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LET NO ONE SEPARATE:
ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

AN ESSAY ON AN ETHICAL ISSUE

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ABBREVIATIONS

BR	Translation of the text is the authors
cf. confer, “compare”	
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , “for example”
LXX	Septuagint – Greek translation of the Old Testament
NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible</i> [®] , copyright © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission.
NICOT	<i>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</i>
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SBJT	Southern Baptist Journal of Theology
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
tr. translated	

INTRODUCTION

To display the glory of the union between Christ and His bride, the church, God ordained that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24; cf. Eph 5:21-33). Rooted in this divine purpose for marriage is God’s purpose to enable a fallen people to partake of an eschatological glory by profiting from what is temporarily meant to image-forth the immeasurable worth of His grace in Jesus, His Son. If this is true for the God-ordained union within marriage, how then shall one think ethically about the issues of divorce and remarriage? For Christian theists, the fundamental approach to answering this question is to first understand the ideal taught by Jesus Christ and the biblical witness to Him. By observing the teachings of Jesus, the apostle Paul, and the Old Testament, this essay, though brief, will try to give grounds for two assertions: 1) a person who has been married and then divorced has no grounds for remarriage, whether guilty or innocent, unless upon the death of one of the parties; and 2) a person who has been married has no grounds for divorce.

TEACHING OF JESUS

Before looking at the first text, Lk 16:18, it is important to first make a note about v. 17, namely, Jesus is not cavalier with His understanding or approach to the Law. Rather, He upholds the Law, and according to Mt 5:17, fulfills it (cf. Mt 5:18-19). Luke’s placement of such a statement about the Law before Jesus’ comment on remarriage reaffirms two things when speaking to the Pharisees. The first is that Jesus does not doubt what the Law affirms. The

second is that He is critical of the Pharisees interpretation of it (cf. Lk 6:3, 9; 11:39; 16:15, 16)—more of which will be observed below. Thus, displeased with their mishandling of the Law, Jesus states, “Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and the one who marries one divorced from a husband commits adultery” (Lk 16:18, BR). Three things are clear in this statement. 1) The first half asserts that a man who marries another, after divorcing his wife, commits adultery against her. Thus, divorce does not dissolve the marriage union, and the divorcer has no grounds for remarriage. 2) The second half asserts that a man who marries a woman who has previously been divorced from her husband commits adultery. In other words, Jesus teaches that even the *innocent* one, whom the previous adultery had been committed against, is not to be remarried, else the man who marries her will become adulterous.¹ 3) There is no exception clause in Luke, nor is an exception implied.² Therefore, according to Lk 16:18, it is clear Jesus taught that if a man divorces his wife and remarries, and if one marries a divorcee, both acts are considered adultery, because divorce does not dissolve the previous union.³

A second Gospel text which parallels Jesus’ teaching on remarriage is Mk 10:11-12 (vv. 2-9 addressed below). It states, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man,

¹ For this conclusion, it is helpful to observe that τὴν γυναῖκα in the first half of the verse is the same woman who was divorced in the second half. This is clear from Luke’s use of the active ἀπολύων in the first half and then switching to the passive ἀπολελυμένην in the latter half. Therefore, there are no grounds on which to object that the innocent party who was divorced is now able to remarry. According to Lk 16:18 there is no party that can be remarried; whether it is the one who committed divorce or the innocent one who was divorced.

² This third point is to point us away from any notion that Jesus’ statement is to be made out as an exaggeration, and thus modified when applied to ‘real-life’ situations (so G. F. Hawthorne, “Marriage and Divorce, Adultery and Incest,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Ried [Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1993], 596). It is simply a straightforward appeal to what He understands the Law to teach (more on this below in Mt 19:9; cf. Dt 24:1-4).

³ For the concerns of this essay, it is helpful to add Leonard Goppelt’s observation that this “bewildering legal maxim did not wish to prohibit remarriage casuistically, but as *mashal*, to condemn every divorce” (*Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Jürgen Roloff, vol. 1, trans. John E. Alsup [Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981], 110.).

she is committing adultery” (NASB). Similar to Luke’s account, the first half of this text asserts that a man who divorces his wife and then marries another woman commits adultery against the woman he divorced. Again, it is clear that Jesus taught that the one who divorces his wife has no grounds for remarriage. In fact, Mark even records an additional assertion in his Gospel which applies to the woman who divorces—not just the man as in the other evangelists’.⁴ Jesus makes it clear that a woman who divorces her husband, and then remarries another man, also commits adultery. In Mark, it is also appropriate to observe that he does not allude to anything Jesus might have taught as an exception to these things. Therefore, it is clear that Mark also quotes Jesus teaching there are no grounds for remarriage without also committing adultery, for a man or a woman; and thus also implying, as in Luke, the consequences of divorce do not annul the previous marriage union.⁵

