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ARTICLE VII.

IS DESERTION A SCRIPTURAL GROUND OF DIVORCE?

BY THE REV. CHARLES L. MORGAN, MOLINE, ILL.

I. HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE.

UPON the interpretation of a single passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians depends our answer to this question. If, when Paul says in 1 Cor. vii. 15, "The brother or the sister is not under bondage (*δεδούλωται*) in such cases," he means to affirm, that when a believing wife is deserted by her consort, or *vice versa*, the two are no longer bound by the marriage vow, but are free to marry again, then he certainly sanctions another ground of divorce besides that which Christ, in his Sermon on the Mount and on one other occasion, seems explicitly to affirm as the *only* ground; viz., *fornication*. The right interpretation of this passage is of prime importance to the interests of morals and good government. Our inquiry may well begin with a brief historical survey.

In Christ's time the permission of Moses (Deut. xxiv. 1), that if a man found "uncleanness" in his wife, he might give her a writing of divorcement, and let her go, and "she may go and be another man's wife," was so freely interpreted by the school of Hillel, that divorce had become practically dependent upon the changing mood and taste of the husband. Although the school of Sham-mai held that the "uncleanness" specified by Moses must involve moral guilt, yet the view of Hillel so far prevailed, that the poor cooking of a dinner, the going from home without a veil, any bodily affliction, or even the preference of the husband for a more attractive woman, were justified by the rabbis as valid grounds of divorce.

Nor, as illustrated perhaps in the woman of Samaria, was this putting away confined to the act of the husband. It was not uncommon for the Jew of Christ's day to excuse the laxity of his people, in this respect, on the plea of the peculiar privileges of God's chosen people.

Of the facility of divorce in the Empire there is copious evidence. To no evil do historians attribute greater responsibility for the fall of the Republic, than to the perfect freedom with which wives and husbands were shifted at will, or even exchanged. Seneca mentions "illustrious and noble women who reckoned time, not by the number of the consuls, but by the number of their successive husbands." Into such disrepute had the married state fallen, and so emptied of its ancient dignity had the family relation become, that Augustus found it necessary, as a measure of state, to offer a bounty to those who would take wives and rear children. We gain some conception of the remarkable influence of the gospel in this fact, therefore, that, though it was the slow work of centuries, yet by mediæval times Christ's law of divorce had become a part of the civil code of every Christian people. This gigantic vice, which struck at the very root of social order by destroying the family, was *curbed* and brought into subjection to the law of Christ. This vast change was wrought on the basis of that interpretation of Scripture which regards Christ's command as declaring a true marriage indissoluble, i. e., permitting *no* final divorce with liberty of remarriage, so long as both husband and wife are alive. Separations, without liberty of remarriage, were granted for adultery, and for whatever other grounds the church deemed fitting. These were allowed on the supposed authority of Paul, "the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such *cases*." The denial by the church of the liberty of remarriage, even to the innocent party of a pair separated for reason of adultery, while the guilty consort lived, was based upon the Mosaic legislation. The Mosaic law attached to adultery the penalty of death;

hence it was urged by the church, that Christ, when he declared fornication to be the only ground of divorce, contemplated the just punishment of the guilty party, and so an end to the union. The denial of remarriage to both parties was also based upon the omission of such permission by both Mark and Luke, who quote Christ thus: "Every one that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery;" and also upon Paul's words in Rom. vii. 2, 3, "For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to her husband while he liveth," etc. The correctness of this interpretation was open to question. Augustine, in his later writings, expressed some doubt as to his earlier conclusions on this subject. In the Eastern church the view finally prevailed that separation for adultery constituted a final divorce, with liberty for the innocent party to remarry at once. In the Western church there was deemed to be one apparent exception to the rule of indissolubility. This was in the case of a Christian deserted by an unbelieving consort. Such desertion, in virtue of Paul's command, "a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases," was deemed by the Western church an abrogation of a marriage which, from the outset, had possessed no sacramental sanction; hence the deserted party, as though never married, was permitted to contract a new alliance. This case was, in reality, no exception to the *rule* of the indissolubility of a *true* marriage, since no true and fixed marriage, "in the Lord," was deemed to have *ever* been consummated. This rule was reaffirmed in the Canons of Trent, and in the Syllabus of Pius IX. in 1864. It should be said, however, that the *impediments* to a true marriage, as set forth by the church, were so many as to render a verdict of nullity almost as easy to procure as a modern divorce.

