

The question of divorce is one that constantly aggravates and agitates the church. This is true whether we think of the church in the restricted sense of the local congregation or whether we think of the church in terms of the church universal. Only rarely does a pastor find that he is not embroiled in the complications associated with divorce and marital separations. And when a certain divorce case within a congregation is further compounded with the complication of members permitting themselves to be influenced by prejudices, worldly and fleshly opinions, the havoc wrought within a congregation often assumes tremendous proportions. A better understanding of the teaching of Scripture in this matter will result if the pivotal passages are discussed in correlation with one another and an attempt is made to bring the relevant Biblical data to the forefront for reflection and study.

We are agreed that the basic tenets of marriage are to be found in Genesis 2, 23-24: "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. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Even thus at the beginning of Creation the nature and basis of marriage are set forth, and by the same token these words clearly and definitely imply that divorce or the dissolution of the marriage bond cannot be contemplated without incurring a radical breach of this divine institution. We cannot agree with the world that any dissolution of the marriage bond can be normal or acceptable before God or man. Our Lord's comments with reference to this Scripture and the institution underlying it was to the effect of showing that the marriage bond is originally and ideally indissoluble. When this divinely instituted bond is broken it must perforce be preceded by a disregard for the relations that God has imposed upon humanity. When the divinely instituted order of love and truth has been brought to naught on the human level then a bringing to naught of our love and truth with God must have preceded.

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This bringing to naught of our troth with God occurred originally in the Garden of Eden through man's fall. Sin did not enter man's domain by reason of man's desecration of the bonds of marriage. This occurred in another manner. Inasmuch as sin did enter and affected all creation one cannot escape the question: How does this sinful conduct of man created by sin affect the marital relation? In order to answer this question let us consider the following pertinent Scripture passages: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord; and thou shalt not cause the Land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." Deuteronomy 24, 1-4; "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Matthew 5, 31-32; "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it." Matthew 19, 3-12; "And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife: And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them. Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." Mark 10, 2-12; "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." Luke 16, 18; "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace." I Corinthians 7, 15; "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." Romans 7, 1-3.

Woman, among the Hebrews, as among most nations of antiquity, occupied a subordinate position. Even though the Hebrew wife and mother was treated with more consideration than her sister in other lands, and other Semitic countries were not the exception, her position, nevertheless, was one of inferiority and subjection. The marriage relation from the standpoint of Hebrew legislation was considered largely as a business affair, a mere question of property. In spite of this prevalent attitude the wife was in most homes in Israel the "most valued possession" of the husband. It should also be borne in mind that the husband was unconditionally and unreservedly the head of the family in all domestic relations. The husband's right and prerogatives were manifest on every side. Nowhere is this more evident than in the matter of divorce. A husband, according to the Law of Moses, might divorce his wife under certain circumstances, but on the other hand, it was to all practical purposes impossible for a wife to put away her husband. This difference is given special significance by the mention of Moses in Exodus 21, 7-11. "And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take him another wife: her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money."

The Old Testament law concerning divorce is recorded in Deuteronomy 24, 1-4. This passage occupies a unique place in the Old Testament, because it contains, as no other passage in the Old Testament, specific legislation bearing upon the question of divorce. The references to this passage in both Testaments confirm the significance which attaches to it in the Old Testament economy. Cf. "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my witnesses is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away." Isaiah 50, 1;

"They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 3, 1; "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." Matthew 5, 31; "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." Matthew 19, 7-8; "And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." Mark 10, 3-5.

The understanding of the import of this passage has been confused, if not distorted, by the adoption of a translation which, though possible, is not by any means the most defensible. The careful reader will notice that the rendering of the King James' Version and English Revised Version differ materially. The King James' Version reads as follows: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." Deuteronomy 24, 1-4.

The crucial point to be noted in this rendering is that the apódosis (the consequent clause or conclusion in a conditional sentence which expresses the result) to the prótasis (a clause which expresses a condition) expressed in the first part of verse one begins in the middle of the same verse and reads: "then let him write

her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." On this rendering the divorce could well be construed as mandatory in the circumstance posited. No doubt many readers have understood the passage in this way and we have regarded divorce as commanded in the event of the uncleanness mentioned in the protasis of the sentence. The inference would naturally be that not only was divorce permitted in this case, but that it was also prescribed.

The English Revised and American Revised versions alter the rendering of verse and might possibly be interpreted as toning down the mandatory feature that is prominent in the translation of the King James' Version. They both translate verse as follows: "When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if he find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

While the apodosis in this case is introduced earlier than in the case of the King James' Version and while the reader might not be so ready to give mandatory force to the rendering, careful examination of the construction would lead the reader to understand that the husband in this case was required to give his wife a bill of divorcement, give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And the reader would still be justified in regarding this piece of Mosaic legislation as not only permitting divorce, in the case of the uncleanness mentioned, but as also requiring

It is the presence of the word "shall" in both clauses—"then it shall be.... that he shall write her a bill of divorcement----" that lends to the rendering of the Revised and American Revised versions the jussive force. The Hebrew has neither "then" nor "that", but only the simple conjunction "and". There is certainly a command in the words of Moses, but, on the other hand, a clear purpose to render the proceeding more difficult in the case of the husband. The evident purpose was, for as possible, to favor the wife and to protect her against an unceremonious banishment from her home and children.

Not a few scholars of the Scriptures are insistent that the protasis in this

passage embraces the first three verses and that it is only at the beginning of verse four that the apodosis is introduced. The comment of C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch brings out this construction very clearly: "In these verses.....divorce is not established as a right; all that is done is, that in case of a divorce a reunion with the divorced wife is forbidden, if in the meantime she had married another man, even though the second had also put her away, or had died. The four verses form a period, in which verses one to three are the clauses of the protasis, which describe the matter treated about; and verse four contains the apodosis, with the law concerning the point in question." (Bibl. Comm. on the O.T. Vol. III pp. 416f.)

