

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Leslie McFall
18 February, 2008

INTRODUCTION

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 certain what He meant and to work out the practical implications of His teaching on divorce and remarriage before the Gospels were written down.

Out of their personal interaction with the Lord Jesus came a clear, unambiguous application that was never seriously challenged for the first 450 years by any authoritative Christian teacher/leader.¹ As a result, a definite pattern of behaviour characterised the whole Christian Church whereby divorce was not permitted for any reason, not even adultery. The so-called 'Pauline Privilege' (1 Cor 7:15-16) was interpreted 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). 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,² and replacing the external Mosaic Law (Heb 6:12; 10:16) 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, there being now no grounds whatsoever for divorce, for either Christian or non-Christian because of the one-flesh nature of the union, and this was understood firmly by the entire Church up until the Protestant Reformation, which then branched off and introduced divorce for adultery *for the first time* as a teaching of the Lord Jesus (which is reflected in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* [1648]).

This paper is in two parts with five appendices. Part 1 sets out the way in which the Reformed Churches were misled into branching off from the unambiguous teaching and universal practice of the Church up until the Reformation. Part 2 sets out guidelines for Christian counsellors on how to handle divorce situations given that divorce cannot dissolve any one-flesh union.

Appendix A sets out a selection of Bible translations which still support Erasmus' 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 David Instone-Brewer's book advocating the use of OT laws to obtain a divorce between Christians and between Christians and non-Christian spouses. Appendix D presents what little patristic, versional and textual manuscript evidence there is in favour of Erasmus' addition of EI to the text of Matthew 19:9. Appendix E sets out the case for the superiority of the Majority Greek Text.

PART I

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

This is a crucial question, because if the early Reformers followed a Greek text that was not the Universal (Byzantine) Text used by the Early Church, and which had been transmitted

¹ 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).

² 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.

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 and attribute to it the inspiration and infallibility that only belongs to the original text and its faithful copies. And that is exactly what happened in the case of Matthew 19:9, where a scribe in the 15th century added to his copy of the Greek text the small Greek word EI (‘if’) before the negative MH (‘not’) to change the text to read ‘except’ (because in Greek EI placed before MH becomes ‘except’).

Who was the first to add EI to the inspired Word of God? We do not know who did it, but the earliest Greek manuscript to contain the addition does not date earlier than a thousand years after Christ.

How did it get into the Reformers’ Bibles? This we do know. It was through Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the Dutch humanist³. He was not a Reformed Christian. He was brought up in the Catholic Church but, like the Reformers, he became disillusioned with the Catholic Church’s teaching on a number of issues, one of which was their insistence that Jesus did not permit divorce or remarriage. Erasmus was extremely angry at the dogmatic stance of the Church over this teaching. He believed that divorce was justified in the case of adultery, so when he came to produce the first published edition of the Greek New Testament, he deliberately added EI before MH in Matthew 19:9 to allow divorce for adultery despite the fact that the three manuscripts which he used did not contain it in their original form.

Not content with changing the Greek text, Erasmus also changed the Latin Vulgate, which was the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. The Vulgate read: “And I say to you that whosoever shall put away [Latin: *dimiserit*] his wife, such as [*nisi*⁴] for fornication [Latin: *fornicationem*], and shall marry another, committeth adultery”. Erasmus altered this to read: “And I say to you that whosoever shall repudiate [Latin: *repudiauerit*] his wife, unless [*nisi*] it be for disgrace [Latin: *stuprum*], and shall marry another, committeth adultery”. By changing ‘*fornicationem*’ to ‘*stuprum*’, Erasmus widened his exceptive clause from the specific sin of fornication, to the general, catch-all phrase of anything that gives ground for “dishonour, disgrace, defilement, unchastity, debauchery, lewdness, and violation,”⁵ all of which are the meanings given to *stuprum* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Suddenly, Erasmus offered divorce not just on sexual grounds (for fornication), but for *any cause* that gave rise to dishonour or disgrace, which may not necessarily be sexual, such as abuse or neglect or anything that a partner feels angry about.

The Reformers did not spot the addition made by Erasmus, because handwritten copies of the Greek New Testament were very rare in those days. Everyone took on trust that Erasmus had been faithful to the handwritten Greek copies that he used to produce the first published edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516. He produced five editions of his text (the last being in 1536, the year he died). In none of them did he correct his mistake, even though by 1536 he had become aware of, and had consulted, many more manuscripts, including the Complutensian Polyglot, which was produced by the Roman Catholic Church in 1522. Erasmus used it make about one hundred corrections in his third edition. The Complutensian did not have his addition of EI, which he could not have failed to notice, but he deliberately ignored it. Unfortunately, only 600 copies of the Complutensian were published, and a consignment of these went down with the ship carrying them to Italy. By the time the

³ For the life and work of Erasmus see Roland Herbert Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York, 1969); Istvan Bejczy, *Erasmus and the Middle Ages - The Historical Consciousness of a Christian Humanist* (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, vol. 106; Leiden, 2001); Richard L. De Molen, *The Spirituality of Erasmus of Rotterdam* (Nieuwekoop, 1987); and Erika Rummel, *Annotations on the New Testament* (Toronto, 1986).

⁴ The Latin could have used *excepta* ‘except’ here in place of *nisi*, but it didn’t. *Nisi* can mean ‘unless’ in some contexts, but as the Early Church knew of no such exception for divorce, it cannot have that meaning in this context (or in Mt 5:32). The *practice* of the Church is the guide to the *meaning* of the terms, because they would hardly practice one thing and then contradict it in their translation.

⁵ This new latitude was probably an attempt to draw on the latitude given by Moses, (but not by God) in Deut 24:1-4, to allow husbands to divorce their wives ‘for every cause’, not just fornication (see Mt 19:3). Deut. 24:1-4 was abolished by the coming 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 it to rid himself (or herself) of their married partner.

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.⁶

What ensured that Erasmus' 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' 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 that Greek text they threw out as not obligatory on any Christian.

The work of examining the truth of Scripture, as practised by the corrupt 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 his 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 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 the 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 Catholic 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.

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 to make doubly sure that any movement away from what the Apostles taught and practised is not the result of being duped or misled.

Because the *new* Reformation doctrine on divorce and remarriage had been settled on the basis of Erasmus' faulty Greek text, no future editor or reviser could or would remove Erasmus' addition. To this day, the Reformation Churches have covered their eyes and have refused to believe that they were duped by Erasmus' deliberate alteration of the Greek text. (See Appx A below for a list of versions still supporting Erasmus' 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' deliberate addition to Matthew 19:9. Rather it was left to the thorough-going, objective assessment 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' duplicity, and while all shades of non-evangelical textual scholars are now in agreement, and have been for centuries, in not including the Erasmian addition in any modern critical edition of the Greek New Testament, 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 was based on Erasmus' faulty Greek text, and which accurately reflected Erasmus' opinion of what he thought Scripture taught. Every modern English translation retains Erasmus' 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 shift at all to remove the new teaching that his addition brought into existence. 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 from Erasmus' εἰ μὴ (EI MH) and is not a translation of the two critical editions mentioned in the Preface (p. ix), namely the United Bible Societies Greek text and the Nestle-Aland 27th edition (1993). Both of these Greek New Testaments reject Erasmus' addition.

