variant in v. 14. MS 69 (under no. 31, see Mill, vol. II. p. 453) read: αγαίας μυρίας in place of μυρίας αγαίας, which Tregelles does not record. Tregelles, however, does record a variant in MS 69 at v. 15, because he gives 69 as supporting αυτῶν after άσσιβείας; he also gives 69 in support of the omission of σοφία after μων in v. 25. Given that Jude vv. 7b-end are missing in MS 69, it would appear that Tregelles used Codex Montforianus as a duplicate of the missing Jude, or that the corrections in the margin of Montforianus are taken from MS 69, which was Tregelles’s belief as regards the missing text of Revelation.

The word order μυρίας αγαίας αὐτῶν [rough breathing] is supported by Elzevir, Curcellus, Fell, and Wetstein. Support for the word order αγαίας μυρίας αὐτῶν [rough breathing] is Griesbach and Scholz. Support for αγαίας μυρίας αὐτῶν [smooth breathing] is Erasmus (1527 checked), Matthaei, Lachmann, and Tregelles.
This is the only variant recorded by Wetstein, and if “31” (the ms no. given to MS 69) is not a misprint, then it is proof that some time after John Jackson did his collation for Wetstein, the Jude folio was cut out. But the fact that Tregelles does not confirm Wetstein’s variant is suspicious. There is no direct evidence that Wetstein used John Fell’s Greek New Testament (1675), but if he did Fell records this transposition in his apparatus for ‘L’, but L stands for the Lincoln College (Oxford) manuscript. However, in Mill’s apparatus this ms. goes by ‘Lin.’ and ‘L’ is reserved for Leicestrensis.

Rev 1:20 (f202v) omit 9 words through h.t. (εύα...είσι) /Swanson not available/correction: supply omitted text: καὶ αἱ εἰπτα λυχνιαὶ ὁς εἰδὲς επτα εκκλησίαι εἰσὶν /Swanson not available/. Wetstein ignores the h.t. error, and his text reads as the omitted words, except that the following MSS omit ας εἰδές, AC. 2. 4. 6. 7. 8. 9. 11. 16. 18. 19. 23. 26. 27. which means that the C2 did not use any of these to copy in the missing text. Curcellus and Fell contain the corrected text.

Rev 2:15 (f203r) οὐ is underlined as well as a cross in the margin /Swanson not available/correction: σῶ/Swanson not available/. Ignored by Wetstein.

Rev 2:15 (f203r.i18) omits ο μισών. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign in the margin before ομοίων /Swanson not available/correction: ο μισών /Swanson not available/. The correction in 69 takes the form of an addition before ομοίων, so that 69 now reads: ο μισών ομοίως. There is no MS in Wetstein that has this exact text. However, he gives two MSS with the reading: ομοίως, ο μισών. The MSS are: 13, 17 (p. 757).
It could be that MS 69 got ο μισών from MS 13, but inserted it at the wrong place.

Rev 2:17 (f203r.i22) omits απὸ τοῦ. The omission is marked with Λ in the text but there is no corresponding sign in the margin before the correction /Swanson not available/correction: απὸ τοῦ/Swanson not available/. Wetstein has φαγεῖν απὸ as his main text. The words φαγεῖν απὸ are omitted in Wetstein’s apparatus by AC 2. 4. a prima manu. 6. 8. 9. 18. 23. 25. 26. 27 (and Bengel). In place of φαγεῖν απὸ τοῦ read: τῷ φαγεῖν, 13. 14 [= Leicester], or read: φαγεῖν τοῦ, 11.19. Wetstein does not record the other printed editions.

Rev 2:18 (f203r.i26) θέσις is underlined and corrected in the margin to τοῖς /Swanson not available/. Wetstein ignores the error in MS 69, as all his MSS would appear to have τοῖς.

Rev 5:9 (f205r.i13) omits καί. The omission is marked with Λ in the text, and a corresponding sign in the margin (both topped with a single dot) before the correction /Swanson not available/. Wetstein notes that καί ultimium is missing only in MS 14 [=Leicester].
Incidentally, τω θεω in 5:9 is omitted only by Erasmus 1-3 editions, Bengel, Colinani, and Aldine, but is in all the Greek MSS.

Rev 5:11 (f205r.l7) The text μυράδες μυράδῳ καὶ χιλιάδες χιλιάδων is underlined, and in the margin is an upside down pyramid of dots with an arc coming out of the top of it. See under Corrector1 for an explanation.

Rev 5:14 (f205r.l26) οὐ προσβυτερους partly underlined. Correction: the margin reads: εἰκοσιτεσσαρες προσβυτερους, which was intended to be inserted between οὐ and προσβυτερους. This has been imported from Rev 4:4, 10; 11:16 (19:4). Swanson not available. Wetstein’s support for the omission of εἰκοσιτεσσαρες is: A. 2. 4. 6. 8. 9. 10. 13. 14. 17. 26. 27. Compl. Plant. Genev. Bengel, which leaves in support for the addition (by subtraction from his list): C. 3. 7. 11. 12. 16. 18. 23. 25. 28. Erasmus, etc. Note that MS 13 = MS 14 = Leicester.

Incidentally, J. Mill mistakenly read MS 69 as: λέγοντα το αμήν. MS 69 does not have το.

Wetstein has copied Mill’s misreading of MS 69 into his apparatus. Wetstein gives ελέγοντα 2. 3. 4. 6. 8. 9. 10. 13. 14. 17. 26. 27. Presumably the rest of his MSS support his main text which is ελέγον: AC. 7. 11. 12. 16. 18. 19. 23. 25. 28. Note that MS 13 = MS 14 = Leicester.

Rev 5:14 (f205r.l27) addition of six words in the margin: ζωντι εἰς τους αἰωνας των αἰωνων. The correction is found in Fell and Curcellus. The omission is marked with L in the text and there is a corresponding sign (both topped with double dots) in the margin before the correction. Swanson not available/correction: ζωντι εἰς τους αἰωνας των αἰωνων/Swanson not available. The addition has been imported from Rev 4:9, 10; 10:6. The marginal text has been displaced upwards by one line due to the presence of the Kephalia number, which appears to have been written by the corrector. This gives us the following sequence of events. First came the Kephalia number, then came the correction. But before both came the patch they are written on, as can be seen in the correction higher up at 5:10. Wetstein’s support for omitting the 6 words is: AC. 2. 4. 6. 7. 8. 9. 11. 12. 13. 14. 16. 17. 18. 19. 26. 27. 28. By default the rest include the six words: 3.10. 23. 25. and Erasmus’s editions. It would appear that Fell and Curcellus could have been the source for the correction.

In 6:1 only MS 14 omits ζωντι through h.t. but this is not corrected by C. There are many more such instances.

Rev 7:1 (f205v.l34) τοῦτο is underlined and in the margin is the correction ταύτα/Swanson not available/. Wetstein ταύτα τοῦτο, AC. 2. 4. 6. 7. 9. 10. 11. 14. 15. 17. 18. 19. 28. Compl. Copt. By default the rest support ταύτα, 3. 8. 12. 13. 16. 27. 28. Erasmus plus the other printed editions. Note that 13 and 14 do not agree here. Leicester (= 14) may have been corrected by Fell and Curcellus.

Rev 16:1 (f211r) The words μεγάλης φωνῆς are underlined. A large S is in the margin. Inside the top circle is the Greek letter α, and inside the bottom circle is the letter β (the ligature form of β), which is very appropriate to indicate a transposition. It occurs only once in the Codex. Wetstein’s support for μεγάλης φωνῆς is AC. 14. 27. with no printed editions. It would appear that Fell or Curcellus is the source for the correction. This may be the work of a different owner/scribe.

Rev 19:1 (f213v.l14) The text καὶ is found in 3. Wetstein’s support for initial καὶ is: AC. 2. 4. 6. 7. 9. 11. 14 [= Leicestrensis]. 16. 18. 19. 25. 26. 27. Bengel, Copt. Syr. Arab. Lutheri. Fell and Curcellus begin 19:1 with καὶ. The default support for the omission of καὶ is: 3. 8. 10. 12. 13. 15. 17. 28. Erasmus, and the other printed editions and versions. This is proof that when John Jackson did his collation in 1728 folio 213 had not been torn in two at that time. The vandalism occurred after 1728.
The following is a list of collated differences in MS 69 in the Book of Revelation which Rev. John Jackson made, but which can no longer be verified because of damage to the Codex.

19:1 69: μεγάλην οχλον πολλον οχλον πολλον μεγάλην (not noted by Mill)
19:1 69: λεγοντων λεγοντος (noted by Mill)
19:1 69: δυναμις και η δοξα δοξα και η ημιμη και η δυναμες (noted by Mill)
19:1 69: τω θεω κυριω τω θεω (noted by Mill)
19:2 69: εικονει only found in 14. Mill read MS 69 as ας.
19:2 69: πολω found only in 14. 18. (not noted by Mill)
19:2 69: εκρινε εφκρινε (A: εκρινε) (noted by Mill)
19:2 69: omit ημων (noted by Mill).
19:3 Erasmus 1-3 editions omit αυτης, but there is no Gk MS support for it. It has support from Colinaei and Aldine.
19:4 69: τω θρωνω, support: A. 2. 4. 6. 8. 9. 11. 14. 26. 26] τω θρωνω the rest support this reading, (noted by Mill)
19:5 69: ουρανου in place of θρωνου, only found in 14 (noted by Mill).
19:6 69: λεγοντες (noted by Mill).
19:8 69: περιβαλλεται (noted by Mill). This is extant on folio 213v.
19:8 69: λαμπρον και καθαρον (noted by Mill).
19:8 69: των αγιων εστι (not noted by Mill).
19:9 69: των θεων εστι (not noted by Mill).
19:10 69: omit first τον (not noted by Mill).
19:10 69: omit last τον (not noted by Mill).
   At this point folio 213v ends.
19:12 69: omit ως (noted by Mill).
19:12 69: εν τη κεφαλη, only found in MS 69 (= no. 14) (not noted by Mill).
19:12 69: add ονοματα γεγραμμενα (noted by Mill).
19:13 69: αυτω το ονομα only found in MS 69 (not noted by Mill).
19:13 69: κεκληται (noted by Mill).
19:14 69: omit posterius τα (not noted by Mill).
19:14 69: omit prius τα (not noted by Mill).
19:14 69: αυτως only found in MS 69 (noted by Mill).
19:14 69: omit posterius και (not noted by Mill).

There are entries for Codex Leicestrensis all the way to Rev 20:15, where they stop. This means that Jackson had the text for Rev 19:10 to 20:15, which is now missing.

20:4 69: το θρωνω (noted by Mill).
20:4 69: omit αυτων prius (noted by Mill).
20:4 69: ab ετη ad ετη comm. 9] omitted by 2. 7. 8. 9. 11. 14 [= MS 69]. 16. a prima manu. 19. 27.
20:6 69: οιμιτ καὶ ἀγιος only in MS 69 (= no. 14) (noted by Mill).

20:6 69: τουτω only in MS 69 (= no. 14) (noted by Mill).

There are other examples from 20:6 to 20:14, left out here.


This is the last entry in Mill and Weststein’s critical apparatuses.

At Romans 1:27 most editions read άρρηνες, including R. Stephens (1551), Montanus (1583), Scaliger (1620), John Fell (1675), Schmider (1658), Mill (1710) and Wetstein (1751), but some read άρρηνες, Erasmi and Colinai and Bogardi (according to Wetstein’s apparatus), but also the Frousoucheiana edition (1547, no verses), H. Stephens (1587), Elzevir (1633), and Curielaeus (1658). 

Note that Colin and Erasmus go together. I noted elsewhere that Colin’s reading of Matthew 18:28, δι ον ονειδιες took over from Erasmus’s δι, and dominated all subsequent editions based on Erasmus’s editions. Did Colin take Erasmus’s 1527 edition and edit it slightly?

**SPORADIC CORRECTIONS**

**CORRECTIONS BY CORRECTOR 3 (69C3)**

The text of MS 69 is given first, and the correction is given next. 

Luke 3:36 (f40r) καυναν not underlined/Yes/correction: μαυνα/No/. This correction is in an orangy-light brown ink, and it appears to be a third corrector.

**UNDERLINING AND SIGLUM BY CORRECTOR (PRESUMABLY 69C2) WITH NO MARGINAL CORRECTION**

The text of MS 69 is given first, and the correction is given next.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (f139r) οτι is underlined by the corrector, who has also placed a ‘v’ in the margin, which most likely is intended to indicate οτι is to be deleted as it has no support in NA27 /Swanson not available. 

1 Thessalonians 2:7 νηπιοι (‘little children’) is underlined, and in the margin is a cross, with no correction. The correct word is ηπιοι (‘gentle’)./Swanson not available. See 1 Thessalonians 1:9 (f139v) ετι is underlined by the corrector, who has placed απο in the margin with a cross preceding it. Both crosses appear to be in the same ink and by the same corrector. 

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (f141r) The η in αυφηθιος is underlined. There is no correction, but it should read: αυφηθιος/Swanson not available. 

Hebrews 13:11 (f159r) κατε is underlined in the text. There is no marginal correction but there is a cross in the margin. The correct text is κατακαυτει/Swanson not available. 

**ΑΕΙΠΕΙ (MISSING TEXT)**

The Greek letter Λ in the margin is matched by the same in the text, but no correction is given. The letter Λ stands for λειπει, which means ‘missing.’

Matthew 21:35 (f4v) Text omitted through h.t./No/correction: και λαβοντες οι γεωργοι τους δουλους αυτου/No/. Support for h.t. omission: none.
Acts 15:34 (f175r) This verse is omitted in MS 69, but it is present in Erasmus and TR and in the following mss: DC 33 323 945 1175 1739 1891 2344 and in the Complutensian Polyglot. It would appear that this verse was in Jerome’s Vulgate, and this may explain why Erasmus retained it. Verse 34 should be removed from the AV, which reads: “However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.” MS D adds to this: “Now Judas alone went forth.” It, too, should be deleted.

Rev 2:14 (f203r) There is a cross in the margin which relates to the underlined βαλακι, which should read βαλακ. The cross and its ink are not the same as the cross two lines below it.

Rev 18:21 (f213v) The word μεγαν has a line of dots beneath it/Swanson not available/. There is no alternative variant in NA27.

ANOTHER SCRIBE

Jas 5:12 (f192v) ρεσται has an umlaut over it, but no corresponding umlaut with the correction in the margin/Swanson not available/correction: ρεστε/Swanson not available/. The style of the Greek letters and the ink are different to the correction three lines below it.

Rev 2:11 (f203r) 69 reads: ο μαρτυς μου, ο πιστος [μου]. The second μου has been placed in L-brackets (but these are not the same as the other L-brackets) and an English note in the margin reads: “... in the second μου it coincides with the Alex. The Ephrem S and other of the earliest MS.” This note was inserted after 69c2 had entered his corrections in the margin because the English note skirts around one of his corrections. Whether this English collator is responsible for other marginal corrections is difficult to assess. I have not seen his Greek style anywhere else in MS 69.

ANOTHER SCRIBE

Rev 9:3 (f207r) The correction χιλιων (‘tunics’) stands in the margin with no connection with any word in the text. It is possible that it is intended to replace εξουσιαν, in which case the change is from ‘power’ to ‘tunics:’ “And there was given to them power (or tunics).” The spindly (almost italic) writing of the correction appears to belong to another corrector.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

A JACKSON CORRECTION IS RECORDED BY WETSTEIN

014 Mark 10:19 (f26r) omits text through h.t. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. However, the epsilon indicates that a different hand wrote this correction. That a number of men helped Rev. John Jackson compile his collation of MS 69 with John Fell’s printed edition of 1675 is mentioned in a letter by Jackson. The following information is taken from A Catalogue of the Books in the Town Library, Leicester (Leicester: Thomas Combe, Junior, [1835], 48pp.). See page 45 for a transcription of Jackson’s letter and the catalogue entry for John Fell’s volume. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: μη αποστρηνηθης — (= missing) 69. a prima manu. By recording ‘a prima manu’ this implies that another hand had inserted the missing text, which could only have been what was added by John Jackson or one of his co-collators. This means that all the marginal corrections were in place by 1751 when Wetstein records this one.
A JACKSON CORRECTION IS RECORDED BY WETSTEIN

Luke 6:1 (f43r) omit δευτεροπρωτω, but εν σαββατω preceding it is underlined. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus. The correction is recorded in Wetstein as: [δευτεροπρωτω] — (= missing) 69. a prima manu. By recording 'a prima manu' this implies that another hand had inserted the missing text, which could only have been what was added by John Jackson or one of his co-collators. This means that all the marginal corrections were in place by 1751 when Wetstein records this one.

The correction was made after the strengthening patch had been added because it straddles the old and the new paper. But it appears that the patch may have covered a previous kephalia notice because just below εν οντιω Θεω αρεσαι ου δικαιαι. The handwriting of the corrector has a few features found more often in Simon Colin's text (1534), particularly σ (initial and middle letters), which takes the form of a capital C. Also the ending -ται, which takes the form of a back-the-front capital C with a small suspended line from the top curve. This form occurs very frequently in Fell (36 times in Matthew 18-28), and less frequently in Wetstein (6x in Matthew 18-28). But both forms (σ and -ται) occur most often in Colin's text, where examples of both ligatures occur on every page, it seems. The corrector has spelled -ες in οντες with a ligature which occurs in Colin, Fell & Mill, where it clearly always means -ευ. Here, it must mean -ες. A similar ligature is used again by the corrector at Romans 10:16, but there it means -ευ just as it does in Colin's and Fell's text (see Romans 10:16 επιστευσε). Crucial in this instance is that the corrector agrees with Fell in the -ται ligature. This particular ligature does not occur in Curcellus.

FELL NOT CURCELLUS ligature/JACKSON COLLATOR

Romans 8:8 (List B no. 48) omit 10 words (38 letters) The same ligature γαρ occurs here, and in Mark 4:15 (f18r) and in Romans 1:27 (f97v), confirming 69C2 as the scribe behind these corrections. Correction: οι δε γαρ εν σαββατω Θεω αρεσαι ου δικαιαι. The handwriting of the corrector has a few features found more often in Simon Colin’s text (1534), particularly σ (initial and middle letters), which takes the form of a capital C. Also the ending -ται, which takes the form of a back-the-front capital C with a small suspended line from the top curve. This form occurs very frequently in Fell (36 times in Matthew 18-28), and less frequently in Wetstein (6x in Matthew 18-28). But both forms (σ and -ται) occur most often in Colin’s text, where examples of both ligatures occur on every page, it seems. The corrector has spelled -ες in οντες with a ligature which occurs in Colin, Fell & Mill, where it clearly always means -ευ, but here, it must mean -ες. A similar ligature is used again by the corrector at Romans 10:16, but there it means -ευ just as it does in Colin’s and Fell’s text (see Romans 10:16 επιστευσε). Crucial in this instance is that the corrector agrees with Fell in the -ται ligature. This particular ligature does not occur in Curcellus.

JACKSON COLLATOR/ CURCELLUS OR FELL ligature

Romans 10:16 (List B no. 50) επιστευσεν a diagonal slash with a dot on either side occurs in the text and before the correction in the margin to link them. This is the first time this sign has been used. Correction: τις επιστευσε_ The ligatures (espec. -ευ) of the corrector matches the printed texts of Curcellus, Fell and Mill, but not Wetstein or Colin.

JACKSON COLLATOR

1 Corinthians 9:27 (List B no. 58) MS 69 reads ὑποποίεζω. There is a pyramid of three dots in the text and in the margin. Above αι is οι, and above ει is ηι. This reads ὑποποιάζω. This is the reading of Curcellus, Fell, Mill, and Wetstein. There is an unreadable correction in ligature form in the margin, which appears to begin ὑπω. . . . It would appear to be written by a different person to corrector 2.

ONLY FELL/JACKSON COLLATOR

Philemon 16 (List B no. 93) έμοι is underlined, but there is no marginal correction. Neither Mill nor Wetstein note an alternative reading in their apparatuses. It so happens that Fell, uniquely, has έμοi which is a misprint. It would appear that this is the reason for the underlining of έμοι in MS 69. If so, then this would identify Fell’s printed text as the one being used to correct MS 69.
CLUES TO THE HISTORY OF MANUSCRIPT

At John 7:52–8:11 (List B no. 26) The 7-line note in the margin has displaced the kephalia number (Κεφ θ) upwards by two lines. This suggests that the kephalias were inserted after the corrector had done his work, or, more likely, they are his work also.

HISTORY OF MANUSCRIPT /CURCELLUS OR FELL (ligature)

Romans 7:8b–9a (List B no. 46) correction adds κατειργάσατο εν ἕμοι πάσαιν ἐπιθυμίαιν χωρὶς γὰρ νόμου αμαρτία ιερὰ. Εὖ γά με ξινων χωρὶς νόμου [ποτε] ἐλθάντος γά τις ἐντολής. . . . The bracketed word, [ποτε], has been omitted by the corrector by mistake. The correction has been written on a patch which predates the correction.

The printed text that comes closest to the handwriting of the corrector is Curcellaeus, as they agree on the ligature for γαρ and the ligature of τ in κατειργάσασαντο. On the other hand the corrector and Fell agree on not using the ligature for τις, which is written τ with a superscript ὅ in Curcellus. The corrector used the large uncial C for σ, in κατειργάσασαντο which is not found in any of the printed texts at this place.

1 Corinthians 4:8 (List B no. 55) Correction adds: καὶ ὑθελὼν ὑ σε ἐβασιλεύσατε. The correction has been written over a patch which deliberately avoided the fourth kephalia (chap.4), which means that the kephalia pre-dates the patch, and the correction post-dates the patch. The writing of gamma as a small uncial is characteristic of the corrector. The ligature for ευ- in ἐβασιλεύσατε is the same in Curcellus, Fell and Mill, but not in Wetstein. The ligature writing of καὶ in the correction agrees with Curcellus. Fell uses a different ligature (a large C with a smaller c inside it).

Philemon 20 (List B no. 94) σου is underlined faintly, and corrected to μου in the margin. Curcellus, Fell, Mill and Wetstein use the same ligature for the correct text, where υ is written above ο. The correction straddles a patch, which may pre-date the writing of the text.

Hebrews 7:24 (List B no. 98) Correction adds το, which is in the form of a ligature. The corrected text is in Curcellus and Fell. The patch on the outer edge is in two parts to avoid pasting over Kephalia 8 (chap. 8). It also skirts around the main text.

Rev 5:14 (List B no. 151) addition of six words in the margin: ζωτι εἰς τοὺς αἰωνας τῶν αἰωνων. The omission is marked with Λ in the text and there is a corresponding sign (both topped with double dots) in the margin before the correction. The marginal text has been displaced upwards by one line due to the presence of the Kephalia number, which appears to have been written by the corrector. This gives us the following sequence of events. First came the Kephalia number, then came the correction. But before both came the patch they are written on, as can be seen in the correction higher up at 5:10.

DAMAGE TO THE MANUSCRIPT

DAMAGE TO JUDE WAS DONE BEFORE 1728

Jude 7b-end is missing (List B no. 135), and the corrector has written Λείπει (‘missing’) at the foot of the page. This shows that when the corrector did his work [John Jackson in 1728], the Codex had already lost a single leaf. The lost sheet had writing on one side. The blank side may have attracted the attention of someone who needed writing material, and this may account for it loss.

DAMAGE TO 2 JOHN WAS DONE BEFORE MILL’S COLLATION IN 1707

2 John 5 (List B no. 138). Mill has misread MS 69 as εχαμεν. It reads εχομεν, as Wetstein and Tregelles have it.
MS 69 verse 5 reads καὶ νημι攻克φων σοι, which has the support of Codex Alexandrinus. The missing text is bracketed, due to the text having been cut at this point, but it clearly reveals a transposition, as Curcellus and Fell read攻克φων σοι καινην. The rest of Wetstein’s MSS read攻克φων σοι καινην. Neither Mill nor Wetstein record any variants in the cut off text (2 John 1-4, and 3 John 5-10), so that it is likely that the damage was done before Mill’s collation (before 1707).

DAMAGE TO REVELATION OCCURRED AFTER 1728

Rev 19:1 (List B no. 154) omits καί (not visible in the text, because half the page is torn off).

Fell and Curcellus begin 19:1 with καί. The default support for the omission of καί is: 3. 8. 10. 12. 13. 15. 17. 28. Erasmus, and the other printed editions and versions. This is proof that when John Jackson did his collation in 1728 folio 213 had not been torn in two at that time. The vandalism occurred after 1728.