S. R. Driver says with reference to this passage: "The rendition of the Revised Version is not here quite exact; verses one to three form the protasis, stating the conditions of the case contemplated, verse four is the apodosis." (The International Crit. Comm. Deuteronomy p. 269). To the same effect is the comment of Joseph Reider: "The chief concern of the law is to prevent remarriage after divorce. Consequently verses one to three must be construed as the protasis and verse four alone as the apodosis." (Op. cit. p.220. The RSV 1952 has adopted this view of the construction).

To these might be added the same judgment on the part of others. We can properly regard this view of the construction and intent of the passage as the one in favor of which there is an overwhelming preponderance. It certainly is a consideration weighted with the closest bearing on this question that the oldest and, on all accounts, the most important, the Septuagint, adopts this construction. As translated the whole passage should then read as follows: "When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, and it cometh to pass, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found in her some unseemly thing, that he writeth her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it unto her hand, and sendeth her out of his house and she departeth out of his house, and goeth and becometh another man's wife, and the latter husband hateth her and writeth her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it into her hand, and sendeth her out of his house, or if the latter husband, who took her to be his wife, dis; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she has been defiled, for this is an abomination before the Lord, and thou shalt not

cause the land to sin which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

These observations with respect to construction are of primary importance, because they show that this passage does not make divorce mandatory in the case of the indecency or uncleanness concerned. It is not even to be understood as encouraging or advising men to put away their wives in such a case. Neither is it to be understood as an authorizing or sanctioning of divorce. It simply provides that if a man puts away his wife and she marries another man the former husband cannot under any conditions take her again to be his wife. There is nothing, therefore, in this passage itself to warrant the conclusion that divorce is here given divine approval and is morally legitimated under the condition specified.

As previously suggested, marriage among the Hebrews, as among most Orientals, was more a legal contract than the result of love and affection. It would be, however, a great mistake to assume that deep love was not often present, for at all times the domestic relations of the Hebrew married couple have compared most favorably with those of any other people, ancient or modern. In the last analysis it was, nevertheless, a business transaction. The husband or his family had, as a rule, to pay a certain dowry to the parents or guardians of the betrothed before the marriage was consummated. A wife thus acquired could easily be regarded as a piece of property which, without great difficulty, could be disposed of in case the husband, for any reason, were disposed to rid himself of an uncongenial companion and willing to forfeit the קֶדָוּת which he had paid for his wife. The advantage was always with the husband, and yet the wife was not utterly helpless, for she, too, though practically without legal rights, could make herself so intolerably burdensome and hateful in the home that almost any husband would gladly avail himself of his prerogatives and write her a bill of divorcement. Thus, though a wife could not divorce her husband, she could force him to divorce her. The common term used in the Bible for divorce is $\text{שֵׁלַח אִשָּׁה בְּיָדוֹ}$ "the sending away of a wife." (Deuteronomy 22, 19.29) We never read of "the sending away of a husband." The feminine participle שֵׁלְיָהּ "the woman thrust out" is the term applied to a divorced woman. The masculine form is not found.

That divorce was practiced must be conceded. This is taken for granted in this passage, so much so that under certain conditions it is permanently valid and inviolable. Leviticus 21, 7.14 and 22, 13; Numbers 30, 9; and Deuteronomy 22, 19.29 also evince the practice of divorce.

It is also conceded that divorce was permitted or tolerated. This is true not simply in the sense in which every event that occurs is permitted, but in the sense that it was conceded or suffered as the actual status quo, and the penalty of civil or ecclesiastical ostracism was not attached to it. This means that a certain freedom in the matter of divorce was tolerated and when that freedom was exercised a civil or ecclesiastical penalty was not thereby incurred. Deuteronomy 22, 19 and 29 presents two cases in which this very freedom was denied and these provisions imply that a certain kind of freedom might be exercised by others who did not fall into either of these two categories. In this respect the difference between the Old and New Testament becomes apparent. This freedom, conceded or suffered under the Mosaic economy, is removed under the Gospel dispensation.

We must, however, distinguish between this sufferance or toleration, on the one hand, and divine approval or sanction, on the other hand. We have already stated that no evidence is to be found which proves that divorce was approved or morally legitimated. Permission, sufferance, toleration was granted. But underlying this act is the concept of wrong. We do not properly speak of toleration or sufferance as granted in connection with what is desirable or intrinsically right. It is this distinction, too often forgotten or for convenience sake pushed into the background, that must be appreciated, and it is this distinction which underlies or is expressed in the treatment our Lord provides on this question.

When I state that an intrinsic wrong is presupposed in the very sufferance accorded, I do not mean to imply that a general or specific sinful condition is presupposed in the practice of divorce, but also that in the very act of divorce itself there is an intrinsic wrong not compatible with the absolute standard of right. And by sufferance is meant that, while the act was intrinsically wrong

and, therefore, worthy of censure, the sanctions attached to this evil were not as severe as the intrinsic evil of the practice merited. For the hardness of their heart Moses suffered them to put away their wives. The restrictions imposed upon the divorce tolerated and practiced were necessitated by the very abnormalities and evils associated with the practice.

The bill of divorcement שְׁטֵרֵת הַגֵּט is an expression found in Deuteronomy 24, 1.3; Isaiah 50, 1; Jeremiah 3, 8. These two words, literally translated signify a document or book of cutting off, i.e., a certificate of divorce given by a husband to a wife, so as to afford her the opportunity of marrying another man. This Hebrew term is rendered by the LXX: $\beta\epsilon\beta\lambda\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\kappa\tau\acute{\alpha}\sigma\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$. This is also found in the New Testament: Matthew 5, 31; 19, 7; Mark 10, 4. In the Talmud this certificate of divorce is called שְׁטֵרֵת הַגֵּט ; there is an entire chapter devoted to the subjects in the Mishna.

