

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

The third reason why Jesus could not accept the break-up of any marriage is that marriage is the supreme analogy of love between a man and a woman, and between Christ and His Bride Church. God is love and He showed that in the sacrifice of His Son for an ungrateful world. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

It is with regret that I hear of Christians becoming followers of pre-Christian Jewish rabbis and taking advantage of the divorce courts of the 'god of this world' (Satan) to end their God-bonded unions. The god of this world is delighted to see Christians enter his divorce courts to end their marriages. He knows that divorce plays into his hands because the Christian who divorces for adultery will soon end up being an adulterer himself through a second marriage. Satan will get two adulterers for the price of one certificate.

What does a divorce certificate reveal about you?

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

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

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

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

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

The possession of a Divorce Certificate will tell the truly spiritual churches of Christ, and their spiritual leaders, a lot about you, and about your relationship with the Lord Jesus. It reveals that you do not have the Spirit of Christ within you (so why are you taking Communion?). It reveals that you are not prepared to forgive certain kinds of sins; that there are exceptive clauses in your policy of forgiveness. It reveals that your mindset is no different from that in the unbeliever; that you behave as someone who has more in common with the world than you have with Christ. Finally, it reveals ignorance of what your Saviour has revealed about the sanctity of marriage. A divorce certificate does not just divorce you from your partner, it also divorces you from your God. The two things go together. *Your Divorce Certificate is also your spiritual Death Certificate.* If you would choose Life, then the sooner you tear it up and return to your forgiven, adulterous partner, the sooner you will have Life within you once again. No adulterer will enter heaven, and no one in a second marriage, whose spouse is still alive, will be in heaven. Be rid of your second marriage, terminate it, if you would see Jesus again.

Possibly the most frequently asked question is: Is the act itself of getting a divorce a sinful act? I have, therefore, devoted Letter 5 (section 1.8.5) to a detailed answer to this question. What the reader should bear in mind at this early stage is that a Hebrew wife became an abomination (a hated person) in God's eyes the moment she slept with two living men. Her second husband turns her into a defiled person the moment he sleeps with her (Deut 24:4). The reason for God's judgment is that He designed 'one wife for life'. Divorce is a rejection of this idea. Remarriage can only occur after a death, not after a divorce. Divorce does not exist in God's world.

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

Out of their personal interaction with the Lord Jesus came a clear, unambiguous application that was never seriously challenged for the first 450 years by any authoritative Christian teacher/leader.¹ As a result, a definite pattern of behaviour (called 'traditions' by Paul) characterised the whole Christian Church whereby divorce was not permitted for any reason, not even for adultery. The break with Judaism was complete and final.

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

After the coming of Jesus Christ and the institution of a new priesthood of which He is its undying, great High Priest, offering a better Covenant between God and Man,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 when the Old Covenant was replaced with the New Covenant, there being now no grounds whatsoever for divorce, for either Christian or non-Christian because of the one-flesh nature of the union. This was firmly understood by the Church up until the Protestant Reformation, which then branched off and introduced divorce for adultery *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 1 ends with replies to five correspondence questions. 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's false teaching on divorce and remarriage. Appendix B explains the author's method for translating the aorist subjunctive in Matthew 19:9. Appendix C presents a critique of 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's addition of *ei* (Greek *ει*) to the text of Matthew 19:9. Appendix E sets out the case for the superiority of the Majority Greek Text.

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.

PART I. TEXTUAL MATTERS & THE DIVORCE TEXTS

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

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

It is a fact of history that the only Greek New Testament available to the Reformers up until 1522 was Erasmus's Greek New Testament. He flooded the European market with his five cheap editions, all of which had his faulty, variant reading at Matthew 19:9. The fault was that he added an extra Greek word in Matthew 19:9 which completely altered Jesus' teaching on divorce.

The original Greek text read: "not over fornication", which amounts to: "not *even* over fornication". Here Jesus excluded the teaching of two influential rabbis, Hillel and Shammai, who both agreed that divorce could be obtained for sexual misdemeanours, such as fornication and adultery. Erasmus turned Jesus' teaching on its head, because his *new* text reads: "except for fornication". This alteration has Jesus agreeing with Hillel and Shammai that divorce is legitimate in His Church, and among His followers, in cases of fornication.

It was harder to obtain a divorce through rabbi Shammai, who insisted that Deuteronomy 24:1-3 referred only to sin of a sexual nature. Rabbi Hillel, on the other hand, handed out divorces for all sexual misdemeanours but also for 'any other cause' (cf. Mt 19:3) that a husband might nominate, even something as trivial as his wife burning his dinner. (See section 1.8.3. below for a fuller treatment of the difference between these two rabbis and Jesus.)

Now Hillel and Shammai had no authority to alter God's law. God decreed the death penalty for adultery and for women who were not virgins on their wedding day. These rabbis were usurpers. If Jesus agreed with these rabbis to alter God's law, then He is as guilty as they are in departing from God's law. Jesus becomes a law-breaker. Divorce for adultery was never God's law from the beginning. Jesus claimed that He came to fulfil every jot and tittle of the Law, and not to do away with it, or alter it, *until He had fulfilled it*. Only after He had kept the law fully and obtained the righteousness that comes from keeping it perfectly was it done away with as a means of obtaining the righteousness that God demanded of every Jew.

When Jesus, therefore, ruled out sexual misdemeanours as grounds for divorce among His followers, He thereby condemned Hillel and Shammai's interference and alteration of His Father's law. His condemnation, "not *even* for fornication" (and we can envisage Him wagging His finger at them) set His divine teaching apart from their human, commonsense compromises. In Jesus' Kingdom, forgiveness is the rule, even the forgiveness of the sin of adultery. *There is no exceptive clause in Jesus teaching on forgiveness*. Jesus said, if you forgive men their trespasses then His Father would forgive them their trespasses. There is no exceptive clause in this statement.

1.2. WHERE DID ERASMUS GET HIS FAULTY TEXT FROM?

There is a very late Greek manuscript, Codex Leicestrensis (Caesarean Text), dated to the 15th century, which has in its margin a correction to its own faulty main text at Matthew 19:9. The faulty main text consisted of the exceptive clause in Matthew 5:32 being imported into Matthew 19:9 where it replaced the so-called exceptive clause in that verse. However, in trying to restore the original exceptive clause in Matthew 19:9 in the margin, the scribe added 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'). It would appear that Erasmus consulted this codex during his stay in Cambridge, England, between 1511 and 1514.

Who was the first to add *ei* ('if') to the inspired Word of God? We do not know who was the *first*, but the earliest Greek manuscript that Erasmus could have had access to, which contained the addition, was Codex Leicestrensis. It has always been assumed by textual scholars that Erasmus saw the marginal reading in Codex Leicestrensis when he stayed in Cambridge. We have no evidence either way, but if it can be shown that the addition of *ei* in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis was inserted *later* than Erasmus's visit, then he could not have got it from this Codex. It is even possible that the marginal correction in the Codex was copied from Erasmus's printed text, and not the other

way round, but to prove this either way, it would be necessary to analyse every marginal correction and see how many are found only in Erasmus's printed text *and* in the margin of the Codex. What Erasmus did find were manuscripts (including Vaticanus) which imported Matthew 5:32 into 19:9. Now 5:32 is a genuine exceptive clause. The mischief was caused by importing it into 19:9, where it did not belong.³ This is what led Erasmus astray.

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

This we do know. It was through Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the Dutch humanist⁴. He was not a Reformed Christian, by any means. He was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church but, like the Reformers, he became disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on a number of issues, one of which was their insistence that Jesus did not permit divorce or remarriage. 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 Gospel manuscripts which he used did not contain it.

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

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

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE TWO MAIN GREEK TEXTS OF MATTHEW 19:9

There is a strong debate going on between supporters of the Nestle-Aland Greek text of the New Testament, which represents a minority text, and the Majority Greek Text which lies behind the *Textus Receptus*. When Westcott & Hort drew up their minority text they relied mainly on one manuscript, codex Vaticanus. Later, this was given some support when codex Sinaiticus was discovered. Nevertheless, the Nestle-Aland text is based on just two manuscripts and papyri which survived only in Egypt. These manuscripts differ from each other in thousands of places. The Majority (Byzantine) Text, on the other hand, has been the text in use in the Church universal. There are over 5,500 manuscripts supporting its text. Some idea of the gulf between these two competing texts can be seen in their translation of Matthew 19:9.

Majority Greek Text (Byzantine): Now I say to you that whoever shall dismiss his wife—not *even* over fornication—and shall marry another, he commits adultery.⁵ And the one who marries one divorced commits adultery.

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

The Nestle-Aland minority Greek text agrees with the Majority Text translation as far as the first occurrence of 'commits adultery'. It omits the last sentence due to a copying error known as *homoioteleuthon* (meaning, 'same ending').

Please note that the Majority Text sentence: "And the one who marries one divorced commits adultery," has been sloppily omitted in the minority text (but not in Vaticanus, which supports the

³ This error is found mainly in the Caesarean Text (family 1 and family 13), to which Codex Leicestrensis belongs (MS 69).

⁴ 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).

⁵ Up to this point, codex Sinaiticus supports the Majority Text. It has omitted the last part of this verse as does Bezae and Leicestrensis, but Vaticanus and the Caesarean Text agree with the Majority Text at this point.

Majority Text at this point). Note also that the underlined minority text translation: “apart from the matter of fornication, he makes her to commit adultery” is a translation of the text of Matthew 5:32, which was sloppily (or deliberately, due to a misunderstanding) imported into Matthew 19:9 where it replaced the original text, which read as the Majority Text does: “not over fornication”. This blunder is found in Vaticanus (but not in Sinaiticus, which supports the Majority Text at this point), in the Caesarean Text, and in Codex Leicestrensis.

In Codex Leicestrensis, some scribe, realising the blunder, attempted to put the correct Greek reading for Matthew 19:9 in the margin, opposite the place where the blunder occurred in the main text (see the scans below). Unfortunately, in making the correction, he slipped in an extra Greek word, namely, *ei*, which means ‘if’. Now this marginal correction may have been an attempt to convey the sense of “apart from the matter of fornication,” which is the original text of Matthew 5:32, but this is not the original text of Matthew 19:9.