L-BRACKETS

1 Corinthians 9:17 (List B no. 57) οὐκ before εἶχω in the text is enclosed in square L-brackets. This is the first occurrence of these L-brackets. At Acts 19:40 (f180r.l8) a modern collator (Scrivener?)596 has written a pencilled note in the margin objecting to these brackets. It reads: “a stupid alteration by some modern reader.” These brackets are found in other places, see f140v (1 Thessalonians 4:1); f148v (Titus 1:12); and f180r (Acts 19:40); 1 John 1:6b-7a (f198r). There is no marginal correction. There is no οὐκ before εἶχω in Curcellus or Fell., and this would account for the L-brackets.

L-BRACKETS

1 Thessalonians 4:1 (List B no. 78) There are square L-brackets around ηνα before καθως. Wetstein omits ηνα before καθως in his main text, as do Erasmus, Curcellus, Fell and Mill.

L-BRACKETS/ CURCELLUS = FELL

Acts 19:40 (List B no. 114) οῦ οὐ/Yes/correction: οὐ has been placed in square L-brackets leaving just οὐ, which Swanson has not noted. A modern collator597 has written a pencilled note objecting to the brackets here. It reads: “a stupid alteration by some modern reader.” This implies that the person who wrote the note regarded οὐ οὐ as the original text.

Because no printed edition before Wetstein (1751) has οὐ οὐ as its main text, Scrivener’s note that the square brackets are the work of a ‘modern reader’ is correct. Scrivener would have supported οῦ οῦ as the TR reading. Just when did οῦ οῦ enter the TR? It was later than Wetstein (1751), but before Scrivener did his collation of MS 69 in 1855, and the L-brackets were to bring MS 69 into line with the text of John Fell (1675).

MISCELLANEOUS

ALEXANDRINUS, in apparatus = CURCELLUS, FELL (but not Bezae)

Romans 4:10b-11a (List B no. 44) correction: οὐκ ειν περιτομή αλλ’ ειν ακροβυστία (v.11) καὶ σημειών ελαύε περιτομής (περιτομήν) σφαγία της δικαιοσυνης της πιστεως της ειν τη ακροβυστία. The corrector has incorporated an alternative reading (περιτομήν) inside his correction. If a manuscript can be found which has this correction then this would be the manuscript used to correct Codex Leicestrensis. The correction within the correction, i.e., περιτομήν, is found in 6 424 1739 1881 (Swanson’s evidence), but none of these mss would have been available in England while the Codex was in Leicester.

596 Samples of the handwriting of S. P. Tregelles and O. T. Dobbin can be seen on folio 203r.
597 Samples of the handwriting of S. P. Tregelles and O. T. Dobbin can be seen on folio 203r. The ‘modern scholar’ was not Tregelles because his text agrees with MS 69.
The solution is in the critical apparatus of Curcellus and Fell who give in support of περιτομην, A. s. 2. In Fell’s apparatus A. stands for Codex Alexandrinus, and “s. 2.” may stand for two of Stephanus’s manuscripts. Mill (1710) gives in support of περιτομην, Steph. e. l. Alex. Wetstein gives in support of περιτομην, AC. etc.

It is possible that the corrector had a copy of Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill, or Wetstein, because only in these four printed texts is there a footnote giving περιτομην as an alternative reading, which the corrector has noted in his marginal correction in MS 69 (= no 37 in Wetstein). The variant is not noted in Bezae (1598), or Schmidi (1658). But we can narrow down the choice to Curcellus, Fell, and Wetstein because in these three editions does the corrector follow their exact ligatures, especially the triple use of τ with a superscript s which stands for της, and the peculiar ligature for writing περι- in περιτομης (twice).

BEZAE
At Mark 4:15 (List B no. 13) the correction: οις has been taken from the brief critical apparatus in Fell (footnote reads: οις Ca. s. 1. [Ca. = Exam. Cantab. quod Bezae fuerat]) or from Curcellus (footnote has οις, but no source). Swanson gives only D in support of οις.

BEZAE
John 8:39 (List B no. 29) The correction: τα εργα του Ἀβρααμ εποιειτε does not include αυ. But Fell and Curcellus both add αυ after εποιειτε, but it is not found in Erasmus (1516, 1527), Colin (1534), Frouschouiana (1547), H. Stephens (1587), Elzevir (1633), Griesbach (1777), Scolz (1836), Complutensian (1522), Montanus (1585) and Scaliger (1620). The introduction of αυ after εποιειτε appears to have begun with R. Stephens (1551). This is the one case where the corrector did not follow either Curcellus or Fell. It is possible that the corrector used D or the Elzevir’s text (1633), which do not have αυ after εποιειτε.

BEZAE/CURCELLUS OR FELL apparatus only
1 Timothy 6:9 (List B no. 89) Correction adds του διαβολου. Wetstein’s support for the addition of του διαβολου is D. a prima manu. FG. Versio. Vulg. It is not found in Colin (1534), or any of the other printed editions until it appears in the apparatus of Curcellaeus (1658) for the first time, and then in Fell. The printed form of the addition in Fell’s apparatus is almost identical to Curcellus’s. Fell’s text is based on that of Curcellaeus, as the use of his ligatures reveal, and certainly Mill based his form of the Greek addition on Fell’s printed form (and was aware of Curcellus’s text, see Mill under Hebrews 7:24). The corrector’s written form of the Greek could reflect the printed form of Curcellaeus, Fell or Mill (or even Wetstein). These are the only sources for this correction in MS 69.

CURCELLUS
John 12:1 (List B no. 33) correction: ο ουν Ιησους. The corrected text is found in Fell and Curcellus, but Curcellus used an unusual ligature to write ου, and this is how the correction has been written, showing that the correction was taken from his text, and not from Fell. However, the situation is reversed in Romans 16:19 (see below).

CURCELLUS OR FELL (ligature)
Romans 4:12 (List B no. 45) The correction is στοιχειον. Interestingly, the marginal correction is written with the same ligature letters as appears in Curcellaeus, Fell, Mill, and Wetstein. Once again we can narrow down the source text used by the corrector of MS 69 to one of these four printed texts.

CURCELLUS AND FELL IN APPARATUS
Romans 7:25 (List B no. 47) correction: του ζωοi μου. Both Curcellaeus and Fell have the correction in their footnotes but agree with MS 69 in their main text. Wetstein records only one manuscript (Stephani 1α) and one version, Syriac, which have the marginal correction as their main text. The corrector took his reading from the apparatus of either Curcellaeus or Fell.

FELL NOT CURCELLUS ligature
Romans 8:12 (List B no. 49) correction: του. The corrector did not follow the ligature as given by Curcellus (which is τ written on top of ου which is written with u on top of o). The corrector followed the ligature of Fell and Wetstein, which is τ alongside u on top of o.

FELL ligature

Romans 16:19 (List B no. 52) correction: χαλρο ουν το εφ ημυν. The ligature for ουν matches Fell and Mill more than Curcellaeus. Wetstein’s support for εφ ημυν ουν χαλρο is AC 37 [= MS 69]. Origens, Damascenus. Below is the scan of the correction in MS 69, which agrees with Fell’s printed text, but not with Curcellus’ text.

However, the situation is reversed in John 12:1 (see above).
A STUDY TO FIND A REASON FOR THE DOTS AND UNDERLINING WITHOUT ANY MARGINAL CORRECTION IN MS 69

I compared Tregelles’s text against MS 69 to check just how thorough was his collation of MS 69, and it did not fare well.

I looked for a possible collation with the Vulgate to explain the dots and underlining where there was no Greek correction in the margins, but this did not explain all the anomalies. I found places where the Vulgate differed from MS 69, but there was no dot or underlining to indicate a consistent policy. Everything was seemingly haphazard, sloppy and sporadic.

The first underlining occurs with the first two words, σου καὶ. There is no known Greek variant at this place, so the focus shifted to the Vulgate. But it, too, is a strict translation of the Greek σου/Latin te. The only solution I can offer is that the corrector wanted σεαυτόν here, to parallel σεαυτόν in the next verse. The dots maybe the work of Rev. John Jackson, who attempted to construct his own Greek text of the NT, which he failed to complete.

The second dot (line 4) is associated with σεαυτόν and σου. Here there is a genuine Greek variant, and the Latin translates one of these as tecum (ablative). Tregelles accepts the TR σου and ignores σεαυτόν. The question arose, is someone just drawing attention to a difference between the TR and MS 69? It cannot have been Scrivener because he would support the TR.

The third dot (line 5) seems to query σταθήσεται (3 pers. sg. fut. pass. ind.). The Vulgate has stet (3 sg. pres. act. subj). Is the dot related to the Vulgate?

The fourth is the underlining of δεδιέμενα (18:18). The query could be the tenses in Latin which translates it as a future followed by the present indicative. The Greek is in the future, followed by the perfect pass ptc., “it shall having been bound.” In Greek neuter plural subjects (δοσα) take sing. verbs in Greek, but plural verbs in Latin. Is this the issue?

The fifth difference. Tregelles reads [τω] ουανακα twice in this verse, but on neither occasion does he give MS 69 in support of the reading, so that it must be assumed that this is what it read. But in a case where he has put τω in square brackets in his main text, you would expect him to give all the evidence for and against, as he states in the Introduction that he would do. It is disconcerting when a collator is not consistent in how he presents his evidence. In this instance he is drawn to follow B (Codex Vaticanus), which is not a Byz. text.

The sixth observation. This has no mark by the corrector, yet MS 69 reads αν whereas Tregelles = TR = εαυ. The lack of any mark shows that whoever was inserting the pencilled dots was not concerned to mark every difference.

No. 7. The words παλιν αμην (18:19) are both underlined and there is a small ‘x’ against the line in the margin. The reason is that αμην is omitted by the Vulgate and the TR (checked with Fell and Curcellus; both of whom register αμην in the crit. app.) but αμην is included in Tregelles’s main text, who follows 69, and EFCHKSUV and ‘Latt.’ which means the bulk of the Vulgate mss. The only evidence Tregelles gives for the omission of αμην is DL, and σ γ (σ stands for the TR), and some Latin mss. RP includes αμην. The old TR is false in this instance, and Tregelles is correct. However, the most likely motive to underline αμην is that it is omitted by the Vulgate.

No. 8. MS 69 reads: δω εξ ήμων σεμφωνήσωσιν. The TR = RP reads: δω ήμων σεμφωνήσωσιν. Tregelles reads: δω σεμφωνήσωσιν εξ ήμων. He has three differences with the TR. First, the transposition, second, the addition of εξ, and third, the alteration of σεμφωνήσωσιν to σεμφωνήσωσιν. Strangely, none of these differences are marked in 69. The reason why no mark appears against the addition of εξ is that it is translated as ex νοθίς (‘out of you’) in the Vulgate.

No. 9. MS reads οπωσ. TR = RP = Tregelles reads ου before γαρ. There is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant. The reason is that the difference was not translatable into Latin, which uses ubi for both Greek words.
No. 10. 18:20. MS reads έις. TR = RP = Tregelles read ἔναν. There is no mark in 69 because it is irrelevant for the Vulgate translation.

No. 11. 18:21. MS 69 reads: αὐτῷ ο Πέτρος εἰσπρ. TR = αὐτῷ ο Πέτρος εἴπε. RP = αὐτῷ o Πέτρος εἴπεν. Tregelles: o Πέτρος εἴπεν αὐτῷ, because of the support of B and the Vulgate. So the absence of any mark in 69 may be due to the ambiguity in the Vulgate word order.

No. 12. 18:21. MS 69 reads: ό αἰτέρος μου εἰς εμε. TR = RP = Tregelles εἰς εμε ό αἰτέρος μου. The Vulgate follows the TR word order, so that I would have expected MS 69 to be underlined if the collation was being made against the Vulgate, which, up to now, seemed to be the case.

No. 13. 18:22. MS 69 and TR, RP read: ἀλλά ἐως. Tregelles reads: ἀλλα ἐως. As there is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant, the collation was not done against a Greek manuscript, but more likely against the Vulgate.

No. 14. 18:23. MS 69 reads: ὁμοωδη. TR, RP, and Tregelles read: ὁμοωδη. As there is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant, the collation was not done against a Greek manuscript, but more likely against the Vulgate.

No. 15. 18:23. MS 69 and TR read: ἱθέλησε. RP, and Tregelles read: ὁμοωδη. As there is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant, the collation was not done against a Greek manuscript, but more likely against the Vulgate.

No. 16. 18:24. MS 69, TR, and RP read: προσθηκεθη, which has the support of B. Tregelles inconsistently does not cite the reading of 69. As there is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant, the collation was not done against a Greek manuscript, but more likely against the Vulgate.

No. 17. 18:25. MS 69, TR, RP, add: αὐτῷ after ὁ κυρίος. Tregelles omits it with the support of B and the Vulgate. Inconsistently, he does not record that MS 69 supports the addition of αὐτῷ after ὁ κυρίος. I would have expected MS 69 to be underlined if the collation was being made against the Vulgate. As there is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant, the collation was not done against a Greek manuscript.

No. 18. 18:25. MS 69 and TR, read: έιξεν. RP: έιξεν (he <at that time> had imperative act ind). Tregelles reads: έιξε (has imperative act ind). In this case the Latin agrees with 69, for it reads habebat. This could account for no mark in 60 to note a variant text.

No. 19. 18:26. MS 69, TR, and RP read: κυριε after λέγων. Tregelles omits κυριε after λέγων. Tregelles inconsistently does not cite the reading of 69 among the supporting evidence. As there is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant, the collation was not done against a non-TR Greek manuscript. The Vulgate does not have κυριε after λέγων in this place, so that if 69 was being collated against the Vulgate I would have expected κυριε to be underlined.

No. 20. 18:26. MS 69, TR, RP read: εμε. Tregelles reads: εμε on the strength of DL. There is no mark in 69 to indicate there is an alternative variant in the Greek. The Vulgate would not distinguish between the two Greek readings.

No. 21. 18:27. MS 69 reads: το δανιων. TR, RP, Tregelles read: το δανιλων. This is a simple spelling variation which does not affect the sense, so that it is a mystery why it was singled out for correction when other more glaring differences are in the text. This correction was clearly collated against a Greek text. Because this is the first instance where a variant Greek reading appears in the margin of 69, it may mean that we should expect actual marginal variants to be a collation against MS 69, whereas the pencilled dots may refer to the Vulgate.

No. 22. 18:28. MS 69, TR read: τοντογεν. Tregelles and RP read: τοντογεν. The difference is not noted in 69 by any mark.

No. 23. 18:28. MS 69, TR, RP read: μοι. Tregelles omits μοι, because of BDL. 1. 33. (Latt.). There is no mark against μοι in 69. MS 69 was not collated against the Vulgate otherwise μοι would have been underlined.

No. 24. 18:28. MS reads: ει τι οφειλης. TR (according to Tregelles), RP, Tregelles read: ει τι οφειλεις. The marginal correction reads: δι τι οφειλεις. Now this correction is found in Curcellus, Elzevir, and Fell (and others). Tregelles gives it as the text of Stephens (the Common Text).
No. 25. 18:29. MS 69, TR, RP reads: εἰς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ. Tregelles omits these four words on the strength of B. These words appear to have been lost through homoioteleuton (αὐτοῦ . . . αὐτοῦ). There is underlining of the word τοὺς and a small ‘x’ in the margin, whose ink (or pencil?) is much fainter than the writing of ὅ, τι ὠφέλεις above it. It would appear that the ‘x’ was meant to draw attention to the fact that the Vulgate does not have these four words.

No. 26. 18:29. MS 69, TR, RP read: επὶ εμοὶ. Tregelles reads: επὶ εμε with support from CDL. There is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant reading.

No. 27. 18:29. MS 69 reads: καὶ αὐτὰν σοι ἀποδώσω. TR reads: καὶ πάντα αποδώσω σοι. There is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant reading here. The Vulgate agrees with TR (and MS 69), which may account for there being no mark in 69.

No. 28. 18:30. MS 69 has a dittography: αὐτὸν αὐτὸν. This occurred after he wrote the first αὐτὸν, when his ink ran out. After he dipped it in the ink he repeated αὐτὸν in the much darker ink. There is no mark in 69 to note the dittography. and Tregelles ignored it.

No. 29. 18:30. MS 69, TR, RP, Tregelles read: ὅπως. Tregelles omits ὅπως after ἐμοί with the support of BCL. Tregelles inconsistently does not cite the reading of 69. As there is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant, the collation was not done against a Greek manuscript. A collation with the Latin would have underlined ὅπως after ἐμοί.

No. 30. 18:30. MS 69 reads: ἤρελησεν. TR, RP, Tregelles read: ἤρελησ. There is no mark in 69 to indicate an alternative reading. MS 69 has the support of D and the Vulgate mss.

No. 31. MS 69, TR, RP read: δὲ after ἐνωτες, with support from the Latin mss. Tregelles reads: οὐν following BD. 33. There is no mark in 69 to indicate a variant Greek text.

**THIS CONCLUDES THE FIRST PAGE OF CODEX LEICESTRENSIS**

Conclusion.
The collation is haphazard and sporadic. There was no collation with Tregelles’s text. If there was a collation with Curcellus and Fell it was not a full collation by any means.

Scrivener noted a number of marginal notes, “too many” he says, and he attributes these to William Chark who owned the manuscript in the late sixteenth century. It is not clear if Scrivener is referring to the corrections or to the longer marginal corrections to bring the Greek text of MS 69 into line with the TR.

My research into the 154 corrections shows that they could not have been done by Wm Chark, who owned the MS before Thomas Hayne, who donated MS 69 to Leicester Town Council in his will of 1640, but it only came into the Council’s possession when Hayne died 27 July 1645.

**THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CODEX LEICESTRENSIS AND CODEX MONTFORTIANUS AND THEIR DATE OF WRITING**

The likelihood that someone took three unique readings from Erasmus’s printed text and inserted them into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis at first sight seems very remote. Much depends on who inserted the 154 corrections in the margin. If they were added by William Chark, then Erasmus (1467-1536) could not have seen them when he examined the MS 69 between 1511 and 1514, when he was in Cambridge university. We would have to conclude that they were not added to the Codex between 1468 and 1520. So where did they come from?

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598 F. H. A. Scrivener’s *Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (London, 1894), p. 202f. He notes that MS 69 has lost Jude 7-25 and Rev 19:10 to the end. This is how the codex exists today. He says that Mill and Wetstein continued up to Rev 20:15. Scrivener (p. xlv) refers to Dobbin’s note that the corrector is the first hand, but Scrivener rightly says they are by a second hand “but nearly as old as the first.” In fact, the second hand can be dated to 1728.
We know something about William Chark from Harris' researches. He traced the earliest record of the collations of the Codex, which would have included notices of the marginal corrections. He mentions Edwards, *History of Libraries*, I. 750, who gives some information regarding the acquisition by the Leicester Town Council of the collation of the MS. made by Rev. John Jackson, Tiffin and Gee for J. J. Wetstein. According to Edwards this collation was purchased 30 years before Edwards's own time, and was made in the margin of an Oxford Greek Testament of 1686 (Harris thinks it should read Fell's edition of 1675). It was at one time the property of Caesar de Missy in the sale catalogue (for 1775) in whose library it is described as follows: 'Collatio codicis Leicestrensis per rev. J. Jackson adscripta margine N. T. Graece impressi Oxonii 1675. Hoc est originale e quo variantes lectiones suo N. T. insenuit Wetsteinius.'

Edwards calls Chark, Clarke and describes him as 'the ejected fellow of Peterhouse.' Chark is mentioned as a distinguished scholar in the time of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Chark's crime was that he not only said that Popes were of the devil but also that Bishops and Archbishops were also! This infuriated the Anglican Establishment. Chark preached his fatal sermon on 5th December 1572, in Great St Mary's, Cambridge. On 5th February he was expelled from Cambridge University and from St Peter's College (now Peterhouse). Someone seems to have aided Chark get the office of preacher in Lincoln's Inn.509

There is a direct connection between Codex Leicestrensis and Codex Montfortianus (Erasmus called this Codex 'Britannicus'). Codex Montfortianus was completed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603). It was owned by Dr. Montfort before it came into the hands of Archbishop Ussher. Montfort was a doctor of divinity in Cambridge in the 17th cent. A previous owner of Codex Montfortianus was William Chark (or Charc), the same who was deprived of his living. The previous owner was Thomas Clement, and before him Froy (or Roy?) a friar. A minimum of three hands wrote Codex Montfortianus. The Book of Revelation was coped from Codex Leicestrensis. According to O. T. Dobbin.608 The same scribe did the running book titles in both MSS. Both MSS were owned by Chark. Now if Harris's observation is correct that one scribe did the running book titles in both codices then we have a direct link between the two works.

Barrett regarded the text of Codex Montfortianus in Revelation to be so close to Codex Leicester [Leicestrensis] that he regarded it as a copy of the Leicester MS. This is possible if Thomas Charc possessed both MSS, and used Leicester to complete Montfort, which is made up of three distinct parts, by three different scribes, unlike Leicester which has one scribe throughout. Erasmus only inserted 1 John 5:7 into his 1522 (3rd) edition when it was seen in Codex Britannicus, which is another name for Codex Montfortianus, but it also occurs in Montfortianus in the exact form that Erasmus has it, and in no other MS found since. So it must have been taken from Montfortianus by Erasmus.601

Tregelles shows that 1 John 5:7-9 was translated into Greek from the Latin, as no other MS has this Greek text. So it is a fabrication. The Complutensian Polyglot (or CP) was also influenced by the Vulgate of 1 John 5:7-9. But it omits v.8b. Tregelles gives a facsimile of the added Greek of 1 John


600 It would help to date the 140 corrections in Codex Leicestrensis, if any of them were used to correct the main text of Codex Monteforianus. Because the 140 corrections are by a single scribe it would take just a handful of its corrections to appear in Codex Monteforianus to establish the latest date for the 140 corrections in Codex Leicestrensis.

5:7ff. The text reads: “for there are three that bear witness in heaven, father, word, and holy spirit, And these three are one and there are three that bear witness on earth, spirit, water, and blood; if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his son.” Tregelles noted that with the single exception of the Latin there is not an ancient version that can be claimed as containing the passage. The oldest Latin MSS do not have it.

Orlando T. Dobbin showed that Codex Montfortianus is a copy of the Oxford MS 39, which contained Paul’s Epistles, Acts, and the Catholic Epistles. In this copy 1 John 5:7-9 does not occur, so he proved that it was inserted by the scribe of Montfortianus.

Harris thought that Codex Montfortianus was written by a Franciscan close to 1520 because we know all the owners of the Codex. He suggested that it was probably written by William Roye a Franciscan friar, and the Codex appeared between the 2nd and 3rd of Erasmus’s editions (between 1519 and 1522).

Harris credits Roye with the inserted of the forgery at 1 John 5:7. The Codex was produced for polemical purposes. The Franciscans of Antwerp sent a copy of a text with 1 John 5:7 in it (The Three Heavenly Witnesses) to Erasmus.

Harris repeats his contention that Codex Leicestrensis is an Italian codex of the 15th century. He points out that the Harleian Codex has the same paper/vellum mixture and catch-words from quire to quire, like Leicestrensis, and is dated to 1427, and written in Bologna.

We should also rule out the possibility that Erasmus made up these readings himself and inserted them into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis. B. Metzger has produced a facsimile of Erasmus’s Greek handwriting and it is clear that it does not match the hand of the corrector of Codex Leicestrensis (especially the writing of epsilon). Specimens of Erasmus’s Greek handwriting can also be seen throughout the margins of MS 2, which was used as the printer’s copy, and these are not the same as the corrections in MS 69.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PRINTED EDITIONS CONSULTED FOR THIS WORK

In chronological order are the following Greek New Testaments. The classmarks (first item) are those of Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, England.

Cambridge University Library, shelf no. F153.e.4.3. Small book. Yellow vellum cover. No verses marked. Belonged to Christian D. Ginsburg. By Simon Colinaeus [Kolinai], Ἡ ΚΛΗΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ. No publisher or place of publication. Dated 1534. Matthew 18:28, δ, τι ὀφείλεις (note the acute accent over δ, and the comma separating it from τι). This is the earliest attestation I can find for δ, τι ὀφείλεις. He follows Erasmus’s text at Matthew 19:9, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία.

Colinaeus /DATE: 1534. TEXT: ERASMUS


[Bulgaria]/DATE: 1547. TEXT: ERASMUS

Cambridge University Library, shelf no. 1.30.5. No author. Text of Robertum Stephanum. Pub. Francofurti, Typis Wechelianis apud Claudium, 1551. No verses marked, only ABC etc. paragraphs. Matthew 18:28, δ, τι ὀφείλεις (note the acute accent over δ, and the comma separating it from τι). In the margin is the alternative reading εἰπ. After it is a tiny letter which looks like a Greek π. He follows Erasmus’s text at Matthew 19:9, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία. However, in the margin he notes the alternative text μὴ ἐπὶ π. This is the reading of the Complutensian Polyglot.