This translation would have been a financial disaster for the publisher if it had stated Jesus' teaching that divorce was incompatible with the 'new heart and the new spirit' with which all His disciples were endowed. 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

⁶ Samuel P. Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament* (London, 1854), p. 25.

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' 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.

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 modern Greek editions of the New Testament (I include here the Majority and the Minority⁷ 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, 'commonsense' 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 Catholic 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 is living in an adulterous relationship with his second wife, whose husband is still alive. 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.

WHAT EVIDENCE HAD ERASMUS TO MAKE HIS ADDITION TO THE TEXT?

The answer is, very little. 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 EI appear in the main text at Matthew 19:9. It would appear that Erasmus deliberately inserted the addition by exploiting a careless marginal correction (probably made from memory).

I give here some background to the emergence of Erasmus' 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 Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo. 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 publication 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.

⁷ For example, the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament, or the Nestle-Aland editions.

Erasmus (1466-1536), a well-known humanist, but still loyal to the Catholic Church, was responsible for editing the Greek text that lies behind the *Textus Receptus*. He based his edition on seven (possibly eight) manuscripts.⁸

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*.

The manuscript numbers in parentheses are according to the Gregory-Aland numbering system.⁹ Erasmus used the following manuscripts:

Manuscript 69 (eap¹⁰) XV cent., Codex Leicesterensis—Leicester, County Record Office: a MS collated, or at least consulted, during Erasmus' stay in Cambridge University (England) between 1511 and 1514.

Manuscript 1 (eap) XII cent., Basle, Univ. Bibl., shelf mark A. N. IV. 2: little used.¹¹

Manuscript 1 (r) (2814), XII cent., Codex Reuchlini – Augsburg, Univ. Bibl., Cod. I.1.4.1: the only MS Erasmus had for the Apocalypse; the MS served as the printer's copy.

Manuscript 2 (e) (2), XI/XII cent., Basle, Univ. Bibl., A. N. IV. 1: the MS served as the printer's copy.

Manuscript 2 (ap) (2815), XII cent., Codex Amerbachiorum, Basel, Univ. Bibl., A.N.IV.4: the MS served as the printer's copy.

Manuscript 4 (ap) (2816), XV cent., Basel, Univ. Bibl., A. N. III. 5: MS consulted for corrections.

Manuscript 7 (p) (2817), XI cent., Basel, Univ. Bibl., A. N. III. 11 : MS consulted for corrections.

Besides these seven MSS,¹² 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.¹³ This MS was consulted for corrections (it is in fact a Gospel text with commentary by Theophylactus—Erasmus' "Vulgarius").

All but one of Erasmus' 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.¹⁴

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).¹⁵

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.

⁸ F. H. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London, 1894⁴), vol. II, p. 183.

⁹ See Aland's *Kurzgefasste Liste*, 2nd ed. 1994.

¹⁰ 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 = Pauls' writings (including Hebrews); and r = Book of Revelation.

¹¹ This MS was deposited in the Dominican monastery near Basel a century before Erasmus used it. Very little else is known about its origin.

¹² Information on the six MSS can be found in Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 124-135.

¹³ "Novum Testamentum a Nobis Versum: The Essence of Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament," *JTS* 35 (Oct 1984) 404, n. 40.

¹⁴ Erasmus borrowed this MS from Reuchlin. It was then lost until it was found in 1861 by Delitzsch in the library of the princely house of Oettingen-Wallerstein. See his *Handschriftliche Funde*, Heft I. and ii. 1861 and 1862. When Erasmus used it, it had no final leaf (containing the last six verses) so he translated the Vulgar back into poor Greek.

¹⁵ 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; XII), 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.

A manuscript from the Agnietenberg monastery, Zwolle (unidentified?). It was consulted for the 2nd edition.

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

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

The Complutensian Polyglot. This was used in later editions (from the 4th ed. in 1527) esp. for Apoc. 22:16-21.¹⁶

Reuben Swanson lists only the TR itself in support of Erasmus' addition of EI in Matthew 19:9.¹⁷ This is surprising. 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 (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 μή 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 ἐπι πορνεία in the margin. What has happened here is that MS 69 has transferred *parektos logou pornei* from Matthew 5:32 into 19:9 by mistake,¹⁸ and the corrector has rightly changed it back to the original reading, but in so doing he inadvertently added EI before MH probably under the influence of *parektos*. This is where Erasmus got his addition, which has had such a disastrous effect on millions of marriages worldwide since 1516, and is perpetuated by modern, so-called 'evangelical' translations.

Tischendorf's meagre evidence in support of Erasmus' Greek text

Tischendorf gives the following evidence in support of εἰ μη. I give his textual apparatus as printed. (Latin is the language used throughout his apparatus.)

As printed:

item ζ (= Gb Sz) praemisso εἰ cum minisc pauc Bas^{eth} (Clem — libere, et quaeritur quorsum spectet—⁵³² χωρισ λογου πορν. et⁵⁰⁶ πλην εἰ μη ἐπι λογω πορη.).

Translation and explanation of the evidence for the non-specialist.

item = similarly

ζ = Erasmus' editions,¹⁹ and all printed editions up to the Elzevir's edition of 1624 (which would include the 1550 edition by Robert Stephens²⁰).²¹

¹⁶ For some further literature on Erasmus and his Greek MSS see Henk Jan de Jonge, "Erasmus and the *Comma Johanneum*," in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 56 (1980), pp. 381-389 [p. 385: "The real reason which induced Erasmus to include the *Comma Johanneum* was . . . his care for his good name and for the success of his *Novum Testamentum*."]. - Jean Hadot, "La critique textuelle dans l'édition du Nouveau Testament d'Erasmus," in *Colloquia Erasmiana Turonensia*, 1972, pp. 749-760 [p. 760: "Si l'on veut rester objectif, il faut situer l'oeuvre d'Erasmus dans son cadre."]. - K.W. Clark, "Observations on the Erasmian Notes in Codex 2," in *Studia Evangelica*, Berlin 1959, pp. 749-756 [p. 752: "We should not attribute to Erasmus the creation of a 'received text,' but only the transmission from a manuscript text already commonly received to a printed form in which this text would continue to prevail for three centuries more."]. See also Bill Combs, "Erasmus and the Textus Receptus," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (Spring 1996) available at <<http://www.dbts.edu/journal.html>

¹⁷ Reuben Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Matthew* (Pasadena CA: William Carey International University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ The same mistake was made by B^sP²⁵D f¹³ (which includes MS 69) and part of f¹.