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

The Latin Vulgate read: “And I say to you that: whosoever shall put away [Latin: *dimiserit*] his wife unless [*nisi*⁶] for fornication [Latin: *fornicationem*]: and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And whoever marries one put away: he commits 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,’ all of which are the meanings given to *stuprum* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.⁸ 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. This expresses the teaching of rabbi Hillel (who, apparently, used Dt 24:1-3 and Ex 21:1-10).

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 for granted 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 1522.⁹ Erasmus used it to 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 expensive, but beautifully bound copies of the Complutensian were published, and a consignment of these went down with the ship carrying them to Italy. By the time the Complutensian was sold out in 1522, Erasmus says that he had sold 3,300 copies of his first two editions by 1522, and there was a demand for a third edition.¹⁰

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

⁶ The Latin could have used *excepta* ‘except’ here in place of *nisi*, but it didn’t. *Nisi* normally means ‘except’ but it can also mean ‘unless’ in some contexts.

⁷ 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 after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Divorce is incompatible with the ‘new heart and the new spirit’, consequently ‘hardness of heart’ belongs only to the unregenerate man, who will follow its urges to rid himself (or herself) of their married partner.

⁸ Erasmus changed his view on the causes of divorce between 1516 (*fornicationem*) and 1519 (*stuprum*). *Stuprum* covers non-sexual misdemeanours in addition to sexual ones. From 1519 onwards he uses *stuprum*.

⁹ The Complutensian Polyglot had been completed in 1514, two years before Erasmus issued his first, much cheaper edition. The Roman Catholic church delayed the release of the Greek NT until 1522, which was unfortunate because it allowed Erasmus to flood the market with his faulty Gk NT. In any case, it is unlikely that the RC church would have reissued a cheaper version.

¹⁰ Samuel P. Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament* (London, 1854), p. 25.

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 early church. It would have been too humiliating for the Reformers to have to apologise to the Roman Catholic church for having departed from the Truth, so the issue was silently swept under the carpet.

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

It was not the work of pioneering, conservative evangelicals desiring to get back to the purest form of the original autograph texts, that finally got rid of Erasmus’s deliberate addition to Matthew 19:9. Rather, it was left to the thorough-going, 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’s 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’s faulty Greek text, and which accurately reflected Erasmus’s opinion of what he thought Scripture taught. Every modern English translation retains Erasmus’s doctrine while at the same time rejecting his Greek text. What a strange, schizophrenic situation!

While there has been a slight shift among conservative evangelical scholars engaged in textual criticism to recognise the damage that Erasmus did, and to remove his addition, there has been no movement at all to remove the new teaching that his addition brought into existence. 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’s 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’s addition.

The *ESV* translation would have been a financial disaster for the publisher if it had removed the exceptive clause and replaced it with the exclusion clause. 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,¹¹ and Robinson & Pierpont.¹² To do so would upset thousands of Christians who have remarried while their spouses were still alive, not to mention translators who are hardly likely to put their remarriage in the context of adultery. Such translators will be shielded by other members of the same Translation Committee who have not remarried, so as not to offend them. And so the compromise is perpetuated in every modern language translation to date. It is time for evangelicals to take their stand and not offend their Lord by persistently mistranslating His teaching as understood by the Apostles and the Early Church.

The reason for this refusal to depart from Erasmus’s humanist doctrine is that due to the confessional stand of the Reformation Churches, divorce and remarriage was introduced *for the first*

¹¹ Zane C. Hodges & Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (2nd. ed; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985).

¹² Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform* (Southborough, MASS.: Chilton Book Pub., 2005).

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 Minority¹³ 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 early church teaching on divorce and remarriage will have serious social implications throughout every nation. In England, for instance, it will result in the true Church of God having to acknowledge that the heir to the throne 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.

1.4. 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 text at Matthew 19:9. It would appear that Erasmus either deliberately inserted the addition on his own authority, or else he took advantage of the marginal correction in codex Leicestrensis if it was inserted before his time.

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

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

The honour of printing the first Greek New Testament goes to Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (1437-1517), the Roman Catholic Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo. 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.

Erasmus (1466-1536), a well-known humanist, but still loyal to the Roman Catholic church, was responsible for editing the Greek text that lies behind the *Textus Receptus*. He based his edition on seven (possibly eight) manuscripts.¹⁴

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*.

¹³ For example, the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament, or the Nestle-Aland editions. These represent the minority Egyptian Text.

¹⁴ F. H. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London, 1894⁴), vol. II, p. 183.

In what follows, the manuscript numbers in parentheses are according to the Gregory-Aland numbering system.¹⁵ Erasmus used the following manuscripts:

Manuscript 69 (eapr¹⁶) XV cent., Codex Leicestrensis. It had been assumed by scholars that Erasmus had consulted this MS during his stay in Cambridge University (England) between 1511 and 1514, and that he had got the text of his 'exceptive clause' of Matthew 19:9 from the margin of this manuscript. See the extended note below: "Note on Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69)."

Manuscript 1 (eap) XII cent., Basle, Univ. Bibl., shelf mark A. N. IV. 2: little used.¹⁷

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,¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ This MS was consulted for corrections (it is in fact a Gospel text with commentary by Theophylactus—Erasmus's "Vulgaris").

All but one of Erasmus's Greek MSS are now found in the Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität, Basel, Switzerland. The exception is MS 1 (r) (2814) of Revelation, which is in Augsburg, Germany.²⁰

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).²¹

Other MSS used by Erasmus later on were:

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

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), and consulted for the 3rd ed.

The Complutensian Polyglot. This was used in later editions (from the 4th ed. in 1527) esp. for Apoc. 22:16-21.²²

¹⁵ See Kurt Aland, *Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter; 2nd ed. 1994).

¹⁶ The standard sigla for the contents of a MS is as follows: e = Gospels; a = Acts; c = Catholic or General Epistles (i.e., the epistles of Peter, James, Jude and John); p = Paul's writings (including Hebrews); and r = Book of Revelation.

¹⁷ This MS was deposited in the Dominican monastery near Basel a century before Erasmus used it. Very little else is known about its origin.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ "Novum Testamentum a Nobis Versum: The Essence of Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament," *JTS* 35 (Oct 1984) 404, n. 40.

²⁰ Erasmus borrowed this MS from Reuchlin. It was then lost until it was found in 1861 by Franz Delitzsch in the library of the princely house of Oettingen-Wallerstein. See his *Handschriftliche Funde* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1861-1862). When Erasmus used it, it had no final leaf (containing the last six verses) so he translated the Latin back into Greek.

²¹ 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.

²² 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

Reuben Swanson lists only the TR itself in support of Erasmus's addition of *ei* in Matthew 19:9.²³ 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.), possibly MS 69 or Codex Leicestrensis (15th cent.) and possibly MS 817 (15th cent.). Swanson has collated the first three MSS, but he does not give any of them in support of the TR text. Rather, they support the *omission* of εἰ before 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,²⁴ and the corrector has rightly tried to change it back to the original reading, but in so doing he inadvertently added *ei* before *mh* probably under the influence of *parektos*. This is probably 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.

1.4.1. Tischendorf's meagre evidence in support of Erasmus's 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 minusc pauc Bas^{eth} (Clem — libere, et quaeritur quorsum spectet—⁵³² χωρισ λογου πορν. εἰ⁵⁰⁶ πλην εἰ μη ἐπι λογω πορν.).

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

item = similarly
 ζ = Erasmus's editions,²⁵ and all printed editions up to the Elzevir's edition of 1624 (which would include the 1550 edition by Robert Stephens²⁶).²⁷
 (= Gb Sz) = the printed texts of Griesbach and Scholz (1827)
 praemisso εἰ = prefix εἰ
 cum minusc pauc = with a few minuscules²⁸
 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).

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 Erasmi Turonensis*, 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 Erasmus 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>

²³ Reuben Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Matthew* (Pasadena CA: William Carey International University Press, 1995).

²⁴ The same mistake was made by BP²⁵D f¹³ (which includes MS 69) and part of f¹.

²⁵ Tyndale followed the second (1519) and third (1522) editions of Erasmus's Greek text. It should be noted that the Complutensian Greek NT, which pre-dated Erasmus's edition but published later than his, does not have εἰ, which was noted by Albert Bengel (Io. Alberti Bengeli, *Apparatus Criticus ad Novum Testamentum*, 2nd ed., prepared by Philippo Davide Burkio [Tubingae, 1763], p. 127).

²⁶ This was published by F. H. A. Scrivener, *H KAINH ΔΙΑΦΗΚΗ Novum Testamentum Textus Stephani A.D. 1550* (Cantabrigiae: Deighton, Bell et filii, 1877).

²⁷ 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 followed most closely (but not faithfully) by the Authorised Version Committee (Preface, vii). It follows Erasmus's text.

²⁸ 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).

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).²⁹
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 ει μη επι λογω πονη. = “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.

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

S. P. Tregelles agrees with Tischendorf’s printed evidence. Note that 69 is the number given to Codex Leicestrensis. His evidence reads as printed:³⁰

†praem. ει ς. 69².mg. (ει μη επι λογω πορν. Clem. 506.)

Explanation of the evidence:

† = indicates an *omission* of something.
 praem. ει = prefix ει
 ς = of the common Greek Text (presumably all printed editions up to the Elzevir’s edition of 1624).
 69².mg. = MS 69 [Codex Leicestrensis] and a second hand (1st corrector) added: ει μη επι πορνεια in the margin. 69* (* = original text) read the text of Matthew 5:32, which MS B also has here, but not Sinaiticus, which agrees with the Byzantine Text here.
 ει μη επι 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, if he examined it, which seems very likely. It is dated to the fifteenth century and the corrector is later, but before 1516, if Erasmus consulted it. Erasmus was born in the fifteenth century (1466). 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! However, it is quite possible that the marginal reading was taken from Erasmus’s text and inserted in the margin of Codex Leicestrensis.