Stephanum /DATE: 1587. TEXT: ERASMUS/ROBERT STEPHANUS

1.33.8. COMPLUTENSIAN TEXT. Ben. Ariae Montani Hispalensis, Novvm Testamentum Graece, cum Vulgata interpretatione . . . Antverpiae: Ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1583. Matthew 18:28. εἰπ τι ὀφείλεις. Note the spelling of ὀφείλεις. The interlinear Latin is: Redde mihi siquid debes. There is a marginal alternative to siquid which is quod. This is the earliest text to read εἰπ τι ὀφείλεις. Montanas used the Complutensian Polyglot Greek New Testament as his text. He follows the Complutensian text at Matthew 19:9 (no εἰ), as does Joseph Scaliger (1620).

Montanus /DATE: 1583. TEXT: COMPLUTENSIAN


Stephanus /DATE: 1587. TEXT: ERASMUS/HERNRY STEPHANUS

1.9.6. Th. Bezae, Iesv Christi Domini Nostri Nouvm Testamentum . . . Pub. Sumptibus Haered. Evst. Vignon. 1598. This is a diglot with Greek and two Latin columns. “Nova interpret.” and “Vetus interpret.” This is his own Latin translation and the Vulgate, side by side, as in Erasmus’s 1516 edition. Matthew 18:28, δ, τι ὀφείλεις (note the acute accent over δ, and the comma separating it from τι). In his annotations he notes: ¶Quod, δ, τι. In omnibus vetustis legis cur εἰπ, siquid: sed perperam. This appears to show that he was aware of the predominant reading εἰπ. It is odd that he does not translate the Greek μοι (mihi) before δ, τι ὀφείλεις, in either of the two Latin columns. He slavishly follows the Vulgate. He follows Erasmus’s text at Matthew 19:9, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία.

Bezae /DATE: 1598. TEXT: ERASMUS

1.31.45. COMPLUTENSIAN TEXT. Joseph Scaliger, ΤΗΣ ΚΛΗΝΗΣ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΣ ἀπαντα. Novvm Iesv Christi D. N. Testamentum, . . . Genevae: Apud Petrum de la Rouiere, 1620. He uses a
lot of ligatures. Matthew 18:28. εἰ τι οφείλεις. Compared to Arias Montanas, note the corrected spelling of οφείλεις. He is the next after Arias Montanas to reject ὅ, τι, and replace it with εἴτι. He follows the Complutenian text at Matthew 19:9 (no εἰ), as does Arias Montanas.

This volume contains the whole Bible in Hebrew and Greek. In the Hebrew there are no numbered verses except at intervals of 5, 10, 15, 20, etc.

Scaliger /DATE: 1620. TEXT: COMPLUTENSIAN


Elzevir /DATE: 1633. TEXT: ERASMUS/ELZE VIR

1.23.9 (large volume, 1512pp + Index; Gospels pp. 1-769) Erasmus Schmidius, Opus sacrum posthumum in quo continetur Versio Novi Testamenti Nova. [Versio, et Declaratio Novi Testamenti Graeci, plane nova.] Norimbergæ apud Michäelem Endterum, 1658. He follows Bezae’s layout. Three parallel columns which are: Greek, Nova interpret. Vetus interpret. Matthew 18:28, ὅ, τι οφείλεις (note the acute accent over ὅ, and the comma separating it from τι). In his annotations he does not note the alternative Greek reading of εἴτι οφείλεις. His own Latin translation is: Redde mihi quod debes. His Vulgate column reads: redde quod debes. His translation correctly takes account of μοι. He follows Erasmus’s text at Matthew 19:9, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία. In his annotations on v. 9 he wrote: “unicam causam divorij ponit Salvator. Leges civiles addunt, insidias vitae structas. Cujus exemplum hic superioribus annis habuimus, in quodam, qui Auriga Rostochiensis erat & vocabatur, qui propter insidias vitae structas, sententia Consistorij, ab conjugis vinculo liber pronunciatus, repudiata vel potius separatâ adhuc vivâ, aliam Rostochij t, & ex ea liberos suscipiebat.”

Schmidius / DATE: 1658. TEXT: ERASMUS

Cambridge University Library, shelf no. Young 137. Stephanus Curcellaeus, H ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ. Novum Testamentum. Amstelaedami, Ex Officina Elzevirianâ, 1658. Matthew 18:28, ὅ, τι οφείλεις (note the acute accent over ὅ, and the comma separating it from τι). The ti is a ligature. The footnote gives εἴτι as an alternative reading. He follows Erasmus’s text at Matthew 19:9, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία. However, in a footnote he has "deest" against εἰ. In his preface he mentions the Complutensian Polyglot and Erasmus’s 1516 edition, also Aldus Manutius 1517 Biblia Graeca, Wolfius Cephalaeus 1524, Simon Colinaeus 1534, Robertus Stephanus 1550, Christophorus Plantinus 1571, Elzevir, Andreea Wecheli 1597, Francisci Junii.

Curcellaeus /DATE: 1658. TEXT: ERASMUS/ELZE VIR

1.30.2 Joannis Millii, Novum Testamentum Graecum cum Lectionibus Variantibus (Roterodami: Apud Casparum Fritsch et Michaelem Böhm, 1710. His earlier work of 1707 (Classmark 1.22.38), did not use section numbers in the Prologemena.

Matthew 18:28, ὅ, τι οφείλεις (note the acute accent over ὅ, and the comma separating it from τι). He has a substantial apparatus.

Cambridge University Library, shelf no. Young 27. Joannis Jacobi Weinsteinii, H ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ. Novum Testamentum Graecum (2 vols. Amstelaedami: Ex Officina Dommeriana, 1751. Matthew 18:28, ὅ, τι οφείλεις (note the grave accent over ὅ, and the comma separating it from τι). All the evidence Westein gives is for εἴτι. CDEFGHKLM. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 15. unus Colb. 16. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 42. 47. 48. 53. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 78. 83. 86. 89. 90. 91. The exceptions are: 14. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 41. 43. 44. 45. 46. 49. 50. 51. 52. 76. 77. 79. 80. 81. 82. 84. 85. 87. 88. In addition he gives: Editio Complut. Stephani prima. Genev. Plant. Bengel. Origenes, Chrysostomus in l. & T. V. 32.

Wetstein /DATE: 1751. TEXT: ERASMUS/ELZEVIR
APPENDIX H

TITLE: “CAN WE TRUST THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS? CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: A TEST CASE.”

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 150 – c. 215)

The purpose of this appendix is to show that translations of the works of the early Church Fathers were made from very late copies of the original works, and in the case of Clement’s works, the translations were made from just one surviving Greek manuscript which is dated no earlier than the 11th century. If this situation obtains for most of the other Church Fathers, then this severely undermines using them as reliable witnesses and reliable translations.

Titus Flavius Clemens, better known as Clement of Alexandria is the earliest, extant Greek Church Father to refer to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 on divorce and remarriage, which he does in his work Stromata (meaning Miscellanies or Patchwork matters). The following is an extract from the introduction to Clement’s work by Rev. B. J. Pratten, on the little that we know of this man.606

Titus Flavius Clemens, the illustrious head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria at the close of the second century, was originally a pagan philosopher. The date of his birth is unknown. It is also uncertain whether Alexandria or Athens was his birthplace.607

On embracing Christianity, he eagerly sought the instructions of its most eminent teachers; for this purpose travelling extensively over Greece, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, and other regions of the East.

Only one of these teachers (who, from a reference in the Stromata, all appear to have been alive when he wrote608) can be with certainty identified, viz., Pantaenus, of whom he speaks in terms of profound reverence, and whom he describes as the greatest of them all. Returning to Alexandria, he succeeded his master Pantaenus in the catechetical school, probably on the latter departing on his missionary tour to the East, somewhere about a.d. 189.609 He was also made a presbyter of the Church, either then or somewhat later.610 He continued to teach with great distinction till a.d. 202, when the persecution under Severus compelled him to retire from Alexandria. In the beginning of the reign of Caracalla we find him at Jerusalem, even then a great resort of Christian, and especially clerical, pilgrims. We also hear of him travelling to Antioch, furnished with a letter of recommendation by Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem.611 The close of his career is covered with obscurity. He is

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606 Taken from: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.txt. I have retained the footnotes given with this ET. The original ET was by Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (series by Philip Schaff [1819–1893]).
607 Epiph., Haer., xxxii. 6.
608 Strom., lib. i. c. v.
610 Hieron., Lib. de Viris Illustribus, c. 38; Ph., Bibl., 111.
611 The reader is already acquainted (Hermas, p. 12, [13] note 9) with permissive canons, by which bishops might commend to their brethren, books fit to be read, which they sent,
supposed to have died about a.d. 220.

Among his pupils were his distinguished successor in the Alexandrian school, Origen, Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, and, according to Baronius, Combefisius, and Bull, also Hippolytus.

The above is positively the sum of what we know of Clement's history.

His three great works, The Exhortation to the Heathen (logos ho protreptikos pros Hellenas), The Instructor, or Paedagogus (paidagogos), The Miscellanies, or Stromata (Stromateis), are among the most valuable remains of Christian antiquity, and the largest that belong to that early period.

Unfortunately, only one 11th century manuscript (MS L) has survived of his Stromata. The 11th century Florence MS, which goes under the library designation Medic. Laur. Pl. v c. 3 [Laurentianae plutei 5 codex 3], and is referred to as Laur. V 3. It is better known as MS L. According to P. Mordaunt Barnard, MS L is our earliest and only authority for the Stromata. Another sixteenth-century manuscript, Codex Athous (also known as Codex Lawra B 113) is said to be a direct copy of the MS L, and therefore is of no value textually. There are samples of facsimiles of MS L in older works, but no photographic edition is currently available.

The earliest Latin translation of the Stromata appears to have been made in 1551 (without the Greek text) by Gentiano Herueto Aurelio [Gentian Hervet, 1499-1584], Clementis Alexandrini Omnia quae quidem extant opera, nunc primum e tenbris eruta Latinitateque donata, Gentiano Herueto Aurelio interprete. (Florentiae: Laur. Torrentius, 1551). It would appear that the translation was made from the manuscript in the Medicae bibliotheca (Florence) by Hervet in January 1550 (see page 4), and his

authenticated, not only by hand and seal, but by a clerical messenger whose duty it was (in the language of Bingham) “to go on the bishop’s embassies, with his letters or messages to foreign churches; for in those days, by reason of the persecutions, a bishop did not so much as send a letter to a foreign church, but by the hands of one of his clergy. Whence Cyprian calls them literae clericae.” Antiquities, book iii. cap. ii. 3. (The reference to ‘Bingham’ is to Joseph Bingham [1668-1723], Origines ecclesiasticæ or, the antiquities of the Christian Church; and Other Works. Revised by R. Bingham. 9 vols. London, 1829. There was an earlier edition of 10 vols. London, 1710-22.)


613 Cambridge University Library, shelf no. 3.15.22.
translation became the standard that was followed by all the succeeding diglots of Clement’s Stromata.

The earliest publication of the Stromata in Greek (without any Latin translation) was by Petrus Victorius, ΚΑΛΗΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΩΣ ΤΑ ΕΥΡΙΣΚΟΜΕΝΑ ΑΠΑΝΤΑ. Ex Bibliotheca Medicea (1550). 614

The earliest publication of the Stromata in Greek and Latin appears to have been made in 1616 by Friedrich Sylburg [1536-1596]. Clementis Alexandrini Opera Graece et Latine quae extant/Daniel Heinsius textum graecum recensuit . . . à Friderico Sylburgio collectae; cum tribus locu pletibus, auctorum, rerum, verborum & phraseon indicibus (Lugduni Batavorum: Ionnes Patius, pro Bibliopolio Commeliniano, 1616). 615

The standard followed by most studies on Clement’s writings tended to follow John Potter’s edition, ΚΑΛΗΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΩΣ ΤΑ ΕΥΡΙΣΚΟΜΕΝΑ. Clementis Alexandrini Opera, quae extant (Venetiis, 1757 [Oxford, 1715]). 616 It would appear that textual scholars, like Tischendorf and Tregelles, relied on Potter’s edition as the most accurate transcription of Clement’s Greek text (see §1.4. above). I have not been able to examine the 11th century Florence MS directly, but if the 16th century MS is an exact copy of it, then this creates confusion over what exactly Clement did write.


614 Cambridge University Library, shelf no. 3.15.21, and Adv. a. 19.1.


617 Where Hervet and Potter differ from Sylburg, these are embedded in Sylburg’s translation. Where the difference might cause confusion, the differences are given in the footnotes.

618 In place of: multos domus exitus custodiat: Potter has: è domo saepe non exeat.
P. Mordaunt Barnard collected three references to Matthew 5:32 in Clement’s *Stromata*. The three are given under Matthew 5:32 (p. 7).

**QUOTATION 1.** Οὐκ ἀπολύσεις γυναίκα πλὴν εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ λόγω πορνείας (*Stromata* II. XXIII. 145.3 [Potter 506; Victorius 168 line 18]). Non dimittes uxorem, praeterqvam propter fornicationem (Potter). ‘You shall not put away the wife, except for the cause of fornication . . .’ (Wilson 82).

**QUOTATION 2.** Ὅ δέ ἀπολειμένην λαμβάνων γυναίκα μοιχάται, ἡσαύν (*Stromata* II. XXIII. 146.2 [Potter 506; Victorius 168 line 23]) Barnard links Mt 5:32 with Mt 19:9 and Lk 16:18. Qui autem dimissam accipit uxorem, moechatur inquit: (Potter 506). ‘He that taketh a woman that has been put away, it is said . . .’ (Wilson 82). Under Mark 10:11 Barnard gives another quotation from Clement (p. 32), but this is the continuation of quotation 2:

‘Εάν γὰρ τις ἀπολύσῃ γυναίκα μοιχάται αὐτήν, τοιτέστιν, ἀναγκάζει μοιχευθῆναι. (*Stromata* II. XXIII. 146.2 [Potter 507; Victorius 168 line 24]). si quis enim dimiserit uxorem, moechatur ipsam, hoc est, cogit eam moechari. (Potter) “For, if, say, one divorces a wife

**QUOTATION 3.** οὐ μὴ ἀπολύσῃς τὴν γυναίκα χωρίς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτήν μοιχευθῆναι (*Stromata* Book III. Chap. VI section 47.2 [Potter 533, Victorius 178 line 29]). Quare qui dimittit uxorem, praeterquam fornicationis causa, facit eam moechari (Potter).

**QUOTATION 4.** ὁ θεὸς συνέζευξεν, ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωρίζετο, “whom God has joined together, let not man separate.” This is an exact quotation of Matthew 19:6 apart from the necessary omission of οὖν.

To put quotations 1 and 2 in their context, I give Philip Schaff’s translation (with Greek text in places):

145.3. Now that the Scripture counsels marriage, and allows no release (οὐδὲ ἄφισταθα) from the union, is expressly contained in the law, “Thou shalt not put away

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620 William Wilson, *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*. Vol. 2. (Ante-Nicene Christian Library. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. Vol. XII. Clement of Alexandria. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869]). Unfortunately this volume lacks an ET for Book III, which a footnote on I. 84 explains: “After much consideration, the Editors have deemed it best to give the whole of this Book in Latin” It is said in II. 244, of chap. 10 in Bk 2 of the *Paed.* “For obvious reasons, we have given the greater part of this chapter in the Latin version.” This, no doubt, was due to the sensitive matter of husbands having sex with menstruating wives.

621 MS L was published by Petrus Victorius (Florentiae: L. Torrentinus, 1550), which read αὐτὴν, but MS L reads αὐτήν.

622 The page number refers to Potter’s edition.

623 Present ind. act. 3 pers. sg. from ἐπίτρέπω (ἐπὶ + τρέπω), meaning to permit, allow; to yield, submit, comply; to commit, intrust, deliver to (Groves 239).

624 Present middle/passive infinitive from ὀφίστημι (fr. ἀπό from and ἵστημι to set), meaning, to separate, sever, disjoin, disunite, to put away, place at a distance, break off (so John Groves, *A Greek and
(ἀπολύσεις) thy wife, except (πλὴν ἐί μη) for the cause of fornication (ἐπὶ λόγῳ πορνείας);” and it regards as fornication628 (μοιχείαν), the marriage of those separated (κεχωρισμένων) while the other is alive.

146.1. Not to deck and adorn herself beyond what is becoming, renders a wife free of calumnious suspicion, while she devotes herself assiduously to prayers and supplications; avoiding frequent departures from the house, and shutting herself up as far as possible from the view of all not related to her, and deeming housekeeping of more consequence than impertinent trifling.

146.2. “He that taketh a woman that has been put away (ἀπολυμένην),” it is said, “committeth adultery (μοιχάται); and if one puts away his wife, he makes her an adulteress (μοιχατσαί),” that is, compels her to commit adultery (μοίχευσαι).

146.3. And not only is he who puts her away (ἀπολύσαι) guilty of this, but he who takes her, by giving to the woman the opportunity of sinning; for did he not take her, she would return to her husband.

147.1. What, then, is the law? In order to check the impetuosity of the passions, it commands the adulteress (μοίχασαι) to be put to death, on being convicted of this [Lev 20; Dt 22:22]; and if of priestly family, to be committed to the flames [Lev 21:9]. And the adulterer (ὁ μοιχός) also is stoned to death, but not in the same place, that not even their death may be in common.

147.2. And the law is not at variance with the Gospel, but agrees with it. How should it be otherwise, one Lord being the author of both? She who has committed fornication (πορνεύσασα) liveth in sin, and is dead to the commandments; but she who has repented, being as it were born again by the change in her life, has a regeneration of life; the old harlot (ἡ παλαιὰ) being dead, and she who has been regenerated by repentance having come back again to life.

147.3. The Spirit testifies to what has been said by Ezekiel, declaring, “I desire not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn.” Now they are stoned to death; as through hardness of heart dead to the law which they believed not. But in the case of a priestess the punishment is increased, because “to whom much is given, from him shall more be required.” Chapter XXIII. — On Marriage.

The context of quotation 4 is:

49.1. There are those who say openly that marriage is fornication. They lay it down as a dogma that it was instituted by the devil . . .

49.3. Next, they do not know the reason why the Lord did not marry. In the first place, he had his own bride, the Church. Secondly, he was not a common man to need a physical partner. Further, he did not have an obligation to produce children; he was born God’s only Son and survives eternally. It is this very Lord who says, “Let no human being part that which God has joined together

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625 The ‘union’ is συζυγίας, from σύν together, and ζυγίνω to join; meaning, a joining together, a yoke, pair; marriage (Groves 532). Literally, “Now that the Scriptures recommend to marry, but not to separate when, indeed, the marriage is permitted, is sanctioned by law [when set] over against, ‘You shall not divorce a wife, except

626 The adverb ἀντικρο[ν] means opposite, over against; to the other side, through and through; clearly, openly, decidedly, expressly, against all opposition (Groves 54).

627 The verb means to enact laws, legislate; to promulgate or publish a law; to ordain or sanction by law; to instruct in the law (Groves 408).

628 This is a wrong translation of μοίχειαν. Read ‘adultery’ in place of ‘fornication.’
"Ὅστε ὁ ἀπόλυτος τῆς γυναίκας χωρίς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτήν μοιχεύθηκαι (Strom Book III. Chap. VI section 47 [Potter 533]).

John Potter, ΚΛΗΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΩΣ ΤΑ ΕΥΠΙΣΚΟΜΕΝΑ. Clementis Alexandrini Opera, quae extant (Venetiis, 1757 [Oxford, 1715]).

The quote from Matthew 5:32 reads: “Ὅστε ὁ ἀπόλυτος τῆς γυναίκας χωρίς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτήν μοιχεύθηκαι (p. 533). The Latin of Potter reads:

Nām quanam ratione dicit Paulus Apostolus esse sanctificatam mulierem á viro, aut virum á muliere? Quid est autem, quod Dominus quoque dixit iis, qui interrogabant de divorcio, An licet uxorem dimittere, cum Moses id permiserit? Ad duritiam cordis vestri, inquit, Moses haec scripsit. Vos autem non legisistis, quod protoplasto Deus dixit, Eritis duo in carne una? [Sylburg and Hervet omit the question mark] Quare qui dimittit uxorem, praeterquam fornicionis causa, facit eam mochari. Sed post resurrectionem, inquit, nec uxorem ducent, nec nubant.

The same Latin translation is given in Sylburg (p. 446) and Hervet (p. 95).

The phrase ἐπὶ πορνείας occurs with reference to Matthew 19:9 at Strom. III. VI. 50.3 Dindorf, II. 275 (lines 2-5)(Potter 534) in the following context:

tούτο γάρ οἱ πυθανόμενοι μοθείν ἤβουλήθησαν, εἰ συγχωρεῖ καταγωγείσεις ἐπὶ πορνείας γυναῖκος καὶ ἐκβληθείσας ἐτέραν γῆσαι.

Ferguson has translated this as: ‘Those asking the question wanted to find out whether, when a wife had been condemned for sexual misconduct (ἐπὶ πορνείας) and removed, there was any advantage in marrying another.’

I discovered Ἰωάννης at Strom. III. VI. Dindorf, II. 27 (line 10)(Potter 535), p. 277 (line7), πορνεία occurs at III. XII. 82 (Dindorf II. p. 294 line 15. P. 299 (sect. 89) line 13, 15, 17 (and μοιχεία)(Potter 552)

Bk III. XVIII, 108 (Dindorf, II. 311, line 25 deals with 1 Cor 7, “a man is not to release (ἀφέναι) a wife.”

F. C. Birkitt in his Introduction to Barnard’s work concluded that, “Clement’s quotations have a fundamentally ‘Western’ character.” His allies are not B and the Coptic versions, but D and the Old Latin.”

629 It would appear that this work is basically a reissue of Sylburg’s 1688 work.


631 By ‘Western’ Burkitt means readings which are at once non-Alexandrian [Egyptian] and non-Antiochian [Byzantine].

Marcovich, he notes that there are “no less than three agreements of Clement with the ‘Received Text’ against the better mss, viz. the position of καθήκονις, the omission of the article before ἀγοραίος, and the addition of καὶ before λέγουσιν.” However, Burkitt noted that when the best Greek and the best Latin mss disagree, Clement more often than not agrees with the Old Latin (often in company with D) than with the best Greek mss, which, for Burkitt, are Ρ and B.

In the case of Luke 9:62, however, Burkett makes the point, “Moreover, the reading of D and Clement is obviously wrong; and it is companionship in error which shows real affinity of text. As a working hypothesis, therefore, we have good grounds for treating the text used by Clement as a branch of the ‘Western’ text not akin to the Old Syriac Version; in other words, as a text really and geographically Western.”

He notes the number of striking agreements between Clement and the Old Syriac which inclines him to believe that they both go back to an ancient confluence.

In Clement the text of John 17:24—26 agrees with the TR, but Burkitt dismisses it with the comment, “I should not be inclined to lay much stress upon the agreement of Clement with the ‘Received Text’ in Jn xvii 24—26, except so far as it discredits the eccentric reading of D in this passage.” This is a curious way to handle textual issues. The text reads as follows, with NA28 and RP variants placed in square brackets:

`Ω πατερ οὐκ εἰδώκαν` | `οὐκ εἰδώκας` [RP = οὐκ εἰδώκας]
--- | ---
`θελόναι διὰ τὸν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν` | `θέλωναί διὰ τὸν δόξαν τὴν ἐμῆς` [RP ἐμὴ/NA28 = ἐμήν]
`οὐκ ἔκακενοι με ἀπαθετήλας καὶ ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς τὸ ὅνομά σου καὶ γνωρίσα.` (Paed i. viii. 71,2)

Burkitt noted that the main problem concerns ὅ and οὐς. He notes that ὅ has the support of BD Bohairic, but “for οὐς we have all other MSS and versions, including the Latin and the Sahidic. In spite of this opposing array there is much to be said for the reading of ΡΒ, seeing that with κάκεινοι following in the same sentence there was more reason to change ὅ in οὐς than vice versa.” This last point is to no avail because the RP text reads the same.

Jerome gives the following list of Clement’s works (chiefly taken from Eusebius):

Στρωματεῖς Stromateis [or Miscellanies] in eight books. (GCS 12 [1972]; Marcovich [2002])

`Quis dives salvetur [Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved?].` (GCS 17 [1970]).

Παιδαγωγὸς Paedagogos [The Instructor] in three books. (GCS 12 [1972]; Marcovich [2002]).

