

Dear Roy and Ann,

Loving Greetings

Feb 26, 1975

After I wrote the article you have, I ran across the enclosed. It is some thoughts I got together on the question in the early 40's when we were first having the trouble with Clapham. It was not dated, but I can tell by the paper it's on, and the typewriter used, that it was about that date.

Generally speaking, it is just about as I would look at the question today, though it should be borne in mind that this was tentative thoughts of 30 years ago. Some points I would express somewhat differently.

I had always hoped and prayed that we would not have to face a case, for I was quite sure a case would split us, however it was settled. I felt if we kept hammering for the high standard, and holding out a strong deterrent position, we might be spared the trauma of a case. I still feel that if a body is sound and spiritual enough, it will be spared many such trials.

I always felt that in a showdown I would not be able to logically take the absurd position of ruling brethren Thomas and Roberts as unsound and incompetent on matters involving fellowship. Logically, such groups as the Dawn should not call themselves Christadelphians, for they have taken a stand that rules brethren Thomas and Roberts as unfit for their fellowship.

I thought you may find some useful thoughts in the enclosed. And it will show that my present position is not at all new, though I did not have it until recently with any strong conviction and consistency. I really never had had time to properly study the question. It was a question I found very distasteful, and which I hoped we would never have to face. Also, as you say, any hint of a suggestion that there may be any circumstances under which divorce might be scripturally justified is likely to be seized upon and torn wide open by shallow minds seeking gratification of the flesh.

On the suing at law aspect, I would like to add a few thoughts. The idea of its permissibility, and the argument that to deny it is "setting Paul against Christ" is a (relatively) recent development, Brethren Roberts and Walker were very clear on the issue. The new idea came in with bro Carter, who taught suing at law for divorce, wills and insurance (according to his own testimony in the magazine.) I believe he went to Central from either the Advocates or the Partial Inspirationists (Suffolk Street) and apparently he was brought up with this idea, and took it to Central with him. They were quite sound on this point before his time. That is, sound as to their official stand, though the Pearce-Davies (I am not at the moment sure of the spelling) case hinged on these general principles, and these brethren had their defenders in high places.

Bro Roberts was very clear on this point. Read chapter 18 in the original Christendom Astray. Bro Carter dropped most of this chapter, and he told me the reason was that bro Roberts' views on suing at law were "too highly colored."

Bro Walker was very clear on it. In the Christadelphian, 1900, p 242, he says: -

"From Mt 19:9 and 5:32 we cannot help concluding that the law of Christ permits a man to put away his wife for adultery. But it does not require it. From John 8:1-11 we also cannot help concluding that it would be like Christ on the brother's part to forgive her.

"From 1 Cor 6 it appears that it would be wrong for a brother to go to law with his erring sister-wife "before the unbelievers" to procure legal separation from her. Rather suffer wrong, as Paul says."

He says again. (Chdn, 1906, p 72)

"Question: Is it lawful for a brother or sister to claim a divorce on the grounds of adultery? If so, could such a brother or sister remain "in the Lord"?"

"Answer: Although Christ expressly allows putting away "for the cause of fornication" (Matt 5:32; 19:9), there is no warrant for going into the court over the matter "before the unbelievers," but much the reverse. If separation must occur, the parties should remain as they are."

You will note in all the extracts that bro Roberts is very careful not to advocate divorce. He speaks of handling cases where there is divorce. He is quite clear that where there was adultery, and divorce did occur, then remarriage is permissible. Apparently bro Walker agreed on both points: do not seek divorce, but if you are

divorced and there has been adultery, you are free to marry. This latter point is clear from his comment (Chdn. 1905, p 94) on the Melbourne case and its aftermath: -

"Melbourne: The interminable strife over the question of marriage and divorce, raised by the misdeeds of some years ago, has reached another acute state. Bro. H. Gordon encloses a typewritten circular giving extracts from bro Roberts writings on the subject, extending over a number of years. The views expressed, which are according to Scripture and commonsense, regard marriage as indissoluble "saving for the cause of fornication" (Mt 5:32). An extreme party in Melbourne wishes to regard marriage as indissoluble absolutely, and apparently division has taken place."