Now, given that Erasmus was a humanist, and he believed that the Matthean exceptive clause in 19:9 permitted divorce (dissolution of the bond and freedom to remarry) in cases of adultery, one wonders if his text was affected by his personal view on divorce and remarriage. He published his view on divorce in his *Annotationes* in the same year that he published the second edition of his Greek New Testament (1519). As noted above, his 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’s instinct to give the innocent party the right to remarry, plus a misunderstanding of the genuine exceptive clause in Matthew 5:32 clouded his text-critical approach to the evidence at his disposal.

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

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

BD 1. 33. al⁶ 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}).

1.4.4. Tregelles’ evidence against the replacement text of Vaticanus

²⁹ Constantinus Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (8th ed.; Lipsiae: Giesecke & Deverient, 1869), 1:114.

³⁰ Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *The Greek New Testament . . . and the Latin Version of Jerome* (2 vols.; London: Samuel Bagster, 1857-1879).

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.³¹

1.4.5. Note on Codex Leicestrensis (MS 69)

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

MS 69 is a member of Family 13 (and this particular manuscript has been fully collated by R. Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Matthew* [Pasadena, CA.: William Carey International University Press, 1995].) Family 13 and Family 1 belong to the Caesarean Text.

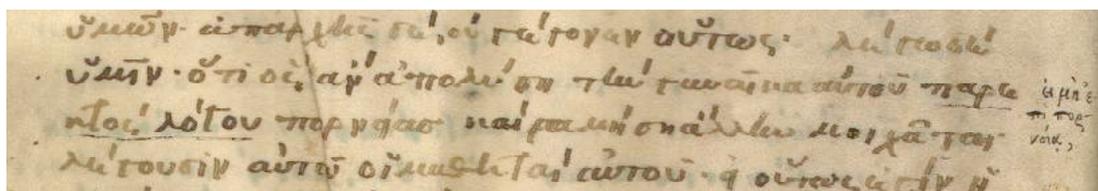
The following image is a sample of the scribe's writing, showing the marginal correction on the extreme right, which was intended to replace the underlined words. The underlining appears to be the work of an older man with a shaky hand. The correction, on the other hand, is very neat and done with a very steady hand. There are other instances of shaky underlined text without any marginal correction. They deserve a study in their own right. They could suggest a collation with another Greek text, even though no correction appears in the margin.

The original writing was done with a reed. The correction was probable written with a very fine quill. The lateness of the correction can be judged from the use of the hyphen in ε-πι and πορ-νεια, and the use of the comma after πορ-νεια. I have not seen these in any other Greek manuscript.

It is quite possible that this marginal correction was taken from Erasmus's printed text (or a later version of the *Textus Receptus*) and inserted into the margin of Codex Leicestrensis. If so, it means that Erasmus did not get his unique reading of εἰ before μὴ in Matthew 19:9 from this manuscript. This leaves his text without the support of any of the manuscripts available to him in 1516.

Codex Leicestrensis (Matthew 19:8-10)

(Note the small writing on the extreme right, in the margin of the MS. It should have read: μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ but the word εἰ was added by the corrector.)



THE UNDERLINED TEXT IS FOUND HERE IN SOME MANUSCRIPTS OF THE CAESAREAN TEXT, AND IN CODEX VATICANUS. IT DOES NOT REPRESENT THE ORIGINAL (UNIVERSAL) TEXT AT THIS PLACE

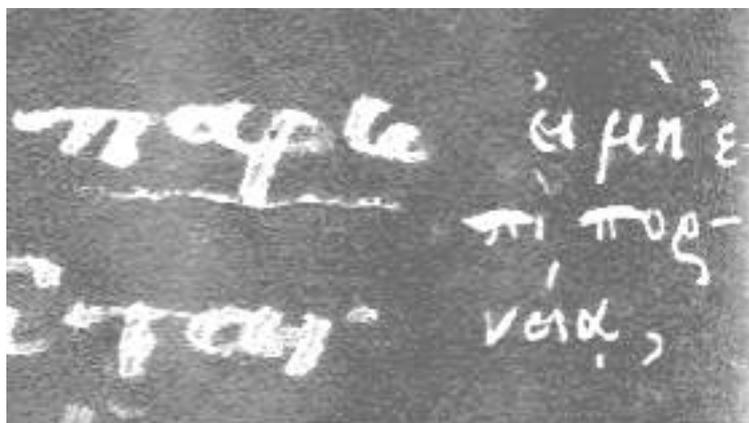
MARGINAL CORRECTION
THE CIRCLED WORD εἰ
IS NOT FOUND IN ANY
EARLY MANUSCRIPT

(19:8) ὑμῶν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς δὲ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως· (19:9) λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν· ὅτι ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτος λογου πορνειας καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται· (19:10) λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ

THIS IS THE MARGINAL TEXT THAT ERASMUS PUT IN HIS 1516 GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, INCLUDING THE CIRCLED WORD.
THIS MARGINAL CORRECTION WAS INTENDED TO REPLACE THE UNDERLINED TEXT BECAUSE THE UNDERLINED TEXT HAS BEEN IMPORTED FROM MATTHEW 5:32

³¹See Appendix D for textual notes on the Matthean exemption clauses.

Below is a greatly enlarged negative view of folio 1 verso, showing the marginal correction. It shows up the use of the modern hyphen and comma. It is possible that Erasmus consulted Codex Leicestrensis and accepted the marginal correction as representing the true text. Or someone may have corrected the codex using Erasmus's printed text.³²



The addition of $\epsilon\iota$ before $\mu\eta$ in Matthew 19:9 was to have catastrophic consequences for Jesus' ethical teaching on marriage and divorce when the Reformers were drawing up their Confessions of Faith. They assumed that Erasmus had faithfully reproduced the best text from the manuscripts available to him at that time.

1.5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERASMUS AND THE *TEXTUS RECEPTUS*

Frobenius, a printer in Basle, Switzerland, suggested to Erasmus of Rotterdam, that they get a Greek New Testament printed ahead of the Alcalá (called *Complutum* in Latin) edition. It was done in a hurry, in six months, in fact, and printed on 1 March 1516, and dedicated to Pope Leo X. It, like the Complutensian, was a diglot with two columns per page, Greek and Latin.

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^e (Gospels), codex 2^{ap} (Acts and Epistles) and codex 1^r (Revelation); and he used a few other manuscripts (1^{ap}, 4^{ap}, 7^p) to make some minor alterations to the text.³³ The only manuscript he had for the Book of Revelation did not contain 22:16-21. He translated the Latin Vulgate of these missing verses back into Greek for the printer!

Erasmus's printed New Testament had many grammatical mistakes and printer's errors. But it was this work that was to become the foundation of the '*textus receptus*.' Five editions did not improve it very much despite the fact that he says he made a careful revision of the original work. These 'improvements' only corrected the worst of the printer's errors and his textual corrections introduced as many new errors as it removed older ones, according to some reviewers. The corrections were as follows: 2nd edition: 400 changes; 3rd edition: 118 changes³⁴; 4th edition: 100 changes (90 in Revelation); 5th edition: 4 changes. Erasmus's third edition introduced 1 John 5:7-8 on the basis of a sixteenth century manuscript (minuscule 61). Luther used the second edition for his 1521 German translation.

The TR had its beginnings in Erasmus's third edition (1522) which Robert Estienne (1503-1559), better known as Robert Stephens, used as the basis for his 1546 edition. His third edition (1550) became famous as the Royal edition. It was the first Greek New Testament to contain a critical apparatus in the side margins. There he gave the variant readings of Ximenes' (1514) edition (= Complutensian Polyglot), and fifteen other MSS, including the 5th century Codex Bezae (D/05) and the eighth 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 Erasmus (1535) and the Catholic Complutensian Polyglot. All "the corrections made by Stephens to the text of

³² See the extended note in Appendix F on Codex Leicestrensis.

³³ Leon Vaganay, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), p. 131.

³⁴ According to John Mill, *A New Edition of the Greek New Testament* (Oxford, 1707).

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].”³⁵

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 immutatum aut corruptum damus.*” Hence the name *Textus Receptus* (TR), which became part of orthodoxy in Europe;³⁶ while in Britain, Stephens’s edition of 1550 acquired this authority. There are only 287 differences between these two Greek New Testaments.³⁷

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

The 1873 Oxford edition of the *Textus Receptus* is a reprint of the 1828 edition, which is based on John Mill’s, *Novum Testamentum Graecum* (Oxon. 1707), which is based on Stephanus’ 1550 edition. This is now used to represent the standard text for the *Textus Receptus*, because it has removed all the obvious printing and scribal misspellings, etc.

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

1.6. HOW SHOULD THE DIVORCE TEXTS 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. Words in italics have no direct Greek behind them, but they are required for translation into correct English.

A word of explanation is needed about the use of square brackets and italicised words in translation. Take the sentence: Tom hit Jack but not Jill. What this means is that: Tom hit Jack but [he did] not [hit] Jill. The verb ‘hit’ is written once but understood twice.

Similarly, in the sentence: Whoever may divorce his wife, if not for fornication, and marries another, he is an adulterer. Here the verb ‘divorce’ is written once but understood twice. This is the same as saying: Whoever may divorce his wife, if not [he divorces] for fornication, and marries another [woman], he is an adulterer.

Now, since the ‘if’ before ‘not’ is not in the Greek, this leaves only the negative ‘not’. Without ‘if’ the verse now reads: Whoever may divorce his wife, not for fornication, and may marry another, he commits adultery. Here the verb ‘divorce’ is written once but understood twice. This is the same as saying: Whoever may divorce his wife, not [he may divorce] for fornication, and may marry another [woman], he commits adultery.

LUKE 16:18 (JESUS’ ABSOLUTIST POSITION)

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

MATTHEW 5:31-32 (THE EXEMPTION CLAUSE: THE HUSBAND IS NOT HELD RESPONSIBLE)

³⁵ Vaganay, *Introduction*, p. 133, who quotes Berger (1879:130).

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Scrivener, Frederick Henry. *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1874; 2nd ed.), p. 392.

Now it was said, “Who, say³⁸, 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 fornication³⁹. And who if, say, may have married a divorced wife he becomes adulterous by marrying her.