Ὑποτύπωσις Hypotyposes [or Delinations] in eight books. (GCS 17 [1970])

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633 The most accurate Greek text of Clement’s Paedagogus (The Instructor) is that by M. Marcovich, Clementis Alexandrini Paedagogus (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002). The Greek text is given

634 Burkitt, idem. p. xii.

635 Burkitt, idem. xiii. (see p. 61 for the Gk text). Clement’s text occurs in Paed i. viii. 71, 2 (Potter 14; Marcovich p. 44).

636 Burkitt, idem. p. xvi.

637 Differences with the Robinson & Pierpont text are specifically noted with RP. The introductory words are: ὅτι δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς μονός ὁν θεὸς καὶ δίκαιος ἐστιν ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ μόνος ὑπὸς ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ μαρτυρήσῃ κύριος εὐσαγγελίῳ λέγων

638 Ibid. p. xvii.

639 John Kaye, ibid. pp. 4-9 has listed other titles that Clement refers to in his works which are no longer extant, or were proposed writings.

The following titles have not survived, or do some as fragments:

De pascha. Treatise on Easter. (GCS 17 [1970])
A Discourse on Fasting. Not extant.
A Book on the Ecclesiastical Canons (Against Judaizers). (GCS 17 [1970])
On the Prophet Amos
On Providence
On Evil-speaking
Exhortation to Patience (for newly baptised)
and about 15 other titles either written by him or about to be written.

The paucity of source manuscripts to recover the Greek text of the writings of Clement of Alexandria.

For the Protrepticus and Paedagogus the best authority is MS P (Paris. Gr. 451; written in 914 for Arethas, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, sometimes known as Codex Aretas), but it lacks Paed. Bk I. i-x and the beginning of xi, which are supplied from MSS F (Florence. Medic. Laur. Pl. 5. c. 24 [only contains the Paed. with lacunae], 11th cent.) and M (Mutinensis Gr. 126; 10/11th cent.). MS M is regarded as a very faithful copy of P, and F an inferior copy of P. It is now recognised that all extant copies of the Paedagogus go back to a single manuscript, namely MS P. The latest edition of the Greek text of the Paedagogus acknowledges that, “Clement’s Paedagogus is preserved virtually in a single manuscript . . . MS P.” This MS was copied “from an exemplar that was full of textual corruptions, lacunae, interpolations and dislocations.

In this work Clement asserted that there was a succession of worlds before Adam. See John Kaye (Bp. of Lincoln), Some account of the writings and opinions of Clement of Alexandria (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1835), p. 6 note.


For the *Stromata*, *Exerpta*, and *Eclogae*, are preserved virtually in a single manuscript, MS L (Florence. Medic. Laur. Pl. v. c. 3). A direct copy of this was made in the 16th cent., MS. Suppl. Gr 250 (Paris).

For the *Quis Dives Salvetur* is preserved virtually in a single manuscript, MS S (Scorialensis Ω III 9. 11th cent.). Michael Ghisler printed this homily in 1623 from a 16th cent. MS V (written by three scribes). There are about twelve fragments of this work, which were collated by P. M. Barnard.647

Note that *praeterquam fornicationis causa*, is the translation of: χωρίς λόγου πορνείας.

Dean Burgon [1818-1888] examined Mark 10:17-31 in Clement’s quotations from this Gospel. He took Mark 10:17-31 as his test passage, and noted, “We make a surprising discovery. There are but 297 words in those 15 verses,—according to the traditional Text: of which, in the copy that belonged to Clemens Alexandrinus, 39 prove to have been left out: 11 words are added: 22, substituted: 27, transposed: 13, varied; and the phrase has been altered at least 8 times. Now, 112 words out of a total of 297, is 38 per cent.” When Burgon used Westcott & Hort’s text as the standard he found that “the words omitted amount to 44. The words added are 13: the words substituted, 23: the words transposed, 34: the words varied 16. And the phrase has been altered 9 times at least. But, 130 on a total of 297, is 44 per cent. You will also bear in mind that Clement of Alexandria is one of our principal authorities for the Text of the Ante-Nicene period.” He concluded: “It is impossible to produce a fouler exhibition of S. Mark x. 17-31 than is contained in a document full two centuries older than either B or N, —itself the property of one of the most famous of the ante-Nicene Fathers.”648

Clement habitually mistakes apocryphal writings for inspired writings.649

J. J. Griesbach collected all the N.T. quotations of Clement in *Symbolize criticae ad supplendas et corrigendas variarum N.T. lectionum collectiones. Accedit multorum N.T. codicum Graecorum descriptio et examen* (2 vols; Halae: impensis lo. lac. Curtii vidvae, 1785-1793), vol. 2, pp. 227-620. Tischendorf’s readings of Clement are excerpted from this work (so Barnard, 1899, viii n 1). Griesbach’s work was superseded by Resch, and he in turn was succeeded by P. M. Barnard (1899) as far as the Gospels and the Acts is concerned.

P. Mordaunt Barnard collected the evidence for the Greek text of Clement’s *Stromata*650 and discovered that the earliest manuscript was MS L. He examined MS P which was written in AD 914 by the scribe Baanes for Arethas, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and also MS M. He compared the hand of MS M (which he dated to the 10th or 11th century) with the hand of MS L and concluded: “This hand cannot, I think, be placed later than the 11th century, and is, I am convinced, the hand of the scribe of Med. Laur. Pl. v. c. 3 [MS L], the only authority for the Stromata. I saw both

646 Ibid. Preface.
MSS. within 48 hours, and also compared this hand of [MS] M with Bandini’s facsimile of the Laurentian codex [MS L].”

John Kaye notes that Clement put the birth of Jesus in the 28th year of the reign of Augustus, and the 28th year must be dated from the victory at Actium. But Clement also believed that Jesus’ ministry lasted only one year. He quoted from all the books of the OT except Ruth, 2 Chronicles, Song of Solomon, and Obadiah. He regarded Tobit as Scripture and Ecclesiasticus. He quotes all of Paul’s Epistles except Philemon, but not James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John.

The Matthean exception clauses in other early sources


Resch’s parallels to Matthew 19:9a are:

   ἥ γραφῇ — νομοθετεῖ εὐκ ἀπολύσεις γυναῖκα πλὴν εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ λόγῳ πορνείας

2. Matthew 5:32a

3. Theophil ad Autol. III, 13
   καὶ ὁ ἄπολυη γυναῖκα παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι

   ἐάστε ὁ ἄπολυων τὴν γυναῖκα χαρῆς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι.

5. Matthew 19:9a
   ὥσ ἄν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείας καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην, μοιχᾶται.

   quicunque dimiserit uxorem suam, sine fornicatione, et aliam duxerit, exponit eam adulterio.

   ὃς γὰρ ἄν ἀπολύσῃ, φησί, τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην, μοιχᾶται.

8. Mark 10:11
   ὃς ἄν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην, μοιχᾶται ἐπ αὐτῆς.

9. Herm. Mand. IV, 1, 6. [p. 78, 10]
   ἐάν δὲ ἀπόλυσα τὴν γυναῖκα ἐτέραν γαμήσῃ, καὶ αὐτὸς μοιχᾶται.

    ἐάν γὰρ τὰς ἀπολύσις γυναίκα, μοιχάται αὐτὴν.

11. Luke 16:18a
    πᾶς ὁ ἄπολυων τὴν γυναίκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμῶν ἐτέραν μοιχεύει.

Resch’s parallels for Matthew 19:9b are:

    ὃ δὲ ἀπολελυμένην λαμβάνων γυναῖκα μοιχάται, φησίν.

13. Codex Ephraemi (C) Mt 19:9b
    καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένης γαμῆς μοιχᾶται

651 Ibid. p. xii.
653 Ibid. 370.
Resch’s parallels for Matthew 19:10 are:


(25) Matthew 19:10


The quotation can be found in Volume I. Book II. Cap. XXII (§145.3). It reads as follows: παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας (‘apart from the matter of fornication’)

The original text of Matthew 19:9 read: μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία (‘not over fornication’)

In what follows I shall attempt to trace the steps that led to the confused text that represents what Clement is supposed to have written originally (according to what has survived), which is given as: παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας. This translates as: nevertheless, except over a matter of fornication,

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654 This belongs to the series, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich’s Buchhandlung, 1906), quotes Clement on Matthew 19:9. The quotation can be found in Volume I. Book II. Cap. XXII (§145.3). It reads as follows: παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας. If this is what Clement wrote, then he has amalgamated (conflated) the so-called exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 in a botched manner. The original text of Matthew 5:32 read: παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας (‘apart from the matter of fornication’)

The original text of Matthew 19:9 read: μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία (‘not over fornication’)

In what follows I shall attempt to trace the steps that led to the confused text that represents what Clement is supposed to have written originally (according to what has survived), which is given as: παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας. This translates as: nevertheless, except over a matter of fornication,

First, the word παρεκτός in Matthew 5:32 is a very rare word, being used only three times in the New Testament and not at all in the LXX.\(^{656}\) The nearest equivalent to παρεκτός is πλην, which occurs 31 times in the NT, and 230 times in the Old Testament. This may explain why Clement (or his transcribers) used πλήν and not παρεκτός. If so, then he (or his transcribers) would have read Matthew 5:32 as: πλήν λογου πορνειας, “besides the matter of fornication.”

Second, if Clement (or his transcribers) regarded πλην λογου πορνειας as the equivalent of μη επι πορνεια, (in Matthew 19:9), then it would have been a simple matter to change μη into ει μη. By this means Clement (or his transcribers) would have brought 19:9 into line with 5:32. Both would then be converted into explicit exclusion clauses. But did Clement do this, or did one of his many transcribers do it? We shall never know, and therefore we can never be sure what Clement actually wrote.

The end result of these changes would be that Matthew 5:32 would have been read as: πλην λογου πορνειας, instead of παρεκτός λογου πορνειας “besides the matter of fornication,” and Matthew 19:9 would have been read as: ει μη επι πορνεια instead of μη επι πορνεια “except/not for fornication.”

In the case of Matthew 5:32, πλην has replaced the very rare word παρεκτός; and in the case of Matthew 19:9 ει μη has been made to agree with πλην (or could Erasmus’s printed text have played a part in creating ει μη(?)).

All would have been well if Clement (or one of his transcribers) had chosen just one of these exception clauses when commenting on Jesus’ teaching about divorce, but Clement did not, if the present text represents what he wrote.

Third, unfortunately as the text now stands, someone attempted to combine every Greek word in the two different exception clauses in Matthew’s Gospel. The following diagram sets out how this was done.

Fourth, in attempting to harmonise and amalgamate (conflate) the two Matthean clauses, the compiler correctly (grammatically) altered the genitive λογου to the dative λογω, but he replaced the dative πορνεια with the genitive πορνειας. This does not come across in the apparatuses of either Tischendorf or Tregelles, for both of them truncate their quotations of Clement to πορνειας (see §1.4. above), which most scholars would assume read the dative form here, following επι, as in Matthew 19:9. Or more likely the compiler/copyist found πορνειας already in Clement’s text and let it stand. The fact that the genitive form stands in the extant text, plus the use of πλην, shows that Clement very likely had the exception clause of Matthew 5:32 in mind when he wrote his work, and not Matthew 19:9.

Now the exception clause in Matthew 5:32 says nothing about an exception, or exceptions, for divorce. Jesus is referring to culpability (not cultural ability to permit divorce) for the evil that would follow a divorce. The focus is on blame for the consequences of divorcing a wife. This is also the focus of Clement, because this is how he expounds Jesus’ exemption clause in Matthew 5:32, in what follows. For both Christ and Clement marriage was, and is, a life-long union dissolved only by

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\(^{656}\) The three occurrences are Mt 5:32; Acts 26:29; and 2 Cor 11:28.
the death of one member. There is no escape from marriage once it is entered into, and Jesus’ disciples instantly recognised this when they logically concluded that it was more advantageous for a man not to marry if that is the essence and implications of marriage.

The resultant text of Clement (as it has come down to us 1,000 years after it was written) is clumsy with both πλην and ei μη meaning the same thing in this context. It is possible that originally Clement wrote πλην λόγω πορνείασ (Matthew 5:32), and this became πλην ἐπὶ λόγῳ πορνείασ “besides the matter of fornication” (cf. Esth 14:18; Sir 29:8 for the construction) when ἐπὶ was inserted.

The next change occurred when someone wrote ei μη in the margin, either to replace the uninspired πλην, or to bring the wording of Clement’s exception clause into line with Matthew 19:9. The marginal reading was then inserted into the text when the text was recopied so that we ended up with πλην ei μη ἐπὶ λόγῳ πορνείασ, which is how the text now reads. Johann Potter’s 1715 edition, for the first time, made Clement’s Greek text available to the academic world.

If the 11th century text of MS L has not been tampered with, and if the words ei μη ἐπὶ were the words that Clement wrote, then this would be the earliest evidence for the reading ei μη. It would be interesting to know if the 11th century copy has the same text as the 16th century copy.

Wenham and Heth noted that Clement conflates the Matt. 19 and Mark 10 accounts, first reflecting Mark 10:2b-5 then Matt. 19:4-5. Then he writes: Ἡστε ὁ ἀπολύον τὸν γυναῖκα χωρίς λόγου πορνιάς ποιείν ἀυτὴν μοιχεύθεναι (Matt. 5:32)! If we can learn anything from the patristic citations of the Matthean texts it is that they interpreted Matt. 19:9 in the light of 5:32.657

We know that very early on, for instance, at the time that Codex Vaticanus was written in the mid-fourth century, that the distinction Jesus was making in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9-12 was lost, because Vaticanus and the Caesarean text-type in particular, replaced the ‘exception clause’ in 19:9 with the exemption clause in 5:32, but the distinction is maintained in Clement.

The danger of assimilation when translating the works of the early Church Fathers

What we must be aware of is that when someone translates a foreign language into his own language, and he comes across a quotation from the Bible in the foreign language, if he is thoroughly familiar with his own mother-tongue Bible, he will automatically give his own translation, and not try to give a strictly literal translation of the foreign version. So, for instance, it is common to find the AV translation being used in place of an unfamiliar English translation when foreign languages are translated into English. The same would apply when transcribing Greek copies after scholars throughout Europe had become familiar with Erasmus’s Greek version.

It is acknowledged by most textual scholars that the so-called exceptive clause in Matthew 19:9 μη ἐπὶ πορνεία is not as instantly clear as ei μη ἐπὶ πορνεία is. It is the more difficult reading. One needs to stop and think about what μη ἐπὶ πορνεία means (‘not over fornication’), whereas you do not need to stop and think about the meaning of ei μη ἐπὶ πορνεία (‘except for fornication’).

Given the fact that many English commentators are on record as saying that there is no difference in meaning between μη ἐπὶ πορνεία and ei μη ἐπὶ πορνεία, then why would you omit the initial ei if it is clearer in than out? Given that some modern scholars would have no hesitation in retaining ei, or adding it in, to bring out the meaning more clearly, would not those who were transcribing the Greek writings of the early Greek Church fathers, after the publication of Erasmus’s text, be tempted to follow Erasmus’s Greek text irrespective of the state of the Greek text that the early Church Father used in his original composition?

It is for this reason that we must be very suspicious of nineteenth-century language translations of the writings of the early Church Fathers, Greek and Latin, because transcribers and translators may have taken liberties in their quest to hurry through with their assignments. We must also take into account the theological convictions of the translators, and their standard of education, in assessing the reliability of their finished work.  

Suppose the translator was a fervent supporter of Erasmus’s exceptive clauses and Erasmus’s addition of εί was not in the text he was translating would he hesitate to insert it on his own authority? After all, he would argue, he was only making plain what was already there. But this is taking a liberty with the early Church Fathers’ writings. The translation of Clement of Alexandria, from *Stromata* 2:23:145:3 (a) reads:

That Scripture counsels marriage, however, and never allows any release from the union, is expressly contained in the law: ‘You shall not divorce a wife, except for reason of adultery.’ And it regards as adultery the marriage of a spouse, while the one from whom a separation was made is still alive. ‘Whoever takes a divorced woman as wife commits adultery,’ it says; for ‘if anyone divorce his wife, he debauches her;’ that is, he compels her to commit adultery. And not only does he that divorces her become the cause of this, but also he that takes the woman and gives her the opportunity of sinning; for if he did not take her, she would return to her husband.

The Greek text is the same in Dindorf (p. 240), Sylburg (p. 424), and Potter (p. 506).


Φημισμένα από τὴν γυναίκα τὴν μή καλλωπίζεσθαι μηδὲ μὴν κοσμεῖται πέρα τοῦ πρεποῦς εὐχαίρει καὶ δείσαι προσανέχουσαν ἔκτενως, τάς μὲν ἐξόδους τῆς οἰκίας φιλαττομένην τάς πολύς, ἀποκλείουσαν δὲ ὡς οἶνον τε αὐτῆς τῆς πρὸς τοὺς οὐ προσήκοντας προσόφεως, προορίγαστερον τιθεμένην τῆς ὁκαρίου φλωρίας τῆς οἰκουρίας. ὁ δὲ ἀπολελυμένην λαμβάναν γυναῖκα μοιχαίτα φησίν, ἕαν γὰρ τὶς ἀπόλυσις γυναῖκα μοιχαίτας αὐτῆς, τουτεῦτα ἀναγκαίας μοιχεύθηκα. οὐ μόνον δὲ ὁ ἀπόλυσας αἰτίος γίνεται τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ παραδεξιόμενος αὐτὴν, ἀφορμὴ παρέχων τοῦ ἁμαρτήσας τῇ γυναίκῃ εἰ γὰρ μὴ δεχοτο, ἀνακάμψει πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα.

The above text should have been translated as: nevertheless, except over a matter of fornication (πλὴν εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ λόγω πορνείας). What the translator produced was: “except for reason of adultery.” This is a sloppy translation, because the text reads πορνείας ‘fornication,’ not μοιχεία ‘adultery.’ Now many theologians—after Erasmus produced his exception clause—assumed that Jesus was referring to adultery as an exception for divorce, and it may be that the translator of Clement’s works had made this assumption also, so that when he came to translate Clement’s Greek he made Clement say what he wanted him to say.

It is now a matter of concern to conservative-evangelicals that only those manuscripts that pre-date Erasmus’s 1516 edition should be used to make an accurate, new translation of the writings.
of the Church Fathers, because the old translations cannot be trusted on a number of levels as outlined above.

**Misinformation regarding Jerome’s Latin Vulgate translation**

Jerome produced his Vulgate New Testament in the fourth century A.D. The Gospel accounts appeared in the year 383. We are told that Jerome used both Old Latin and Greek manuscripts, and an English translation of the Vulgate on Matthew 19:9 would read:

> And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, unless [nisi] it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, commits adultery.

Now because this Latin translation preceded Erasmus’s Greek text by a millennia, it is held up as proof that Jerome had a Greek text that was identical to Erasmus’s at Matthew 19:9. There are three serious objections to this argument.

First, if Jerome did have Greek copies identical to Erasmus’s text at Matthew 19:9, why are there no copies of Jerome’s Greek manuscripts extant today with ei mh in Matthew 19:9?

Secondly, Jerome used the Latin term nisi, (ni si) which means ‘if not.’ If Jerome wanted to make an exception he would have used excepta which means ‘except’ (as he did in Mt 5:32). If we retranslate Jerome’s text using nisi it would read: “whosoever shall put away his wife, if not over fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: . . . “ Given that God ruled out divorce for fornication, and Jesus ruled out divorce apart from fornication, taken together the two forbidden categories exclude divorce for any cause, which is what the original Greek said (see below).

So Jerome was correct to use nisi and not excepta in this context because he knew what the Gospel tradition was since the time of Jesus, and he agreed with it in his writings: ‘no divorce and no remarriage.’ If Jerome had written excepta in Matthew 19:9, and if we knew from his writings that he believed that Jesus did make an exception for divorce in the case of fornication/adultery, then Jerome would have been our very first solid witness to Erasmus’s doctrine. Taken in isolation from what he believed, Jerome’s term nisi could be read either for or against an exception, and it is his rejection of an exception for divorce that is critical to understand how he interpreted the term nisi, and how we should understand his translation of the Greek text in front of him.

In Matthew 5:32 Jerome correctly used excepta, whereas Erasmus did not understand the different teaching that Jesus taught in these two places, so he used nisi, to harmonise the two places. In this he may have been misled by Codex Leicestrensis,659 which has imported the so-called exception clause of 5:32 into 19:9, and done away with the original text of 19:9.660

Thirdly, the Roman Catholic church had a single tradition going right back to the early Church Fathers which did not recognise the dissolution of a lawful marriage, and this was Jerome’s belief also, so he would hardly translate the Greek to create an exception for fornication/adultery. How could such a universal ban on divorce arise, and be a fixture in the mind of the early Church Fathers, if it did not go back to Jesus’ own teaching?

**Misinformation regarding Church Fathers’ support for Erasmus’s ‘exception clause’**

Reliance is placed on English translations of the works of the early Church Fathers, pre-Nicene and post-Nicene, but these translations were made in the light of the Authorized Version which had followed Erasmus’s text at Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. Given that all English versions were in support of Erasmus’s text it was no wonder if the original texts of the Fathers would be brought into

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659 We know that Erasmus examined this Codex during his three-year stay in Cambridge, between 1513 and 1515, and he mentions it in his *Annotations.*

660 The same textual error appears in Codex Vaticanus.
line with the new Protestant doctrines. It is doubtful if any of the following translations can be trusted, as they are all direct quotations from the KJV. One would need to see the original Greek or Latin transcriptions of each man’s works, and have the manuscripts dated, before one could trust the present English translations.

1. **Clement of Alexandria** (ca. 195)—“You shall not put away your wife except for the cause of fornication” (Roberts and Donaldson 1995, 2.379). I have shown that this ET cannot be trusted.

2. **Tertullian** (ca. 207): Jesus prohibits divorce “except for the cause of fornication” (Ibid. 4.45). Again, Christ “permits divorce when the marriage is spotted with unfaithfulness” (Ibid. 3.405). He allows “divorce for no cause, except one” (Ibid. 4.66).

3. **Novatian** (ca. 235): Christ “said that a wife must not be put away, except for the cause of adultery” (Ibid. 5.589).

4. **Origen** (ca. 245): The Savior does not at all permit “the dissolution of marriages for any other sin than fornication alone” (Ibid. 9:511).
   “For confessedly he who puts away his wife when she is not a fornicator, makes her an adulteress.” (Commentary on Matthew 14 [a]) The ‘exceptive’ clause is taken from Mt 5:32.

5. **Basil the Great** (375): “The Lord said, ‘If any one leave his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, he causes her to commit adultery.” (Amphilochius 199 [a]) The ‘exceptive’ clause is taken from Mt 5:32.

When it is known that the manuscript used to translate Clement of Alexandria’s works is a 16th century manuscript, and that there is only one manuscript of his works younger than it, we are talking about a gap of over 1,000 years between the original text and the oldest known copy of his work. What scribal errors accrued in that long line of transmitting his works and ideas? What harmonising tendencies and conflations were there when it came to translating his Greek into Latin, especially when Clement was quoting Scripture?

If the oldest manuscript we had of Matthew’s Gospel was dated to 1000 years after he wrote it, could we trust it? This is what we have to ask ourselves when it comes to the writings of the ante-Nicene Fathers, especially in the light of Jerome’s translation of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 which are both open to misinterpretation. If you come looking to manoeuvre Jesus to support divorce, then He can be manipulated to do so. What is crucial is Jerome’s own understanding of what Jesus taught on the issue of divorce, and he is against divorce, and he is against remarriage. This suggests that his use of nisi was never intended to create an exception, but should be taken at its face value to mean ‘if not over fornication.’

*The conclusion of the matter is this*

I have examined the foundation of the claim that Irenaeus had the same Greek text as Erasmus, and discovered that the claim rested on just two manuscript copies of his works. Both manuscripts are over 1,000 years later than the time Irenaeus wrote. When I examined the manuscript on which the modern translation of his works was based I discovered it was not a direct quotation of any known Greek text of Matthew 19:9, nor was it in agreement with Erasmus’s Greek text. Rather it was a conflation of two distinct readings. One was taken from Matthew 5:32 and the other was taken from Matthew 19:9. This fact is hidden in the English translation of Irenaeus’s works.

The lesson we can draw from this is that the foundation of each quotation of any early Church Father must be closely examined to see how old are the manuscripts on which the English
translations depend. Until this information is known and thoroughly examined and a full textual apparatus drawn up for the original wording of each Church Father’s work, we can no longer trust any translation of the works of the early Church Fathers, which are quoted as though this work had been done.