This bill of divorcement served several purposes. Since it was a legal document it served as a deterrant of hasty action on the part of the husband restraining him from frivolous, thoughtless, and rash dismissal. It was also a testimonial to the woman of her freedom from marital obligations to the husband who sent her away. And it would be a protective instrument in the matter of the woman's reputation and well-being, particularly in the event that she married another man. In his 'The Gospel According to Matthew Explained' J. A. Alexander writes (p. 145): "The writing of divorcement, therefore, was itself no hardship, but a benefit, protecting the divorced wife from unfounded imputations, and declaring her repudiation to be founded upon something less than violation of her marriage vow. This was the requisition of the law, but what was the corruption or the false interpretation of it, tacitly implied and afterwards refuted? This we learn from a fuller declaration of our Savior on a different occasion, which has been preserved by Mark (10, 2-12), consisted in regarding the Mosaic precept as a license to repudiate at will; whereas it was a merciful provision in behalf of the repudiated woman, designed to mitigate the hardship of divorces, even when unlawful. It is not a general permission to repudiate, but a stringent requisition

that whoever did so should secure his wife from injury by certifying that she was not chargeable with unchaste conduct, but divorced upon some minor pretext."

We may conclude that the bill of divorcement was required by positive enactment in all cases of divorce and was, therefore, in the category of precept or requirement. This should be borne in mind, because it may have an important bearing upon the interpretation of the New Testament passages,

In regard to "the unseemly thing" we shall admit that it is exceedingly difficult and hazardous to ascertain what it really was. The Hebrew ^נג_וף ^הא_ור^ות^ו literally means "nakedness of a thing." Rabbinical interpretation presents different viewpoints. The School of Shamai regards it as unchastity of behavior, whereas the School of Hillel regards it as any indecency or anything displeasing to the husband. Certain followers of the School of Hillel consider most frivolous reasons as sufficient to be included under this term. ~~Ad~~iversity of interpretation is to be found in the Talmudical Tract 'ג'ט ^הא_ור^ות^ו. Leo Auerbach translates it to be: "The House of Shamai says: A man must not divorce his wife unless he has found her to be unfaithful. As Deuteronomy 24, 1 states: "Because he hath found some uncleanness in her." The House of Hillel says: He may divorce her if she only spoiled a dish for him because it was said: Uncleanness is anything. Rabbi Akiba says: He may divorce her if he found another that is more beautiful than his wife, because Deuteronomy 24, 1 states: "If it come pass that she find no favor in his eyes."

This divergence in Rabbinical interpretation can serve us in a good stead, for it provides us with a convenient approach to the question. If the School of Shamai's interpretation can be demonstrated as correct, then the Mosaic legislation here would be almost identical with the provisions of the New Testament on this question. In Lightfoot's 'Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae (Vol. XI p. 116-117) ^נג_וף ^הא_ור^ות^ו is set forth as meaning adultery. We cannot agree with his argumentation or conclusions. By examining the evidence we can readily conclude that the truth rests in neither of these views. The following statements inveigh against the contention that ^נג_וף ^הא_ור^ות^ו refers to adultery.

- 1. The Pentateuch prescribed death for adultery. Leviticus 20, 10: "And the

man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death." Leviticus 20, 10; "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel." Deuteronomy, 22, 22. Cf. also: Deuteronomy 22, 23-27. It must be concluded, therefore, that the provisions of Deuteronomy 24, 1-4 cannot apply to a case of proven adultery on the part of the wife. She and her guilty partner were both put to death.

2. It might be contended, however, that though the divorce legislation could not apply to a case of proven adultery it might apply to a case of adultery not proven, but on good grounds suspected. The provisions of Numbers 5, 11-31 (law of the trial for jealousy) have to do with such a case and the stipulation prescribed leaves no place for divorce. This same passage has to do also with the case of the man who entertains suspicion or jealousy with reference to his wife when there is no ground in fact for such suspicion. The provisions of Deuteronomy 24, 1-4 cannot, therefore, apply to a case of suspected divorce, whether such suspicion be warranted or unjustified.
3. The Pentateuch deals with the case of a man who brings the charge of uncleanness against his newly-wedded wife. (Deuteronomy 22, 13-21) If the charge is disproven by the presentation of the token of virginity on the part of the father and mother of the daughter, then the man may not put her away: "she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days." (v.19). If the tokens of virginity were not found in the daughter, she was to be stoned to death. So again the provisions of Deuteronomy 24, 1-4 cannot apply to this case.
4. In Deuteronomy 22, 23-24 we have the provisions for uncleanness on the part of a virgin betrothed unto a husband. In this case both the virgin betrothed and the man who defiled her were to be put to death.

5. In the case of a betrothed virgin who was forced, Deuteronomy 22, 25-27 provides that the man was to be put to death and the virgin was to be treated as guiltless.

6. In the case of a man who lies with a virgin not betrothed, the requirement of Deuteronomy 22, 28-29 is that the man must marry the woman and he may not put her away all his days.

We see, therefore, that the Mosaic Law provides for all sorts of contingencies in the matter of sexual uncleanness. In none of the cases cited above does the phrase $\text{וְאִשָּׁה אֲדוּלְתָהּ}$ or even the word אֲדוּלְתָהּ occur. In every case the remedy or redress is entirely different from recourse to divorce. In none of these contingencies could the prescriptions of Deuteronomy 24, 1-4 apply. We must conclude, therefore, that there is no evidence to show that $\text{וְאִשָּׁה אֲדוּלְתָהּ}$ refers to adultery or to an act of sexual uncleanness. In fact, the evidence conclusively inveighs against any such interpretation. Cf. Keil and Delitzsch: op. cit. p. 419. 3/19/73 Intro. Soc. Del. Conf.