MATTHEW 19:3-12 (THE EXCLUSION CLAUSE: NOT EVEN FOR FORNICATION)

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—not *he may 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*.’

¹⁰ His disciples say to him, ‘If it is like this—*namely*, the case of the husband with the wife—it is not advantageous to marry.’ ¹¹ But he, he said to them, ‘Not all *men* do receive this word, but to whom it has *already* been given. ¹² For they are eunuchs, which out of a mother’s womb were born like this; and they are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs by men; and they are eunuchs, which eunuched themselves on account of the reign of the heavens. The *one* being able to receive *it*—let him receive *it*.’

MARK 10:2-12 (JESUS’ ABSOLUTIST POSITION)

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*.’

ROMANS 7:1-3 (ONLY DEATH ENDS A MARRIAGE)

Are you ignorant, brothers—for to those knowing law I speak—that the law⁴⁰ has lordship over the man as long as he lives? For the married woman has been bound by law to the living

³⁸ The small Greek particle (*an*) means, ‘suppose,’ ‘let us say,’ ‘for example,’ ‘for instance’. It introduces a hypothetical situation, especially for teaching purposes.

³⁹ Jesus puts the responsibility on the husband for what happens to a man’s wife after he divorces her. The exception to this blame is where she commits fornication *before* her husband divorced her. Alternatively, the exception to his responsibility/culpability 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. Jesus puts the blame for her adultery on her first husband.

⁴⁰ The ‘law’ here is ‘the law of the husband’ (not the Torah, or Dt 24:1-4), which is implicit in Gen 2:24, which upholds the permanent nature of the one-flesh union.

husband, and if the husband should die, she has been free from the law of the husband. So, then, the husband being alive, she shall be called an adulteress if she becomes another man's *wife*. Now if the husband should die, she is free from the law, so that she cannot be *deemed* to be an adulteress, having become another man's wife.⁴¹

1 CORINTHIANS 7:39 (ONLY DEATH ENDS A MARRIAGE)

A wife has been bound by the law so long time as her husband should live. Now if her husband may sleep [die], she is free to be married to whom she desires—only *she must marry* in the Lord.

Now, it is significant that when Jesus states His own teaching free from any context, He never qualifies His absolute ban on divorce. In private, with His twelve Apostles, He is consistent in denying any validity to any divorce. He stated in Luke: "Every *husband* divorcing his wife, and marrying another *woman*, commits adultery." He stated the same in Mark: "Who if, for example, may have divorced his wife, and may have married another *woman*, he becomes adulterous *by marrying her*." But then, lest someone should wonder if the same applies to a wife divorcing her husband, Jesus addresses that possibility directly in Mark, when He added: "And if, say, a wife may have divorced her husband, and she may have been married to another *man*, she becomes adulterous *by marrying him*." So there is no loophole in His teaching. Whether the wife divorces her husband, or the husband divorces his wife, is immaterial: both are committing adultery if they remarry.

But another loophole opens up. The manner in which Jesus states His teaching might suggest that it is the person who *initiates* the divorce, and who remarries, who is the adulterer. So what is the status of the one who has been the victim of the divorce? Is the victim free to remarry? Jesus closed off that possible loophole by stating in Luke: "And every *man* marrying a divorced *wife*, he commits adultery," and in Matthew: "And the *man* having married a divorced *wife*, he becomes adulterous *by marrying her*." So if an unmarried man innocently marries a divorced woman, he is an adulterer in Jesus' eyes, because the woman he has married is still the wife of another man. *Jesus does not recognize the validity of the husband's Mosaic divorce*. Similarly, if a virgin marries a divorced man she is an adulteress in Jesus' eyes, because the man she has married is still the husband of another woman.

There can be no doubt about the challenge that Jesus has mounted against the Mosaic law on divorce. He deliberately invalidates all divorces obtained through Deuteronomy 24:1-3 and Exodus 21:1-10. This is another case where Jesus might have said, "You heard that it was said of old, a man may divorce his wife for any cause, especially fornication, that displeases him, but I say to you that if any man obtains such a divorce he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

The challenge Jesus mounted against Moses's law meant that all marriages entered into, following a divorce, were adulterous relationships. Jesus, quite bluntly, condemned Moses for introducing his law of divorce. Jesus recognized that Moses was forced into making such a law, because of the hardness of men's hearts. But bowing to the hardness of men's hearts compromised the original teaching on marriage that God instituted 'in the beginning', between Adam and Eve. Jesus brushed away Moses' degrading law of divorce which was created by men for men to gratify their lusts, and He reinstated the original law of marriage, which ruled out any divorce on any grounds. By undercutting Deuteronomy 24 and Exodus 21 with His return to Genesis 2:24, Jesus totally undermined the rationale for divorce. It meant that Jesus lifted His disciples on to a different plane of experience and living, one in which His spirit would indwell every believer and remove the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, of feeling, of compassion, of forgiveness, and mercy.

We have examined Jesus' statements about divorce which He gave in private. Now let us examine how He handled questions about His absolutist position. News, no doubt, soon spread about Jesus' abolition of divorce on any grounds. His enemies must have heard this news with astonishment. But astonishment soon turned to glee because here was a clear case where this 'country rabbi' took on Moses in a head to head confrontation. Moses was clearly superior to this ignorant, self-appointed rabbi, they must have thought. Jesus' reputation, as a national leader, would be lost overnight if they could trap him in a direct confrontation with Moses. To claim to be a higher authority than Moses would ensure his rejection by the nation, for who could condemn Moses and win the respect of the nation? The entire religious establishment was united behind Moses's teaching on divorce. The schools of Hillel and Shammai, so often at loggerheads with each other, and vying with each other to be the supreme authority in religious matters, were united in the first item on their

⁴¹ A remarriage can only follow a death, not a divorce.

lists of causes that men could divorce their wives for, namely, 'for fornication'. Then followed an extensive list of decreasing misdemeanours ending in trivial causes such as burning the husband's dinner. The trap was set to ask Jesus if a man could divorce his wife "for any cause". They expected Jesus would soften on His hard stance over divorce. But they underestimated Jesus. He knew these men well. They were hypocrites. He knew the way they exploited their wives with their easy divorces. They were ignorant of the fact that a greater than Moses stood in their midst. For the man they were about to tempt was none other than Immanuel—God with us. God Himself was about to give them an answer that would alter their relationship with Moses for ever.

The Pharisees gathered about Him. The question was asked. They stood in intense silence listening and expecting Him to say: "I abolish divorce, except for fornication." Instead, as He looked them in the eye He said, "not for fornication". This was the last thing they expected to hear from Him. By denying the first, and unquestionable grounds for divorce, He had effectively ruled out all the long list of causes that came after 'fornication'. How easily, the Son of God, demolished the Mosaic system of divorce. Little did they realise that a greater than Moses had arrived in their midst according to prophecy. One greater than Moses had spoken, and spoken with such supreme self-assurance and self-belief in His teaching. Exuding tremendous confidence in His own superior authority He demolished the teaching of Moses on which all men were depending on to put away their unloved wives. The implication of His abolition of Moses was that His teaching was vastly superior to that of Moses. And it was superior, because the Son and the Father were one in their hatred of divorce. At this point in history, the dispensation of divorce was abolished. From now on all men were accountable to the Son, and would be judged by Him on the Day of Judgment.

Jesus, like no man before Him, could see the evils of divorce. We have in Matthew 5:31-32 His thoughts on the *implications* of divorce. Here He is not spelling out His absolutist position, but commenting on the implications of going ahead with a divorce. And the implications are extremely serious, as He is about to explain to them. He said, "Now it was said, 'Who, say, may have divorced his wife, let him give to her a departure document.' But I, I say to you that who, say, may have divorced his wife he makes her to become adulterous—apart from the case of fornication. And who if, say, may have married a divorced wife he becomes adulterous by marrying her."

Note the insinuation of Jesus. The man who divorces *makes* his wife commit adultery. The man would dispute that implication vehemently. He would argue that once he had handed her her bill of divorce setting her free to marry whomsoever she pleased, what she did after that was none of his business. This Jesus challenged head on. Under His new Covenant rule over all men, the man who divorced his wife would be held responsible for his wife's subsequent adultery when she remarried. The implication of this new ruling was that it was impossible to get a divorce and remain innocent, and that is exactly the point Jesus was determined to push all men to. Divorce was now abolished, and anyone who thought they could go on living under the old Mosaic provisions would be excluded from God's presence.

Matthew 5:31-32 must be set in the context of who is culpable for the consequences of divorcing one's partner. Jesus puts the responsibility on the husband for what happens to a man's wife after he divorces her.

Now here comes the exception clause. Note that the exception is not a loophole to Jesus' absolutist position, but an exception to the man's *culpability* for what happens to his wife *after* he has set her out in the street.

The exception covers the case where she commits fornication *before or after* her husband divorced her. Jesus would not be unjust to blame a man for his wife's unfaithfulness while she was living with him. Neither would Jesus hold a man responsible for his wife's sexual sins after he divorced her if she 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 by her husband, then her second marriage is an adulterous relationship, because in God's eyes she is still the wife of her first husband. In this case, Jesus puts the blame for her adultery on her first husband, but He makes an exemption if his wife, of her own free will, does not remarry but lives a life of fornication. This is the true explanation for the genuine exceptive clause in Matthew 5:31-32.

Likewise, if a wife divorces her husband for fornication, she is not held responsible for his sin. Likewise, when he leaves her, if he chooses not to remarry, but live a life of fornication, then she will not be held responsible for his sins. However, if he believes that she has given him his freedom to remarry, then she will be held responsible for his sin of adultery, because in God's eyes he is still married to her.

But there was another dimension to their trap. They had heard Jesus preach the sum of the Law as, 'Love God and love your neighbour as yourself'. He had also preached that unless we forgive others their sins, God would not forgive us our sins (Lk 11:4). It implied that the sin of adultery had

to be forgiven should the offender ask for it (cf. Lk 17:3). The ancients had preached, 'Love your neighbour, and hate your enemy' (Mt 5:43), but Jesus turned this on its head and commanded His followers to 'love your enemies' (Mt 5:44). They were to bless those cursing them. They were to do good to those hating them; and pray for their persecutors and those saying all manner of evil about them. They were to turn the other cheek, when hit by their enemies. The Pharisees could not understand this new teaching of the 'Kingdom of God' that Jesus preached everywhere as 'being within you' (Lk 17:22), and as having 'come near' to the nation of Israel. Jesus prayed to His Father to forgive those who crucified Him. He was true to His own teaching right up to the end.