Coming to the Reformation era, we find Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Zwingli, and Bucer, all advocates of the view that not only (1) was adultery declared by Christ a valid ground of final divorce, with privilege of

remarriage to the innocent party, but (2) that *desertion* was sanctioned by Paul as in *all cases* a righteous ground for the same final divorce with privilege of remarriage. Protestantism, therefore, in contrast with Rome, affirmed the principle that a true marriage is *not* indissoluble, but may be dissolved with privilege of remarriage, on *either* of the *two* grounds, adultery or *desertion*. With the exception of England, Protestant communities generally adopted this view. In Scotland, since 1573, absolute divorce, with privilege of remarriage, has been granted for adultery or desertion.

In England, although many efforts were made, of which Milton's was the most notable, to secure greater license, yet, until 1857, the law remained substantially the same as that of the Roman church, holding marriage to be indissoluble for any cause. During all this time, however, while the *law* remained fixed, divorces were repeatedly granted by special acts of Parliament on the ground of adultery. In 1857 a law was passed, providing for a complete divorce for the husband on the ground of the wife's adultery, and for the wife on the ground of the husband's adultery enhanced by aggravating circumstances, such as cruelty, etc. For desertion, cruelty, and all other causes save adultery, only judicial separation *a mensa et thoro* is permitted in England. The divorce on the ground of adultery is, however, *final*, permitting remarriage. In the United States, the variety of grounds on which a final divorce may be secured is only limited by the variety of iniquity. The State statutes range from the denial of *all* divorce, as in South Carolina, or the recognition of but *one* ground, adultery, as in New York, to the easy divorces of Connecticut, whenever "the happiness of the petitioner" is shown to be destroyed and "the end of the marriage relation frustrated," or, as in Indiana, where it may be allowed "for any other cause for which the *court shall deem it proper* that a divorce should be granted."

It is to be noted, then, that the stringent view of the Roman church, permitting no final dissolution of a true marriage, which was changed by the Protestant Reformers to the permission of a final divorce on either of the two grounds, adultery or desertion, has degenerated still further in the United States, to the permission of divorce for *any* cause which a civil court may deem sufficient. As a result of such degeneracy the ratio of divorces to marriages in New England stands as one to ten; in Connecticut, reckoning simply the American population, as one to eight; and in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, with other Western States, the same lax tendency is marked. In view of the facts, it can hardly be a question, that, if marriage possesses any such sanctity as that with which Scripture invests it, which Christ avowed for it, and which history awards it as the corner-stone of political stability and moral growth, then it becomes the churches of America to ask whether they have not slept while the enemy has sown tares; and whether a mistaken interpretation of Scripture has not opened the way to a vast evil. The general admission of *desertion* as a valid ground of divorce opens not only one of the easiest and most available methods, but one which in itself possesses no such peculiar, and inherently disrupting, nature as that which distinguishes *fornication*. Regarded from a legal or humanitarian point of view merely, the reasons for granting a divorce for desertion are less forcible than for many other grounds. That which gives chief weight to the explicit commands of Scripture is an inherent reasonableness, appealing to the conscience. The fact that desertion no more possesses such inherent reasonableness than many other grounds, affords a strong presumption that it is *not* sanctioned by Scripture. It becomes every Christian pastor and teacher, therefore, carefully to review the Scripture on this point, before assenting to a ground which has opened the door to widest abuse.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