The reason why the divorced woman who has married another man may not under any circumstances return to her first husband is that by her second marriage she has been defiled ($\text{וְאִשָּׁה אֲדוּלְתָהּ}$). This root (אֲדוּלְתָהּ) is used frequently in the Old Testament, particularly in the Pentateuch. It is used if moral, religious, or ceremonial pollution. The strength or force of the word may be seen by the fact that when used of moral defilement it can refer to the grossest types of sexual immorality and when used of religious defilement can refer to the gross iniquity of idolatry.

An examination of the Old Testament usage will evince that the defilement involved in this case cannot be reduced to the level of merely ceremonial defilement, but will have to be placed in the category of Leviticus 18, 20 and Numbers 5, 13-14; 20, 27-29. There is no ceremonial ritual that can remove the defilement, as in other cases where ceremonial uncleanness is in view. And if the defilement is not taken into account and the prohibition to return to the first husband is violated, the evil is an abomination ($\text{וְאִשָּׁה אֲדוּלְתָהּ}$) to the Lord and it causes the land to sin.

The very nature of the restriction imposed shows that some kind of gross

abnormality is regarded as entering into the situation. In normal conditions a woman whose husband died was at liberty to marry another man. If no abnormality entered into this case we should think that it would be most natural and normal for the woman to return to her first husband in the event of the death of her second. But it is just here that the law is most jealous. Even in the case of the death of the second husband the woman may not return to her first husband. The severity of the restriction and the reason assigned show the gross irregularity of the situation created by the second marriage: "she has been defiled."

It should be noted that the divorced woman is not prevented from returning to her husband if she did not marry a second. It is only in the event of remarriage that the defilement enters and the prohibition takes effect. It should also be noted that the law at this point does not prevent a woman from marrying a third husband in the event that the second husband divorces her or dies. But in no case may she return to a former husband if once married to another. This peculiarity is most striking and shows the grave complication that is liable to arise once a bill of divorcement is given. While the bill of divorcement as such does not prevent reconciliation and restoration, yet once a second marriage is consummated the whole relationship changes. The second marriage effects an unobliterable separation from the first husband. This implies a unique relation to the first husband and demonstrates that the marriage bond is so sacred that, although divorce may be given and a certain freedom granted to the divorced persons, yet there is an unobliterable relationship that appears, paradoxically enough, in the form of an unobliterable separation the event that a second marriage has been consummated on the part of the divorced wife. This irremedial separation only serves to enforce the gross abnormality entailed and serves to confirm the interpretation given earlier as to the import of this passage. Divorce was not required, legitimated, sanctioned, or encouraged. It was rather discouraged, and the severity of the restriction imposed, together with the reason assigned for this restriction, enforces that discouragement. Divorce was indeed tolerated or suffered. But the evil and wrong presupposed in that

very sufferance receive emphatic declaration in the provision of unobliterable

irregularity entailed in the divorce.

It should indeed be noted that it is only with reference to the prohibited return to the first husband that the defilement concerned is mentioned. The remarriage on the part of the divorced woman is not expressly stated to be defilement irrespective of return to the first husband. In view of these considerations we must exercise great caution before we stigmatize such a remarriage as adulterous. One thing is certain, the second marriage is not placed in the category of adultery nor the woman regarded as an adulteress in terms of the pentateuchal legislation. The woman and her second husband were not put to death as the Pentateuch required in the case of adultery. While not stigmatized as adultery in terms of the Mosaic economy, nevertheless, it is not at all so certain that the remarriage is not regarded as involving defilement. It may very well be that the evil attaching to divorce and the abnormal situation in which the woman is placed as the divorce of her first husband are regarded as casting a shadow over the second marriage, even though the second marriage is not placed in the category of adultery and civil or ecclesiastical penalty is not appended.

But even if we suppose that the defilement is not regarded as inhering in the second marriage per se, we must observe that the moment return to the first husband is envisaged, then the marital relation to the second husband takes on an entirely different complexion. Whatever may be true of the second marriage, irrespective of return to the first husband, the moment return is envisaged, then with reference to the first husband, the woman has been defiled. And it is this restoration that is called an abomination. All of this forcibly reminds us of the grave abnormalities that inhere in the practice of divorce. The one insurmountable obstacle to the marriage of this particular woman with this particular man is not that the woman has been married to another man, but simply that the particular man concerned is the man from whom she had been divorced. It is the fact of divorce that bears the whole burden of ultimate responsibility for the defilement that is sure to enter when the first marriage is restored after a second marriage had been consummated.

Thus within the limits of this passage we have exemplified and confirmed principle that while divorce was suffered in the Mosaic economy we have no way to suppose that under any circumstances was it sanctioned or approved as the right or prerogative of the husband.

It is not claimed that this interpretation resolves all difficulties connected with the practice of divorce. But it is a construction of the passage that is grammatically, syntactically, and exegetically defensible and it brings a harmonious principle into the teaching of the Old Testament. It eliminates the inconsistency that inheres in the very notion of approval or sanction and it accords to the practice of divorce a status really consistent with the original institution of Genesis 2, 23-24 and in harmony with the final word of the Old Testament on this question: "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering anymore, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore ought that he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let not man deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." Malachi 2, 13-16.

II. The first passage in the New Testament that deals with the question of divorce is found in Matthew 5, 31-32: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Here we cannot mistake the express allusion to the Old Testament provision governing divorce in Deuteronomy 24, 1-4. Two features of this passage in Matthew 5, 31 must

be noted.