The examination of Irenaeus’s work, in this article, has been a salutary lesson not to take any modern translation of a Church Father’s work for granted. They all come under suspicion as a result of this test case.

The other factor that must be taken into account is that the surviving works of the early Church Fathers come from Gentile Christian church fathers. We do not have the works of any early Jewish Christian church fathers, which has created an imbalance. Everything is seen through the eyes of non-Jews, and this may account for the ignorance in understanding the Jewish background that pervades Matthew’s Gospel.

When the Jewish background is taken into account this brings to light a new insight into how the Jews understood Jesus’ definition of ‘every cause.’ This new insight strengthens the ‘no divorce and no remarriage’ teaching that the Holy Spirit guided Mark and Luke to give to the Gentile world. Matthew said the same thing to a Jewish audience. The betrothal interpretation is an irrelevant distraction, because Matthew is saying exactly the same thing as Mark and Luke with no additional information, and with no exception clauses.

An observation

It could well be that Erasmus misunderstood Jerome’s use of nisi in Matthew 19:9 and thought it meant the same as excepta, which Jerome used in Matthew 5:32. Erasmus informs us in one of his letters that he clarified the meaning of the text in 600 places, and it would appear that his addition of ἐὰν before μὴ was one of those ‘clarifications.’ There are over 1,700 manuscripts of Matthew’s Gospel dating from AD 350 to 1500, but in not a single one of them is there the addition of ἐὰν that Erasmus added to the text. He added the word with no authority from the three manuscripts that he used to compile his text of the four Gospels. Consequently, he added ἐὰν on his own authority, thinking he was ‘clarifying’ what Jesus said, even though he knew perfectly well that this was not what Jerome believed (because he was editing Jerome’s works at the time he put his first edition of the Greek NT together). Nor did Erasmus’s ‘exceptional clauses’ agree with what the Roman Catholic Church taught consistently.

Understanding why Erasmus ‘clarified’ the divorce texts

Erasmus was deeply affected by the state of marriage in his day, and he witnessed a lot of hardship and degrading unions. He was a humanist at heart, and he desperately wanted to see divorce become a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, of which he was a son. So there is that factor to bear in mind.

Next, we can sympathise with Erasmus’s addition of ἐὰν because when you remove it the text becomes difficult to understand, for it would read, ‘not over fornication.’ It is not immediately apparent what this is referring to.

Given that there was some ambiguity in the way that some early Church Fathers understood the Greek words μὴ ἓπειρα παρονεία ‘not over fornication,’ to mean a husband could divorce his wife for adultery/fornication, but could not remarry under any circumstances, it was tempting to create a text that would permit divorce for fornication. The early Church Fathers were clear that there could be no remarriage following a divorce/separation.

It is well understood that practices, ceremonies, and rituals, will always be more stable than interpretations. If Jesus initiated no remarriage following a separation, this would soon develop into a tradition, and then into a set custom, and this custom would become embedded in the life of the Church universal, even if the interpretation that should have gone with it didn’t, due to heavy periods of severe persecution and disruption.

It would appear that once the Jewish influx into the Church dwindled, and the Gentile element or proportion became the majority, the key to understanding the Gospel of Matthew, which was written for the Jew, faded or was lost.

Now Jesus in Mark and Luke set out His doctrine very clearly that there were no grounds for divorce and every remarriage was an adulterous affair. Instinctively, the Early Church recognised that this was the true position of Jesus on the issue of divorce and remarriage. Consequently, the Jews must have been told the same thing in Matthew’s Gospel. But how can the words ‘not over fornication’ mean that there were no grounds for divorce and every remarriage was an adulterous affair?

The answer was very simple once one took into account that Jesus was asked by Jews (not Gentiles) a question regarding the law of God. He was asked if it was lawful to divorce a wife for every cause. Because Jesus was addressing Jews, and because He was asked a legal question, Jesus addressed Jews with a legal answer. They knew that the law did not allow divorce for adultery or fornication. So there was no problem there. Both Jesus and the Pharisees were agreed that it was unlawful to get a divorce on the grounds of adultery or fornication. The question then turned on whether it was lawful to get a divorce for a non-fornication cause, and it was at this point that Jesus announced that if any Jew standing in front of Him divorced his wife on the grounds of a non-fornication issue, it was an unlawful thing to do, and the divorce did not dissolve his marriage, and if he divorced his wife and remarried, he was committing adultery against his ‘divorced’ wife.

The Jews knew that God made it unlawful to punish adultery/fornication with divorce. Now they heard the Son of God make it unlawful to punish non-adultery causes with divorce. So, together, the first two Persons of the Trinity abolished divorce on any grounds for any reason, for all time to come. In this way all three Gospels are teaching the same thing.

In effect what Jesus did was use a negative phrase (‘not over fornication’) to identify the positive causes that He would not allow divorce for. There were literally hundreds of non-sexual sins/faults that a wife could commit, any one of which could be used by a hard-hearted husband to get rid of her. Jesus was not going to go through this long list of non-sexual causes condemning them one by one, instead He cleverly encapsulated this multitude of causes by saying, anyone who divorces his wife over a non-fornication cause was doing so unlawfully. The answer is so simple, seen in this light.

Jesus’ use of simple arithmetic summed up His position with mathematical precision. The Jews were faced with a simple sum to do in their heads. ‘Take away adultery and fornication and what are you left with?’ The answer staring them in the face was, ‘Non-adulterous and non-fornication causes.’ Back came Jesus’ mathematical logic, ‘Then I am telling you now that if you get a divorce over non-fornication issues, is it lawful.’ The Jews knew that God never gave them permission to divorce their wives ‘over non-fornication’ issues, despite the efforts of the rabbis to make Deuteronomy 24:1-3 say so. Deuteronomy was descriptive, not prescriptive, which meant that the Jews had no law justifying divorce as coming from God.

The best interpreters of Jesus’ answer in Matthew 19:9 were the Jews, because they lived under the Law. Once they became a minority as the Church expanded and the Gentiles poured into the Church in their vast hordes, the key to understanding what Jesus meant when He said, “whoever divorces his wife over a non-fornication issue” was lost.

The Church was left with only Matthew’s words, and his words, taken out of their Jewish legal context, appeared to say to the ignorant Gentile Christian that it was not lawful to divorce for a non-fornication issue, but it was lawful to divorce for a fornication issue. But the Christian Jews knew that God did not allow them to divorce their wives for adultery/fornication, and this, they
rightly judged, would carry over into Jesus' teaching. So no Christian Jew would have argued that a Christian could get a divorce for adultery. And given Jesus' ban on divorce for non-fornication issues, he would never accept that a Christian could get a divorce over a non-adulterous issue. It would not make sense to him. His history told him that Moses connived to permit them to divorce their wives only over non-fornication issues, but now Jesus had cut off these issues as grounds for a divorce.

Given this Jewish legal context to Jesus' answer to a legal question we can encapsulate His answer as follows:

Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife—not over fornication which is punished by death—and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.

We can put the grounds for divorce that Jesus is condemning in a positive format:

Now I say to you that who, for instance, may have divorced his wife over a non-fornication cause and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous by marrying her. And the man having married a divorced wife, he becomes adulterous by marrying her.

That Jesus has closed off the only loophole in the Torah that the Jews had been in the habit of using to get a divorce, would have been obvious to the Jew who first heard Jesus' teaching, but it is not so obvious to Gentile Christians, even today, who continue to misunderstand the phrase Jesus used, and prefer to see it as a loophole to get a divorce for fornication/adultery.

POSTSCRIPT

MS L was collated by Joseph [Giuseppe] Müller for Gulielmi Dindorfii [Wilhelm Dindorf] (1802-1883).662

Three facsimiles of this manuscript can be found in older works.

First, in the catalogue of Angelo Maria Bandinii (1726-1803), Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae (4 vols. Florentiae, 1774-77; reprinted, Leipzig, 1961), I. p. 12f. Taf. I. 1 (p. 82) giving an extract from Bk 2.1 [and not 3.11 as titled].663


663 The facsimile text is taken from Strom. Bk II.A, lines 1-6 (ἐξής . . . προγενεστέρων), as transcribed in Dindorf’s edition (vol. 2. p. 145) and Stätlin Bk III. 1, 1. (ed. Früchtel; 1960, p. 113). The spelling of βαρβαρόν is given as μαρβαρόν (line 1) in the facsimile, but μ for β is often found in manuscripts belonging to f1 and f13 (Caesarean Text). The same word is repeated in Bk IV. 1. (Dindorf II. 315. line 9 of text)(Potter 564) in Vitelli’s facsimile 107, as also εμώλην is written for εἴσβολην (Dindorf II. 315. line 13 of the text), and in Vitelli’s facsimile at Bk VI. XVI. (Dindorf III. 230. 144 lines 18ff.)(Potter 814) where we have εμδόμον (for ἐμδόμον), μεταμόλας (for μεταμολας), εμδομάδα (for εμδομάδα), ανήμος (for ανήμος), εκμαλλεί (for εκμαλλεί), ἡμὶς (for ἡμὶς), εμδομασίν (for εμδομασίν), εμδόμη (for εμδόμη), and εμδόμαδος (for εμδόμαδος)(2x). These are not noted in otherwise model transcriptions. In the second marginal note of this facsimile the spelling is εμδοματικων. The contracted κ[τι] in the 1st and 3rd marginal notes are close to those found in some
Second, in *The Palaeographical Society. Facsimiles of Manuscripts and Inscriptions* (London, 1884-1894), Series II. vol. II. pl. 107.\textsuperscript{664} The extract covers the end of *Strom.* III. Bk III. and the beginning of Bk IV.

The third facsimile occurs in Girolamo Vitelli [1849-1935] e Cesare Paoli [1840-1902], *Collezione Fiorentina di facsimili paleografici Greci e Latini illustrati*, Fasc. I. Tavola x. (6 Fascicles; Firenze, 1884-1897).\textsuperscript{665} The facsimile is taken from *Strom.* Bk VI. chap. 16. section 144 (Dindorf Vol. III. p. 230).

\textsuperscript{664} The printed *Indices to Facsimiles of Manuscripts and Inscriptions Series I. and II. 1874-1894* (London, 1901), p. 15 has a register: ‘Clement of Alexandria. Miscellanies. Greek. 11th cent. ii. 107.’ This refers to the Second Series. Vol. I., and Plate 107 is the 63rd item from the front. (This series should not be confused with *The New Palaeographical Society’s Facsimiles*, [London, 1913-1930]). The entry reads: “The Στρωματεία or Miscellanies of Clement of Alexandria. Vellum; 338 leaves, measuring 10 3/4 by 8 inches; with 31 lines in a page. Written in the 11th century. In quires generally of eight leaves, ruled, but faintly, on one side with a hard point. Written in minuscules in a flowing hand, with moderate use of contractions. The occurrences of many large forms of letters, rising above the line, may be observed. There are some marginal notes in small uncials.” The text of the facsimile is taken from *Strom.* Bk III. XVIII. 110 (Dindorf, II. 313, lines 3-14 (i.e., to the end of Bk III), and Bk IV. I.1. (Dindorf, II. 315, lines 1-14/ Pottr 563-64). The writing of iota subscript as a full letter, as in τη γι for τη is also commonly found in f1 and f13 mss, as is the contraction of και to σ with a grave accent (line 6). Transposition errors are corrected by the scribe by means of α, β (written as μ), Γ, over the letters (line 9), and Dindorf has gone with the correction, but footnoted the exact reading of MS L. The bar Nu is used at the end of a line (line 11). The original was εμπεριλειψαται and the syllable –λειφ– was corrected (superscript)(by the original hand, it would seem) to read εμπεριλιφθησαται, as noted by Dindorf (II. 315 n). Occasionally Dindorf will insert final Nu where it is not in the MS, as in παραστάσεως (line 8 of text) without any footnote notice. Occasionally he will depart from MS L and go with Sylburg’s text (Dindorf II. 315, line 12 of the text), but, fortunately, these changes are footnoted. There is one nomena sacra of ϑυ (for θεός).


\textsuperscript{666} Vitelli gives the following details about MS L (Laur. 5, 3, c. 287; 11th cent.). Dimensions M. 0,267 x 0,196, with 29-31 lines per page; 388 pages (some mutilation). The facsimile text runs from και την πολαιαν επταγθυγγον to
APPENDIX I

HOW TO CRITIQUE WORKS ON DIVORCE

This brief document examines the quickest way to assess any author’s position on the lawfulness of divorce and remarriage, from a conservative-evangelical point of view. When we are on a car journey there are many side roads that we can take to leave the main highway. It is the same with the study of divorce. This document outlines five key forks in the road where scholars have deviated from a conservative-evangelical highway and have ended up with a non-evangelical position as regards Jesus’ doctrine of forgiveness. I have used these five, potentially misleading routes as a template for assessing every new work dealing with the subject.

Anyone who follows the route outlined below and incorporates these five points into their final position will find that they arrive at a destination that does full justice to Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage, and forgiveness, without adding or subtracting from God’s Word, and without compromising a fully Reformed doctrine of the inspiration and infallibility of God’s Word, as set out in the Majority (Universal) Greek New Testament.

I.1. DESCRIPTION OR PRESCRIPTION?

1. Regarding Deut 24:1-4. If this is the proof text that God has given permission to all human beings everywhere, in all dispensations, to divorce their wives for ‘every cause,’ then this interpretation will make it impossible for its supporter ever to come to a knowledge of the truth. And even if some try to modify the universality of divorce (that Deut 24:1-4 is believed to advocate) in the light of Jesus’ intervention in history, this modification is what will hold the author in bondage to a doctrine of divorce of his own making, for others will modify it their way, and everybody will do what is right in his own eyes (as the schools of Hillel and Shammai illustrate). Once committed to a doctrine of divorce for a lawfully consummated marriage, however modified it may be, it is virtually impossible to escape from this mind-set, because it is the mind-set of someone who does not have the Spirit of Christ actively dwelling in them, or who has followed a false teaching/teacher.

QUESTION: How do you recognise quickly the wrong interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4? Look at 24:1. It will read (as in the AV/KJV): “then let him write her a bill of divorcement.” This ET presents God as the speaker, and presents God saying to every hard-hearted man (in all ages, and until the end of the world), “I give you permission to divorce your wife for any cause you care to think fit. And after you have dissolved your marriage, I give you permission to marry another virgin, and if you do not like her I give you permission to divorce her, and take a third wife, and a fourth wife, and so on and on, until you find a wife that you like. The only thing I do not want you to do is to remarry one of your past wives. This is the only restriction I put on your quest to find a
suitable helpmeet.” Here God prescribes (hence the term prescriptive) how divorce is to be carried out among His people.

QUESTION: How do you recognise quickly the correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4? Go to 24:1. It will read: “and he writes her a bill of divorce.” This ET, which must begin with ‘and’ (not ‘then’) presents God as the speaker, but here He is describing something that He strongly disapproves of. This comes out if 24:4 begins with ‘then,’ as in: “then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back again.” In other words vv. 1-3 are taken up describing a practice that God disapproves of, and v. 4 is where He displays His anger against this universal custom of divorce that is common throughout the entire world, because it is endemic in all societies, all cultures, all nations and tribes and local communities. It is as common as sin; and it can no more be eradicated from human society than sin can be. God put up with sin and divorce during the Mosaic dispensation; but He has a clear plan to introduce a new dispensation, and a new Kingdom, in which these two evils will not be able to exist. This era came into being when Jesus announced, “You must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God.” Those born again into this new Kingdom do not divorce and do not sin (wilfully).

Every author gives away his final position on divorce by the way he prefers to translate Deuteronomy 24:1-4. It is the second place I go to when I examine any work on the subject of divorce and remarriage.

I.2. ERASMIAN AND NON-ERASMIAN SOLUTIONS


QUESTION: How do you recognise quickly the wrong interpretation of Matthew 19:9? If the ET reads: “except for fornication,” then the author is a supporter of Erasmus, who added a word to Scripture to put divorce into the teaching of Jesus. Because the AV/KJV dominated the English-speaking world for 400 years, its ET of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Matthew 19:9 have controlled the thinking of readers and scholars alike. It is the default position, and so it became the consensus view. It is very difficult to shift it, now that divorce has come inside the Church from the world.

QUESTION: How do you recognise quickly the correct interpretation of Matthew 19:9? If the ET reads: “not over fornication,” then the author is not a supporter of Erasmus, and has removed the word he added to Scripture. Any of the following ETs bring out Jesus’ original teaching on divorce as spoken to His fellow-countrymen: (1) not over fornication which was punished by death (McFall), (2) not over fornication (Darby Bible; W. B. Godbey; Conservative Version), (3) for any other cause than the loss of her virtue (Basic English Bible), (4) for any cause other than her unfaithfulness (Good News Translation), (5) for any reason other than her unfaithfulness (God’s Word® Translation); (6) not on [the ground of] fornication (J. B. Rotherham), and (7) for any reason except her unfaithfulness (Weymouth N.T.).

What all these English translations have in common is that they have correctly isolated non-fornication issues as the grounds for divorce in Jesus’ content-identity phrase ‘not over fornication,’ because they have honestly translated the Greek text in front of them. However, it is not at all clear whether the committees or individuals who produced these ETs were aware that the Pharisees had not changed God’s capital punishment for fornication, so that divorce could not be obtained for adultery or fornication in Jesus’ time. The modern reader needs to know this background information if he is not to create an exception where no exception existed in the mind of the Lord Jesus. It is for this reason that I have translated Matthew 19:9 as: “. . . not over fornication which was punished by death.” It was easier for Jesus to refer to all non-fornication causes using this expression, than give a long list of non-fornication causes that He is about to condemn. He was a master of conciseness and precision. Jerome’s Latin has nisi ‘not if,’ and reads: “whoever divorces his wife if not for fornication, . . .” which, given that Jerome did not accept remarriage after divorce, means that
he has identified non-fornication causes as the target of Jesus’ condemnation. In this he disagrees with the modern, Erasmian position.

Speaking for myself, I recognise that Matthew wrote his Gospel specifically for his own fellow-countrymen. It was addressed to Jews, not to Gentiles, and that is the key to understanding and to interpreting the biblical record of what Jesus said regarding divorce. The solution is very simple. No Jew was permitted by God to divorce his wife for fornication. Every divorce was obtained by the Jews for non-fornication causes. Jesus grouped these non-fornication causes under the phrase “not over fornication.” God the Father banned divorce for fornication; God the Son banned divorce for non-fornication causes. Together, they banned divorce from the earth for all time to come. QED.

Every author gives away his final position on divorce by the way he prefers to translate Matthew 19:9. It is the first place I go to when I examine any work on the subject of divorce and remarriage. In a matter of seconds the author’s position is revealed to be either Erasmian or non-Erasmian. The next step is to see how the author translates Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The author may not follow the AV/KJV, in which case he cannot trace divorce back to Moses, so he will go to the O.T. prophetic literature and justify divorce as a legitimate institution because God used it as an analogy of His relationship with Israel. “If God used it then it cannot be a sin for humans to use it,” goes the argument, but this is to use figurative language to establish a biblical doctrine. Is God a rock because He likens Himself to such?!

I.3. TWO DISTINCT TEACHINGS

3. Regarding the separate teaching in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:3-9. All authors can be divided into two positions.

(1) Those who recognise that Jesus is teaching two different things in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19; and

(2) Those who are ignorant that Jesus is teaching two different things in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19.

The vast majority are in the ignorant position. This position treats both passages as though Jesus is making an exception to His total ban on divorce for any cause.

Those in position (1) recognise that there is a genuine exemption clause in Matthew 5, but there is no exception clause in Matthew 19. This position puts the exemption clause in Matthew 5 in the context of Jesus’ blame theology. Jesus blames the man who divorces his wife for any cause (sexual or non-sexual) and thus forces her into a position of sleeping with another man through a remarriage, which is adultery in Jesus’ eyes, but not in the eyes of the Jews.

In Jesus’ blame theology, her sin of adultery (when she remarries) will be blamed on the first husband, and not on his wife, whom he divorced. However, the exemption from blame comes into play if the divorced wife committed adultery or fornication before he divorced her, or if she became a prostitute after he divorced her. In these cases of fornication, the first husband will not be held accountable, because she sinned against her own conscience.

Blame theology comes into its own where a divorce culture exists, and where it is believed (though wrongly) that divorce dissolves a lawfully consummated marriage. If the divorcer and the divorced believe they truly revert to being single again after a divorce bill has passed between the two, and the divorced wife sincerely believes she is doing a legitimate thing in remarrying another man, then Jesus shields her from the penalty for her remarriage, and blames the adultery of her remarriage on her husband.

The introduction of a blame theology was a completely new doctrine, as it affected the custom of divorce. It had never been discussed by the rabbis, or by the schools of Hillel and Shammai. It is nowhere mentioned in the Mishnah nor in the Talmuds. They are all ignorant of such a doctrine.

Blame theology is not discussed in any modern treatments of divorce and remarriage. The reason for this oversight has been the way those in the ignorant category approach the text. They
come to it with blinkers on. They are looking solely to see if the words can be read as is a loophole to Jesus' absolute ban on divorce for any reason. It is, sadly, a case of ‘Seek and you shall find’ what you come to the text to expect to find. In ignorance the two, so-called exception clauses in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19 are ignorantly assumed to be addressing the same exception to permit divorce for fornication.

The cause of this confusion is twofold. (1) Ignorance in reading the text itself, coupled with ignorance of the different Greek words used in the two places, and (2), conflating what the Spirit said to the Gentiles with what He said to the Jews. This merging of the two cultural backgrounds, by Gentile teachers, was a fatal mistake. If the merging had been done by Jews then they would never have made the fatal mistake that some early, Gentile, Church Fathers made.

I.4. THE LEGACY OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

4. The legacy of the early Church Fathers. Unfortunately, part of the confusion left behind by the early, non-Jewish Church Fathers is still in place to this day. The Gospel of Matthew should have been read within a Christian Jewish context; and the Gospels of Mark and Luke should have been read within a Christian Gentile context, and kept distinct, which would have led to the discovery that Jesus was as absolute about His ban on divorce when speaking to the Jews, as He was when speaking through the Spirit to the Gentiles in Mark and Luke.

The confusion among the early Gentile Church Fathers was caused when they ignored the Jewish background of the Gospel of Matthew, and became confused over their harmonisation of the divorce texts. Because these three Gospels were predominantly commented on by Gentile Church Fathers, their commentaries blinkered and channelled the thinking of all who followed in their wake. They lifted out the Jewish-orientated clauses in Matthew and metaphorically pasted them into what Mark and Luke said to the Gentile nations (Greek and Roman), and the inevitable result was confusion. Their error has been repeated by all who have followed, sheep-like, in their trails. Today, the untaught repeat the same methodological mistake that the early Church Fathers made.

The lesson from church history is to interpret Matthew’s statements within a Jewish setting and a Jewish context, and do not attempt to harmonise the Synoptic Gospels as a first step. When Jesus’ answer is interpreted in terms of how the Jews lived under the Law, and how the Greeks and Romans lived without the Law, it will be appreciated that divorce for adultery was never a lawful option for the Jews, but it was a lawful option for the Greeks and Romans whom God allowed to live under their own laws. Through Mark and Luke, Jesus informed Greeks and Romans alike that divorce on any grounds was banned for ever.

If the early Church Fathers had held back harmonising the statements in Mark and Luke with the statements in Matthew, and had, through this more cautious procedure, discovered that Jesus made no exception for divorce in Matthew’s Gospel, then they would never have made the blunder that many of them did in allowing divorce (which most of them viewed as a temporary separation) for fornication/adultery. What united them, however, was their insistence that there could be no remarriage following a ‘divorce.’ This must have come through to them from the earliest traditions, or ethics, as we would expect, because practices transmit longer and more faithfully than their interpretations.

The procedure of most Western commentators is to merge the statements on divorce in the three Gospels, and treat them together in one place. This is to repeat the mistake of the past. It is a

667 It would have been inappropriate for Matthew to incorporate Mark 10:12 into his Gospel, as it would have been inappropriate for Mark to incorporate Matthew’s content-identity phrase ‘not for fornication’ into his Gospel. Because these two Gospels were written for different cultures, each spoke directly to the target culture in such a way as to leave both cultures in no doubt about Jesus’ absolute ban on divorce for any reason.
methodological error to exegete Matthew’s statements *alongside those of Mark and Luke*. This must lead to confusion in both the author’s mind and in his readers’ apprehension of the true situation and context in which these statements were made. Context is paramount in conjunction with the requirements of the target audience.