The trap the Pharisees laid for Him was simple. They tempted Him to name some sins that would justify divorce. They dictated the shape of Jesus' answer by posing the question in a loaded manner. They asked, 'Is it lawful to divorce *for every cause*?' If He had replied: 'for every cause', then He would have agreed with rabbi Hillel's list and his interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-3, which consisted of (1) adultery, (2) desertion, (3) abuse, (4) hard-heartedness, (5) neglect, and (6) any other cause a husband wished to nominate, such as burning his dinner.

No doubt, as they discussed the possibilities that Jesus might give in His answer, they would have assumed that He would mention fornication as the number one sin, as this was universally agreed to be the most heinous sin against the marriage union. It was also commonsense. How far His list would agree with Shammai's or Hillel's was, no doubt, also on their minds. But if Jesus had agreed with them to nominate one sin that should not be forgiven, then He was a hypocrite, and they would have laughed Him to scorn. Why? Because He preached that men should forgive seventy times seven (Mt 18:21-23), and seven times a day (Lk 17). Now if Jesus had an exception clause tucked away somewhere in His teaching, to His own absolute position on forgiving all sins, then He misled Peter. An exception for the sin of fornication would have undermined His own teaching that men must forgive others all their sins. But has Jesus nominated a sin that should not be forgiven? If He has, that would not be in keeping with the Lord's Prayer ('forgive us our sins as we forgive others their sins'). And significantly, it would be the only sin that Jesus taught should be punished, rather than forgiven.⁴²

Jesus saw through their trap easily and in His answer He put them on the spot. The one sin that they felt sure He would agree not to forgive would be fornication, but it was precisely this sin that He ruled out when He said: "Whoever divorces his wife—not *even* for fornication—and marries another commits adultery." Jesus taught that no sin was too great that it could not be forgiven unilaterally, even fornication, or adultery. Jesus easily evaded the trap because His teaching on love and forgiveness was at the heart of His Gospel. God had continually forgiven Israel her 'adultery' for 1500 years. Hoshea had forgiven his wife her adultery. Neither divorced their spouses. Jesus found the golden rule in the Scriptures: "All things, therefore, that you wish that men should do to you, do likewise to them, for this is the law and the prophets" (Mt 7:12).

Jesus came through the trap laid for Him without compromising His absolutist position regarding the illegitimacy and unlawfulness of divorce among His followers. He upheld His Father's teaching: "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

The exemption clause in Matthew 5:32 is a genuine exceptive clause. The evil came about through Codex Vaticanus and other corrupt manuscripts, which transferred this grammatically, genuine exceptive clause into Matthew 19:9, where it does not belong. Matthew 19:9 contains an exclusion clause, not an exceptive clause.

From an examination of the above texts it is clear that Jesus has abolished divorce *per se*. There are now no grounds for divorce. Divorce was the creation of man. Marriage was the creation of God.

It follows that if the man-made creation of divorce has been abolished for all time to come then remarriage is out of the question. *All remarriages are adulterous relationships while both spouses are still alive*. Both fornicators and adulterers are excluded from heaven. "Have you not known that the unrighteous the reign of God shall not inherit? Be not led astray; neither 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).

⁴² Many in Paul's churches had been adulterers and fornicators (1 Cor 6:11) before their conversion but they were 'cleansed' of this sin before they were permitted to become church members. Jesus did envisage church discipline, see Mt 19:15-17, and excommunication (1 Cor 5:1-5) with the object of restoring the sinner to full membership again.

When Codex Vaticanus transferred the exemption clause in Matthew 5:32 into Matthew 19:9, and when Erasmus added εἰ (EI) before μὴ in Matthew 19:9, both of these changes introduced a completely new idea. Where Jesus had said, “not for fornication,” meaning, a man may not divorce for fornication, Vaticanus and Erasmus changed it to read, he may not divorce “except for fornication,” which Erasmus then translated into Latin to read, “except for indecency,” thereby permitting divorce for fornication *and* virtually ‘every cause’ that a man could squeeze into the term ‘indecency’. He is rabbi Hillel come alive again.

Jesus, in fact, specifically ruled out fornication as a grounds for divorce, but Erasmus turned the text into grounds *for* divorce. You could not get a more blatant contradiction that this, and this blatant misrepresentation of Jesus’ teaching is present in every major English translation from the Reformation to the present day. It is these mistranslations which are the cause of sin among all Protestant denominations. A large number of Christian leaders are in an adulterous, second-marriage situation. These men are never going to abide by the standard that Jesus has set for His people. It is from among these men that translation committees are formed, ensuring that the exceptive clause remains embedded in each succeeding new translation.

The diagram below shows the gulf that exists between the life of the Lord Jesus and the life of the Pharisees. Jesus was ‘in the world’ but not ‘of the world’. His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom. To enter His kingdom a man had to be ‘born-from-above’. To remain within His kingdom one had to have the Spirit of Christ living within him. The contrasts could not be greater. Jesus knew that His kingdom had invaded the realm of the kingdom of Satan, and from Satan’s kingdom would be rescued a remnant of humanity. The mindset of that remnant would be increasingly conformed to His own image—an image of freely forgiving all who sinned and an intense love to do all in one’s power to urge all men to be reconciled to God, their Maker. Jesus called on His disciples to live a life totally different from that of the Pharisees. A crucial area of difference was one’s attitude to the marriage bond.

The diagram shows that where the Pharisees could not forgive their wives they resorted to divorce. Jesus taught that this act was incompatible with His forgiving spirit. That clearly marked off His disciples from the disciples of Moses. Indeed, an unbridgeable gulf separated the two life-styles.

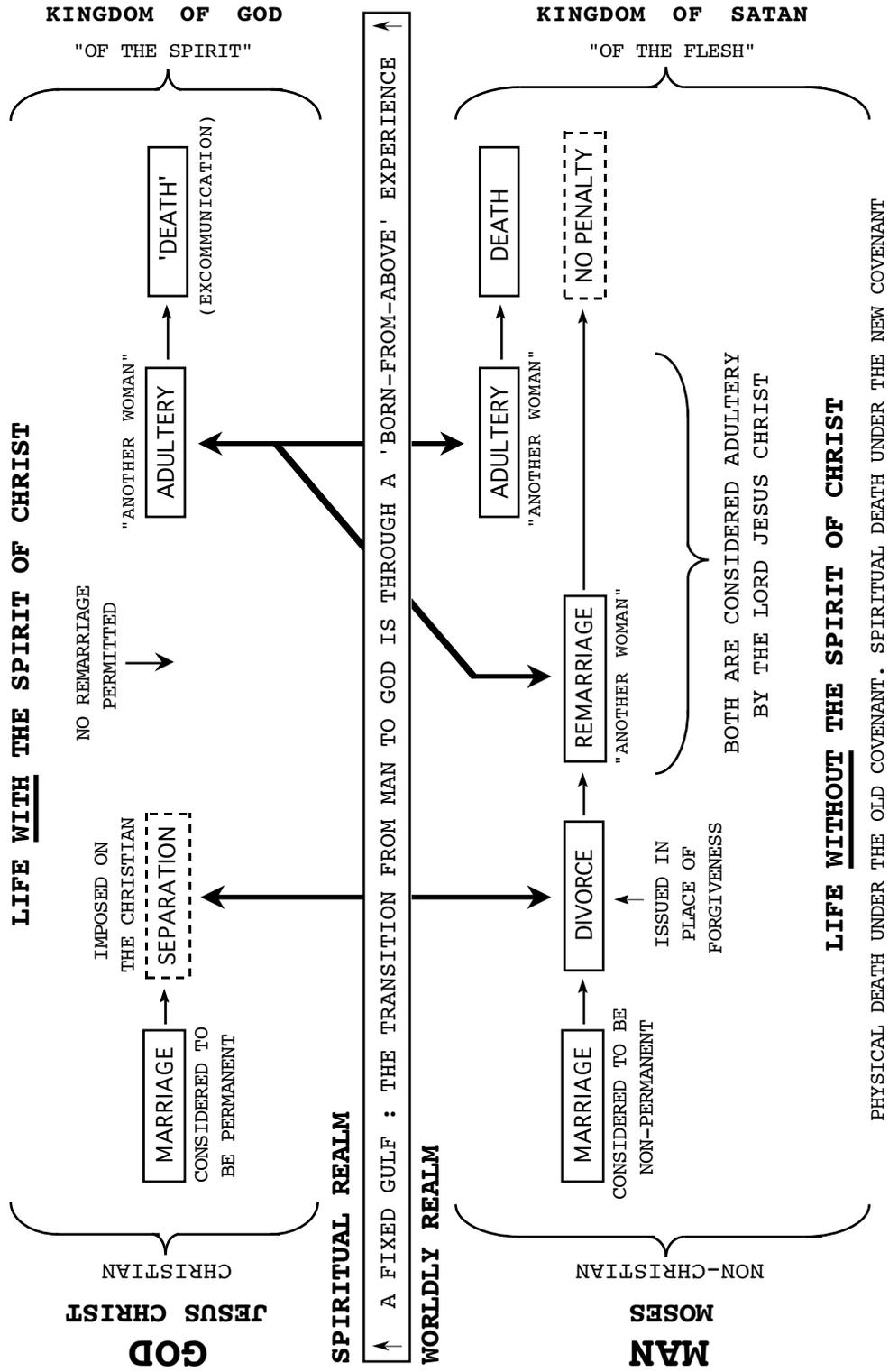
The diagram shows that where the Pharisees introduced remarriage, Jesus permitted His followers to accept separation, the separation that comes from sin—and to patiently wait for reconciliation. If reconciliation did not look probable, His followers were not to be anxious about it, but to devote their new status as ‘freed from marriage’ to give more time to His cause.