To the right interpretation of Paul's words in 1 Cor. vii. 15, "not under bondage in such cases," the first essential is the clearest apprehension of Christ's teaching. We may fairly assume that no interpretation of Paul, consistent with even the broadest view of inspiration, should conflict with the explicit declarations of Christ, provided we can attain reasonable certainty as to what those declarations are and mean. Upon two occasions Christ referred to divorce. The first instance occurs in his Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matt. v. 31, 32; the second, a few days before his final entry to Jerusalem, recorded in Matt. xix. 1-12; Mark x. 2-12; and Luke xvi. 18. In his Sermon on the Mount, Christ contrasts the righteousness of his kingdom with that legislation which had prevailed, by God's permission, among those of "old time." Third, in the order of topics, stands divorce; "It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. v. 31, 32). Remembering the extreme laxity that prevailed on this subject among the Jews of Christ's day, it seems certain that Christ here rebukes the wide-spread polygamy by contrasting the law, which in the "old time" God permitted "for the hardness of your hearts," with that divine law, which was at the beginning, and which shall prevail in a kingdom of righteousness. Christ's second recorded mention of divorce was his reply to a wily question of the Pharisees, put with direct intent to entrap him. "Is it lawful," they asked, "for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" "Have ye not read," replied Christ, "that he which made them, from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and

shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. xix. 3, 6). To this the Pharisees plausibly rejoined, "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?" "He saith unto them: Moses for your hardness of heart suffered" (not commanded, as you affirm, but *suffered*) "you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery." It is to be noticed, first, that Christ adds, here, to what he had previously said, in the Sermon on the Mount, this, that not only does the man so putting away his wife, save for fornication, cause her to commit adultery in case she remarries, but he *also* commits adultery if *he* marries another woman. To this, Mark's record adds, that the wife, "if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery" (Mark x. 12). Neither Mark nor Luke, however, refer to the one exception, mentioned by Matthew, of fornication.

The force of Christ's teaching here must depend on the meaning of the terms he uses. What *is* the "putting away" spoken of? Does it signify a putting away with privilege of remarrying, or refer to any separation? The fact that the Jews, whom Christ addressed, gave full liberty of remarriage to any wife or husband who had been "put away," has satisfied some that Christ here forbade *only* such putting away as involved the permission of remarriage. Opposed to this view, however, stand the words of Christ, declaring the union of husband and wife in one flesh to be a bond more sacred than that which unites the child to the parent; Therefore "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife," "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." These words convey no permission for *any sort* of separa-

tion, either *final*, with liberty of remarriage, or a separation merely *a mensa et thoro*. On the other hand, the very fact that any putting away of wife or husband was counted by the Jews as opening the way for remarriage, forcibly argues that Christ both intended to condemn, and *did*, in his prohibition, emphatically condemn, any and every sort of *separation* of husband and wife. That any "putting away" involved in Christ's thought the possibility of remarriage, and that he therefore condemned *all* "putting away," is further indicated by the fact that, in each of his allusions to the matter, he connects with such "putting away" the possibility of remarriage.

Again, what does the "fornication" signify, which Christ affirms to be the only ground of "putting away"?

Both by ancient and the best modern exegetes, *πορνεία*, translated *fornication*, is held to be substantially equivalent to *μοιχεία*, adultery, and to signify the sexual intercourse of the wife with another than her husband. This crime was punishable, under the Levitical law, with death, but this penalty had ceased to be inflicted long before Christ's time. Christ's teaching, then, we may sum up as follows:

1. Save for the cause of fornication, no man may put away his wife.

2. The wife may not put away her husband, save (though Christ does not explicitly say this, yet consistency compels us to infer it) for reason of fornication. Favoring this inference that for *one* cause the wife may put away her husband, although it is not allowed explicitly by Christ, there is the argument that the wife should possess the same privilege with the husband. Opposed to the inference stands the fact, that the fornication of a wife was, under Jewish law, a much graver sin than the fornication of a husband, and more severely punished.

A like difference is recognized in English law to-day, which requires that the adultery of the husband, to warrant divorce, must be of an aggravated nature. That there is an obvious difference between the two cases has

been generally recognized; and yet the language of Mark, which applies precisely the same prohibition to both husband and wife, seems to put them in this respect upon equal footing, and we may reasonably infer that for one ground, *fornication*, the wife may also put away her husband.

3. He who puts away his wife, or she who puts away her husband, saving for fornication, and *marries again* (during the other's life), commits adultery. The language of Mark, "committeth adultery *against her*," indicates that the remarriage contemplated as involving adultery, was a marriage during the other's life.