Speaking for myself, it was only when I looked at Matthew’s statement on divorce in Matthew 19:9 *in total isolation from those in Mark and Luke*, and after I had removed Erasmus’s addition of εἰ to before μὴ, and put myself in the sandals of those who stood in Jesus’ presence, that the *Jewish* setting of Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees proved to be the key to unlock its interpretation. This interpretation meant that the Betrothal interpretation became obsolete, unnecessary, and a hindrance to discovering the truth, because this explanation was created specifically to account for Erasmus’s insertion of the exception clause in Matthew 19:9, which the early proponents of the Betrothal solution assumed to be part of Jesus’ teaching on divorce. How wrong they were, but they can be forgiven because (as Paul said) they did it in ignorance. However, no modern supporter of the Betrothal solution can plead ignorance any longer. No textual scholar, worthy of the name, would ever accept Erasmus’s addition as the original Greek text of Matthew 19:9. The Betrothal ‘house’ had been built on Erasmus’s sand; the truth must be built on Matthew’s original text. With the collapse of the Betrothal house, where can conservative-evangelicals go to preserve the truth that Mark and Luke state very clearly, and yet account for the so-called ‘exception clauses’ in Matthew’s Gospel?

I.5. **THE SCHOOLS OF HILLEL & SHAMMAI**

5. *The Schools of Hillel and Shammai*. We know nothing about the teaching of Hillel and Shammai, who probably died before the birth of Jesus, but even that is not known for certain. There is no direct connection between them and the Schools of Hillel and Shammai. What little evidence we have about these two schools suggests that they came into existence after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. Both schools belong to the sect of the Pharisees. The Mishnah, or Oral Torah, only reached a written form many generations after the time of Jesus, and after the era it purports to write about, and only from memory. The Babylonian Talmud was composed about 450 years after the death of Jesus, and it, too, is based on memory.

We have no evidence at all for the suggestion that the Schools of Hillel and Shammai existed in Jesus’ day. Consequently, we have no warrant to assume that the Pharisees who questioned Jesus in Matthew 19 belonged to either school.

The likelihood is that the Jews in Jesus’ day were fiercely loyal to God in obeying His every command, and had been throughout the Maccabean period and through to the Second Jewish Revolt in A.D. 132-135. Although the Romans were tenuously masters of Palestine, they were forced by the Jews to remove their image-bearing standards from Jerusalem. The Jews were so incensed at this violation of their Law that they were prepared to die for their religion in order to ensure that they got their way. The result of these religious riots was that the conquerors had to give in to their zealous, religious hostility. Nowhere else in the Roman Empire were the Romans forced to back down in the face of such implacable, national, religious fervour.

John records in his Gospel numerous occasions where the religious leaders were in total control of the national religion and had the public audacity to seek to kill religious heretics, such as Jesus. They had their own Temple police force. See John 5:16, 18 (Judea); 7:1, 19, 20, 25 (Galilee); 8:22, 37, 40; 11:53; 12:10. These twelve references to assassination attempts on Jesus’ life at the instigation of the highest religious authority had strong, religious backing in the Law of Moses, where law-breakers and blasphemers were to be stoned to death. Paul was one of these zealous defenders of the Law of Moses.

Paul was given authority from the religious leaders in Jerusalem to imprison and kill any of Jesus’ followers, which he did willing out of pure zeal for God, and to preserve the national religion from heretical views.
A woman taken in adultery would have been stoned to death at a nod from Jesus, showing that these men were keeping strictly to the commands of God. If the Roman authorities had tried to control the death penalty for breaking the Law of God they would have been sent packing with the words that Peter uttered before the Sanhedrin, “We ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). Every Jew, to a man and boy, had nothing but contempt for every Roman soldier who would keep them from obeying God. It was within this fiercely, nationalistic defence of their religion that Jesus lived and moved and had His being. If the Roman authorities had attempted to change the Law of God and take away from the Sanhedrin their right to discipline its heretics, they would have stirred up a hornet’s nest of protest, and galvanised the entire nation to such a pitch of national anger that it could have sparked off riots nationwide, which the Romans would not have been able to quell. The Romans had to tread very carefully not to offend the religious sensibilities of the people, as represented by the Sanhedrin. So if divorce replaced the death penalty, this would have to come from the religious leaders themselves and not be forced upon them by the Romans.

It is an unproved assumption that the Roman authorities interfered in the internal affairs of the Jewish religion and could prevent the death penalty for adultery from being carried out. God commended any Israelite who took it into his own hands to inflict the death penalty for sins that He had laid down the death penalty for. So those who were prepared to stone the adulteress in John 8 would not have been sinning against God if they had carried out the stoning, because they were still living under the Law, and not under Grace, and death for adultery, Sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, etc. etc., must often have been carried out during the 1,500 years since God gave the law at Mount Sinai.

POSTSCRIPT

Another identifying characteristic of those who follow the Erasmian teaching is the absence of Jesus’ doctrine of forgiveness in their pastoral counselling. It is very rare to find a soft-hearted divorcer; they are all hard-hearted sinners, male and female. If there is a reference to forgiveness among the Erasmians it is just a token section. It has no substance.

I.6. McFall’s solution in a nutshell

Mark and Luke state Jesus’ total ban on divorce for Greeks and Romans without any exceptions.

Matthew states the same because he did not need to state that the Jews could not get a divorce for adultery and fornication, as these were punished with death, not divorce. Consequently, Jesus was able to say to the Jews, Whoever gets a divorce for a non-fornication issue, and remarries, he is an adulterer, because his first marriage has not been dissolved.

What looked like an exception in the words “not over fornication,” was misunderstood by later generations and this accounts for the confusion in handling Matthew’s record. Jesus cleverly answered the Pharisees’ question “ . . . for all causes?” with his subtraction formula, Whoever divorces his wife, not over fornication (meaning, ‘anything besides fornication’), and marries another woman commits adultery.”
APPENDIX J

THE VERB ‘TO FORNICATE’ IN GREEK LITERATURE

CATEGORY A: The verb ‘to prostitute/fornicate’ used in Greek sources.

No. 1. DEATH FOR ADULTERY AND BETROTHAL FORNICATION.

Flavius Josephus (AD 37–ca. 105), Against Apion (Greek, ed. B. Niese; English: Loeb Class. Lib.)

Josephus was born the year Pontius Pilate left Judea (AD. 36/7), so he was a contemporary witness to the punishments meted out for homosexuals, rapists of virgins, adulterers and adulteresses.

Book 2, section 199: But, then, what are our laws about marriage? That law owns no other mixture of sexes but that which nature hath appointed, of a man with his wife, and that this be used only for the procreation of children. But it abhors the mixture of a male with a male; and if any one do that, death is its punishment [Lev 20:13; 18:22, 29].

It commands us also, when we marry, not to have regard to portion [not to be influenced by dowry], nor to take a woman by violence, nor to persuade her deceitfully and knavishly; but to demand her in marriage of him who hath power to dispose of her, and is fit to give her away by the nearness of his kindred; for, says the Scripture, “A woman is inferior to her husband in all things.” (Note 1) Let her, therefore, be obedient to him; not so that he should abuse her, but that she may acknowledge her duty to her husband; for God hath given the authority to the husband.

A husband, therefore, is to lie only with his wife whom he hath married; but to have to do with another man's wife is a wicked thing, which, if any one ventures upon, death is inevitably his punishment: no more can he avoid the same who forces a virgin betrothed to another man, or entices another man's wife [Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-27].

The law, moreover, enjoins us to bring up all our offspring, and forbids women to cause abortion of what is begotten, or to destroy it afterward; and if any woman appears to have so done, she will be a murderer of her child, by destroying a living creature, and diminishing human kind; if any one, therefore, proceeds to such fornication or murder, he cannot be clean.

COMPULSORY RITUAL WASHING AFTER INTERCOURSE (‘tradition of the Elders’?)

Moreover, the law enjoins, that after the man and wife have lain together in a regular way, they shall bathe themselves; for there is a defilement contracted thereby, both in soul and body, as if they had gone into another country; for indeed the soul, by being united to the body, is subject to miseries, and is not freed therefrom again but by death; on which account the law requires this purification to be entirely performed.

(Note 1) A literal text is nowhere present in the Old Testament, but the concept certainly is (cf. Paul’s use of ‘law’ in 1 Cor 7:39).


No. 2. MARRIED WIFE COMMITTED ADULTERY AND FORNICATION

Cassius Dio Cocceianus, Historiae Romanae (ἡμοιχεύετο) (ἐπορνεύετο)

668 All the material in this Appendix was obtained via the online database of Perseus, which contains 69 million Greek words.
Book 61, chapter 31: ὅτι ἡ Μεσαλίνα ὤσπερ οὐκ ἔξαρκοιν οἱ ὅτι καὶ ἔμοιχεύετο καὶ ἐπορνεύετο τὰ τὰ γὰρ ἄλλα αἰσχρῶς ἐπράττε, καὶ ἐπὶ οἰκήματος ἐστίν ὅτε ἐν τῷ παλαιτῶ αὐτὴ τε ἐκαθέζετο καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τὰς πρώτας ἐκαθίζε, καὶ ἐπέθυμησε καὶ ἀνήρας τοῦτο δὴ τὸ τοῦ λόγου

Messalina, as if it were not enough for her to play the adulteress (ἔμοιχεύετο) and harlot (= fornication)(ἐπορνεύετο),—for in addition to her shameless behaviour in general she at times sat as a prostitute in the place herself and compelled the other women of the highest rank to do the same,—now conceived a desire to have many husbands, that is, men really bearing that title. And she would have been married by a legal contract to all those who enjoyed her favours.

No. 3. (μοιχεùθείαν) (πορνευεῖσθαι) (ἐπορνεύετο) (ἐμοιχεùθη) (ἐπορνεύετο)
Dio Chrysostom, Orationes (ed. J. de Antim)(πορνευεῖσθαι)(ἐπορνεύετο)
speech 64, section 3669: . . . καὶ νομιθετικὴ, τρεῖς ἔθηκεν αὐτή τοῖς Κυπρίοις νόμοις τὴν μοιχεùθειαν κειραμένην πορνευεῖσθαι; θυγάτηρ αὐτῆς ἔμοιχεùθη καὶ τὴν κομήν ἀπεκείρατο κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ ἐπορνεύετο, τὸν ὁποῖον ἀπρόκειναι ἄταφον ἐπεθύμησε δεύτερος οὗτος Δημοκράσεως νόμος; τρίτος ὥστε μὴ ἀποκτείναι βοῶν ἀρότριοι. δυοῖ δὲ αὕτη παιδῶν ᾅρρενῶν ὄντων, ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ βοῦν ἀποκτείναι

[Cyprus had its famous women:] just so Cyprus too had its Demonassa, a woman gifted in both statesmanship and law-giving. She gave the people of Cyprus the following three laws: a woman guilty of adultery (μοιχεùθείαν) shall have her hair (κομή) cut off and be a harlot (πορνευεῖσθαι)—her daughter became an adulteress (ἔμοιχεùθη), had her hair cut off according to the law, and practised harlotry (ἐπορνεύετο): whoever commits suicide shall be cast out without burial—this was the second law of Demonassa; third, a law forbidding the slaughter of a plough-ox. Of the two sons which she had, the one met his death for having slain an ox, while the other, who slew himself, she refrained from burying.

No. 4. MARRIED WIFE COMMITTED FORNICATION (ἐπορνεύετο) (μοιχεùεις)
Lucian, Jupiter trageodeus (Zeus Rants) (ed. A. M. Harmon)
Vol. 2. section 52: Τιμοκλῆς εἰρωνεύη τοῦτο πρὸς ἐμὲ, τυμβρούχε καὶ μιαρὲ καὶ κατάπτυστο καὶ μαστιγία καὶ κάθαρμα; οὐ γὰρ ἴσιν νῦτινος μὲν πατρὸς εἷς, πῶς δὲ η ἡμήρι που ἐπορνεύετο καὶ ὥς τὸν οδέλφου ἀπέπνειας καὶ μοιχεùεις καὶ τὰ μεράκια διαφθείρεις, λιχνότατε καὶ ἀναισχυντότατε; μὴ φέγγε δ' οὖν, ἐος καὶ πληγὰς παρ' ἐμοῦ λαβων ἀπέλθης; ἥδη γὰρ σε τούτω τῷ ὀστράκῳ ἀποσφάξας παμμαίραν ὤντα.

TIMOCLES: Are you mocking me, you ghoul, you miscreant, you abomination, you gallows-bird, you scum of the earth? Don’t we know who your father was, and how your mother was a courtesan (ἐπορνεύετο), and that you strangled your brother and you run after women (= you commit adultery, μοιχεùεις) and corrupt the young, you height of all that’s lewd and shameless?

No. 5. MARRIED PROSTITUTE COMMITS ADULTERY (πεπορνευεύκων) (μοιχεùτρια)
Procopius, Historia Arcana (Anecdota)
(Greek). Vol. 6, chapter 1, p. 6, line 19ff. Ην τῷ Βελισαρίῳ γυνή, ἥς δὴ ἐν τοῖς ἐμπροσθεν λόγοις ἐμνήθησθι, πάππου μὲν καὶ πατρὸς ἤνειοχος, ἐν τῷ Βυζαντίῳ καὶ Θεσσαλονίκῃ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο ἐνδειξημένων, μητρὸς δὲ τῶν τινος ἐν θυμελὴ πεπορνευεύκων, αὕτη τὰ πρότερα μάχλων τινα βιῶσα θάνος καὶ τὸν τρόπον ἐξερευνά, φορμακευαί τα πατρομος πολλὰ ὀμίληκα, καὶ τὴν μάθησιν τῶν οἱ ἀκακαιον ποιησάμενη, ἐγγυτίτε ύπερτον Βελισαρίω γυνὴ γέγονε, μήτηρ ἤδη παιδῶν γενομενὶ πολλῶν. εὐθὺς μὲν ὅν ἤξιον μοιχεùτρια τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἶναι.

669 In Perseus this is wrongly referenced to Speech 47.
Belisarius had a wife, whom I have had occasion to mention in the previous books; her father and grandfather were charioteers who had given exhibitions of their skill in both Byzantium and Thessalonica, and her mother was one of the prostitutes (περναιστικων) attached to the theatre. This woman in her early years lived a lewd sort of life and having become dissolute in character, not only having consorted much with the cheap sorcerers . . . later became the wedded wife of Belisarius, after having already been the mother of many children. Straightway, therefore, she decided upon being an adulteress (μοιχευτικα) from the very start, but she was very careful to conceal this business, not because she was ashamed of her own practices . . . but because she dreaded the punishment the Empress might afflict.

No. 6. BRIDE COMMITS ADULTERY. MARRIED MAN COMMITS FORNICATION
Basil, Saint, Bishop of Caesarea, Epistulae
(Greek)
(p. 112, line 1ff.) XXI. In the case of a man married (συνωκισεω) to a woman, whenever not being satisfied with his marriage he falls into fornication (πορευεσαι),670 we judge such a person a fornicator (πορνησαι), and we hold him to a longer period in his punishment; but we have no canon which subjects him to a charge of adultery (μοιχευτικα), if the sin be committed against some unmarried (ἐλευξωμενα) ‘free’ woman; because it says, “The adulteress (μοιχαλη) polluted shall be polluted,”671 and shall not return (αναστρεψει) to her husband.672 “He that keepeth an adulteress is foolish and wicked.”673 However, he who has committed fornication (πορνευσαι) shall not be excluded from living with his wife (και οταν κατεχουμενοι άφρων και άσεβης. ο μενοί πορνευσαι ουκ αποκλεισθησαι της προς γυναικα έκατου εσοντεσεως). Therefore the wife will receive her husband when he returns from fornication,674 but the husband shall dismiss (αποστεψει) the polluted woman from his house.675 But the reasoning in these matters also is not easy, but the custom has so obtained.

chapter 199: XXII (p. 114, line 9ff.) . . . ὡστε ἣ ... πορευεσαι επιτιμησαι. ἐστι δὲ ἐν τέσσαριν ἁρισμένη τοις πορνευωμενοι ἐπιτιμησαι. χρη το πρώτο ἐκβάλλειθαι των προσευωμαιν, και

Continuation of the above (p. 112, line 17ff.). XXII. Regarding men who hold women by abduction, if they have carried off women who had been betrothed (προμενησεσμενα) to others, they must not be received [to take Communion] before they have separated (ἀφελεσθαι) from them and have placed them in the power of those to whom they were originally betrothed (μηστεσουμενα), whether the latter wish to receive them or to give them up. . . . However, he who holds a wife by secret or somewhat violent seduction must acknowledge the punishment for fornication. And punishment for four years has been prescribed for fornicators (πορνεωμενοι).

670 A married man who cohabited with an unmarried woman was subjected, not to the punishment of adultery (fifteen years), but to that for fornication (seven years). Cf. Canons 59 and 77. This was in accord with the Mosaic law and the Roman law, but in the Christian law any carnal intercourse in which one of the parties, either the man or the woman, is married, is adultery.


672 Probably a reference to Deut 24:4.

673 Prov. 18:22. Cf. Canon 9 and note.

674 Cf. Canon 9 and note.

675 Basil does not use the word for ‘divorce’ but simply ‘sends away’ his wife. For how long is not stated.
No. 7. BETROTHED WIFE COMMITS FORNICATION (πορνεύωσαι)
Basil, Saint, Bishop of Caesarea, Epistulae
(Greek)
chapter 46 (p. 300, line 15ff.) Ἐπὶ τούτοις Μὴ ὁ πίπτων ὦκ ἀνύσταται; ἢ ὁ ἀποστρέφων ὦκ ἐπιστρέφει; διὰ τι ἀπέστρεψεν ἢ παρθένος ἀποστροφὴν ἀναιδῆ, καίτοιγε ἀκούσασα Χριστοῦ του νυμφίου διὰ λεγόντος λέγοντος. Καὶ ἐπὶ μετὰ τὸ πορνεύωσαι αὐτὴν ταῦτα πάντα πρὸς με ἀνάστρεφον καὶ ὦκ ἀνάστρεψε. Μὴ ῥήτινῃ ὦκ ἔστιν ἐν Ἰαλαδᾶ; ἢ ἰατρὸς ὦκ ἔστιν ἕκει; διὰ τι ὦκ ἀνέβη ἵσις θυγατρὸς λαοῦ μου;

Why did the virgin turn away, a shameless turning, even though she heard Christ her spouse declare through Jeremias: “And when she had committed all these fornications (τὸ πορνεύωσαι), I said: Return to me; and she did not return”? Is there no balm in Gilead?

No. 8. MARRIED FEMALE PROSTITUTES
Strabo, Geography (πορνεύειν)
(Greek) (English) (English, ed. H.C. Hamilton, Esq., W. Falconer, M.A.)
book 15, chapter 1: πολλάς δὲ γαμούσιν ὄνητας παρὰ τῶν γονέων, λαμβάνουσι τε ἀντιδίδοντες ζεύγος βοῶν, ὅσα μὲν εὑπεθείας χάριν τῶς τ' ἄλλαις ἡδονής καὶ πολυτεκνίας; εἰ δὲ μὴ σωφρονεῖν ἀναγκάσαιει, πορνεύωσαί εξεστί. διεὶ δὲ οὐδὲς ἐστεφανομένους οὐδὲ θυμίας οὐδὲ απιένει, οὐδὲ σφάτους τὸ ἱερεῦν ἀλλὰ πινύουσιν, ἵνα μὴ λελωμημένον ἀλλ' ὀλκλήρον π. τ. διδόται τῷ θεῷ.

They marry many wives, who are purchased from their parents, and give in exchange for them a yoke of oxen. Some marry wives to possess obedient attendants, others with a view to pleasure and numerous offspring, and the wives prostitute themselves (πορνεύειν), unless chastity (σωφρονεῖν ‘to have self-control, discretion’) is enforced (ἀναγκάσαιει) by compulsion.

No one wears a garland when sacrificing, or burning incense, or pouring out a libation. They do not stab, but strangle the victim, that nothing mutilated, but that which is entire, may be offered to the Deity.

No. 9. FORNICATION AND ILLEGITIMATE OFFSPRING
Plato, Laws
book 8, section 841d: δ καὶ δυὸι διάτερα βιασαίμεθα περὶ ἐρωτικῶν, ἢ μηδένα τολμᾶν μηδὲνος ἀπτεθάνει τῶν γυναικῶν ἁμα καὶ ἐλευθέρων πλὴν γαμετῆς ἐκατον γυναικὸς, ἀδυτα δὲ παλλακῶν σπέρματα καὶ νόθα μὴ σπέρειεν, μηδὲ ἀγονα ἀφρέκον παρὰ φύσιν ἢ τὸ μὲν τῶν ἀφρέκον πάμπαν ἀφελομῆθα ἀν, τὸ δὲ γυναικῶν, εἰ τις συγγίνοιτο τινὶ πλὴν ταῖς μετὰ θεῶν καὶ ἱερῶν γάμων ἐλθούσαις εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, ὄνηταίς εἶτε

[841d] . . . we might forcibly effect one of two things in this matter of sex-relations,—either that no one should venture to touch (ἀπτεθάνει) any of the noble and freeborn, save his own wedded wife, nor any unholy and bastard seed in fornication, nor any unnatural and barren seed in sodomy,—or else we should entirely abolish love for males, and in regard to that for women, if we enact a law that any man who has intercourse with any women save those who have been brought to his house . . .

COMMENT: The contrast is between ‘wedded wife’ (and lawful offspring) and unwedded sex (and illegitimate children). The words “in fornication,” are supplied by the translator. They are not in the Greek.

676 Paul used the same delicate expression in 1 Cor 7:1, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman.”
No. 10. FORNICATION (πορνεύονται) IS PRE-MARRIAGE SEX
Herodotus, The Histories (Greek) (English, ed. A. D. Godley)

There are not many marvellous things in Lydia to record, in comparison with other countries, except the gold dust that comes down from Timolus. [2] But there is one building to be seen there which is much the greatest of all, except those of Egypt and Babylon. In Lydia is the tomb of Alyattes, the father of Croesus, the base of which is made of great stones and the rest of it of mound ed earth. It was built by the men of the market and the craftsmen and the prostitutes (παιδίσκαι, ‘maidens’). [3] There survived until my time five corner-stones set on the top of the tomb, and in these was cut the record of the work done by each group: and measurement showed that the prostitutes’ (παιδίσκεων, ‘maidens’) share of the work was the greatest. [4] All the daughters of the common people of Lydia ply the trade of prostitutes (πορνεύονται), to collect dowries, until they can get themselves husbands; and they themselves offer themselves in marriage.
[5] Now this tomb has a circumference of thirteen hundred and ninety yards, and its breadth is above four hundred and forty yards; and there is a great lake hard by the tomb, which, the Lydians say, is fed by ever-flowing springs; it is called the Gygaean lake. Such then is this tomb.

No. 11. MALE PROSTITUTES (πεπόρνευται)
Aeschines, Against Timarchus
speech 1, section 94: καίτοι λογογράφος γ' τ' θανάτου, ὁ μιχανώμενος αὐτῷ τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ, ἐναντία με λέγειν ἐμαυτῷ. οὐ γὰρ δὴ δοκεῖν εἶναι αὐτῷ δυνατόν τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀνθρώπων πεπορνευθαί καὶ τὰ πατρώα κατεδηδόκειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἡμαρτηκέναι τι πέρι τὸ σῶμα παιδός εἶναι φθινὰ, τὸ δὲ τὰ πατρώα κατεδηδόκειν ἄνδρός· ἐτὶ δὲ τοὺς κατασχύνουσαν αὐτῶν μισθοὺς φθινα πράττεσθαί τοῦ πράγματος· ἀποδεικνύειν οὖν περιέχεσθαι καὶ περατεύουμενος κατὰ τὴν ἀγοράν, εἰ ὁ αὐτὸς πεπόρνευται τε καὶ τὰ πατρώα κατεδηδόκεν.

And yet a certain speech-writer who is concocting his defence says that I contradict myself; since it seems to him impossible, he says, for the same man to have been a prostitute and to have consumed his patrimony. For, he says, to have sinned against one’s own body is the act of a boy, but to have consumed one’s patrimony is that of a man. And furthermore he says that those who defile themselves exact pay for it. He therefore goes up and down the marketplace expressing his wonder and amazement that one and the same man should have prostituted himself (πεπόρνευται) and also have consumed his patrimony.

No. 12. MALE PROSTITUTES (πεπορνεύονται)
Aeschines, Against Timarchus
speech 1, section 70: ... αὐτὸν κατηχῆμεν πρὸς Ἡγίασανδρον, οὐ δοκεῖ ὑμῖν πρὸς τὸν πόρνον πεπορνεύοντα; ἢ τίνας αὐτῶν οὐκ οἰόμεθ’ ὑπερβολάς ποιεῖσθαι βδελύριας παροικοῦντας

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Shall I yield to the temptation to use language somewhat more explicit than my own self-respect allows? Tell me, fellow citizens, in the name of Zeus and the other gods, when a man has defiled himself with Hagesandrus, does not that man seem to you to have prostituted himself (πεπορνεύσθαι) to a [male] prostitute?