Though Luke and Mark both give clear accounts of Jesus’ teaching concerning the issue of divorce and remarriage, one more Synoptic tradition remains, the Gospel of Matthew. It is Matthew who includes additional clauses in two places which leads scholars to assume an exception is indeed the case for one’s ethical understanding of divorce and remarriage. The first of Jesus’ teachings is found in the ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ and the second is during an encounter with the Pharisees in Judea. Respectively, these texts will be addressed with regard to my

⁴ Among the Synoptic tradition, Mark is the only one who notes the wife acting to divorce her husband. This is probably due to Mark’s gospel being more pointed toward a Gentile audience. Making this claim in a gospel like Matthew’s would have made no sense to the Jewish audience, where it was more commonly taught that the husband took the initiative for divorce (David Wenham, *Paul, Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* [Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995], 284).

⁵ In his analysis of the major points of contention in ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ views, William Heth notes that minorities teach that Jesus is meeting only with his disciples in private in Mk 10:11-12. This would clearly show the “kingdom standards for his disciples” (*Jesus on Divorce: How My Mind has Changed*, Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, vol. 6, no. 1, [Spr 2002], 8).

understanding of Matthew's use of the exception clause, and will be followed by the explanation of Matthew's exception clause.

Before observing Mt 5:32, it is important to note the structure of Mt 5 and what is implied by its context. Jesus' statements on divorce and remarriage fall within a section of six antitheses, each marked by the phrase, Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρήθη (vv. 21, 27, 31, 33 only ἐρρήθη, 38, 43), and followed by, ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν (vv. 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). Jesus' response to what was being said, in each case, was not to establish a new law by nullifying an old one, but to purposefully associate the true Law with who He was, namely, the 'expected one' to fulfill all righteousness (Is 6:6-7; 11:2; cf. Mt 3:14, 15; 5:17). Jesus is establishing His kingdom, and with it the "ethics of the reign of God"⁶ on earth. Thus, through His teaching in vv. 21-48, He is fulfilling the Law given to Israel, whereas the Scribes and Pharisees of His day tended to relax or misinterpret it (v. 19). Thus, previous to these antitheses, it is crucial to note Jesus' statement, "For I say to you that if your righteousness does not abound more than the Scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (v. 20, BR). This was so stated by Jesus to indicate the surpassing worth of His own righteousness, a righteousness far greater than that of the Pharisees, and the complete righteousness sinners needed to enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, in v. 31, when Jesus states, "It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce,' but I say to you..." He is by no means aiming to reassert something the Pharisees already taught. Instead, He is going to reveal what the original intentions of the Mosaic Law were designed for, namely, guarding the wife, not permitting divorce (cf. Mt 19:8).

⁶ George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 123-6.

With that said, Mt 5:32 now has grounds for interpretation. He writes, “But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, apart from grounds of fornication, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (BR). Parallel to both Mark and Luke, this text asserts the same principles for divorce and remarriage.⁷ It teaches that, a man who divorces his wife “makes her commit adultery.” That is, in the case of a man divorcing his *innocent* wife,⁸ he forces her into remarriage and is responsible for her adulterous relationship. Jesus is assuming that the woman who was divorced by the husband will most likely get remarried.⁹ The text also teaches that a man who marries a woman who has been put away by another man commits adultery. Both of these assertions agree with the absolute statements of Lk 16:18 and Mk 10:11-12, and are further supported by Mt 19:9.

The text of Mt 19:9 is preceded by an encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees. To test Jesus, they ask, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife according to every cause?” (Mt 19:3, BR). The question was not asked for the sake of curiosity, but rather to see if Jesus would choose sides between the two prevailing Jewish schools of thought.¹⁰ The more conservative

⁷ This conclusion assumes my interpretation of the ‘exception clause’ that is explained further below.

⁸ The wife being divorced in this picture is considered innocent because the clause, *παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας*, is closely tied to the phrase, *ποιεῖ αὐτήν μοιχευθῆναι*. Note, the husband is *causing* her adultery by divorce. If the wife’s adulterous act is the grounds for divorce in this verse, as is commonly assumed by the majority, why then would the text go on to say that the man divorcing her ‘causes her to commit adultery.’ It seems that she would have already been the adulterer. Therefore, since the man cannot make her an adulterer if she had already “made herself one,” it is better to assume this woman is the innocent party (Heth, *Jesus on Divorce*, 9).