4. Whoever *marries* the one so put away, during the other's life, *commits adultery*.

5. That the innocent party of a pair divorced for reason of fornication, may remarry, may be presumed, though Christ does not say it. This presumption the Roman church denies, holding any *true* marriage absolutely indissoluble, save by death. Favoring it, is the fact that Christ only declares that one guilty of adultery who remarries, after putting away his wife for *other* ground than fornication; hence the inference of *liberty* to remarry for the innocent party justly divorced *on* that ground. Whether the guilty party, after divorce, may remarry, Christ does not say. The expectation would seem granted that the civil law would not sanction the remarriage of the guilty party, and that such prohibition would be a part of the penalty for their crime.

The substance of Christ's teaching may be succinctly put into a sentence: Let no man *put away* his wife, and let no wife put away her husband, *for any cause, save fornication*.

This "putting away" may be justly interpreted as including both final divorce and the separation *a mensa et thoro*. Christ gives no direct or inferential permission for *any* separation whatever. The inference of such a permission contradicts the unqualified language "whosoever putteth

away." But, while Christ gives no sanction to a state of separation without divorce, that fact does not argue guilt to the innocent party who is deserted. The existence of such a state of separation, as a sad and helpless result of one party's desertion, is fully recognized by Paul, but neither Paul nor Christ can be fairly interpreted as advocating or commending any such separation brought about by *mutual* consent.

If now, we have rightly apprehended the letter and spirit of Christ's teaching on this subject, two further questions arise:—

First. Granting that Christ sanctioned but *one* ground of divorce, did he intend that sanction as a practical guide and rule for his day and all the future, or, did he simply present an *ideal* standard, toward which men were to approximate? In the latter opinion Dr. Lange and Dr. Schaff, with others, rest. They compare the command respecting divorce, with the commands, "Swear not at all," and "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," and infer that all alike are set forth by Christ as the ideal rather than practical rule. If this conclusion be true, then the question is naturally suggested, Did Christ, when he condemned the old *permission*, given for the hardness of the people's heart, and proclaimed a new law, contemplate and sanction precisely the *same laxity* for the practical rule of his followers in the future, as that which he so forcibly condemns? That view would seem to empty Christ's commands of meaning and force.

Second. Is it possible that Christ, in forbidding all save *one* ground of divorce, so failed to contemplate the *emergencies* which would arise in his kingdom, such, e. g., as the desertion of a believer by an unbelieving consort, that his apostle Paul would be justified in the introduction of a second ground of divorce, viz., *desertion*, to supply the deficiency? Such a failure on Christ's part would seem, not only inconsistent with his *authoritative* utterance

on any subject, and especially one with which he deals very explicitly, but would make all his doctrine subject to apostolic revision. We must conclude, therefore, that, unless there can be found in other passages of Scripture such irreconcilable contradiction of what seems the explicit teaching of Christ as to warrant the serious doubt of our interpretation, Paul will be found to agree with Christ in *sanctioning* but one ground of divorce and only unavoidable separation.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF PAUL.

We begin our inquiry respecting Paul's teaching on divorce, with the fair presumption that it will conform to that of Christ. The words of Christ, carefully interpreted, must of course be authoritative and final, unless the teaching of the apostles conflicts so irreconcilably as to indicate that our interpretation of Christ must be at fault. What then is the fact respecting the reconciliation of Paul's statements with our interpretation of Christ as forbidding not only all divorce, but all voluntary separation, save for the one ground of adultery? Briefly, and in general, this: It is *possible* to interpret Paul's words, when considered by themselves alone, to sanction *desertion* as a second ground of divorce; but, when taken in connection with Christ's words, that interpretation creates a conflict, which only an unwarrantable exegetical strain can reconcile. On the other hand, there is a simple and natural interpretation of Paul's language, which perfectly accords with what we have seen to be the simple and natural interpretation of Christ's teaching. To show this, we will briefly trace the course of thought by which Paul leads up to the words, "a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." Paul opens the general subject of marriage, in his first letter to the Corinthians, with a preface stating that he now speaks "concerning things whereof ye wrote unto me." The nature of these "things" we learn from what follows. With respect to the unmarried he *commends*