No. 13. MALE PROSTITUTES (πεπορνεύσθαι)
Aeschines, Against Timarchus
(Greek) (English)
speech 1, section 79: ἐγὼ δὲ πρὸς τοῦ Δίος, εἰ, ὥσπερ περὶ τοῦ γένους, οὕτω καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἐπιτηδεύματος τούτου ἐδέχασθα δοῦμαι ψήφου Τιμαρχοῦ, εἰτ' ἐνοχὸς ἔσθιν εἰτέ μή, ἐκρίνετο δὲ τὸ πράγμα ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ, εἰςήγητο δὲ εἰς ὑμᾶς ὥσπερ νυνί, μὴ ἔξην δ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου ἢ τοῦ ψυφίσματος μήτε ἐμοὶ κατηγορεῖν μήτε τούτῳ ἀπολογεῖσθαι, ὁ δὲ κήρυξ ὦτοις ὁ συνι παρεστικῶς ἐμοὶ ἐπιρρώτα ὑμᾶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου κήρυγμα· τῶν ἰησών ἢ τετραπημένην, οὕτω δοκεῖ πεπορνεύσθαι Τιμαρχοῦ, ἢ δὲ πλῆρης, ὄτω μή, τί ἄν ἐψηφίσασθε; ἀκριβῶς οἴδ᾽ ὅτι κατέγνωτ᾽ ἀν αὐτοῦ

Come now, in God's name! if, as on the question of birth, so on the question of these personal habits, Timarchus had to submit to a vote as to whether he is guilty of the charge or not, and the case were being tried in court and were being brought before you as now, except that it were not permitted by constitution or statute either for me to accuse or for him to defend himself, and if this crier who is now standing at my side were putting the question to you in the formula prescribed by law, “The hollow ballot for the juror who believes that Timarchus has been a prostitute, (πεπορνεύσθαι) the solid ballot for the juror who does not,” what would be your vote? I am absolutely sure that you would decide against him.

No. 14. MALE PROSTITUTES (πεπορνεύσθαι)
Aeschines, Against Timarchus
(Greek) (English)
speech 1, section 136: ἐγὼ δὲ οὕτω ἔρωτα δίκαιον ψέγω, οὕτω τὸὺς κάλλει διαφέροντάς φημὶ πεπορνεύσθαι, οὕτ᾽ αὐτὸς ἔξαρνόμει μὴ οὐ γεγονέναι τ᾽ ἔρωτικός, καὶ ἐτί καὶ νῦν εἶναι, τὰς τε ἐκ τοῦ πράγματος γιγνομένας πρὸς ἐπέρους φιλονοίκιας καὶ μάχας οὐκ ἀρνοῦμαι μὴ οὐχὶ συμβεβηκέναι μοι.

Now as for me, I neither find fault with love that is honorable, nor do I say that those who surpass in beauty are prostitutes (πεπορνεύσθαι). I do not deny that I myself have been a lover and am a lover to this day, nor do I deny that the jealousies and quarrels that commonly arise from the practice have happened in my case.

No. 15. MALE PROSTITUTES (πόρνης) (πεπορνεύσθαι)
Demosthenes, Against Androton
speech 22, section 61: καὶ προσήκειν αὐτῷ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ μέρος εἰσφέρειν μετὰ τῶν μετοίκων, τῷ δὲ παιδί ἐκ πόρνης ἐσται, τοῦ δὲ τόν πατέρ᾽ ἠταιρικέναι, τοῦ δὲ τὴν μητέρα πεπορνεύσθαι, τοῦ δ᾽ ἀπογράφειν ὥστε ὑφειλεῖ ἐξ ἀρχῆς, τοῦ δὲ τὸ δείνα, τοῦ δ᾽ ὦτοι ῥήτα καὶ ἄρρητα κακά, ἔξης ἀπαντάς;

[61] Then do you suppose that all these men are his inveterate enemies merely because he collected this money from them? Is it not rather because he said of one of them, in the hearing of all of you in the Assembly, that he was a slave and born of slaves and ought by rights to pay the
conceivable crime—slandering them all in turn?

The eminent orator Demosthenes says that you must either wipe out your laws, or else no attention must be paid to my words. For he is amazed, he says, if you do not all remember that every single year the senate farms out the tax on prostitutes, (πορνικόν) and that the men who buy this tax do not guess, but know precisely, who they are that follow this profession. When, therefore, I have dared to bring impeachment against Timarchus for having prostituted himself, (πεπορνευμένω) in order that I may deprive him of the right to address the people in assembly, Demosthenes says that the very act complained of calls, not for an accuser’s arraignment, but for the testimony of the tax-gatherer who collected this tax from Timarchus.

I will recite to you the names of older and well-known men, and of youths and boys, some of whom have had many lovers of their beauty, and some of whom, still in their prime, have lovers today, but not one of whom ever came under the same accusations as Timarchus. Again, I will tell over to you in contrast men who have prostituted themselves (πεπορνευμένων) shamefully and notoriously, in order that by calling these to mind you may place Timarchus where he belongs.

To which class do you assign Timarchus—to those who are loved, or to those who are prostitutes (πεπορνευμένους)? You see, Timarchus, you are not to be permitted to desert the company which you have chosen and go over to the ways of free men.
I am also surprised, fellow citizens, that you who hate the brothel-keeper propose to let the
willing prostitute (πεπωργεμένος) go free. And it seems that a man who is not to be permitted to be
a candidate for election by lot for the priesthood of any god, as being impure of body as that is
defined by the laws, this same man is to write in our decrees prayers to the August Goddesses1 in
behalf of the state. Why then do we wonder at the futility of our public acts, when the names of such
public men as this stand at the head of the people’s decrees? And shall we send abroad as
ambassador a man who has lived shamefully at home, and shall we continue to trust that man in
matters of the greatest moment? What would he not sell who has trafficked in the shame of his own
body? Whom would he pity who has had no pity on himself

No. 20. MALE PROSTITUTES (πεπωργεμένος)
Aeschines, Against Timarchus
speech 1, section 189: τίνι δ’ ύμων ούκ εὐγνωστός ἐστιν ἢ Τιμάρχου βδελυρία; ὡσπερ γὰρ
τοῦς γυμναζομένους, κἂν μὴ παρόμειν ἐν τοῖς γυμνασίοις, οἷς τὰς ψεύτικας αὐτῶν ἀποβλέπουσες
γιγνάσκομεν, οὔτω τοὺς πεπωργεμένους, κἂν μὴ παρόμειν αὐτῶν τοῖς ἔργοις, ἐκ τῆς ἀναδείξεως καὶ
tοῦ βράσους καὶ τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων γιγνάσκομεν.

To whom of you is not the bestiality of Timarchus well known? For just as we recognize the
athlete, even without visiting the gymnasia, by looking at his bodily vigor, even so we recognize the
prostitute (πεπωργεμένος), even without being present at his act, by his shamelessness, his
effrontery, and his habits. For he who despises the laws and morality in matters of supreme
importance, comes to be in a state of soul which is plainly revealed by his disorderly life

No. 21. MALE PROSTITUTES (πεπωργεμένος)
Demosthenes, On the False Embassy
speech 19, section 233: τούτων μὲν τοίνυν οὐκ έκρινεν Αἰσχύνης, ὅτι τῶν αὐτῶν παίδ’ ἐπ’
ἀισχύνη πρὸς Φιλιππον ἐπέμψεν. Εἰ δὲ τὶς ὡν ἐφ’ ἥλικίας ἐτέρου βελτίων τὴν ἱδέαν, μὴ προϊδομένος
τὴν ἐξ ἐκείνης τῆς ὄψεως ύποφίαν, ἵσαμωτέρον τῷ μετὰ ταύτ’ ἐχρήσατο βίῳ, τούτων ὡς
πεπωργεμένον κέκρικεν

Now Aeschines never prosecuted Phrno for sending his own son to Philip with a
dishonorable intention. But if a man in the bloom of his youth was more comely than others, and if,
disregarding the suspicion that his personal charm might provoke, he has lived rather recklessly in
later years, Aeschines must needs proceed against that man for fornication (πεπωργεμένον).

No. 22. MALE PROSTITUTES (πεπωργεμένος)
Aeschines, Against Timarchus
speech 1, section 52 καὶ παρὰ τοῦτο ὃς ἐτέρου ἐληλυθότα, οὕτε δὴ ἕπειται μόνον
ἡταίρικος, ἀλλὰ μᾶ τοῦ Διόνυσου οὐκ ὁδ’ ὅπως δυνήσομαι περὶ πλέκειν ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ
πεπωργεμένος· ὅ γὰρ ἐκή τοῦτο καὶ πρὸς πολλοὺς πράττων καὶ μισθοῦ, αὐτῷ μοι δοκεῖ τούτῳ
ἔνοχος εἶναι

But if, saying nothing about those bestial fellows, Cedonides, Autocleides, and Thersandrus,
and simply telling the names of those in whose houses he has been an inmate, I refresh your
memories and show that he is guilty of selling his person not only in Misgolas’ house, but in the
house of another man also, and again of another, and that from this last he went to still another,
surely you will no longer look upon him as one who has merely been a kept man, but—by
Dionysus, I don’t know how I can keep glossing the thing over all day long—as a common
prostitute (πεπωργεμένος). For the man who follows these practices recklessly and with many men
and for pay seems to me to be chargeable with precisely this.
Neither let us test the Lord, as some of them tested, and perished by the serpents. Neither let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them committed sexual immorality (έπορευσαν), and in one day twenty-three thousand fell. [9] Neither let us test the Lord, as some of them tested, and perished by the serpents.

While he [Alexander] was still a mere boy, and a very handsome one, as could be inferred from the sere and yellow leaf of him, and could also be learned by hearsay from those who
recounted his story, he trafficked freely (ἐπόρνεσε lit. he prostituted) in his attractiveness and sold his company to those who sought it. Among others he had an admirer who was a quack, . . .


No. 27. MALE PROSTITUTE (πεπορνευκότα)
Cassius Dio Cocceianus, Historiae Romanae
book 64, chapter 5: γέλωτα μέντοι ὁ Οὐιτέλλιος πολλοῖς παρεῖχεν ὀρθῶνες γάρ ἄνδρα σεμνοπροσωποῦντα ἐν τοῖς δημοσίαις προαόδοις ὁ ἤδεσαν πεπορνευκότα, καὶ ἐφ᾽ ἵππου βασιλικοῦ καὶ ἐν χλαμοίδι πορφυρῇ ὁ ἁπισταντο τοὺς ἀγωνιστάς ἵππους ἐν τῇ οἰκεντίᾳ ἔσβητι ψίχουσα,

Vitellius, however, furnished many with material for amusement. They could not restrain their laughter when they beheld wearing a solemn face in the official religious processions a man whom they knew to have played the strumpet (πεπορνευκότα, ‘prostituted himself’).

No. 28. MALE PROSTITUTE (πεπορνεύσθαι)
Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists
(Greek) (English, ed. C. D. Yonge, B.A.) (Greek, ed. Kaibel)
book 6, chapter 40: Φιλόξενος δ᾽ ἢ Περνοκοπίς εἰμιοπνότοις λόγου ὅτι οἱ κίχλαι τίμιαι εἰσὶ καὶ τοῦ Κορυδῶνο παρόντος, ὃς ἐδόκει πεπορνεύσθαι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐγώ, ἔφη, μηνημονεύω ὅτε ὁ κόρυθος ὀβολοῦ ἦν. ἢν δὲ καὶ ὁ Φιλόξενος τῶν παρασιτῶν, ὦς Αξιόνικος εἰρήκεν ἐν τῷ Χαλκιδικῷ:

But Philoxenus, who was surmounted Pernopicos, when it happened to be mentioned that thrushes were very dear, and that, too, while Corydus was present, who was said formerly to have prostituted himself (πεπορνεύσθαι)—“I,” said he, “can recollect when a lark (κόρυθος) only cost an obol.” (And Philoxenus too was a parasite, as Axionicus has stated in his Chalcidian. But the statement is thoroughly proved.)

No. 29. MALE PROSTITUTE (πεπορνευκύσις)

book 5, chapter 302: γίνεται δὲ ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν, ἐπάν τις αἰσχρά καὶ δυσρήτα ἀναφανδὸν λέγη, καθάπερ ὁ τῆς Τιμάνδρας κατηγορῶν ὡς πεπορνευκύσις τὴν λεκάνια καὶ τοὺς ὀβολοὺς καὶ τὴν ψίαθον καὶ πολλὴν τινα τοιαύτην διαφημίζαν κατάρασσε τοῦ δικαστηρίου.

Side by side with the forcible style there is found, as might be expected, a corresponding faulty style, called ‘the repulsive.’ It occurs in the subject-matter when a speaker mentions publicly things which are disgusting and defile the lips. The man, for instance, who accused Timandra of having lived a wanton life (πεπορνευκύσις, lit. ‘having lived fornicatingly’), bespattered the court with a description of her basin, her obols, her mat, and many other such unsavoury details.

No. 30. MALE PROSTITUTE (πεπορνεύσθαι)
Athenaeus, Deipnosophistae
(Greek) (Greek, ed. Charles Burton Gulick) (English, ed. C. D. Yonge, B.A.)
book 6, chapter 40: Φιλόξενος δ᾽ ἢ Περνοκοπίς εἰμιοπνότοις λόγου ὅτι οἱ κίχλαι τίμιαι εἰσί καὶ τοῦ Κορυδῶνο παρόντος, ὃς ἐδόκει πεπορνεύσθαι, ἀλλ᾽, ἐγώ ἔφη, μηνημονεύω ὅτε ὁ κόρυθος ὀβολοῦ ἦν. ἢν δὲ καὶ ὁ Φιλόξενος τῶν παρασιτῶν, ὦς Αξιόνικος εἰρήκεν ἐν τῷ Χαλκιδικῷ πρόκειται δὲ τὸ μαρτύριον μηνημονεύει δ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ Μένανδρος ἐν Κεκρυφάλῳ αὐτὸ μόνον Περνοκοπίδα αὐτὸν καλῶν.
But Philoxenus, who was surnamed Pternocopis, when it happened to be mentioned that thrushes were very dear, and that too while Corydus was present, who was said formerly to have prostituted himself (πεπορνεύσασθαι) — "I," said he, "can recollect when a lark (κόρυθος) only cost an obol." (And Philoxenus too was a parasite, as Axionicus has stated in his Chalcidian. But the statement is thoroughly proved.)

No. 31. MALE PROSTITUTION

Jude 7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities [fem. pl.] around them, in like manner to these [masc. pl.] prostituting themselves (ἐκπορνεύσασαι [fem. pl. aor ptc, due to ‘cities’]), and gone after other flesh, have been set before — an example, of fire age-during, justice suffering.

No. 32. MALE FORNICATOR

A Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology

Entry Apellos-biography "... that he was expelled from the school of Marcion for fornication with one Philumene, who fancied herself a prophetess, ..."

Apelles flourished about A. D. 188, and lived to a very great age. Tertullian (Praescrt. Haeret. 30) says, that he was expelled from the school of Marcion for fornication with one Philumene, who fancied herself a prophetess, and whose fantasies were recorded by Apelles in his book entitled Φανερώσεις (see Euseb. Hist. Eccl. 5.13).

If a deacon commit fornication (πορνεύσασθαι) after receiving the diaconate, he shall be removed from the diaconate ... those in the ranks of the laity, after being expelled from the place of the faithful, are again taken back into the place from which they fell, but the deacon once and for all incurs the lasting penalty of deposition.

No. 33. MALE DEACON COMMITS FORNICATION

Basil, Saint, Bishop of Caesarea, Epistulae (πορνεύσασθαι)

chapter 188, III (p. 22, line 6ff.): Διάκονος, μετὰ τὴν διακονίαν πορνεύσασθαι, ἀπόβλητος μὲν τῆς διακονίας ἔσται: εἰς δὲ τὸν τῶν λαϊκῶν ἁπασθείς τόπον, τῆς κοινωνίας οὐκ εἰρήθησαι. διότι ἀρχαῖος ἐστι κανόνες τῶν ἀπὸ βαθμίου πεπωκότας τούτω μόνῳ τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς κολάσεως ὑποβάλλεσθαι:

Is not this a monstrous thing? In the case of those who were neighbors and who had shown themselves of all the Greeks by common consent to have conferred the greatest benefits upon your state, you thus carefully and accurately defined regarding each one the terms on which they should

No. 34. FEMALE PROSTITUTES (πεπορνευμένην)

Demosthenes, Against Neaera

speech 59, section 107: οὐκ οὖν δεινόν; πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀστυγείτονας καὶ ὀμολογουμένοις ἀρίστους τῶν Ἑλλήνων εἰς τὴν πόλιν γεγενημένους οὕτω καλῶς καὶ ἀκριβῶς διαρίσσαθε περὶ ἐκάστου, ἐν γὰς δέ ἔχου τὴν ὁραμαντικήν, τὴν δὲ περιφοινίαν ἐν ἀπάθει τῆς Ἐλλαδός πεπορνευμένην οὕτως σιχρύους καὶ ολιγοφράδης ἔστησε υβρίζουσαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ ἀσεβοῦσαν εἰς τοὺς θεοὺς ἀτιμωρητον, ἣν οὐτε οἱ πρόγονοι ἀστήν κατέλιπον οὐθ' ὁ δῆμος πολίτιν ἐποίησατο

Is not this a monstrous thing? In the case of those who were neighbors and who had shown themselves of all the Greeks by common consent to have conferred the greatest benefits upon your state, you thus carefully and accurately defined regarding each one the terms on which they should

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677 Apellos, a disciple of Marcion, departed in some points from the teaching of his master. Instead of wholly rejecting the Old Testament, he looked upon its contents as coming partly from the good principle, partly from the evil principle.
receive the gift of citizenship; are you then thus shamefully and recklessly to let off unpunished a woman who has openly played the harlot (πορνευμένη) throughout the whole of Greece, who treats the city with outrage and the gods with impiety, and who is a citizen neither by birth nor by the gift of the people?

No. 35. FEMALE PROSTITUTE (πορνεύσα) (πορνείας)
Revelation 2:20-22

[20] But I have this against you, that you tolerate your woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. She teaches and seduces my servants to commit sexual immorality (πορνεύσα), and to eat things sacrificed to idols. [21] I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality (πορνείας). [22] Behold, I will throw her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great oppression, unless they repent of her works.

No. 36. FEMALE PROSTITUTE (πόρνη)(ἐπόρνευσαν)
Revelation 17:2

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here. I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, [2] with whom the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality, and those who dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her sexual immorality (ἐπόρνευσαν).”

No. 37. FEMALE PROSTITUTE (ἐπόρνευσαν)(πορνεύσαντες)
Revelation 18:3, 9

[9] Ἐπ᾽ αὐτήν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς ὑμῖν, καὶ οἱ ἐπιτελεῖς καὶ οἱ ἐμποροί τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ πορνεύσαντος καὶ τηρητικάς, ὅταν βλέπωσιν τὸ καύσων τῆς πυράς αὐτῆς

He cried with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and has become a habitation of demons, and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird! [3] For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her sexual immorality, . . . [9] the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from the abundance of her luxury.”

No. 38. FEMALE PROSTITUTES (καταπορνευθέσσα)ς(πορνεύειν)
Strabo, Geography
(Greek) (English) (English, ed. H.C. Hamilton, Esq., W. Falconer, M.A.)
book 11, chapter 14: ἀλλὰ καὶ θυγατέρας οἱ ἐπιφανέστατοι τοῦ ἑθους ἀνιεροῦσι παρθένους, ἀεὶ νόμος ἦτοι καταπορνευθεῖσαι πολὴν χρόνον παρὰ τῇ θεῷ μετὰ τάτα δίδονται πρὸς γάμον, οὐκ ἀπαξεύωντος της τοιαύτης συνοικεῖας οὐδενός, τοιόσον δὲ τι καὶ Ηρόδωτος λέγει τὸ περὶ τῶν π. Λυδάς: πορνεύεις γὰρ ἀπάσας. οὕτω δὲ φιλοφρόνοις χρωνύται τοῖς ἰερατεῖς ὠστε καὶ ξενίαν παρέχουσι καὶ δώρα ἀντιδίδοσι πλείον πολλάκις ἢ λαμβάνουσιν, ἄτ' εἴς εὐπόρον ὁικών ἐπιχορηγοῦμενοι· δέχονται δὲ οὐ τοὺς τυχόντας τῶν ἱερῶν, ἀλλὰ μάλιστα τοὺς ἀπὸ ίσου ἀξίωματος.

Both the Medes and Armenians have adopted all the sacred rites of the Persians, but the Armenians pay particular reverence to Anaitis, and have built temples to her honour in several places, especially in Acilisene. They dedicate there to her service male and female slaves; in this there is nothing remarkable, but it is surprising that persons of the highest rank in the nation consecrate their virgin daughters to the goddess. It is customary for these women, after being prostituted (καταπορνευθεῖσαι) a long period at the temple of Anaitis, to be disposed of in marriage, no one disdaining a connexion with such persons. Herodotus mentions something similar respecting the Lydian women, all of whom prostitute (πορνεύειν) themselves. But they treat their paramours with much kindness, they entertain them hospitably, and frequently make a return of more presents than they receive, being amply supplied with means derived from their wealthy connexions. They do not admit into their dwellings accidental strangers, but prefer those of a rank equal to their own.

No. 39. FEMALE PROSTITUTES (πορνεύσθαι)(πόρνης)
Strabo, Geography
(Greek) (English) (English, ed. H.C. Hamilton, Esq., W. Falconer, M.A.)
book 13, chapter 4: ... οὗ τὸ πλεῖστον ἔργον αἱ παιδικαὶ συνετέλεισαν· λέγει δ’ ἐκεῖνος καὶ πορνεύσθαι πᾶσας· τινὲς δὲ καὶ πόρνης μνήμα λέγουσιν τὸν τάφον χειροποίητον δὴ τὴν λίμνην ἐνίοι ἱστορούσι τὴν Ἀκρόπολιν πρὸς τὸ ἐκδοχὰς τῶν πλημμυρίδων, αἱ συμβάνουσι τῶν ποταμῶν ἐνδομένων. Ὑπαιπα δὲ πόλις οὗτοι καταβαίνουσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ Τιμώλου πρὸς τὸ Καίσαρτα πεδίον.

The monuments of the kings lie around the lake Coloë. At Sardes is the great mound of Alyattes upon a lofty base, the work, according to Herodotus, of the people of the city, the greatest part of it being executed by young women. He says that they all prostituted themselves (πορνεύσθαι); according to some writers the sepulchre is the monument of a courtesan (πόρνης). Some historians say, that Coloë is an artificial lake, designed to receive the superabundant waters of the rivers when they are full and overflow . . .

No. 40. FEMALE PROSTITUTE (πορνευομένη) (ἔταιράν)
Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists
(Greek) (English, ed. C. D. Yonge, B.A.) (Greek, ed. Kaibel)
book 13, chapter 51: Λυσίας δ’ ἐν τῷ πρὸς Λαίδα, εἶ γε γνήσιος ὁ λόγος, τοῦτων μυημονεύει· Φιλέα γε τοὶ ἐπαύσατο πορνευομένη ἑτη νέα όουσα καὶ Σκιώνη καὶ Ἱππαφήσις καὶ Θεόκλεα καὶ Ψαμίος καὶ Λαγίσκα καὶ Ανθεία. μὴπότε δεῖ γράφειν ἀντὶ τῆς Ανθείας Ἀντείαν. οὐ γὰρ εὐρίσκομεν παρ’ οὔδενι Ανθείαν ἀναγιαγιμένην ἔταιράν,

And Lysias, in his oration against Lais, if, indeed, the speech is a genuine one, mentions these circumstances— "Philyrus abandoned the trade of a harlot (πορνευομένη) when she was still quite young; and so did Scione, and Hippaphesis, and Theoclea, and Psamthe, and Lagisca, and Anthea." But perhaps, instead of Anthea, we ought to read Antea. For I do not find any mention made by any one of a harlot (ἔταιράν) named Anthea.