⁹ This assumption is based on 1) limiting the exception clause to premarital fornication (discussed further below); 2) the passive *μοιχευθῆναι* making the husband responsible for the adultery if the wife remarries; 3) the common misinterpretation of what the Law ‘permitted;’ and 4) quite often in Jewish circles, the divorced woman was thought to be ‘free’ and would remarry (cf. I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 2 vols. in 1, Library of Biblical Studies, ed. Harry M. Orlinsky [New York, Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1967], 67, 70).

¹⁰ David Wenham even introduces the possibility that the Pharisees were testing Jesus to see if His teaching would support the recent divorce and remarriage of Herodias, who left her previous marriage to Herod Antipas’ brother to then remarry the more ‘prominent’ Herod, ruler of Galilee (Wenham, *Paul*, 215). That John the Baptist was murdered for speaking against this divorce and remarriage of Herodias also gives ground to the conclusions of this essay.

school of Shammai taught that a man could divorce his wife only on the grounds of sexual immorality, whereas the more liberal school of Hillel granted a man to divorce his wife on just about any grounds, even burning food.¹¹ Hence they asked, "...according to *every* cause?" Jesus' answer does not uphold either of their interpretations. Instead, His answer reaffirms from two texts in Genesis what God's original purpose for marriage was "intended to be."¹² He answered,

Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' (Mt 19:4-5, NASB)

Jesus' exposition of Gen 1:27 and 2:24 is this. "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate" (19:6). In other words, when God joins a man to his wife, they become 'one flesh.'¹³ Once the two have become 'one flesh,' that is, united to one another in covenant marriage, no man is to separate that union.¹⁴ If God established this relationship and joined them together, no action of man is able to separate the 'one flesh' union. Jesus thus declared marriage indissoluble.

In response to Jesus' absolute statement, the Pharisees contested, "Why then did Moses command to 'give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?'" (19:7, NASB)—a

¹¹ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2 ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 485; Friedrich Hauk and Siegfried Schulz, "πορνεία," ed. Gerhard Friedrich, *TDNT*, vol. VI, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 591; I. Abrahams, *Pharisaism*, 73.

¹² I. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1950), 147. I disagree with Marshall, however, that the Matthean clauses are not original (Ibid., 144).

¹³ Based on his analysis of the OT use of the verb *dābaq* ("to cling on to"), and the word *bāśār* ("flesh"), A. Isaksson convincingly argues that the 'one flesh' union is a covenanted union that establishes a "kinship bond" (cf. Dt 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20; Josh 22:5; 23:8; Ruth 1:14-16); Abel Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple: A Study with Special Reference to Mt. 19:3-12 and 1. Cor. 11:3-16*, trans. Neil Tomkinson (Copenhagen: C. W. K. Gleerup Lund, 1965), 17-21.

¹⁴ The significance of this 'one flesh' union is also noted by the way Paul discusses the problem of men joining themselves to prostitutes in 1Cor 6:12-20; that to join them with the prostitute was something incompatible with being joined to Christ. Paul also uses this same 'one flesh' language in Eph 5:31 (cf. Eph 5:29, 33) to explain the incredible mystery of Christ's *union* with the church.

question they thought would refute such an interpretation of the Genesis texts, or at least prove that there was indeed an exception. However, Jesus then explains that due to the ‘hardness’ of their hearts (v. 8a), Moses permitted them to divorce their wives.¹⁵ The Pharisees’ understanding of the OT text was wrong-headed. The emphasis of Dt 24:1-4 was written not to “legislate” the practice of divorce, as the Pharisees pressed, but more specifically to regulate the remarriage of women after divorce.¹⁶ Standing firm upon His previous interpretation of the Genesis texts, Jesus then contrasts what Moses permitted with what God designed from the beginning (19:8)—contending once more for the binding marriage union explained in vv. 4-6. Jesus is affirming, not what the Pharisees had already relaxed (cf. Mt 5:19) in the Law, but what the Law was meant to point God’s people toward, namely, the ideal of the Messianic kingdom,¹⁷ in which they uphold what God originally intended marriage to be, that is, indissoluble. To make this ideal clearer, Jesus adds, “And I say to you whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another commits adultery” (19:9).

Now, before one assumes that, with the exception clause of v. 9, Jesus softened his rigid interpretation of marriage, five things should be considered. 1) Mt 19:9 parallels Mk 10:11, even with regard to the encounter with the Pharisees’ (Mk 10:2-9), yet Mark’s account is without

¹⁵ Mk 10:5 makes it even clearer that Jesus is again reaffirming his prohibition of divorce based on the grounds that the ‘one flesh’ union is indissoluble. “Because of your hardness of heart he [Moses] wrote you this commandment.” This ἐντολήν is not referring to what the Pharisees just stated in v. 4 about divorce, but to the entirety of Dt 24:1-4. In other words, v. 5 is making it crystal clear that Dt 24:1-4 was written because the Jewish people misunderstood the marriage union from the beginning, and in their hardened hearts were giving approval to divorce, rather than upholding God’s original design and intentions for marriage.