celibacy, but at the same time advises marriage for whom it is necessary, and emphasizes the duties of the married life. It should be noted also that Paul's commendation of celibacy, to those for whom it was possible, was justified on account of the "present distress" (1 Cor. vii. 27). But if, in some circumstances, the single state is preferable to the married, the question would naturally arise in the minds of many of the married, Is it not better, and will it not advance our own and Christ's interests, for us to separate? It would not have been strange if there were some in Paul's day, since they exist in our own, whom a mistaken *assurance* of Christ's immediate coming persuaded to forsake wife and children, to engage in exclusively Christian work. The writer had occasion, a few years since, to counsel the obligation of home duties to an illiterate person whose unbalanced zeal was leading him to leave his family in dependence on charity while he went out ignorantly to preach Christ. Paul must have counselled many such. Or, again, husbands and wives of incompatible nature may have asked instruction from the church at Corinth respecting their separation, and these inquiries may have come in turn to Paul for answer. But, however varied the circumstances which suggested the question on this subject, here is Paul's answer: "But unto the married I give charge, *yea* not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife" (1 Cor. vii. 10, 11). This advice *may* have had in view only those couples of whom both husband and wife were believers. The fact that in the next paragraph, under the designation of "the rest," Paul speaks to couples, of whom one party is an unbeliever, might argue, that his preliminary advice was designed exclusively for believers, but that conclusion is by no means certain. When Paul says that it is not he, but the *Lord*, who commands with reference to the married, he is understood by the best

authorities to refer to the commands of Christ recorded for us in the Gospels. These commands of Christ, however, were not addressed exclusively to believers, but notably on the second occasion to the Pharisees. In quoting Christ's authority, therefore, Paul probably addressed an audience as wide and varied, and certainly he would not *limit* the obligation of Christ's command. The probability is strong, therefore, that Paul first gives the authority of Christ in his general command to all married persons: "To the married I give charge, *yea* not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband leave not his wife."

An important question here arises as to the meaning of the word *χωρίζομαι*, here translated "to depart." Does Paul mean "let not the wife absolutely separate herself with a possibility of remarriage" (let not the wife divorce herself), or does he mean "let her not separate from her husband's household, even though the marriage bond continues?" The argument for each of these interpretations is so strong as to create the probability that both ideas are included, and all separation forbidden. His appeal is to Christ's command, which, as we have seen, forbade any sundering of the marriage relation save for reason of fornication. But all separation, in the Jewish practice of the day, involved the liberty of remarriage, hence Christ forbade *all* separation or putting away, and the probability seems strong that, in strict accord with, and on the authority of Christ, Paul does the same. A further indication that the separation here forbidden by Paul was a separation which would be understood as opening the way to remarriage, is the specific command which Paul now adds "but and if she depart" (if for any unfortunate reason a separation occurs, if the lesser sin of separation is committed) "let her remain unmarried, or" (what is by all means preferable) "else be reconciled to her hus-

band." It is noticeable here, that Paul makes no mention of the one ground of separation sanctioned by Christ. Possibly the general acquiescence in the disruption of a union which such crime involved, rendered it unnecessary to allude to it. It is also to be noted, that Paul's *recognition* of the unfortunate fact of separation, and his command to those so separated, cannot be fairly interpreted as the least *sanction* of such a state. He simply views it as a calamity to be retrieved as soon as possible, and adds a command to avert a worse.

Now Paul passes to some peculiar cases, upon which his advice has been sought, and which he styles "the rest." "But to the rest say I, not the Lord." Paul reverts now from Christ's command to his own judgment, since, with respect to the cases he now considers, Christ did not particularize. We are not to forget, however, that when Paul appeals to himself, he appeals to an *apostle*, to one who speaks with authority, and who, as he says in the same chapter, believes himself to "have the Spirit of God." It is not without authority, therefore, that he now speaks to "the rest" who, as the context shows, are the believing husbands and wives, of unbelievers. "If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her. And the woman which hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." Here the word signifying separation is ἀφίημι, instead of χωρίζομαι, but there seems no reason for distinguishing a different meaning. This passage reflects some light on the nature of the separation which Paul speaks of in verse 11, for if the wife of an unbelieving husband is to *remain* with her husband whenever *possible*, then it is evident that the departure indicated by "but and if she depart" is not a voluntary but either a compulsory or sinful separation. Between