¹⁹ Tyndale followed the second (1519) and third (1522) editions of Erasmus' Greek text. It should be noted that the Complutensian Greek NT, which pre-dated Erasmus' edition but published later than his, does not have εἰ, according to Albert Bengel (Io. Alberti Bengeli, *Apparatus Criticus ad Novum Testamentum*, 2nd ed., prepared by Philippo Davide Burkiio [Tubingae, 1763], p. 127).

²⁰ This was published by F. H. A. Scrivener, *H KAINH ΔΙΑΦΗΚΗ Novum Testamentum Textus Stephani A.D. 1550* (Cantabrigiae: Deighton, Bell et filii, 1877).

²¹ 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) believed that Beza's fifth edition of 1598 was the Greek Text

- (= Gb Sz) = the printed texts of Griesbach and Scholz (1827)
 praemisso εἰ = prefix εἰ
 cum minusc pauc = with a few minuscules²²
 Bas^{eth} 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).²³
⁵³² χωρισ λογου πορν. = “without (the) matter of fornication.” Clement has this text in Potter’s edition, page 532. This Greek text is a modified form of Matthew 5:32.
 et⁵⁰⁶ πλην εἰ μη ἐπι λογω πορη. = “but except on account of (the) matter of fornication.” Clement has this text in Potter’s edition, page 506. This creative combination (or paraphrase) of 19:9 and 5:32 is unique to Clement.

Tregelles’ meagre evidence in support of Erasmus’ Greek text

S. P. Tregelles agrees with Tischendorf’s printed evidence. His evidence reads as printed:²⁴

†praem. εἰ ζ. 69².mg. (εἰ μη ἐπι λογω πορν. Clem. 506.)

Explanation of the evidence:

- † = indicates an *omission* of something.
 praem. εἰ = prefix εἰ
 ζ = the common Greek Text (presumably all printed editions up to the Elzevir’s edition of 1624).
 69².mg. = MS 69 and a second hand (1st corrector) added: εἰ μη ἐπι πορνεία in the margin. 69* (* = original text) read the text of Matthew 5:32, which MS B also has here.
 εἰ μη ἐπι λογω πορν. Clem. 506 = “except on account of (the) matter of fornication.” Clement reads this Greek text in the edition of his work by Iohannis Potterus (Oxonii, 1715).

What is intriguing about this evidence is that Erasmus appears to have selected his final text from the margin of *one* Greek manuscript, namely, MS 69. It is dated to the fifteenth century and the corrector is later. Erasmus was born in the fifteenth century (1466-1536). This means that the text he chose was only a few decades old. In terms of being ancient, the ink was hardly dry on the corrector’s work!

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 the selection of the marginal reading in MS 69 was not affected by his personal view on divorce and remarriage. He published his views on divorce in his *Annotationes* in the same year (1519) that he published the second edition of his Greek New Testament. As noted above, his exegesis 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 an exemption of something in the three Greek words (μη ἐπι πορνεία), plus Erasmus’ instinct to give the innocent party the right to remarry clouded his text-critical approach to the evidence at his disposal.

Tischendorf’s evidence against the replacement text of Vaticanus

followed most closely (but not faithfully) by the Authorised Version Committee (Preface, vii). It follows Erasmus’ text.

²² 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).

²³ Constantinus Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (8th ed.; Lipsiae: Giesecke & Deverient, 1869), 1:114.

²⁴ Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *The Greek New Testament . . . and the Latin Version of Jerome* (2 vols.: London: Samuel Bagster, 1857-1879).

Tischendorf indicated that in Matthew 19:9 μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ was replaced with the text from 5:32, i.e., παρεκτος λογου πορνειας, in the following MSS:

BD 1. 33. al^o it^{pler} (c d ff¹. m *excepta causa adulterii; e praeter causam fornicationis; a b f ff² g¹ h q nisi ob causam fornic.* Item Aug *excepta causa fornicat., nisi ex causa forn., nisi ob causam forn.*; Tert^{bis} libere om μη επ. πορν., item Athenag^{leg 33}) syr^{cu} sah cop Or^{3,647sq} (Clem⁵³³ χωρισ λογου πορν.) Bas^{eth} Chr (et.^{mo 6}).

Tregelles' evidence against the replacement text of Vaticanus

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

BD. 1. 33. 69*. a.b.c.e.ff².g¹.h.m. [=Old Latin MSS] Syr.Crt. [=Syriac Curetonian] Memp. [=Bohairic] Theb. [=Sahidic] Orig. [=Origen] iii. 647^c. 648^{a.c}. 649^b. (vid. cap. v. 32) χωρισ λογ. πορν. Clem. [=Clement] 533. (sed qu. cap. v.)

Both the Nestle 27th edition and the Majority Text omit εἰ before μὴ so that the addition can be confidently ignored as not part of the Autograph Text.²⁵

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERASMUS AND THE *TEXTUS RECEPTUS*

Frobenius, a printer in Basle, Switzerland, suggested to Erasmus of Rotterdam (1467-1536), 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, too, was a diglot with two columns per page, Greek and Latin. It was so slap-dash that it has been likened to the work of a schoolboy.

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 2^c (Gospels), 2^{ap} (Acts and Epistles) and 1^r (Revelation); and he used a few other manuscripts (1^{ap}, 4^{ap}, 7^p) to make some minor alterations to the text.²⁶ The only manuscript he had for the Book of Revelation was damaged at 22:16-21. He translated the Latin Vulgate back into Greek for the printer! His printed New Testament had many grammatical mistakes and printer's errors. But it was this careless piece of 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. The corrections were as follows: 2nd edition: 400 changes; 3rd edition: 118 changes²⁷; 4th edition: 100 changes (90 in Revelation); 5th edition: 4 changes. Erasmus' third edition introduced 1 John 5:7-8 on the basis of a sixteenth century manuscript (minuscule 61). Luther used the second edition for his 1521 German translation.

The TR had its beginnings in Erasmus' third edition 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' (1514) edition (= Complutensian Polyglot), and fifteen other MSS, including the 5th century Codex Bezae (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) and introduced our present-day chapter and verse divisions on a journey between Paris and Lyons. His last text rests for the most part, on the fifth edition of the humanist Erasmus 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]."²⁸

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 of the second edition were the words, "*Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil*

²⁵See Appendix D for textual notes on the Matthean exemption clauses.

²⁶Vaganay, *Introduction*, p. 131.

²⁷According to John Mill, *A New Edition of the Greek New Testament* (Oxford, 1707).