¹⁶ Peter C. Craigie notes that “the text treats it [divorce] as a practice already known” (*The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT [Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976], 304-5). Also William Heth and Gordon Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce: The Problem with the Evangelical Consensus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 107; Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry*, 23-5.

¹⁷ The reference Jesus makes back to Genesis (as well as Paul in Eph 5:31) could be seen in direct relationship to the arrival of the Messianic age, realized in His life and ministry. Jesus is therefore ushering in restoration with the kingdom. Cf. Wenham, *Paul*, 120; Heth and Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, 46.

the exception clause. 2) In Mt 19:6, Jesus taught a ‘one-flesh’ union which no man was to separate. 3) In this encounter, it would make no sense for Jesus to teach something which the Pharisees themselves taught in 19:7. 4) Dt 24:1-4 is not giving grounds for divorce, but managing a hardened people. 5) The disciples’ reaction in Mt 19:10, and Jesus’ response to them was placed after vv. 3-9 for the purpose of teaching that God gives grace to those who are single, and will sustain those who abstain from remarrying after divorce (cf. 1Cor 7:7).¹⁸ With these things in mind, it is now appropriate to address the meaning of the exception clause of Mt 5:32 and 19:9.

Matthew adds both clauses (παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας, 5:32; μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ, 19:9) to his gospel to address the specific issue of divorce on the grounds, not of adultery, but of fornication during the betrothal period.¹⁹ This is based primarily on Matthew’s choice of the word πορνεία over the word μοιχεία to accomplish his “theological” purposes.²⁰ His use of both terms makes clear that he understood a distinction to exist between the two (cf. Mt 5:27-32; 15:19; 19:9),²¹ and so selected πορνεία for two reasons. The first was so that he would get rid of any assumption that the Law, in particular Dt 24:1-4, was giving grounds for divorce.²² It is often assumed that the ‘some indecency’ of Dt 24:1 is adultery; however, this is not so. According to the Law, adultery was not something associated with divorce. If one was caught in adultery, that person was to be punished to death by stoning (e.g. Lev 20:10; Dt 22:21, 22). Death by stoning

¹⁸ Cf. Wenham, *Paul*, 245-6.

¹⁹ Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry*, 134; Heth and Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, 169-176.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 169-71.

²¹ Other NT writers made this same distinction using both words in the same sentence (cf. Mk 7:21; 1Cor 6:9; Heb 13:4); Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry*, 134-5. Also Fridrichsen in Hauk and Schulz, *TDNT*, vol. VI, 592n74;.

²² Cf. Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry*, 25-6. See also note 16.

ended the marriage, not divorce. The second was to be sure that his primarily Jewish audience²³ would understand that Joseph was indeed just for considering ‘to divorce’ Mary during their *betrothal* period (Mt 1:19). According to first century Judaism, an engaged couple was already considered ‘husband’ and ‘wife.’²⁴ If during this period, one committed fornication—since *adultery* is only ascribed to those married—the engagement could only be ended by divorce.²⁵ This is exactly how Matthew describes the situation of Joseph and Mary in 1:18-19 (cf. Lk 2:5), thus testifying to his familiarity with Jewish custom and its significance for his largely Jewish audience who would need such an explanation when addressing issues of divorce, especially with regard to his note of Joseph’s ‘just’ consideration. Therefore, the exception clause is speaking only to premarital fornication.²⁶

If this is so, then Mt 5:32 and 19:9 concur with the plain ethical demands of Jesus in Mark and Luke, thus portraying the kingdom’s arrival in Messiah Jesus, and all of the ethical

²³ After being told that their father was the devil, and not Abraham, the Jews accused Jesus of being born ‘of fornication’ (ἐκ πορνείας, Jn 8:41; Hauk and Schulz, *TDNT*, vol. VI, 585). Their previous understanding of Dt 23:2 (23:3 LXX), and the probable rumors of Mary’s pregnancy previous to marriage would cause such a reaction to Jesus’ harsh words here and elsewhere (Abrahams, *Pharisaism*, 73).