1. The form in which the allusion to Deuteronomy 24, 1 appears is not a verbatim quotation either from the Hebrew text or from the Septuagint version. While it is true that the bill of divorcement was required in every case of divorce as we have previously set forth, and while the form used here by Christ may simply focus attention upon that fact and be, therefore, a perfectly proper paraphrase of this provision implied in Deuteronomy 24, 1, yet it is also true that the form used by our Lord may reflect an idiomatic version of the Deuteronomic provision, an idiom current in Israel, which Jesus proceeds to correct.
2. More particularly must it be noted that the form used here by our Lord does not imply that Deuteronomy 24, 1 gave to the Israelites the right to put away their wives, far less does it imply that in certain cases the Israelites were under obligation to put away their wives. The language cannot strictly be interpreted to imply any more than that, if a man did put away his wife, it was necessary for him to give her a bill of divorcement. In other words, the form used implies that provision was made for a certain contingency, but does not determine whether the contingency itself was right or wrong. This text, therefore, does not interfere in the least with the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24, 1-4 as previously presented.

In Matthew 5, 32 Jesus proceeds to propound the principle that to put away or dismiss a wife for any reason, but that of sexual infidelity, is sin. Before undertaking to discuss the express teaching of this text it is well to bear in mind that there are two subjects closely germane to this whole question of divorce on which this text does not reflect. First, the text deals exclusively with dismissal or divorce on the part of the man; what rights may belong to the woman in the matter of obtaining a divorce are not intimated. Secondly, Jesus says nothing here with respect to the question of the remarriage of the man who puts away his wife for the cause of fornication.

We shall attempt to resolve the express teaching of the text under the following paragraphs.

1. Fornication is unequivocally stated to be the only legitimate ground by which a man may put away his wife. The word used here is the more generic term for sexual uncleanness, namely, fornication (*πορνεία*). This term may be used of all kinds of illicit sexual intercourse and may apply to such on the part of unmarried persons, in whose case the sin would not be in the specific case adultery. But although it is the generic word used here (cf. also Matthew 19, 9), it is not to be supposed that the sense is perplexed thereby. What Jesus sets in the forefront is the sin of illicit sexual intercourse. It is implied, of course, that such on the part of a married woman is not only fornication, but also adultery in the specific sense, for the simple reason that it constitutes sexual infidelity to her spouse. And this is the only case in which, according to Christ's unambiguous assertion, a man may dismiss his wife without being involved in the sin which Jesus proceeds to characterize as making his wife to be an adulteress.

It should be observed that Jesus does not say that the husband in such a case is obliged to put away his wife. Whatever may be the truth respecting this question the text does not pass comment on it. All that is stated is that if the husband puts away his wife for this reason he is not involved in the sin specified.

What is of paramount importance is that however significant is the exceptive clause as guarding the innocence of the husband in dismissing for sexual infidelity, it is not the exceptive clause that bears the weight of the emphasis in the text. It is rather that the husband may not put her away for any other cause. It is the one exception that gives prominence to the illegitimacy of any other reason. Pre-occupation with the one exception should never be permitted to obscure the force of the negation of all others.

2. The evil of putting away (for any other reason than that of adultery) is viewed from the standpoint of what it entails for the woman divorced. The man "makes her to be an adulteress" (*ποιεῖ αὐτὴν πόρνην*). If we are to give passive force to the infinitive in this clause, it could be rendered, "he makes her

to suffer adultery." (The passive of *παρουσία* occurs infrequently in the *Koivn*
 In addition to this verse the only instances in the New Testament are Matthew 19, 9
 and John 8, 4). Lenski tries to force a wholly unwarranted interpretation of this
 word in his 'Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel' (pp. 226 ff). The man is not
 said in this case to commit adultery; his sin is rather that he becomes implicated in
 the wrong of adultery on the part of his dismissed wife.

We stand ready to admit that the phrase "to suffer adultery" is a difficult one.
 It should be apparent that the wife does not become an adulteress simply by being
 divorced. She is contemplated as illegitimately divorced on the part of her wanton
 husband. She is the victim of ^{a unilateral determination (Scheid) which she has accepted} his unlawful action, and her station could not,
 therefore, in justice be viewed as one of adultery. In fact, she is viewed as
 innocent of adultery in the act of divorce and so the act of divorce of which she
 is not the agent cannot of itself make her an adulteress.

It is necessary, therefore, to envisage some subsequent action in which the
 woman is involved within the scope of this expression, "makes her suffer adultery."
 Our Lord is no doubt regarding the woman from the position in which she is placed by
 the divorce. She is placed in the position either of being tempted to be joined to
 another man or being plied with solicitations to the union on the ^{part} of another
 man, or of both. Our Lord is fully cognizant of the weakness of human nature and
 of the great liability to another marital undertaking on the part of the divorced
 woman. When that marriage is undertaken, then adultery is committed on the part of
 that woman and her new spouse. This is the significant implication of Jesus'
 statement. The woman has now become an adulteress and her new spouse an adulterer.
 This is the ^{ultimate cause} entail of moral tragedy that our Lord designates. And what He says of
 the husband who divorced the woman is that he is sinfully involved in this moral
 tragedy. Truly, the divorcing husband is not charged with being an adulterer. He
 is not envisioned as having married again. But he cannot extricate himself from a
 wrong that involves express adultery on the part of others. It is upon this sin on
 the part of the divorcing husband that the stress is laid. The sin of remarriage on
 the part of the divorced woman is not by any means minimized--she has committed

adultery by that remarriage. And it is the sin of adultery that Jesus is condemning in the whole of this part of his discourse. Nonetheless the leading thought of the passage focuses attention upon the sin of the divorcing husband--"he makes her suffer adultery."