²⁸Vaganay, *Introduction*, p. 133, who quotes Berger (1879:130).

immutatum aut corruptum damus.” Hence the name *Textus Receptus* (TR), which became part of orthodoxy in Europe,²⁹ while in Britain Stephens’s edition of 1550 acquired this authority. There are only 287 differences between these two Greek New Testaments.³⁰

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 third 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 edition. Mill’s edition is now used to represent the standard text of 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. See Appendix E.

HOW SHOULD MATTHEW 19:9 BE TRANSLATED?

The following texts are a translation of the Majority 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.

MATTHEW 5:31-32

Now it was said, “Who, say, may have divorced his wife, let him give to her a departure document.”³² 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 fornication³¹—*if she remarries*. And who if, say, may have married *a divorced wife* he becomes adulterous *by marrying her*.

LUKE 16:18

Every *husband* divorcing his wife, and marrying another *woman*, commits adultery. And every *man* marrying *a divorced wife*, he commits adultery.

MATTHEW 19:3-12

³ 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 example, may *have* divorced his wife—*he may* not *have divorced her* for fornication—and may *have* married another *woman*, he becomes

²⁹ For a Russian Orthodox view of the Byzantine Text see R. P. Casey, “A Russian Orthodox view of New Testament Textual Criticism,” *Theology* 60 (1957) 50-54.

³⁰ Scrivener, Frederick Henry. *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1874; 2nd ed.), p. 392.

³¹ Jesus puts the responsibility on the husband for what happens to a man’s wife after he divorces her. The exception to this responsibility is where his divorced wife does not remarry but commits fornication. She knows that this is an unlawful state, hence she becomes responsible for her own fornication. But if she remarries, thinking that she has been truly set free from her husband, then her second marriage is an adulterous relationship, because in God’s eyes she is still the wife of her first husband, because man cannot divorce what He has united in one flesh.

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—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*.'

MARK 10:2-12

² 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 unto 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.'

¹⁰ And in the house his disciples questioned him again concerning the same *thing*.¹¹ 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*.¹² 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*.'

From these 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 whoremongers, 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 Cor 6:9).

When Erasmus added εἰ (EI) before μὴ, this introduced a completely new idea. Where Jesus had said, "not for fornication," meaning, a man may not divorce for fornication, Erasmus changed it to read, he may not divorce "except for fornication," which he then translated it to read, "except for indecency," thereby permitting divorce for fornication *and* virtually 'every cause' that a man can squeeze into "indecency". Jesus, in fact, specifically ruled out fornication (or adultery) as a grounds for divorce, but Erasmus turned the text into a grounds *for* divorce. You could not get a more blatant contradiction than this.

PAUL ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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.

I take Jesus 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 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" (Mt 19:3). Paul thinks it is beneath Christians to take

each other to secular courts to solve their disputes, 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 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 Aus³² 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. 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 is 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 can separate a married couple. 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' (*apoluw*), 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 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 he 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.

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

³² Roger Aus, "Caught in the Act," *Walking on the Sea, and the Release of Barabbas Revisited* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1998), p. 23. Josephus regards death as the normal punishment for adultery. He knows nothing of divorce for adultery. He was a contemporary of Paul and the other Apostles.

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. 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) 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.)

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 lawcourts. 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?

But 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 Cor 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 England). 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. It is a savour of life unto life, or death unto death.

I truly believe 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' 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' 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 Two 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, thou 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 Thess 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 criteria 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 is: Will, or can Jesus in-dwell 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?

PART 2

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN COUNSELLORS

In any counselling situation the first thing the Christian counsellor needs to do is 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.³³ If the Christian counsellor has a false view of these two doctrines, or an incomplete or 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 reinstated 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 sidelined.

How would such 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. By unlawful sex is meant (1) prostitution, (2) fornication, and (3) adultery.

Under (2) would be included (a) singles having sex with singles, or promiscuous sex, and (b) unmarried partners. Under (3) would be included singles marrying a divorced person whose spouse is still alive, and (b) all remarriages where death has not separated lawfully married couples.

PRINCIPLE 2. *Reconciliation to a married partner must not be hindered*

This principle is paramount where divorce is present. A remarriage 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

³³ 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.btinternet.com/~lmf12

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 Cor 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 6. A Christian contemplates marrying a non-Christian.
- Case 7. One spouse becomes a Christian and is then divorced by the non-Christian.
- Case 8. A non-Christian divorces a Christian spouse.
- Case 9. A Christian divorces a non-Christian spouse.
- Case 10. A Christian divorces a Christian.
- Case 11. A divorced spouse becomes a Christian.
- Case 12. A Christian remarries and then repents of it.
- Case 13. Two singles have sex, should they marry?
- Case 14. One Christian bullying another Christian spouse.
- Case 15. Multiple partners.

FIRST CASE. 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 first to suggest a divorce will be responsible for the other's sin of remarriage, if remarriage follows (Mt 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.

SECOND CASE. 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.

THIRD CASE. 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. Then 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.)

FOURTH CASE. 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*.

FIFTH CASE. 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.

SIXTH CASE. 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 Cor 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 Cor 6:15) because s/he is a defiled (unsanctified) person (cf. 1 Cor 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 (Heb 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" (Heb 6:4-6).

SEVENTH CASE. ONE SPOUSE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN AND IS THEN DIVORCED BY THE NON-CHRISTIAN

In this case the couple got married before one of them became a Christian. The logic of the Sixth 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.

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 Cor 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 house, I would never advise them to abandon 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.

EIGHTH CASE. 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. 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 Moses' law of divorce, God commanded that no such reconciliation should take place. In this way He showed His disapproval of Moses' attempt to regularise a situation that the people forced on him. But the ban on reconciliation 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.

NINTH CASE. 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 hardhearted.” 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 723 BC before He finally ‘divorced’ (in the metaphorical sense) His stubborn wife, Aholah (the name given to Samaria, or the Ten Tribes).

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 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 so 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 hardhearted, . . .” 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.

TENTH CASE. 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 Cor 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 week 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'.

ELEVENTH CASE. 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 relationship. 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 (namely, 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.

TWELFTH CASE. A CHRISTIAN REMARRIES THEN REPENTS OF IT

This is a case where a Christian (distinguished as 'A') married an unbeliever ('B'), 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 'C', 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 C.

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, namely B, 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 (B) dies, then Christian A can marry Christian C, 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?

THIRTEENTH CASE. 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 Cor 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. This gift has been given to some, and they should not marry. To other Christians it has not been given, and they should marry only a Christian. To the list of prohibited degrees of marriage in Leviticus 18, Jesus would add His own, "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.

FOURTEENTH CASE. 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 Tim 6:1). "Exhort slaves to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again" (Tit 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.

FIFTEENTH CASE. 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 wholly 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?

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.