²⁴ Cf. Gen 29:21; Dt 22:23-4; 2Sam 3:14. The engagement, or betrothal period, was far more serious in Jewish society than our modern perceptions tend to lean. With this Jewish understanding, Matthew so describes Mary as Jesus’ mother ‘who had been betrothed’ (μνηστευθείσης) to Joseph (v. 1:18), and Joseph as already Mary’s ‘husband’ (ἀνὴρ, v. 19). See Abrahams, *Pharisaism*, 72.

²⁵ Abrahams observed, “...if the husband suspected his wife of unchastity while betrothed to him, he was compelled, as a ‘righteous man,’ to divorce her (betrothal was so binding that divorce was necessary to free a betrothed couple)” (*Pharisaism*, 72). Mt 1:18-19 understands this to be the case for Joseph. Note Matthew’s use of ἀπολύσαι; the same verb used in 5:32 and 19:9 for ‘divorce.’ We may also consider that Jesus would have had to explain these things in relation to divorce to the Pharisees. That is, He would permit divorce of an engagement on the grounds of fornication, but would not permit divorce of a marriage already consummated and representative of the ‘one flesh’ union (Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry*, 139-40; Heth and Wenham, *Jesus on Divorce*, 171).

²⁶ Two objections could be raised: 1) Does explaining Matthew’s use of πορνεία in this way restrict the word’s meaning? 2) Would someone be able to discern this from a straightforward reading of the text? The answer to the former is, ‘yes.’ According to the context of his Gospel and his purposes within, I find it perfectly fitting for Matthew to use this term in such a restricted sense. The answer to the latter is, ‘no;’ however, it seems fair to say that many things within Scripture must be explained, and thus God has ordained teachers for His church.

demands of the reign of God. For Jesus, divorce is contrary to God's design, and remarriage after divorce is adultery, because divorce fails to terminate the 'one flesh' union.

JESUS AND THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

This is precisely what Paul teaches in his letters. Giving the instruction of the Lord,²⁷ Paul commands (*παραγγέλλω*) that a woman should not depart from her husband, likewise, the husband is not to divorce his wife (1Cor 7:10-11). In other words, divorce is forbidden. Then, to emphasize his understanding of the 'one flesh' union, he adds that a woman who leaves is to remain *ἄγαμος* ("unmarried") or be reconciled to her husband. Even when considering those married to unbelievers, Paul instructs them not to divorce (vv. 12-15).²⁸ His understanding of the 'one flesh' union is also implied in Rom 7:2-3. Using marriage as an analogy of what it means to be free from the Law and joined to Christ, Paul demonstrates that the union cannot be dissolved except upon the death of one's marital partner. For this reason, Paul calls the woman who joins herself to another, while her husband is living, an adulteress. Therefore, it is clear that the apostle Paul's teaching is indeed that of the Lord Jesus found in the Gospels.

CONCLUSION

²⁷ Parallels to Christ's teaching: 1) Paul's assertion of Lk 16:18 in 1Cor 7:10; 2) his use of *μὴ χωρισθῆναι* as in Mt 19:6=Mk 10:9 (*μὴ χωρίζετω*); 3) for the wife to be 'separated not' is parallel to 'what God has joined together, let no one separate'; 4) 1Cor 7:11 parallels Mt 19:9.

²⁸ The phrase, *οὐ δεδούλωται*, of 7:15 may be used to object that Paul does give grounds for 'the believing one' to remarry. This is not the case: 1) Paul distinguishes his meaning by using *δουλόω* in v. 15 instead of *δέω* as in 1Cor 7:39 (Heth, *Jesus on Divorce*, 12); 2) *Οὐ δεδούλωται* is only referring to what C. K. Barrett calls the "mechanical retention of a relationship" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ed. Henry Chadwick, Harper's New Testament Commentaries [San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1968], 166). In other words, 3) the believer does not have to make war with the other for "God has called us to peace" (cf. *Ibid.*, 166). 4) Paul would not say something contrary to his instruction in vv. 10-13 (Heth, *Jesus on Divorce*, 12).

In conclusion, the teaching of Jesus and the apostle Paul both provide the foundation for how one ought to think ethically about divorce and remarriage. Concerning these issues, one must first understand that divorce is contrary to the original purposes God outlined in creation for marriage. It fails to honor what God meant to display through it, and acts contrary to what the covenant union *is*, namely, ‘one flesh.’ Secondly, if divorce were to occur, neither partner is to remarry because the ‘one flesh’ union cannot be dissolved. Thus, they can only be reconciled to one another; or, upon the death of one partner, are freed from that union to remarry. The kingdom, though not in full, has come to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, and with it “the demands of the reign of God.”²⁹ Therefore, may His Church take great delight in displaying now what is true of Christ’s faithful love to His unfaithful, but becoming beautiful, bride.

²⁹ Ladd, *Theology*, 126.

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