*Jesus raised the previous question + asserted a new one
woman - not to be put away except when she first
in faithfulness, unbrokenly, the Rabbinical School
had approved the divorcing work*

3. The remarriage of the woman divorced is adultery on her part and on the part of the man who is joined with her in marriage--"and whosoever marries her who has been put away, commits adultery." The only reason for which this remarriage can be regarded as adulterous is that the first marriage is still in God's sight regarded as inviolate. The divorce has not dissolved it. Illegitimate divorce does not dissolve the marriage bond and consequently the fact of such divorce does not relieve the parties concerned from any of the obligations incident to marriage. They are still in reality bound to one another in the bonds of matrimony and a marital relation or any exercise of the privileges and rights of the marital relation with any other is adultery. Whatever the law of men may enact, this is the law of Christ's kingdom and to it the laws of men should conform. -- *Did Jesus here raise over the prophetic*

4. It follows from what has been said that the man who divorces his wife ("except for the cause of fornication") is not thereby at liberty to remarry any more than the divorced wife. If the woman commits adultery by remarriage, this is so; because she is still in reality the wife of the divorcing husband. And if so, the divorcing husband is still in reality the husband of the divorced woman and consequently may not marry another. The question as to whether or not the divorcing husband may remarry in event of remarriage on the part of the divorced wife is not reflected upon in this text. This is a perplexing question we shall not attempt to answer here.

In concluding our discussion of this passage it is necessary to return to the question of the relation of the law enunciated here by Jesus to the Old Testament law and provisions pertaining to divorce. The essence of Jesus' teaching in this place is that there is only one legitimate ground for divorce on the part of the man and that divorce for any other reason is overt sin and to be treated accordingly both in our moral judgment and in civil jurisprudence. We have need to consider:

1. We have already established that the Old Testament law did not provide for divorce in the case of adultery. The law was more stringent; it required the death penalty for sexual infidelity. The marriage was thereby dissolved, but this was effected through the death of the guilty party. The law enunciated by our Lord, on the other hand, institutes divorce as the means of relief for the husband in the case of adultery on the part of his wife. Here then is something novel and it implies that the requirement of death for adultery is abrogated in the economy Jesus Himself inaugurated. There are accordingly two provisions which our Lord instituted, one negative and the other positive. He abrogated the Mosaic penalty for adultery and he legitimated divorce for adultery. In this very distinctly appears that original legislative authority that pertained to our Lord and it is perhaps the most conspicuous concrete instance of the exercise of that authority in the Sermon on the Mount.

2. Again we found that the Old Testament did not legitimate, authorize, or sanction divorce for other reasons than that of adultery. In the Mosaic economy divorce for the reason mentioned in Deuteronomy 24, 1-4 was suffered or tolerated. It was afforded sufferance as an evil, and, because tolerated in practice, was not penalized by civil ostracism or ecclesiastical excommunication in the Mosaic jurisprudence. But the law that Jesus enunciates or institutes is one that obliterates this kind of sufferance or tolerance. In His kingdom the jurisprudence respecting divorce is to be more stringent. The economy He inaugurates is not to be characterized by the laxity inherent in the sufferance afforded in the Mosaic economy. And this means that the reasons given for divorce in Deuteronomy 24, 1-4, tolerated in the Mosaic jurisprudence, are abrogated in the New Testament. We have here a striking combination of elements. On the one hand, the abrogation of the death penalty for adultery and the substitution of divorce as the legitimate resort for the innocent husband indicate a relaxative amendment of the ^{penal} ~~penal~~ sanction attached to adultery. On the other hand, in the abrogation of the Mosaic sufferance respecting divorce we find an increased severity of moral judgment and legal enactment. The divorce tolerated by Moses is completely reversed and so the very evil recognized and

presupposed in the Mosaic sufferance now receives condemnation and correction: the same measure as its real character. The right violated in that evil receives vindication and that principle of right is carried to its logical issue in the prohibition of all such divorce as was suffered under Moses.

It is precisely here that the original and basic law of the Old Testament receives its confirmation, the law presupposed in the very sufferance granted to Moses and the law to which Jesus makes His appeal. Our Lord truly abrogates the observance of certain temporary regulations governing the penalty for adultery and abrogates certain permissions respecting divorce. He did this in the exercise of His divine authority with which He was invested. In order that we do not wrongly conclude that these amendments make the laws of purity and sanctity of the marriage bond more stringent, or that we suppose that Jesus entertained a lower estimate of the binding character of the law of God, we must perceive that in the abrogation of the divorce tolerated under Moses there is applied a stringency that raises jurisprudence to the level of the intrinsic requirements of the law of God. In so doing Jesus seals and puts into operation the basic principle of the Old Testament law and exemplifies in concrete manner his own protestation: "Think not that I came to destroy the law of the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfill." It is in Him and in the economy of the New Testament which He established that the law receives its full validation, vindication, application, fulfillment, and embodiment. Could anything be more declarative of the exacting demands of purity than the abrogation of every concession to the hardness of man's hearts? This is the force of the pronouncement: "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Matthew 5, 32.

In Matthew 19, 3-8 our Lord's utterances respecting divorce were evoked by the direct question on the part of the Pharisees: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Matthew 19, 3b. This question was doubtless intended to ensnare Jesus and place Him under the necessity of taking sides on the question the divided rabbinical interpretation. Our Lord's answer is characteristic. He

He immediately appeals to Scripture and to the original constitution of the human race as male and female. Marriage is grounded in the male and female constitution; as to its nature marriage implies that the man and woman are united in one flesh; as to its sanction marriage is divine; and as regarding its continuance marriage is permanent. The import of all this is that marriage from its very nature and from the divine institution by which it is constituted is ideally indissoluble. It is not a contract of temporary convenience and not a union that may be dissolved at will.

Jesus skillfully parried the ensnaring question, confronted the Pharisees with primary principles, and brought them face to face with the sinful conditions under which alone the question of divorce could arise. He enunciated the principles in the light of which the practice of divorce is to be evaluated and its propriety or impropriety determined. Jesus answer, however, provoked another question on the part of the Pharisees. It is with this question and the answer that we are now mainly concerned. The question was: "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" Matthew 19, 7. The Pharisees must have been alluding to Deuteronomy 24, 1-4. It is quite probable that the Pharisees had an erroneous conception of the Deuteronomic passage. In any case it was a garbled version of the passage that was presented in their question. Whether they intentionally garbled the passage or construed it erroneously, they intended, no doubt, to refute or ensnare Jesus by the form of the question. In verse three we are told that they "came unto Him, tempting Him."