However, if children were born of such illicit unions, every effort should be made by the Christian to lawfully marry their partner (but only if the partner is a Christian), 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.

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.

END

(FIVE APPENDICES FOLLOW)

A. THE TRANSLATION OF MATTHEW 19:9 IN THE ENGLISH VERSIONS

B. AN EXPLANATION FOR THE AUTHOR'S LITERAL TRANSLATION OF MATTHEW 19:9

C. CRITIQUE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003)

D. TEXTUAL NOTES ON MATTHEW 5:32 & 19:9

E. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE MAJORITY (BYZANTINE) TEXT

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' unsupported addition of EI in Matthew 19:9, they have not thrown out his unbiblical teaching on divorce and remarriage. In this selection there are thirty-two translations³⁴ which have retained the wrong translation (i.e., Tyndale's), and only three that translate the Majority Text (the NU text is in agreement with the Majority Text in this instance).

WILLIAM TYNDALE BIBLE (1525/1530) I saye therefore vnto you whosoever putteth awaye his wyfe (except it be for fornicacion) and maryeth another breaketh wedlocke. And whosoever maryeth her which is divorced doeth comyt advoutry.

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 (1901) (ASV) 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.

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,³⁵ 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.'

DOUAY-RHEIMS AMERICAN EDITION (1899) (DRA) (19:8) 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.

ENGLISH JUBILEE 2000 BIBLE (Jubilee 2000) 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.

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) And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." [in red ink]

GOD'S WORD TRANSLATION (GodsWord) I can guarantee that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than her unfaithfulness is committing adultery if he marries another woman."

GENEVA BIBLE (1599) (Geneva1599) I say therefore vnto you, that whosoeuer shall put away his wife, except it be for whoredome, and marry another, committeth adulterie: and whosoeuer marieth her which is diuorced, doeth commit adulterie.

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.

³⁴These were taken from: <http://crosswire.org/study/parallelstudy>.

³⁵ 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."

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."

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD VERSION (ISV) "I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (red ink)

JAMES MURDOCK'S TRANSLATION 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.

JOHN WYCLIFFE BIBLE (1395) (Wycliffe) And Y seie to you, that who euer leeueth his wijf, but for fornicacioun, and weddith another, doith letcherie; and he that weddith the forsakun wijf, doith letcherie.

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. (red ink)

LATIN VULGATE (Vulgate) Dico autem uobis: quia quicumque dimiserit uxorem suam nisi ob fornicationem: & aliam duxerit, moechatur. Et qui dimissam duxerit: moechatur.

ERASMUS' LATIN (1527) Dico autem uobis, quod quicumque repudiauert uxorem suam, nisi ob stuprum³⁶, & aliam duxerit, is committit adulterium. Et qui repudiatam duxerit: is adulterium committit.

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."

RESTORED NAME KING JAMES VERSION (RNKJV) 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.

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) "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, 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.

THE COMMON EDITION: NEW TESTAMENT (Common) And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits 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 LIVING ORACLES NT (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.

TISCHENDORF'S EIGHTH EDITION GNT (Tisch) [This does not have EI.]

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

UPDATED KING JAMES VERSION (UKJV) And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away does commit adultery.

³⁶ 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 Mt 19:3.

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 (ει). Westcott-Hort did not publish an English translation of their text.]

WEYMOUTH NT (1912) (Weymouth) And I tell you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except her unfaithfulness, and marries another woman, commits adultery."

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."

YOUNG'S LITERAL TRANSLATION (1898) (YLT) '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.'

CORRECT TRANSLATIONS

MCFALL'S VERSION. Now I say to you that who, for example, may *have* divorced his wife—he *may not have divorced*³⁷ *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*.

CONSERVATIVE VERSION (ACV) And I say to you, that whoever may divorce his wife, not for fornication,³⁸ and will marry another, commits adultery. And he who married her who has been divorced commits adultery.

ANALYTICAL-LITERAL TRANSLATION (ALT) "But I say to you*, whoever divorces his wife [but]³⁹ not for sexual sin and marries another commits adultery, and the one having married the one having been divorced commits adultery."

DARBY BIBLE (1889) (Darby) But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication,⁴⁰ and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he who marries one put away commits adultery.

³⁷ The use of the Greek negative particle μὴ [MH] cannot be followed by the indicative mood. Here, the context permits the repetition of the previous aorist subjunctive verb, 'may have divorced'. See Appendix B for a fuller explanation of this point.

³⁸ 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. See the same problem with the Darby Bible.

³⁹ This addition introduces confusion. It could suggest that divorce is legitimate for sexual sin, but not for non-sexual sin. On the other hand, the addition could be taken to mean that divorce is not obtainable for sexual sin.

⁴⁰ This is ambiguous. It could be taken to mean 'not *counting* for fornication', in which case it would allow divorce for fornication. See the same problem with the Conservative Version.

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*."

The verb "may have divorced" is in the subjunctive mood, which I have conveyed using "may" to capture the idea of possibility. 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.

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. Mk 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 or heard about Jews obtaining a divorce on the grounds of adultery, which was an illegal 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 the rider He embedded in His total ban. The rider reads: "he may not have divorced for *porneia*," which amounts to a command. (And, by the way, we have no evidence that either Shammai or Hillel or their respective "Houses" ever gave permission to use divorce in place of the death penalty.)

Here is how I go about translating the Greek aorist subjunctive in my Harmony of the four Gospels. I will deal with the two terms "subjunctive" and "aorist" 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, may, 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," 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 a particle used in conjunction with it, such as "if," or "unless".)

Second, the term "aorist" refers to an action in its finished (result) form, as opposed to ongoing 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 and the context 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. 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 is to be repeated after MH, hence my precise translation. 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, the translation reads: "Now I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife (not [he may have divorced] for fornication) and may have married another woman, he becomes adulterous." Note the repetition of the aorist subjunctive verb in square brackets because of the use of the particular negative form that is used in conjunction with it, i.e., MH. 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.

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. 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.

APPENDIX C

CRITIQUE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003)

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 the 'Any Cause' divorce that Rabbi Hillel introduced before Jesus was born, and which 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 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. He claims that 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. On these two claims hangs the entire work.

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 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, mislead many into the sin of adultery through a second marriage while the first spouse was still alive.⁴¹ 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 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 a faulty 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 for any reason, and this astonished them so greatly that they were impelled to ask the question, "Why, therefore, did Moses permit . . . ?" Consequently, in this

⁴¹ A larger, 67-page critique of this book can be read on my web site: www.btinternet.com/~lmf12

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 His 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 sidelined his teaching as obsolete and irrelevant for His followers. Jesus then undercuts their own position by pointing out that the law on divorce did not come from His Father, but from Moses. And to press home His case, Jesus points out that the law did not so much come from Moses as from themselves. They demanded it. They pressed Moses to give it to them. They refused 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 catchword phrase. The author, himself, has created the fiction of a legal divorce called 'Any Cause', and then allowed himself to be misled by own creation of the phrase 'Any Cause', when he 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 his separation 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'.