such a husband and wife as are now referred to, there would exist evidently the strongest possible temptation to separate. The Christian faith of the believer must have suffered incessant annoyance, if not persecution, from the views and habits of the unbelieving consort which would present arguments for separation, beside which the most of our modern improvisations would be weak. But to the question respecting such, shall they separate? Paul answered, no! Notwithstanding the inconvenience, and incompatibility, and possibly suffering, of such pagan contact, yet, if the unbelieving one consents to remain in union, the believer is *not* to seek a separation. But now arises this new case: "If the unbelieving departeth (*χωρίζεται*), let him depart, the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God hath called us in peace." "Not under bondage" to what? This is the all important question.

Let us review. Paul has repeated Christ's command to *all the married* that there be *no* separation. Then he has advanced his own command respecting believers married to unbelievers. They also are to *maintain their union*: there is to be no voluntary separation, and, if compulsory separation occurs, the parties are not to marry again but to seek the earliest possible reconciliation. But if these are the commands, then what shall that believer do, whose unbelieving consort refuses to remain in union and departs? How can a believer maintain a union in such a case unless willing to deny the faith? Am I bound, such an one would ask, to follow the unbeliever and insist on maintaining the union, for the sake of obeying Christ's command to the married? No, replies Paul, a brother or sister is not bound in such cases. "Let him depart," for such insistence upon union could result only in strife, "but God hath called us in peace." Or if any one thinks, that to insist on following the deserter might result in the unbeliever's salvation, consider the great risk, "For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy

husband? or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Is not this the thing, therefore, which Paul says the believer is "not bound" to do; viz., to *follow*, and *insist on union* with, such an unwilling and deserting consort? What but strife could result! "But God hath called us in peace." The law of Christ commanding that there be *no separation*, you are "not under bondage" to observe, where, as in such a case, it is inconsistent and impossible. This interpretation of the "not under bondage," answers every just demand which can be made upon the words. So far from conflict with what we have seen to be Christ's law, this interpretation stands in natural and perfect agreement. It gives no sanction to a state of separation, save that which is necessitated by the guilty act of desertion. Paul simply says that, *when deserted*, the law of Christ does not require you to jeopardize your faith and peace by insisting upon an unwilling union. If, on the other hand, we accept the view held by the Reformers, and widely sanctioned to-day, and urge that "not under bondage" signifies, that the one forsaken is not bound by the *marriage tie*, but is free to remarry, then we conflict: (1) with Paul's direct command, given on Christ's authority, that, if a separation occur, the parties are to "remain *unmarried*;" (2) with the specific words of Christ affirming that he who puts away his wife, for any cause save fornication, and marries another, commits adultery, and that if she marries another, she commits adultery; (3) with two other utterances of Paul, the one in verse 39 of the same chapter, and the other in Rom. vii. 2, in both of which Paul speaks of the wife as being bound by the law "so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be *dead*, she is free to be married to whom she will." "So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress." In view of the conflict entailed by such an interpretation of the words "not under bondage" as sanctions the right of divorce on the ground of desertion, in view of the necessity it also entails of emptying Christ's

words of their natural meaning, and in view, again, of the vast evils which history shows to have grown out of such interpretation,—are we not fully warranted in our conclusion, that it is altogether unjustifiable? Paul does not affirm that the marriage bond is rendered void by desertion; he does not sanction the dissolution of the bond on that ground; and so adds *no second* ground of divorce to the *single* one affirmed by Christ.

Christ set his seal to the sanctity of a marriage union which admits of no disruption, save for that single cause which, by its very nature, destroys the sacred inviolate unity of husband and wife in one flesh. Paul implicitly follows Christ's precept. He also forbids all separation. He adds his command to those who are in a compulsory state of separation because forsaken. This therefore we are to regard as the Scriptural law binding upon all Christ's people. Only in accordance with that law has the minister of Christ liberty to invoke the divine blessing upon the nuptial rites. Into accord with that law we are to seek, to the limit of our influence, to bring public sentiment and the laws of the state.