We shall concede that the bill of divorce was mandatory in every case of actual divorce. In that sense it might properly be said that Moses commanded the bill of divorce. There is an element of truth, therefore, in the form of the question, but it can hardly be supposed that it was with this merely contingent requirement that the Pharisees intended to baffle Jesus. To say the least, the question would have been phrased most awkwardly if all they meant by alleging a command on the part of Moses was simply the contingent requirement. Furthermore, their question must in some way be regarded as intimating an antithesis between the alleged command of Moses and the position that had just been enunciated by Jesus Himself. The most

reasonable interpretation of their question is then that they regarded or at least represented Moses as requiring men to divorce their wives in certain cases. The question with which Jesus would have been confronted, therefore, was on that point on the assumption that Moses commanded divorce, and, in effect, would be as follows: if marriage is indissoluble according to the original institution, if it is a bond that man cannot dissolve, how is it that Moses commands divorce? Is there not an antithesis between Jesus' assertions and Moses' commandment? It is this question that Jesus proceeds to answer and His answer is of paramount significance in connection with the whole question of Mosaic provisions and of the Old Testament law. "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." Matthew 19, 8.

The first feature of Jesus' reply that calls for comment is the phrase: "Because of the hardness of your heart." (*πρὸς τὴν ἐκλήροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν*). It means "in reference to" or "out of regard to" the hardness of your heart and implies that the situation in reference to which or out of consideration for which the Mosaic permission was granted was one created by the stubbornness of the Israelites. The situation that provided occasion for the permission was one of moral perversity; it arose from insubordination to and rebellion against the will of God. The implications are most important, for, is it not apparent that the judgment respecting perversity presupposes some law or obligation that is violated or desecrated? Where no law is there is no transgression. The only law or standard relevant to this particular case is that expressed in Genesis 1, 27; 2, 24: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." The very judgement respecting hardheartness, then, presupposes the abiding validity and obligation of the original institution as expounded by Jesus in His answer to the first question of the Pharisees. The original institution and its binding authority had not been abrogated or even suspended, and the moral perversity of the Israelites consisted in their disposition and determination not to abide by these ordinances. The bill of divorce was directed to this

perverse situation and not to the abrogation of the divine institution.

The second feature of Jesus' reply concerns the permission asserted to have been given by Moses: "permitted you to put away your wives." (ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν ἀπολύειν τὰς γυναῖκας ὑμῶν). The distinction between the verb used by Jesus to denote Moses' action and the verb used by the Pharisees should be carefully noted. The Pharisees alleged that Moses commanded (ἐνετείλατο). Jesus say, Moses permitted (ἐπέτρεψεν). Jesus does not admit or endorse any insinuation or allegation to the effect that Moses commanded divorce. He rather affirms what is of entirely different effect in the interpretation of the Mosaic provisions and particularly of Deuteronomy 24, 1-4. The word that Jesus uses is one that implies sufferance or tolerance, but in no way implies approval or sanction of the practice, far less authorization or commandment of it. The Mosaic action is, therefore, two places removed from the concept of commandment.

This interpretation on the part of our Lord is wholly in line with and confirmatory of, the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24, 1-4. The clear import of Jesus' words is that divorce was suffered in the Mosaic economy, because of the hardheartedness of the Israelites. It was a concession to their weakness, but it did not condone the practice. It was in reality a witness to the gross evil that arose from, or even consisted in, desecration of the divine ordinance: "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

The third feature of our Lord's answer is the contrast He institutes between the permission of Moses and the creation ordinance: "but from the beginning it was not so." (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς δὲ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως). From the beginning there was no such permission. It is not simply that the practice was not commanded, not simply that it was not authorized, not simply that it was not approved, but rather that it was not even permitted. The Mosaic permission was, therefore, a departure from the creation ordinance and from the practice to which it obligated men.

In this connection it is well to observe the force of the imperative in verse six: "let not man put asunder." (ἀνασπάσῃς ἢ χωρῆς αὐτῶ) H. A. W. Mayer comments: "Having regard, therefore, to the specific nature of marriage, Jesus

utterly condemns divorce generally as being a putting asunder on the part of man of what, in a very special way, God has joined together. (Comm.) Divorce is contrary to the divine institution, contrary to the nature of marriage, and contrary to the divine action by which the union is effected. It is precisely here that its wickedness becomes singularly apparent: it is the sundering by man of a union God has constituted. Divorce is the breaking of a seal which has been engraven by the hand of God.

III. Paul is the only other New Testament author besides Christ who has been supposed to treat of divorce. A careful examination of Paul's writing will disclose the fact that he has nowhere discussed the question: for what cause or causes a man might put away his wife, or a woman her husband, with liberty of marriage to another person. Whatever Paul has to say about divorce is found entirely in I Corinthians 7. Even a cursory reading of that chapter will disclose the fact that Paul is not discussing the question for what causes marriages might be disrupted, but the question of manners and morals in the relation. Paul does not modify Christ in any respect. Some interpreters suppose that in verse fifteen Paul has allowed divorce to a believing partner who has been deserted by an unbelieving spouse. Even thus these interpreters wish to be understood that Paul has added desertion to the exception Christ has made as a cause for divorce.

Paul does not say that a Christian deserted by a heathen spouse may be married to someone else in this verse nor anywhere else. All Paul says is: "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace." I Corinthians 7, 15. To say that a deserted partner "is not under bondage" (*δεδούλωται* : hath not been enslaved) is not to say that he or she may be remarried. What is meant is easily inferred from the spirit that dominates the whole chapter, and that is that everyone shall accept the situation in which God has called him just as he is. Do not become excited is the directive that hovers over every situation. If you are married: so remain. If you are unmarried: so remain. If an unbelieving partner deserts, let him or her desert. Nothing can be more beautiful in the morals of the marriage relation than

the directive given by Paul in this chapter for the conduct of all parties in marriage in all trials.