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' ἁσδηποτοῦν αἰτίας)." 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’ ἕν].”⁴²

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 divorces. 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 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 approach⁴³ 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 integrity of 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 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.

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 translation of all major English

⁴² See the longer critique on this point at: www.btinternet.com/~lmf12

⁴³ Note the errors in his translation of the Aramaic texts in chap. 13.

translations.) If Jesus is making provision for divorce for adultery, then He is in direct conflict with the Law of God.

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 Numbers 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 theology.

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 (Deut 17:6). These would need to be examined by judges, not by an ordinary citizen who was shunned by the religious establishment. (2) According to the Law (Deut 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 Cor 6), 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, He intimated, preceded Moses' teaching, therefore they should go back to the first thing God taught about marriage and focus on Genesis 2:24 and forget about Deuteronomy 24:1-4 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, practice 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 to show that one cannot trust Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph, Ⓢ) in Matthew 5:32 and 19:1-12.

Assimilation in Matthew 5:32⁴⁴

The Nestle 27th edition at Matthew 5:32 reads: πᾶς ὁ ἀπολυῶν. 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 and versions support the Majority Text reading ὡς ἂν ἀπολυση which includes: Ⓢ D U 2 579 28 346 Syr^{cur}, Syr^{sin}, Sahidic and Bohairic. Nestle adds “*pm*.” to this list.

The use of “*pm*” (=permulti, = a large number; see Nestle’s Introduction p. 56*) in the critical apparatus to represent the Majority Text reading here is misleading, because the Majority Text 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 Majority Text 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 Farstad’s text was created from von Soden’s apparatus. This shows up the weakness of constructing a major Text-type from a critical apparatus. We know there is a very definite Byzantine Text-type which rivals the Egyptian/Alexandrian Text-type. There is a great need to produce the purest form of the Byzantine Text-type. In the meantime, where is the “even split” in the Majority Text witnesses to justify the Nestle 27th “permulti” evaluation?

Jesus comments on six teachings of the Ancients. The first three religious regulations point to the need to keep the Ancients’ tradition at the thought-level, not just the physical level. The last three are all commands which overturn the Ancients’ tradition. It would appear that the Nestle 27th preference at Mt 5:32 is due to assimilation with 5:22 and 28 (πᾶς + participle; cf. Lk 16:18).

Mt 5:22	ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος	“the one being angry”
Mt 5:28	ὅτι πᾶς ὁ βλέπων	“the one viewing”
Mt 5:32	ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀπολυῶν	“the one divorcing” (= assimilation)
Mt 5:34	μὴ ὀμοσαι	“Do not swear”
Mt 5:38	μὴ ἀνίστηναι	“Do not oppose”
Mt 5:44	ἀγαπατε	“Love”

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 the rest are 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, Nestle 27th accepts B as the likely original text.

Assimilation in Matthew 19:9

⁴⁴ Throughout this Appendix MT indicates the Majority Text, two editions of which have appeared in print, which attempt to get back to the original autograph texts. They were made by Z.C. Hodges & A.L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Nelson, 1985), and M.A. Robinson & W.G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform* (Southborough, MASS.; Chilton Book Publishing, 2005).

Another example of assimilation in MS B occurs at Matthew 19:9. Here MS B reads: *parektos logou porneias poiei autnn moixeutēnai*. This has been imported directly from Matthew 5:32 without any changes and replaces the Autograph Text at this point.

MS D, 33, f¹³ Sahidic and possibly Syr^{cur} plus some lesser known Greek MSS have a hybrid text. These have the first three words in agreement with MS B (*parektos logou porneia*) but accept the Majority 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 πορνείᾳ with παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας, the evidence is as follows:

BDC^c 1. 1582. 33. 13. 69*. 124. 788. 346. *a.b.c.e.ff^{a.2}.g¹.h.m.* [=Old Latin MSS] (*c d ff^a m = excepta causa adulterii; MS e = praeter causam fornicationis; MSS a b f ff^a.g¹.h q = nisi ob causam fornic.* Item Aug *excepta causa fornicat., nisi ex causa forn., nisi ob causam forn.*; Tert^{bis libere} om μη επ. πορν., item Athenag^{leg 33}) syr^{cur} sah boh cop Orig. iii. 647^c. 648^{a.c}. 649^b. (Clem⁵³³ χωρις λογου πορν.) Bas^{eth} Chr (et.^{mo 6}).

The Autograph Text is that represented by all the other manuscript and versional evidence. This evidence will include: Ⳉ A ℞ W C* Θ Δ Π K L N U 2 28 69^{ms} 118 157 565 579 700 1071 1424 plus some versional evidence not recorded in the apparatuses, presumably Eth Goth Arm Syr^{sin}. In this case Nestle 27th goes with the Majority Text as probably the original text.

The omission of Matthew 19:9b

MAJORITY TEXT reads: 'And the *one* having married *one* having been divorced is being adulterous *with her*.' This is omitted by Nestle 27th.

Combining the evidence from Nestle 27th, Tischendorf and Tregelles for the omission, this comes to: Ⳉ C³ D S L 2* 69 1241 *pc it a.b.e.ff^{a.2}.g¹.h. sy^{s.c} sa bo^{ms}*.

The evidence for including the text is: B Z ℞ (= EFGHMYΩ) K U 078 700 28 157 1071 Vulg. *c.f.g².m.q. sy^{pal.hcl} sy^{ler} bo Arm Eth Bas^{eth} Dam^{par}* (Tert potius ad 5:32).

The evidence for a very slight variation on the ℞-text (reading γαμῶν for γαμήσας but keeping the rest of the verse the same) is: W C* N Θ Δ Π 33 1424 565 1 2^c 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).

ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται (32 letters)
καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσας μοιχᾶται (31 letters) (omitted by h.t.)
λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ 'αὐτοῦ' εἰ

Here two lines end with the same Greek word. The length of line would be no problem. P⁴⁵ has 51 letters per line; P⁶⁶ has 25 letters per line; and P⁷⁵ has 30 letters per line.

The suggestion 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."⁴⁵

καὶ ὅς ἐάν 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 Mt 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 ἀνδρὸς 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

⁴⁵ See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 48.

so. Compare the importation of John 19:34 into Matthew 27:49 where it has created an historical blunder (ⲥⲔⲘⲚⲘⲚ ⲡⲥ ⲱⲓⲛⲥⲥⲥ ⲙⲁⲉ)(see the next section on this blunder). Compare also the importation of Mt 5:32b into Mt 19:9a by B which no printed text has adopted as the original text.