The diagram also shows that Jesus put remarriage on the same level as adultery. Remarriages can only occur in the worldly realm, in the kingdom of Satan, among those living ‘according to the flesh’, in other words among those who are perishing, who are living without the Spirit of Christ. Remarriage is a sin, because it opposes what God has required of all men from the beginning of the creation.

The constant danger facing the remnant is to forsake the spiritual realm and go back into Satan’s kingdom to take advantage of his Divorce Certificate, thinking that it will free him from his unwanted wife. But to do so will lead to spiritual death. If he can’t forgive, then neither will he be forgiven.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A WOMAN WHO HAS SEX WITH TWO LIVING MEN IS A DEFILED WOMAN AND AN ABOMINATION TO GOD AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD TO THE END OF TIME



1.7. A SUMMARY OF JESUS' TEACHING

The following characteristics can be deduced from Jesus' foundational teaching about human marriage:

(1) It is indissoluble. God has ordained that once male and female 'come together' in marriage the bond between them can never be severed. Only the death of one of the partners can end the relationship. (Mt 19:4b-6, 8b; Mk 6-9; 1 Cor 7:39; Rom 7:2b, 3b) See (7) below for an apparent exception.

(2) Divorce *per se* is a violation of God's law for marriage. No one can use any man-made means to dissolve a consummated marriage, such as secular divorce courts or wilful desertion. (Mt 5:32; Lk 16:18; Mt 19:9; Mk 10:11-12; 1 Cor 7:10b, 11b-13) See (7) below for a real exception.

(3) Remarriage *per se* is a violation of God's law for marriage. No one can attempt to dissolve the first marriage bond by making another. Two is a mystery, but three is a monstrosity. A second marriage is always bigamous and adulterous while both partners are alive. (Mt 5:32; Lk 16:18; Mt 19:9; Mk 10:11-12) See (7) below for a real exception.

(4) Adultery occurs when partners use some man-made means to end a consummated marriage and then remarry. Either or both members are guilty of adultery against their partner if they remarry. There is no such thing as an innocent party in a remarriage. The innocent *and* the guilty party must remain unmarried or be reconciled. (Mt 5:32; Lk 16:18; Mt 19:9; Mk 10:11-12; 1 Cor 7:11, 15; Rom 7:3) See (7) below for an apparent exception.

(5) Anyone who marries a person already married or divorced from an existing partner is guilty of adultery against that person. (Mt 5:32; Lk 16:18; Mt 19:9) See (7) below for an exception in the case of a "divorced" betrothed wife.

(6) Anyone who divorces a person will be held responsible by God for the future sexual sins that that divorced person will commit through a second marriage. (Directly stated, Mt 5:32; [indirectly stated, Lk 16:18; Mt 19:9; Mk 10:11-12]) See (7) below for a real exception.

(7) Judaism permitted divorce before marriage as well as after it. This is an anomaly, because until there is actual intercourse, the two have not become one flesh. Consequently, anyone who divorces an engaged spouse will *not* be held responsible by God for the future relations that that 'divorced' person will experience through a 'second marriage'. This law only applies to cultures which require a bill of divorce to break a binding marriage contract before it is consummated. Because the two persons never became 'one flesh' there was no consummated marriage, therefore there can be no adultery following such a 'divorce'.

It should also be borne in mind that a marriage between Christians was the expected norm (1 Cor 7:39). To marry against this norm was to invite the Lord's displeasure if not punishment. When one partner becomes a Christian the marriage is still a 'one flesh' union, and whether the unbeliever stays or leaves (through getting a state divorce) the marriage bond exists until one partner dies (1 Cor 7:12-15).

The teaching of the Lord Jesus was simple, 'no dissolution and therefore no remarriage,' that it was never seriously challenged for the first five centuries. The Early Church set its face resolutely against all remarriages.

The conclusion of this paper can be summed up as follows:

JUDAISM PERMITTED DIVORCE BEFORE MARRIAGE AS WELL AS AFTER IT

<p>UNCONSUMMATED MARRIAGE A BINDING ENGAGEMENT TO BE MARRIED</p>	<p>CONSUMMATED MARRIAGE</p>
<p>DIVORCE REQUIRED TO END BOTH RELATIONSHIPS</p>	
<p>THE "HUSBAND" IS EXEMPT FROM THE SIN OF HIS "WIFE'S" REMARRIAGE</p>	<p>THE HUSBAND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SIN OF HIS WIFE'S REMARRIAGE</p>

GREEKS AND ROMANS DID NOT HAVE A CUSTOM OF DIVORCE FOR ENGAGED COUPLES HENCE MARK AND LUKE OMIT MENTIONING IT

ALL CULTURES PERMITTED DIVORCE FOR CONSUMMATED MARRIAGES. UNIQUELY, GOD DID NOT PERMIT IT FOR HIS PEOPLE

Evangelicals are now deeply split over the issue of divorce and remarriage. Gordon Wenham and William Heth have argued the case for a return to the doctrine and practice of the Early Church. According to them, in the centuries following the first proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world, the Church's unanimous view was "no remarriage following divorce," and "divorce" was interpreted as separation and not a dissolution of the marriage.⁴³ There are a number of difficulties with the interpretation (but not the practice) of the Early Church view as put forward by Wenham & Heth, and these will be outlined later on. First, we shall take a look at the prevailing situation in the world today.

The Early Church view was not rediscovered during the Reformation. Rather, the situation among the main denominations since the Reformation is best summed up in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) Chapter XXIV. Sections V and VI:

Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract [Matt. 1:18-20]. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce [Matt. 5:32], and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead [Matt. 19:9; Rom 7:2-3].

Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage; yet nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage [Matt. 19:8-9; 1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 19:6]: wherein a publick and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed, and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion in their own case [Deut. 24:1-4].

When compared to the seven characteristics that should mark every human marriage, none but the seventh (in the opening sentence) is in agreement with the doctrine and practice of the Early Church. Wenham & Heth have ably exposed the weaknesses of this interpretation of Jesus' teaching. It is sufficient just to highlight a number of objections to it. Note, however, the recognition given to the divorce of betrothed wives in the first sentence. Only the example of Joseph and Mary is given in support of this. The possibility that Matthew's exemption clauses might refer to the same situation never seems to have occurred to those who drew up the Confession.

⁴³ Tertullian (AD 155-220), in his later writings (unfortunately not quoted by W-H), accepted that adultery terminated a marriage as death does (Wenham & Heth, *op cit.*, p. 37). It is interesting that Paul deliberately refuses to use the word for divorce (*apoluw*) and instead goes for non-technical verbs such as *aphiemi* (send away) and *chorizo* (separate), even though these later may have become identified with the old vocabulary. This break with the vocabulary of the Old Covenant Law would be typical of Paul's attitude to something which was now "obsolete" (Heb 8:13), and surpassed in the New Covenant Law of Christ. It was not until the sixth century that the Eastern Church permitted remarriage after divorce. The Western (Roman Catholic) Church up until the Reformation refused to permit second marriages.

1.8. 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 (1 Cor 6), how less likely should a Christian go to a secular court to dissolve a union that God had joined!

Nowhere under the Torah does God withdraw His command to kill adulterers, therefore for the Pharisees to replace it with divorce (if they did), this was to set aside God's law for their own traditions. It is sometimes argued that under Roman rule the Jews were not able to carry out the death penalty for adultery. But Roger Aus⁴⁴ has brought forward evidence that the death penalty was still being carried out under Roman rule, so that divorce was not the only option open for adultery to God-fearers. He noted, "It is also recorded that at least one daughter of a priest (still in her father's house) was burnt to death before 66 CE because of committing adultery (in Jerusalem)." And then, in the next sentence, he says, "If the daughter of a priest was caught while engaging in such behavior, it is very probable that those further down the social scale of priests/Levites/Israelites did so also, and certainly more frequently."

Divorce ends nothing. Pushing a piece of paper across a courtroom table changes nothing about that relationship in the eyes of God. As far as God is concerned they are still 'one flesh' after the paper has been pushed across the table. Divorce is a fiction. It has no reality in God's world.

Like Jesus, Paul regarded all marriages, Christian and non-Christian, as irreversible. Only the death of one of the partners could separate a married couple (Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:39). Remarriage, Jesus pointed out, only multiplies adulteries. There are no innocent parties if both spouses believe that by getting a divorce they have untied their marriage knot and are free to remarry. Jesus puts the blame on the spouse (the wife or husband) who initiates the divorce. The initiator is the guilty person, but the other spouse is just as guilty if they agree to it.

Note that New Testament Greek does not have a verb to convey the legal action 'to divorce'. It uses a variety of common verbs to convey the idea, such as 'to send away', 'to put away', 'to send out', etc. Interestingly, Paul never used the verb 'to send away' (*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 the state legalises prostitution, abortion and homosexual practices.

To believe that divorce actually annuls a legitimate marriage is to oppose Jesus' teaching on marriage. To then obtain a divorce and remarry is to sin against the Lord Jesus and God. *All divorces are sinful actions* if those who obtain them believe that they annul their legitimate marriages. *All remarriages are adulterous relationships* while both spouses are still alive.

⁴⁴ 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. Kirsopp Lake, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History* (2 vols; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1965) noted that Annas the high priest condemned James the Just to death and he was stoned (Vol. I. Bk 2. XXIII. §2, §22, §24).

APPENDIX D

TEXTUAL NOTES ON MATTHEW 5:32 & 19:9

The purpose of this Appendix is to show that one cannot trust either Codex Vaticanus (B) or Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph, Ⲙ), or both, in Matthew 5:32 and 19:1-10.

Assimilation in Matthew 5:32⁸⁵

The Nestle-Aland 27th edition at Matthew 5:32 reads: *πας ο απολυων*. This has the support of B L Δ 1. 33. K M Vulg c. f. ff¹. g². l. m. Syr^{pal, hcl} Goth Arm Eth. But the rest of the evidence, including the versions, support the MT reading *ος αν απολυση* which includes: Ⲙ D U 2 579 28 346 Syr^{cur}, Syr^{sin}, Sahidic and Bohairic. Nestle-Aland adds “*pm*” to this list.