Many reasons might be given why Paul could not have given liberty of remarriage besides the one that he did not in this text; but attention should be called to the fact that such an assumption of authority in divorce would also have brought him in conflict with the Roman government. We do not hereby impugn a moral cowardice of Paul, but since neither circumstance nor occasion arose the Holy Spirit did not permit to enter into an assertion, confirmation, or explanation of the divorce question; therefore, we cannot read into this chapter what was not there to begin with. We thus we shall pass Paul as having in no respect modified the considerations of divorce laid down by Jesus in Matthew 19.

In all civilized countries the machinery of legislation and statute should be open for removal or relief of troubles in marriage without proceeding to its dissolution. If a father is cruel to his children, we should not abolish the parental relation, but punish the father for his cruelty. If a father or mother deserts children, we should not assist him or her to rear other children whom they in turn can again desert, but we should punish him or her for his or her desertion. What can be done by legal statute in case of parent and child, can also be done in case husband and wife. By instituting absolute divorce, frequently for guilty and innocent alike, we invite the very evils we think we are remedying by divorce. Often we make it the interest of a dissatisfied party to create a situation which our courts will regard as intolerable, so that he or she may be free of the marriage bond and consummate another. How often in turn are we not witnesses to the fact that this becomes a continual recurrence of a vicious cycle.

By affording a so-called easy way out of the troubles of married life we also invite carelessness about entering marriage. By our divorce statutes we say to a young woman: "If your husband deserts you, you may have another. If he is cruel, you may have another. If he fails to support you, you may have another. If he is a drunkard, you may have another. If he is incompatible or doesn't make you happy-- what this might all entail mere man may never realize or comprehend-- you may have

another. We could continue this ad infinitum as well as ad nauseam. When an easy road is thus made out of marriage, will there be proper caution about entering into marriage? By just as much as a crevice for relief of the miseries of married life is opened by divorce, by so much the flood gates are opened into those miseries. Inasmuch as mankind needs to be impressed that the door of marriage does not swing outward as well as inward, mankind can only expect happiness and blessing to result in marriage when it follows the principles laid ^{down} for it in the Word of God.

We believe that Luther's comments should present a sobering as well as a heartening view in this matter. "Those who want to be Christians are not to be divorced, but each to retain his or her spouse, and bear and experience good and evil with the same, although he or she may be strange, peculiar and faulty; or, if there be a divorce, that the parties remain unmarried; and that it will not do to make a free thing out of marriage, as if it were in our power to do with it, changing and exchanging, as we please; but it is just as Jesus says: "What God has joined together let not man put asunder."

"For trouble here is owing solely to the fact that men do not regard marriage according to God's word as his work and ordinance, do not pay regard to his will, that He has given to every one his spouse, to keep her, and to endure for his sake the discomforts that married life brings with it; they regard it as nothing else than a mere human, secular affair, with which God has nothing to do. Therefore one soon becomes tired of it, and if it does not go as we wish, we soon begin to separate and change. Then God nevertheless so orders it, that we thereby make it no better; as it then generally happens, if one wants to change and improve matters, and no one wants to carry his cross, but have everything perfectly convenient and without discomfort, that he gets an exchange in which he finds twice or ten times more discomfort, not alone in this matter but in all others.....

"But you ask: Is there then no reason for which there may be separation and divorce between man and wife? Answer: Christ states here (Matthew 5.31-32) and in Matthew xix. 9, only this one, which is called adultery, and he quotes it from the law of Moses, which punishes adultery with death. Since now death alone dissolves

marriages and releases from obligation, an adulterer is already divorced not by man but by God himself, and not only cut loose from his spouse, but from this life. By adultery he has divorced himself from his wife, and has dissolved the marriage which he has no right to do; and he has thereby made himself worthy of death, in such a way that he is already dead before God, although the judge does not take his life. Because now God here divorces, the other party is fully released, so that he or she is not bound to keep the spouse that has proved unfaithful, however much he or she may desire it.

"For we do not order or forbid this divorcing, but we ask the government to act in this matter, and we submit to what the secular authorities ordain in regard to it. Yet, our advice would be to such as claim to be Christians, that it would be much better to exhort and urge both parties to remain together, and that the innocent party should become reconciled to the guilty (if humbled and reformed) and exercise forgiveness in Christian love; unless no improvement could be hoped for, or the guilty party who had been pardoned and restored to favor persisted in abusing this kindness, still continued in leading a public, loose life, and took it for granted that one must continue to spare and forgive him....

In addition to this cause of divorce there is still another: if one of a married couple forsakes the other, as when through sheer petulance deserts the other. So, if a heathen woman were married to a Christian, or, as now sometimes happens, that one of the parties is evangelical and the other not (concerning which Paul speaks in I Co. vii. 15), whether in such a case divorce would be right? There Paul concludes: If the one party is willing to remain, the other should not break the engagement; although they are not of one faith, the faith should not dissolve the marriage tie. But if it happens that the other party absolutely will not remain then let him or her depart; and thou art not under any obligation to follow. But if a fellow deserts his wife without her knowledge or consent, forsakes house, home, wife and child, stays away two or three years, or as long as he pleases (as now often happens), and when he has run his riotous course and squandered his substance and wants to come home again and take his old place, that the other party must be

under obligation to wait for him as long as he chooses, and then take up with him again: such a fellow ought not only to be forbidden house and home, but should be banished from the country, and the other party, if the renegade has been summoned and long enough waited for, should be heartily pronounced free."

Commentary on Sermon on the Mount, pp. 169-174.