Lastly, in Aleph there is a section break at the end of Matt 19:9 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 Mt 5:32 and 19:9 seeking to reconcile the two passages by using the same text (as in B's case).

CONCLUSION: The Nestle 28th edition should adopt the Majority Text at Matthew 19:9b.

LESSON 1: The Alexandrian Text was a local text, confined to Egypt, whereas the Majority Text was found throughout the Christian world, which meant 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 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 NU⁴⁶ 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 ⲥ agreed, that was the original text. They departed from this rule on only eight occasions (all of them spelling differences).⁴⁷ An exact copy of the original text which had been exactly 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.

LESSON 2: Bruce Metzger's *Commentary* 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 *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. This is termed an eclectic 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.

⁴⁶ NU stands for the combined witness of the two dominant printed texts of the NT, namely, N = Nestle 27th edition, and U = United Bible Societies edition.

⁴⁷ The 8 are at Jn 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

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE MAJORITY (BYZANTINE) 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 the Majority Text⁴⁸) 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 Majority (Byzantine) Text, 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 with the Majority Text. 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 all other text-types. There is no evidence for this story. 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 badly transmitted text. It is a sloppy copy of the Universal text. 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. Vaticanus and Sinaiticus have transported part of John 19:34 into Matthew 27:49. 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 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 mechanical 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 mechanical errors in the Egyptian text suggests that it goes back to an early, sloppy copy, or a rushed copy made by a careful scribe. 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.

A third 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.

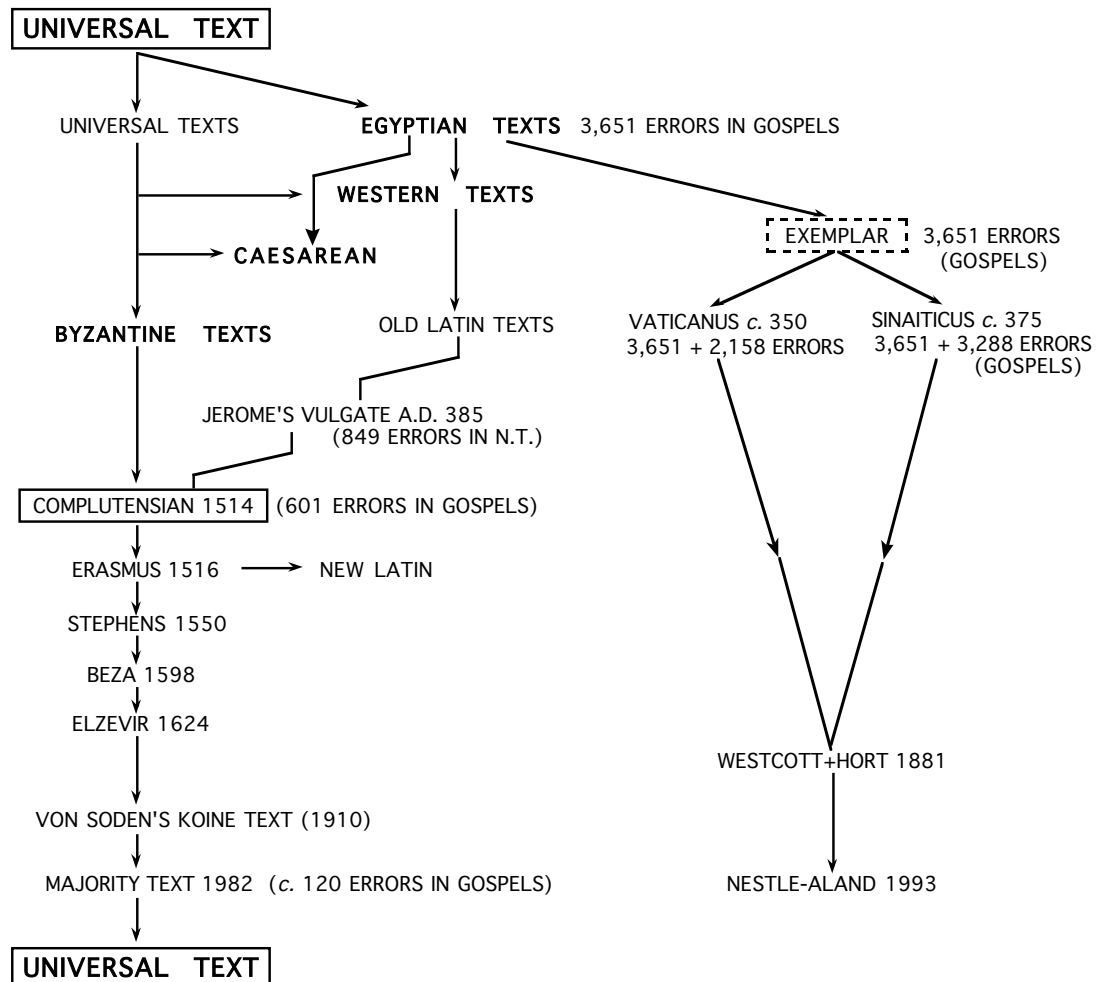
On top of these blunders and scribal mistakes, there are, in addition, 9,166 differences between the Majority Text and the combined errors in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in the four Gospels alone. The fact that these alterations were made at all should make one suspicious of

⁴⁸ Erasmus' text and the Complutensian text were both based on Majority Text manuscripts, not on Egyptian or Western texts.

following a scribe who is that careless in copying out the Word of God for the next generation.

The following chart sets out the relationship of the four major text-types, namely, Byzantine, Egyptian, Western and Caesarean. The spatial relationship indicates their textual relationship. The Caesarean Text comes closest to the Byzantine Text, then the Western Text, then the Egyptian Texts, which are the furthest removed from the Universal (Byzantine) Text.

GENEALOGY OF TEXTUAL FAMILIES



In the following section it can be shown that: *Wherever Vaticanus differs from Sinaiticus, Sinaiticus agrees with the Majority Text, and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, Vaticanus agrees with the Majority Text.* This means that all disagreements between Vaticanus and Sinaiticus came about because one or other has departed from the Majority Text. The Majority Text lies behind both manuscripts, and their differences are due entirely to their failure to reproduce it.

We can demonstrate this by comparing the two versions of the Byzantine Text which we find in the printed text of Erasmus and the Complutensian Polyglot.