The use of “*pm*”⁸⁶ in the critical apparatus to represent the MT reading here is misleading, because the MT is not “divided in fairly equal strength between two (rarely three) variant reading” as *pm* has been designated to convey.

Von Soden’s apparatus shows that the MT reading is undivided, though, strangely, Hodges & Farstad’s siglum indicates that the Majority Text witnesses are about three-quarters in support of their printed text, for they use M (not M-pt) instead of the Gothic M (Ⲙ), 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, but we need the full resources of scholars to produce the Byzantine Text-type. In the meantime, where is the ‘even split’ in the MT 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 tradition of the ancients at the thought-level, not just the physical level. The last three are all commands which overturn the tradition of the ancients. It would appear that the Nestle 27th preference at Mt 5:32 is due to assimilation with 5:22 and 28 (*πας* + participle; cf. Lk 16:18).

Mt 5:22 <i>οτι πας ο οργιζομενος</i>	“the one being angry”
Mt 5:28 <i>οτι πας ο βλεπων</i>	“the one viewing”
Mt 5:32 <i>οτι πας ο απολυων</i>	“the one divorcing” (= assimilation)
Mt 5:34 <i>μη ομοσαι</i>	“Do not swear”
Mt 5:38 <i>μη ανιστηναι</i>	“Do not oppose”
Mt 5:44 <i>αγαπατε</i>	“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 are the rest pre-Mosaic teachings?

Conclusion: Here is a case where the Egyptian text-type is split. MS B is clearly not the autograph text. It shows evidence of assimilation to the style of the first two challenges that Jesus makes to the teaching of the ancients. Despite this evidence, Nestle 27th accepts B as the likely original text.

Assimilation in Matthew 19:9

Another example of assimilation in MS B occurs at Matthew 19:9. Here MS B reads: *παρεκτος λογου πορνειας ποιει αυτην μοιχευθηναι*. This has been imported directly from Matthew 5:32 without any changes and replaces the autograph text at this point.

⁸⁵ 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 Zane C. Hodges & Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Nelson, 1985), and Maurice A. Robinson & William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform* (Southborough, MASS.; Chilton Book Publishing, 2005).

⁸⁶ *pm* = *permulti*, which means “a large number of manuscripts, when the Majority Text is divided”; see Nestle’s Introduction p. 56*

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 MT text in place of the rest of MS B. This hybrid text is unlikely to be the autograph text.

If we combine the textual evidence from Tischendorf and Tregelles for the replacement of *ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ* with *παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας*, and ignore the surrounding context, the evidence is as follows:

BDC^c 1. 1582. 33. 13. 69*. 124. 788. 346. *a.b.c.e.ff².g¹.h.m.* [=Old Latin MSS] (*c d ff. m = excepta causa adulterii; MS e = praeter causam fornicationis; MSS 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^{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: \aleph A \mathfrak{M} 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 MT as probably the reading of the original text.

The omission of Matthew 19:9b

MT reads: ‘And the *one* having married *one* having been divorced is being adulterous *with her.*’ This is omitted by Nestle 27th. (The words in italics need to be supplied in English.)

Combining the evidence from Nestle 27th, Tischendorf and Tregelles for the omission, this comes to: \aleph C³ D S L 2* 69 1241 *pc it a.b.e.ff².g¹.h. sy^{s.c} sa bo^{ms}.*

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

The evidence for a very slight variation on the \mathfrak{M} -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 \mathfrak{M} making a very strong case for including verse 9b, otherwise how does one explain the wide diversity of manuscripts and versions (Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic and Bohairic) in support of it?

The most obvious cause of the omission was *homoioteleuton* (h.t.) for which Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph) is famous (or rather, infamous). A *homoioteleuton* error can occur when two words have similar endings, and the term is now used for similar beginnings as well.

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 *μοιχᾶται*. The underlined text has accidentally dropped out of the manuscript. 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.

To counter the strong evidence of the Majority Text the theory put forward is that the fact that B reads “*μοιχᾶται* only once (at the conclusion of the combined clauses) makes it more probable that the text was expanded by copyists who accommodated the saying to the prevailing text of 5.32.”⁸⁷ This, of course, is special pleading.

καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ μοιχᾶται (Mt 19:9b)
 is said to have been derived from:
καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσας μοιχᾶται (Mt 5:32)

There are two difficulties with this explanation. If copyists borrowed a line from 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

⁸⁷ See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 48.

APPENDIX E

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE MAJORITY TEXT

The object of this Appendix is to show that the Reformation Churches were misled in 1881 into giving up the Majority Text (also called the Byzantine text, the Koine Text, the *Textus Receptus*, or simply MT⁹⁰) in favour of a *local* Egyptian Text. The Egyptian text came into prominence through Westcott and Hort in the late nineteenth century. Their text was based mainly (if not solely) on two manuscripts, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. The criterion used was, where these two manuscripts agreed against the MT, their text was to be preferred every time. This criterion still dominates all modern Greek texts of the New Testament.

Westcott and Hort succeeded in replacing the Majority Text with a *local*, Egyptian text using three false assumptions, namely, that the older a manuscript was the nearer it was to the original text. Secondly, that scribes were more likely to add words here and there in the copying process, than omit them. The latter criterion can be double-edged, in that if a copyist thinks this has happened to the copy he is about to re-copy and sets out to omit what he regards as redundancies, then he will end up with a shorter text, which is the case with the Egyptian text. It is about 3% shorter overall when compared to the MT. All modern English translations are based on this local, Egyptian text, which is a corrupt form of the Majority Text.

Their third assumption was that the Majority Text did not exist before the fifth century. They believed that it was created by an individual called Lucian. It is then postulated that his text was then taken up by the major centres of Christianity, particularly Constantinople, where it became the official text of the Church, resulting in the loss of almost all other text-types. There is no evidence for this conjecture. No modern scholar now accepts this concocted scenario, but it was accepted in 1881 as a probable fact, and the damage was done before it could be challenged. As a result the Revised Version of 1881 was not the revision of the Authorized Version that it was intended to be, but a version heavily influenced by Westcott and Hort's new Greek text.

WHY SHOULD CONSERVATIVE SCHOLARS BE SUSPICIOUS OF THE EGYPTIAN TEXT?

The reason why the Egyptian text should not be accepted is that it is a corrupt text.⁹¹ There are two blunders in the Egyptian Text that should alert all conservative-evangelical ministers of the Gospel to the nature of that corrupt text. In Matthew 27:49 Vaticanus and Sinaiticus have transported part of John 19:34 to this place. Their addition, which appears to have come from memory as the Greek words are in a different order, reads: "Now another taking a spear he plunged into his side and out came water and blood." What betrays this addition as a blunder is the position where it was added in Matthew's narrative. In John, it occurs after Jesus is dead, and the spear 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 *homoioleuthon* ('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.

⁹⁰ Erasmus' text and the Complutensian text were both based on Majority Text manuscripts, not on Egyptian or Western texts.

⁹¹ The reader would benefit greatly by reading an article entitled, "The Case for Byzantine Priority," by Maurice A. Robinson published as an Appendix in his work, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Southborough, Massachusetts: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005); also, by the same author, "In Search of the Alexandrian Archetype: Observations from a Byzantine-Priority Perspective," in *The New Testament Text in Early Christianity, Proceedings of the Lille colloquium, July 2000*, edited by Christian-B. Amphoux and J. Keith Elliott (Lausanne: Éditions de Zèbre, 2003), pp. 45-67.

On top of these obvious blunders and scribal mistakes, there are, in addition, thousands of minor changes to the Majority Text,⁹² hundreds of which do not affect the translation, but the fact that these alterations were made at all should make one suspicious of following a scribe who is that careless in copying out the Word of God for the next generation.⁹³

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

We can illustrate this by comparing the two versions of the MT which we find in the printed text of Erasmus and the Complutensian Polyglot. Lines 5 and 6 compare the Complutensian and Erasmus over against the MT.

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

	TYPE OF ERROR	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	TOTALS	%
1	OMISSIONS	56	47	49	51	203	22.5
2	ADDITIONS	47	28	49	52	176	19.5
3	SUBSTITUTIONS	106	71	108	99	384	42.5
4	TRANSPOSITIONS	16	9	19	9	53	6.0
						(816)	
5	AGREE AGAINST MT	21	14	24	23	82	9.0
6	ALL DISAGREE	1	0	2	3	6	0.5
	GOSPEL TOTALS	247	169	251	237	904	100%

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

	TYPE OF ERROR	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	TOTALS	%
1	OMISSIONS	11	18	20	18	67	11.1
2	ADDITIONS	32	31	34	30	127	21.1
3	SUBSTITUTIONS	76	50	65	31	222	37
4	VOWEL SUBSTITUTIONS	30	25	35	21	111	18.5
5	CONSONANT SUBSTIT	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