No. 41. FEMALE PROSTITUTE (πορνευομένη) (ἔταιράν)
Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*  
(Greek) (English, ed. C. D. Yonge, B.A.) (Greek, ed. Kaibel)  
book 13, chapter 62: . . . and Luiseis δ' ἐν τῷ κατὰ Λαΐδος, εἰ γνήσιος ὁ λόγος, μυθιστεῖς αὐτῆς, καταλέγων καὶ ἄλλας ἐταίρας ἐν τούτοις. Φιλόσα γέ τοι ἐπαύσατο περιευμένη ἐτί νέα οὕσα καὶ Σκιώνη καὶ Ἰππάφειας καὶ Θεόκλεια καὶ Ψαμάθη καὶ Λαγίσκα καὶ Ἀνθεία καὶ Ἀριστόκλεια.  

For perhaps here we ought to read Nais, and not Lais. But Hermippus, in his Essay on Isocrates, says that Isocrates, when he was advancing in years, took the courtesan [= prostitute] Lagisca to his house, and had a daughter by her. And Strattis speaks of her in these lines  
And while she still was in her bed, I saw Isocrates' concubine, Lagisca,  
Playing her tricks; and with her the flute-maker.  
And Lysias, in his speech against Lais, (if, at least, the oration be a genuine one,) mentions her, giving a list of other courtesans also, in the following words:—"Philyra indeed abandoned the trade of a courtesan while she was still young; and Scione, and Hippaphesis, and Theoclea, and Psamathe, and Lagisca, and Anthea, and Aristoclea, all abandoned it also at an early age."  

No. 42. FEMALE PROSTITUTE (ἐτέρω)(πεπορνευμένη)  
Procopius, *Historia Arcana* (Anecdota)  
Vol. 6, chapter 5 (p. 62, line 11ff.). ἡνίκα δὲ Ἀντωνίνα τῆς βασιλίδος ἄπογενεμένης ἐς Βυζαντίου ἦλθεν, ἐπελάθετο μὲν ἑθελοῦσα ἃν ἐκείνη ἐμαχχος εἰς αὐτὴν εἴργαστο, ὡς ἡκιστα δὲ ὑπολογισμένη ὡς, ἢν τοῦ ἔτερου ἢ παῖς αὐτή ἐνοικίζοιτο, πεπορνευμένη τὰ πρότερα ἦστα, τὸν Θεοδώρας ἔγκοινον κηδεῖτιν ἀτμίμαζε, τὴν τε παῖδα ὡς μάλιστα ἀκουσια βιασμένην ἀνδρὸς τοῦ ἑρωμένου ἀπόστησε, μεγάλην τε ἀγνωμοσύνης ἐκ τοῦ ἑργοῦ τούτου ἀπεγκαταδέσαν εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους, ἤκοντα τε οὐδεὶν πόνῳ ἀναπείθε τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦ ἄγους αὐτῇ μεταλαχεῖν τοῦδε.  

But when Antonina, after the Empress' death, came to Byzantium, she purposely forgot the benefits which the Empress recently had conferred on her, and paying no attention whatever to the fact that if the girl should marry anyone else, her previous record would be that of a prostitute (πεπορνευμένη), she spurned the alliance with the offspring of Theodora . . .

No. 43. FEMALE SLAVE PROSTITUTE (πεπορνεύσθαι)(μοιχὼν)  
book 6, chapter 20: ὅτι ἂγαπής ὅτι σοι λαλῶ, καὶ μεγάλην ἑυτυχίαν δοκεῖς τὸν σὸν καταφλίσας δεσπότῃ, ὀλλὰ ἀκκίζῃ καὶ σχηματίζῃ πρὸς ἀπόνοιαν; ἔγω μὲν σε καὶ πεπορνεύσθαι δοκῶ· καὶ γάρ μοιχῶν φιλεῖς.  

[Leucippe, a female slave of Thersander, was a virgin and remained so.] Thersander . . . when he was disappointed of his hopes [to mate her] gave free rein to his anger. "Wretched slave," he cried, striking her on the face, "miserable, love-sick girl; I heard all your ravings. Are you not delighted that I even speak to you? Do you not think it a great piece of good fortune to be able to kiss your master? . . . A harlot you must be, for it is an adulterer ((μοιχὼν)) that you love.”  

No. 44. MALE AND FEMALE PROSTITUTES (πεπορνεύκότος)(ἐταίρας)  
(Greek) (English, ed. R.D. Hicks)  
book 6, chapter 2: δύο μαλακῶν περιτραπτομένων αὐτῶν ἠφι, μη ἑσυνείδησε· κυων τευτλία οὖ τρώγει. περὶ παιδός πεπορνεύκότος ἐρραιθείς ποθὲν εἶπ, Τεγέατης, ἠφι, ἀφι Παλαιάτηθεν θεσαύμενος ἀτερέυοντα ἠφι, τι τούτο; ἢ ἰον τούτο; ποτὲ σε νικήσαντα νῦν καταβάλῃς; θεσαύμενος υῖον ἐταίρας λίθον εἰς ὧδυον βάλλοντα, πρόσεχε, ἠφι, μὴ τὸν πατέρα πλῆξις.
When two cowards hid away from him, he called out, “Don’t be afraid, a hound is not fond of beetroot.” [62] After seeing a stupid wrestler practising as a doctor he inquired of him, “What does this mean? Is it that you may now have your revenge on the rivals who formerly beat you?” Seeing the child of a courtesan [ἐταῖρας = prostitute] throw stones at a crowd, he cried out, “Take care you don’t hit your father.”

No. 45. MALE AND FEMALE PROSTITUTES (tà πορνεία) (ἐταῖρας) (ἐπορνεύετο) (αἱ πόρναι)

Cassius Dio Coccceianus, Historiae Romanae

book 80, chapter 13: τάδε ἐστίν. ἐστιν κατάλειψις οὐκετῶρ περιπετείας κόμαις χρώμενος, καὶ τὰ τῶν καταλείψεων εἰργάζετο. ἐστι τὰ πορνεία τὰ περιβόητα ἐσεφόιτα, καὶ τὰς ἐταῖρας ἐξελάτων ἐπορνεύετο. καὶ τέλος ἐν τῷ παλάτῳ οἰκῆμα τι ἀποδείξας ἐνταῦθα ἁσέλαγας, γνωμὸς τ’ ἀεὶ ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας αὐτῷ ἐστῶν ὀψερ αἱ πόρναι, καὶ τὸ συνδόνιον χρυσοῦς κρίκοις ἐξηρτημένον διασεῖών,

He [Sardanapalus] would go to the taverns by night, wearing a wig, and there ply the trade of a female huckster [innkeeper]. He frequented the notorious brothels (tà πορνεία), and played the prostitute himself (ἐπορνεύετο). Finally, he set aside a room in the palace and there committed his indecencies, always standing nude at the door of the room, as harlots (αἱ πόρναι) do, … while in a soft and melting voice he solicited the passers-by.

No. 46. MALE AND FEMALE PROSTITUTES

1 Corinthians 6:15-19 (πόρνης)(πόρνη)(πορνεύετο)(πορνεύων)


book 1 Corinthians, chapter 6:15-19, “Ἀρας οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνης μέση; Μή γένοιτο. οὐκ ἴδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώνοις τῇ πόρνῃ ἐν σώμα ἐστιν; . . . [17] ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν πνεύμα ἐστιν. φέρων γὰρ τὴν πορνεύον, πάν ἀμάρτημα ὁ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἕκτος τοῦ σώματος ἑαυτοῦ, ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἱδίον σώμα ἀμαρτάνει; ὡς ἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐστίν, οὐ ἔχετε αὐτὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ; καὶ οὐκ ἠστε ἐναντίον θεου, ἡγομένης γὰρ τιμῆς δοξᾶσατε ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν.

Don’t you know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! [v. 16] Or don’t you know that he who is joined to a prostitute (πόρνη) is one body? For, “The two,” says he, “will become one flesh.” [v. 17] But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. [v. 18] Flee sexual immorality (πορνεύαι)! “Every sin that a man does is outside the body,” but he who commits sexual immorality (πορνεύων) sins against his own body. [v. 19] Or don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

No. 47. ABSENCE OF ADULTERY AND PROSTITUTION (μοιχείαι)

Plutarch, Mulierum virtutes (ed. Goodwin)(English) (Greek, ed. Gregorius N. Bernardakis)

(English, ed. Frank Cole Babbitt) (Greek, ed. Frank Cole Babbitt)678

chapter 12: “It was a custom among the maids of Cios to assemble together in the public temples, and to pass the day together in good fellowship; and there their sweethearts had the felicity

678 Where information about languages is given in each extracted entry, this is taken from Perseus, which does not always include an ET. This has to be obtained from elsewhere.
to behold how prettily they sported and danced about. In the evening this company went to the house of every particular maid in her turn, and waited upon each other's parents and brethren very officiously, even to the washing of their feet. It oftentimes so fell out that many young men fell in love with one maid; but they carried it so decently and civilly that, when the maid was espoused (ἐγγύω) to one, the rest presently gave off courting of her. The effect of this good order among the women was that no mention (ἀνέγγυον = not credited) was made of any adultery or fornication (φθοράν = destruction) among them for the space of seven hundred years. προαγγελέω


No. 48. COMMAND NOT TO COMMIT ADULTERY OR FORNICATION (πορνεύσεις) (μοιχεύσεις)
Barnabas, Barnabae Epistula (ed. Kirsoopp Lake)
(Greek, Loeb, p. 76, by B. D. Ehrman)
chapter 19.4: οὐχ ἐπιφανείᾳ σεαυτῷ, ἔσεξ δὲ τα πεινόφρων κατὰ πάντα· οὐκ ἀρείᾳ ἐπὶ σεαυτὸν δοξαν. οὐ λήμβην θυλίαν συνηράν κατὰ τοῦ πληρίουν σου, οὐ δώσαις τῇ φυλής σου βραδός; οὐ πορνεύσεις, οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ παιδοφθορήσεις. οὐ μὴ σοι ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξέλθῃ ἐν ἀκαθαρσίᾳ τῷ νῦν. οὐ λήμβην πρόσωπων ἑλέξαιτα τινά ἐπὶ παραπτώματι. ἔσεξ πραύς, ἔσεξ ἡσύχιος, ἔσεξ τρέμουν τοὺς λόγους οὕς ἠκουσας. οὐ μηνισικάκησες τῷ ἀδέλφῳ σου.

Do not exalt yourself but be humble in every way. Do not heap glory on yourself. Do not make your soul impertinent. Do not engage in sexual immorality, do not commit adultery, do not engage in pederasty. The word of God must not go out from you to any who are impure.

[Alternative ET:] You shall not exalt thyself, but shall be humble-minded in all things; thou shalt not take glory to thyself. Thou shalt form no evil plan against thy neighbour, thou shalt not let thy soul be foward. Thou shalt not commit fornication (πορνεύσεις), thou shalt not commit adultery (μοιχεύσεις), thou shalt not commit sodomy. Thou shalt not use the word of God depart from thee among the impurity of any men.

No. 49. FEMALE PROSTITUTES (πορνευομένας) (προαγαγεύειν), PIMPS (μαστροπούς)
Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists
(Greek, ed. Kaibel)(English, Loeb, vol. iv. by C.B. Gulick)
book 10.443a ἐπαινεῖν οὖν αὐτοῖς τούτων Κλέανθι ὁ τύραννος, ὁ καὶ οἱ μαστροποῦς τῶν εἰθισμένων προαγαγεύειν τῶν ἐλευθέρων γυναῖκας καὶ τρεῖς ἡ τέτταρας τῶν ἑπιφανέστατος πορνευομένας ἔνδημας εἰς αὐτοὺς καταποντίζοι τιαν προστάξεως καὶ Ἐρμίππος δὲ ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῶν ἐπὶ σοφῶν Περιενδρόν τὸ αὐτὸ ποίησαι.

. . . . And so the tyrant stopped them from these practices; he was the one who tied up in sacks the procuresses (= pimps, τῶν μαστροπούς) who were in the habit of seducing (= to prostitute, προαγαγεύειν) well-born women of the free class, as well as three or four of the most conspicuous harlots (πορνευομένας), and ordered them to be drowned in the sea.’ Hermippus, too, in his work On the Seven Sages, says that Periander did the same.

No. 50. ADULTERERS (μοιχεύσος), FORNICATIONS (πορνεύσος)
Clement of Alexandria, Quis Dis Salvetur (‘The Rich Man’s Salvation’) (ed. G.W. Butterworth)
Thief, do you wish to receive forgiveness? steal no more.
Fornicator, keep pure in future. Extortioner, repay with interest.
False witness, practice truth.

No. 51. ADULTERY (μοιχείαν), FORNICATION (πορνεύειν)
Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus ('Exhortation to the Greeks/Heathen') (ed. G.W. Butterworth)
chapter 4 (p. 136, lines 6-12): . . . kata&pau&son, 3Omhre, th_n w?|dh&n:
ou)k e1sti kalh&,
moixei/an dida&skei:
porneu&ein de h(mei=j kai ta_\w{jta parh|th&meqa:
Cease the song, Homer. There is no beauty in that; it teaches adultery. We have declined to lend even our ears to fornication.

No. 52. FORNICATION (πορνεύειν) PIMP (πορνοβοσκός)
Xenophon of Ephesus, Ephesiaca ('The Ephesian Tale of Anthia and Habrocomes') (ed. Rudolf Hercher)
book 5, chapter 7: Kai \dh_\kosmh&saj kalh_| me
ne0sqh~ti pollw_| de \xrusw_| h}gen
prosthsome/nhn te/gouj:
In due course the pimp (πορνοβοσκός) who had bought Anthia made her display herself in front of the whorehouse. He dressed her up in a beautiful costume and lots of gold and took her to her spot outside a stall. But she raised a loud wail: "What troubles are mine!" she cried, "Are my previous predicaments not enough, the chains of banditry? Must I now be a whore as well? Beauty of mine, you are justly violated, . . . [Anthia was married to Habrocomes.]"
Deut. 23:17 'There is not a prostitute (πόρνη) among the daughters of Israel, nor is there one fornicating (πορνεύων) among the sons of Israel;

Oúk ēstai πόρνη ἀπό θυγατέρων Ἰσραήλ, καὶ οὐκ ēstai πορνεύων ἀπό υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ· οὐκ ēstai τελεσφόρος ἀπό θυγατέρων Ἰσραήλ, καὶ οὐκ ēstai τελισκόμενος ἀπό υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ.

CATEGORY B: ‘Fornication’ used in non-Greek sources.

No. B1. Titus Livius (Livy), The History of Rome (ed. Evan T. Sage, Ph.D.) book 38, chapter 24: “... her disposition; when he found it shrinking from voluntary fornication (Lat. stupro), he did violence to her body, . . .”


The full context to the above except is:

“There remained an entirely new war with the Tectosagi. Setting out against them the consul came on the third day of marching to Ancyra, a famous city in that region, from which the enemy was a little more than ten miles distant.

[2] While they were established in camp there, a memorable deed was done by a captive woman. The wife of the chieftain Orgiago, a woman of surpassing beauty, was held under guard among a large number of prisoners; the commander of the guard was a centurion, characterized by both the lust and the greed of the soldier.

[3] At first he tried her disposition; when he found it shrinking from voluntary fornication, he did violence to her body, which fortune had made a slave.

[4] Then, to quiet her indignation at the injury, he held out to the woman the hope of a return to her own people, but not even that, as a lover might have done, did he grant her for nothing. Having stipulated for a definite quantity of gold, to avoid taking one of his own men as an accomplice, he allowed the woman herself to send as a messenger to her people whomsoever of the prisoners she should choose.

[5] He designated a spot near the river to which not more than two of the kinsmen of the captive were to come with the money the following night to receive her. It happened that one of the woman’s own slaves was among the prisoners under the same guard.

[6] This man, as messenger, the centurion at nightfall conducted beyond the line of sentinels. The following night both the two kinsmen of the woman and the centurion with the prisoner came to the appointed place.

[7] While they were displaying the money, which was to amount to an Attic talent — for

[8] so great had been the sum agreed upon—the woman in her own language ordered them to draw sword and kill the centurion as he was weighing the money.

[9] When they had slit his throat and cut off his head, the woman herself wrapped it in her garment and carried it on her return to her husband Orgiago, who had escaped home from Olympus;

[10] before she embraced him she dropped at his feet the head of the centurion, and, when he wondered whose head this was and what this act meant, so unlike that of a woman, she confessed to him the的部分 the violence done to her person and the vengeance exacted for her forcibly violated chastity, and, as the story goes, by the purity and dignity of her life in other respects maintained to the end the glory won by a deed that marked her as a true matron.

681 Livy. Books XXXVIII-XXXIX with an English Translation. Cambridge. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1936: published without copyright notice. Practically the same story is told by Polybius (XXII. xxi), Plutarch (Mul. Virt. 43), Valerius Maximus (VI. i. ext. 2) and Florus (l. xxvii. 6). All probably came from the same ultimate source, although Plutarch quotes as from Polybius an item not now found in Polybius’ own version.

act 2, scene 1: “... a woman cardinally given, might have been accused in *fornication*,
adultery, and all uncleanness there.”

SCENE I. A hall in ANGELO’S house. Enter ELBOW, and Officers with FROTH and
POMPEY.
Elb. He, sir! a tapster, sir; parcel-bawd; one that serves a bad woman; whose house, sir, was, as they
say, plucked down in the suburbs; and now she professes a hot-house, which, I think, is a very
ill house too.
Escal. How know you that?
Elb. My wife, sir, whom I detest before heaven and your honour,—
Escal. How? thy wife?
Elb. Ay, sir; whom, I thank heaven, is an honest woman,—
Escal. Dost thou detest her therefore?
Elb. I say, sir, I will detest myself also, as well as she, that this house, if it be not a bawd’s house, it is
pity of her life, for it is a naughty house.
Escal. How dost thou know that, constable?
Elb. Marry, sir; by my wife; who, if she had been a woman cardinally given, might have been
accused in *fornication*, adultery, and all uncleanness there.
Escal. By the woman’s means?
Elb. Ay, sir, by Mistress Overdone’s means: but as she spit in his face, so she defied him.
Pom. Sir, if it please your honour, this is not so.
Elb. Prove it before these varlets here, thou honourable man; prove it.

COMMENT: Shakespeare is aware that there is a difference between ‘adultery’ and
‘fornication’ but that the same woman can be guilty of both sins.

No. B3. MEN MISUSE WIVES FOR FORNICATION
The Quran (ed. Muhammad M. Pickthall)
Shakir)
sura 5: The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you, and your food is
lawful for them. And so are the virtuous women of the believers and the virtuous women of those
who received the Scripture before you (lawful for you) when ye give them their marriage portions
and live with them in honour, not in *fornication*, nor taking them as secret concubines.

No. B4. MEN MISUSE WIVES FOR FORNICATION
The Quran
Muhammad M. Pickthall)
Sura 2: [197] The pilgrimage is (performed in) the well-known months; so whoever
determines the performance of the pilgrimage therein, there shall be no intercourse nor *fornication*
nor quarrelling amongst one another;

No. B5. MEN MISUSE WIVES FOR FORNICATION
The Quran
Muhammad M. Pickthall)
Sura 4: [24] And all married women except those whom your right hands possess (this is) Allah’s ordinance to you, and lawful for you are (all women) besides those, provided that you seek (them) with your property, taking (them) in marriage not committing fornication. Then as to those whom you profit by, give them their dowries as appointed; and there is no blame on you about what you mutually agree after what is appointed; surely Allah is Knowing, Wise. [25] And whoever among you has not within his power amleness of means to marry free believing women, then (he may marry) of those whom your right hands possess from among your believing maidens; and Allah knows best your faith: you are (sprung) the one from the other; so marry them with the permission of their masters, and give them their dowries justly, they being chaste, not fornicating, nor receiving paramours; and when they are taken in marriage, then if they are guilty of indecency, they shall suffer half the punishment which is (inflicted) upon free women.

No. B6. MEN MISUSE WIVES FOR FORNICATION
The Quran
sura 17: [31] And do not kill your children for fear of poverty; We give them sustenance and yourselves (too); surely to kill them is a great wrong. [32] And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and an evil way.

No. B7. MEN MISUSE WIVES FOR FORNICATION
The Quran
sura 25: [68] And they who do not call upon another god with Allah and do not slay the soul, which Allah has forbidden except in the requirements of justice, and (who) do not commit fornication and he who does this shall find a requital of sin; [69] The punishment shall be doubled to him on the day of resurrection, and he shall abide therein in abasement;

No. B8. MARRIED WOMEN COMMIT FORNICATION
The Quran
sura 60: [12] O Prophet! when believing women come to you giving you a pledge that they will not associate aught with Allah, and will not steal, and will not commit fornication, and will not kill their children, and will not bring a calumny which they have forged of themselves, and will not disobey you in what is good, accept their pledge, and ask forgiveness for them from Allah; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

No. B9. MARRIED MEN AND WOMEN COMMIT FORNICATION
The Quran
(English, ed. M. H. Shakir) (Arabic, ed. Muhammad M. Pickthall) (English, ed. Muhammad M. Pickthall)
sura 24: A sura which We have sent down and which We have ordained in it have We sent down Clear Signs, in order that ye may receive admonition. [2] The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication, flog each of them with a hundred stripes: Let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day: and let a party of
the Believers witness their punishment. [3] Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry and but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever: nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman: to the Believers such a thing is forbidden.

[4] And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegations), flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after: for such men are wicked transgressors; [5] Unless they repent thereafter and mend (their conduct); for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

[6] And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have (in support) no evidence but their own, their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth; [7] And the fifth (oath) (should be) that they solemnly invoke the curse of Allah on themselves if they tell a lie.

[8] But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times (with an oath) By Allah, that (her husband) is telling a lie; [9] And the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly invokes the wrath of Allah on herself if (her accuser) is telling the truth. [10] If it were not for Allah's grace and mercy on you, and that Allah is Oft-Returning, full of Wisdom, (Ye would be ruined indeed).

**AT WHAT POINT WERE THE MARRIAGE VOWS MADE?**

Deuteronomy 24:5 that it is when a man TAKES his wife that he is then exempt for military service for the first year of his marriage. The year does not begin with the betrothal.

In Genesis the betrothal and marriage are not separated by any length of time. This is proved by comparing Deut 20:7 and 24:5. Scripture recognises that the first year of marriage only begins after the consummation of the marriage (Deut 24:5). It was only in later times that these two parts of a Hebrew wedding were artificially placed months apart.

Adam and Eve were married the day they met. Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, paid the dowry to Laban (sister of Rebekah) and Bethuel (father of Rebekah) and without any delay he returned to Isaac with her immediately (Gen 24:55–61). On meeting Rebekah Isaac married her immediately (24:67). There was no delay between purchase and consummation. The two stages were one.

Jacob married Rachel seven days after he married Leah. Genesis 29:27 spells out the contract or dowry, and then Jacob took Rachel after he has fulfilled the week’s festivities for Leah. Jacob would have married Rachel the day he agreed to the terms of Laban, but for his obligation to complete the week of days for Leah (cf. Jud 14:12). That Jacob took both sisters for wives before he served fourteen years as their dowry, see Dake’s Bible p. 30, first side column.

It would appear from the account of the marriage of Samson to an unnamed Philistine wife that the period between contracting the dowry to the marriage feast was a matter of days. Samson went with his father and mother to pay the dowry. While the parents stayed in Timnath, Samson journeyed back home (three miles away) but on the way he killed a young lion. A few days later, on his way back to Timnath to claim his bride a swarm of bees had nested inside the carcase, bringing their store of honey with them. Samson sampled the honey and took some of it for his parents who were still in Timnath, no doubt making preparations for the week-long wedding festivities.

When David paid the dowry of 200 Philistine foreskins to Saul he was immediately given Michal as his wife (1 Sam 18:17–20, 28). There was a day set for the marriage of David to Merab, Saul’s eldest daughter, but inexplicably, Saul gave her to another man. Saul tried to mollify David by offering to keep the date he set for their wedding but that it would be to Michal, his younger daughter. However, in place of a dowry, Saul requested 100 Philistine foreskins before the wedding day came. David accomplished the task set for him “before the days had expired” (1 Sam 18:26). So there was just a short time between David’s betrothal to Michal and his marriage to her.
From an Evangelical and Reformed point of view the two best works are those by W. A. Heth, & G. J. Wenham, Jesus and Divorce (1985), and Andrew Cornes, Divorce and Remarriage (1994).


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Young, J. J.  

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END OF E-BOOK ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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FOR ARTICLES ON
(1) DIVORCE versus NO DIVORCE
(2) LOVE-HEADSHIPS versus FEMINISM (Good Order in the Church)
(3) MAJORITY (Byzantine) TEXT versus MINORITY (Egyptian) TEXT
(4) EVOLUTION versus AIK-CREATION (‘after its kind’)
(5) BIBLE CHRONOLOGY