**LIST OF DEVIATIONS FROM THE BYZANTINE TEXT IN ERASMUS' FIRST
EDITION OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT (1516)**

TYPE OF ERROR	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	TOTALS	%
OMISSIONS	56	47	49	51	203	22.5
ADDITIONS	47	28	49	52	176	19.5
SUBSTITUTIONS	106	71	108	99	384	42.5
TRANSPOSITIONS	16	9	19	9	53	6.0
AGREE AGAINST MT	21	14	24	23	82	9.0
ALL DISAGREE	1	0	2	3	6	0.5
GOSPEL TOTALS	247	169	251	237	904	100

**LIST OF DEVIATIONS FROM THE BYZANTINE TEXT IN THE COMPLUTENSIAN
POLYGLOT (1514)**

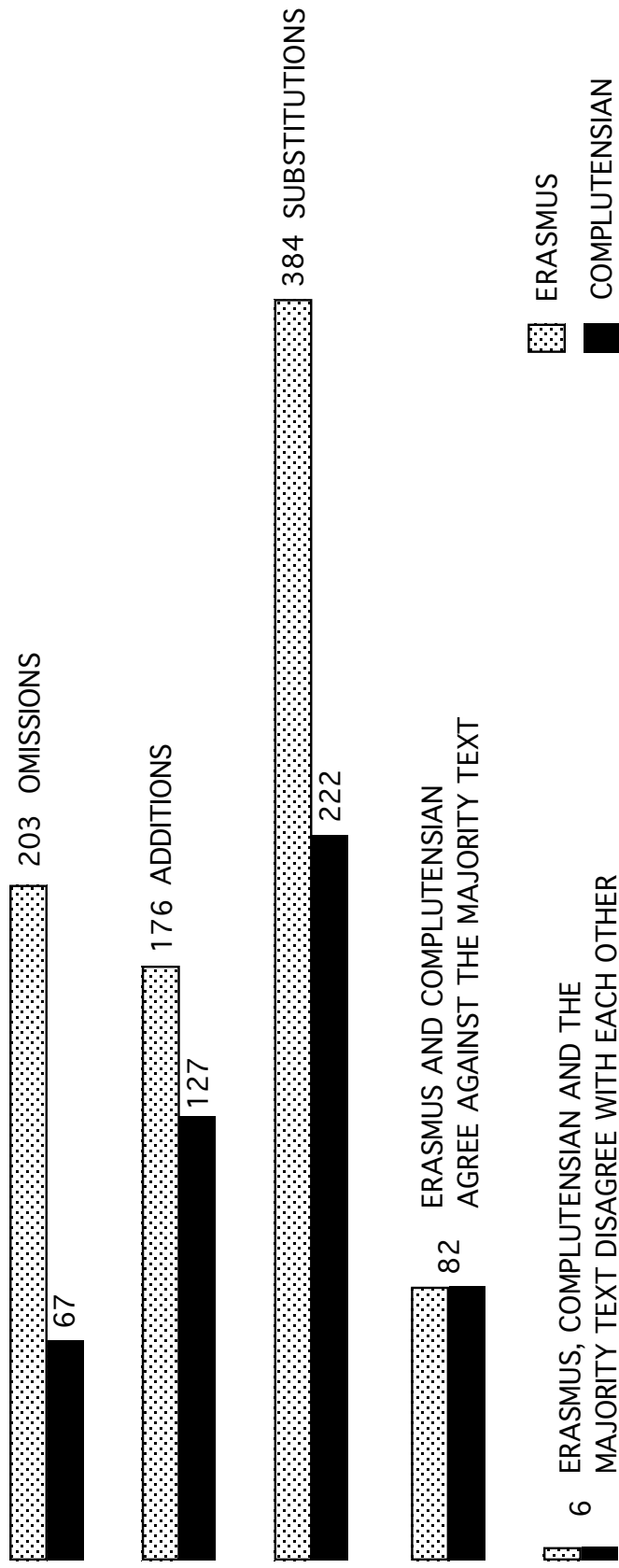
TYPE OF ERROR	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	TOTALS	%
OMISSIONS	11	18	20	18	67	11.1
ADDITIONS	32	31	34	30	127	21.1
SUBSTITUTIONS	76	50	65	31	222	37
VOWEL SUBSTITUTIONS	30	25	35	21	111	18.5
CONSONANT SUBSTITUTIONS	26	22	14	12	74	12.3
GOSPEL TOTALS	175	146	168	112	601	100
FINAL NU OMITTED	332	258	449	265	1304	1.5

The last column in both tables gives the percentage for each kind of error. It is clear that in Erasmus' text substitutions account for the majority of the errors (37%),⁴⁹ followed by additions (21.1%) and then vowel substitutions (itacisms) (18.5%). The total number of errors is 904 in Erasmus (hereafter abbreviated to Eras), and 601 in the Complutensian text (hereafter abbreviated to CP).

There are two important facts that emerge from a comparison of the texts of Eras, CP and Majority Text. The first remarkable fact is that in only six cases do Eras, CP and Majority Text all disagree. The second remarkable fact is the figure of 82 agreements between Eras and CP *against* the Byzantine (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 Byzantine Text were introduced.

⁴⁹ This could be due to following a memorised version which was different from the exemplar.

A COMPARISON OF THE DEVIATIONS IN ERASMUS AND THE COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT FROM 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

From these two totals we can make the following important observation: *Wherever Erasmus differs from CP, CP agrees with the Majority Text, and wherever CP differs from Erasmus, Erasmus agrees with the Majority Text.* 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 \aleph (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 Majority Text 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 Majority Text—plus the 29 where they each disagree—from their combined disagreements with the Majority Text, which is 1529 variants, we can make the following important observation: *Wherever Vaticanus differs from Sinaiticus, which happens 610 times, Sinaiticus agrees with the Majority Text, and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, which happens 890 times, Vaticanus agrees with the Majority Text.*

An identical study was carried out on Luke's Gospel which produced the same pattern. There are 14 cases where Vat., Sin., and Majority Text 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 Majority Text. These shared disagreements are found in the *local* Egyptian text.⁵⁰ It was never a universal text, like the Majority Text. 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 Majority Text—plus the 14 where they each disagree—from their combined disagreements with the Majority Text, 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 Majority Text, and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, which happens 768 times, Vaticanus always agrees with the Majority Text.* 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 Majority Text than Vaticanus, which is closer to the Majority Text. It is the same in the copying of John. Sinaiticus has moved further way from the text of Vaticanus, which is closer to the Majority Text. 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 limited to 600 copies. It was expensive, and it was never reprinted.⁵¹ Its text is superior to Erasmus' both in the use of clear fonts, its pleasing layout, and the complete lack of abbreviations and ligatures which spoil Erasmus' text, but more importantly, as the diagram above shows, its text of the four Gospels was closer to the Majority Text, and it did not have the Erasmian addition of EI 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, except when it differs from the TR, which it puts in the margin.

END

⁵⁰ The so-called Western Text is a mixture of MT + Egyptian + arbitrary changes.

⁵¹ 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.

DR. LESLIE McFALL
E-mail: lmf12@talk21.com
Web page: www.btinternet.com/~lmf12
14 May, 2007. Revised 18 February, 2008.