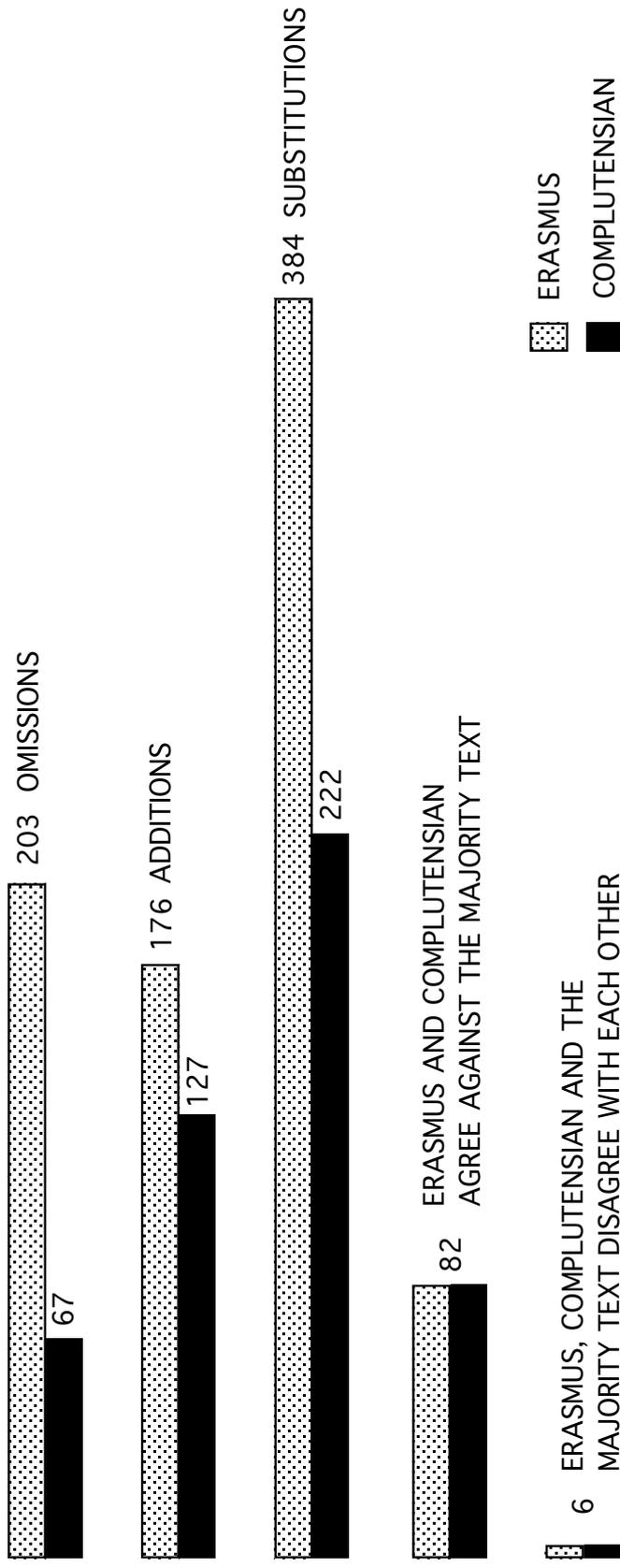
The far right column in both tables gives the percentage for each kind of error. It is clear that in Erasmus's text substitutions account for the clear majority of the errors (37%),⁹⁴ followed by additions (21.1%) and then vowel substitutions (itacisms) (18.5%). The total number of errors is 904 in Erasmus (hereafter abbreviated to Eras), and 601 in the Complutensian text (hereafter abbreviated to CP).

⁹² There are about 9,166 differences between the Majority Text and the combined errors in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in the four Gospels alone.

⁹³ A glaring error occurs in MS B which contradicts itself at Acts 10:19. There it states that two men came to visit Peter in Joppa, but in 11:11 it states there were three. It is the only manuscript to contain this contradiction.

⁹⁴ 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

There are two important facts that emerge from a comparison of the texts of Eras, CP and MT. The first remarkable fact is that in only six cases do Eras, CP and MT all disagree. The second remarkable fact is the figure of 82 agreements between Eras and CP *against* the Majority Text. This shows that the Greek MSS consulted by Eras and CP came from a common ancestor, albeit probably an ancestor four or five generations back, when these 82 divergences from the MT were introduced.

From these two totals we can make the following important observation: *Wherever Erasmus differs from CP, CP agrees with the MT, and wherever CP differs from Erasmus, Erasmus agrees with the MT.* This means that all disagreements between Erasmus and the Complutensian come about because one or other departs from the Majority Text.

Why is this important? The answer is that we find an identical situation between MS B (Codex Vaticanus), MS \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 MT all disagree. The second fact is that Vat. and Sin. agree *against* the Majority Text in 666 cases. This shows that the text copied by Vat. and Sin. came from a common ancestor, albeit probably an ancestor four or five generations back. If we deduct the 666 divergences from the MT—plus the 29 where they each disagree—from their combined disagreements with the MT, which is 1529 variants, we can make the following important observation: *Wherever Vaticanus differs from Sinaiticus, which happens 610 times, Sinaiticus agrees with the MT, and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, which happens 890 times, Vaticanus agrees with the MT.*

An identical study was carried out on Luke's Gospel which produced the same pattern. There are 14 cases where Vat., Sin., and MT all disagree. The second fact is that Vat. and Sin. agree *against* the Majority Text in 1157 cases. It is this large number of shared disagreements that constitutes the Egyptian Text as a distinct text-type, and so distinguishes it from the MT. These shared disagreements are found in the *local* Egyptian text.⁹⁵ It was never a universal text, like the MT. This shows that the text copied by Vat. and Sin. came from a *local*, Egyptian common ancestor, albeit probably an ancestor going back to the second century.

If in Luke we deduct the figure of 643 divergences of Vaticanus from the MT—plus the 14 where they each disagree—from their (B+ \aleph) combined disagreements with the MT, which is 1425 variants, we can make the following significant observation: *Wherever Vaticanus differs from Sinaiticus, which happens 643 times in Luke, Sinaiticus always agrees with the MT, and wherever Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus, which happens 768 times, Vaticanus always agrees with the MT.* The conclusion is inescapable, namely, all disagreements between Vaticanus and Sinaiticus come about because one or other departs from the Majority Text. In the copying of Luke, Sinaiticus has moved further way from the text of Vaticanus, which is closer to the MT. It is the same in the copying of John. Sinaiticus has moved further way from the text of Vaticanus, which is closer to the MT. The same goes for Matthew and Mark; Vaticanus is closer to the Majority Text.

What this study shows is that if the Roman Catholic church had published its Greek New Testament as soon as it was printed, there would not have been the need to produce Erasmus' Greek New Testament. But the delay between printing the New Testament in 1514 and its release to the public in 1522, allowed an inferior version to swamp the market. Also, the Complutensian was limited to 600 copies. It was expensive, and it was never reprinted.⁹⁶ Its text is far 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 Erasmus' 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 as its main text. We need to lay the TR aside and give a straight translation of the Majority Text to the next generation.

⁹⁵ The so-called Western Text is a mixture of MT + Egyptian + arbitrary changes.

⁹⁶ 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.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In any congregation there will be Christians whose sin is not visible. They may be committing adultery in their mind. But there are others whose sin is visible in the form of their second spouse. Many of these will have obtained their divorce through ignorance, or before they became Christians. Wise counselling will be needed to restore such persons to live a life pleasing to God. The Holy Spirit stipulates, through Paul, that the Elders in Christ's Church must be the husbands of one wife. And what goes for Elders must also go for all male members, as the norm.

The knowledge that Jesus has abolished divorce for all His followers is considered by many Christians to be a 'harsh doctrine'. But calling it 'harsh' or 'soft' makes no difference to the sinfulness of divorce. Flee the divorce courts as you would flee the brothel.

During the course of His short ministry Jesus offended many interest groups, and religious parties, and He said some harsh words of rebuke to other groups (Jn 6:61). He stood absolutely alone on occasions. Even His own disciples were offended by some of the things He preached (Lk 11:45). On some occasions His own disciples gave up following Him and returned to their earlier belief-system. The abolition of divorce was one such 'hard doctrine' to accept.

Many attempts have been made to soften His teaching, or to bring Jesus down to the level of a mere man, a new Moses, with a revised, updated version of the old Torah. Many have tried to incorporate, accommodate, or merge the old Torah into His new teaching; to mix the old, stale wine, with the new wine of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. We have seen the emergence of a rabbinic-gospel, whereby the leaven of Hillel has been mixed in with the teaching of Jesus. Jesus was aware of rabbinic teaching which he hated: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," He preached (Mt 16:12; Mk 8:15; Lk 12:1). The new wine of Jesus' teaching requires new wine skins to contain it. The old, rabbinic skins (doctrines) have to be discarded.

In the final analysis, the consensus of scholars counts for nothing, whether they are for or against Christ's teaching on divorce. When we stand before our Lord to give an account for our lives and teaching what counts is what the Spirit has revealed. I have shown that what has been revealed in the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts, and in the unanimous witness of the early Church fathers, is that Jesus abolished divorce, as He abolished adulterers, prostitutes and homosexuals, from having any part or place in His Kingdom. Jesus does not play around with sin or make it an integral part of His system, as the rabbis did. Divorce, like stealing, is a sin against God, and no sin can enter heaven.

There is not a single doctrine in Jesus' teaching which has come about through pressure of the hard-heartedness of His followers, or through the refusal of His disciples to accept any of His doctrines, forcing Jesus to back down, compromise, or concede to their wishes. Yet this is what happened when God introduced His Torah to Israel. They refused to stone the adulterers and fornicators, and forced Moses to regulate their demand to be able to divorce their hated wives for any cause. The response of hate is divorce; the response of love is forgiveness. It is truly astonishing that God permitted Moses to introduce his Bill of Divorce in order to let these hard-bitten husbands get their own way.

It would appear that there are many Christian leaders who are attempting to do the same thing with Jesus' teaching. Unfortunately for them, Jesus will not change His doctrines to suit their hard-heartedness. It is a case of either you forsake all and follow Him in every detail of His teaching, or you turn back and create your own denomination, or church, or sect. What you cannot do is pretend that Jesus permitted divorce for fornication, and that you are going to take advantage of some perceived loophole in His teaching to punish your wives or husbands. There is no such loophole. If Jesus permitted divorce for fornication then He destroys His own doctrine that men must forgive men *all* their sins. There is no exception clause for withholding forgiveness for fornication or adultery. Jesus forgave the sin of adultery with the words, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." That has to be the only response of every Christian. Jesus made no room in that statement for the setting up of divorce courts.

God the Father handed over all mankind to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it will be before Him that every individual will give an account of his words and deeds. The more a person knows of God's teaching and will for them, the more will be expected from them.

It is a privilege to expound the teaching of Jesus clearly in this article. It has made me realise more than ever that to follow Jesus without a born-again experience is not possible. It requires a new spirit and a new heart, one that can love one's enemy and forgive all men their trespasses in a genuine manner. Where that spirit is present, there is also the spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Divorce is man's attempt to regulate sin, not kill it. Divorce feeds, fertilises and multiplies sin. Jesus starves, weeds out and exterminates sin in the lives of all His born-again followers. The clear

message coming from Jesus' teaching and the revelation of the Holy Spirit is to flee divorce as you would flee stealing.

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