This makes it clear that bro Walker agreed with bro Roberts. In the extracts referred to (which must be about the same ones we have — I have never been able to find any others), bro Roberts clearly teaches there may be remarriage after divorce for the proper cause. It might not be clear from bro Walker's other extracts (as above 1900, 1906) that he thought so too.

Bro Jannaway was also in agreement as late as 1920 when he published Christadelphian Answers (see enclosed). He says there can be divorce for just one cause. Couples may separate for other causes, but may not remarry. This exactly parallels bro Roberts' extract #3 in my two pages of extracts.

In the Detroit Pebbles case (1923), all in this area of the ecclesial world accepted the Exceptive Clause (even Walter Livermore at that time — on his own direct admission to me in writing quite recently). The whole issue was whether the Pebbles should be asked what was the grounds of the divorce that had been obtained (before coming to the knowledge of the Truth). All were willing to accept them as man and wife if the divorce had been obtained for adultery.

As to the application of 1 Cor 6 to marriage and divorce, note that both chapter 5 and chapter 7 are all about marriage and divorce. Yet bro Carter stoutly argued that ch 6, right in between them, had nothing to do with that subject. He argued that if you could "go to law" to get married, then you could surely "go to law" to get divorced. He could see no difference. He apparently had no conception of the significance of the "against another" aspect.

Much love, Rene

ENCLOSURE referred to above...

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

G V Growcott (1940)

I can find no Scripture which would justify me in requiring a remarried divorcee to separate. On the other hand I find that in a very similar (but far more serious) circumstance — marriage to the alien, adultery against the temple of God — the state created by the adultery is accepted upon repentance for the sake of the children and in hope of conversion (1 Cor 7:12-16; I Pet 3:1-2).

I find divorce and remarriage unqualifiedly condemned as an abomination to God. I find divorcees and remarried persons styled adulterers who will not inherit the kingdom unless they repent. I find the same thing in relation to marriage with the alien. I find it referred to as whoredom, harlotry, adultery, unfaithfulness, treachery, corruption. I find that marriage with alien was one of the principle causes of the flood (Gen 6:2). I find that from this time forward there has always been strife between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between the saints and the world, and I find that marriage between the two is the closest bond that good can form with evil, and the greatest cause of corruption and danger to the children of God; the strongest union with the world of the ungodly; the most to be feared and condemned.

It was by this that the nations of Canaan corrupted and conquered Israel when every other artifice failed. It was this above all things that Israel was warned against and it was this that brought upon them the worst of their plagues.

The seriousness of the offense is illustrated by the record in Ezra 9 "The princes came to me saying--, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lends, doing according to their abominations for they have taken or their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and my beard, and sat down astonished until the

evening sacrifice. And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness...and I fell upon my knees and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens . . . And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land unto which ye go to possess it is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, not seek their peace or their wealth forever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children forever... Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? . . Behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: we cannot stand before thee because of this."

We find that the remedy they found was this, "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law".

"And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel, Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do His pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, AS THOU HAST SAID, SO MUST WE DO."

Such was the inflexible severity of the law of alien marriage. On the other hand, although divorce and remarriage are never approved, and "it was not so from the beginning" we do find that "for the hardness of their hearts" it was allowed, and even such men as Jacob, Moses, Abraham, David, etc, listed among the faithful, had more than one wife and violated the law from the beginning that "the twain shall be one flesh"

Let us therefore keep things in their proper proportion.

When we come to the law of Christ we find that God's abhorrence of alien marriage with Belial, of the temple of God with the temple of idols, still the closest and most intimate form of union with the corruption of the world. The twain, saith he, shall be one flesh.

But we find that God's treatment of the matter is different, although his displeasure and disapproval are still the same. We find that we are working according to different principles. We are to stay with the unbelieving partner and endeavor to win them to the Truth. Let us note well that the union is still adultery, unfaithfulness and whoredom with the world, but we are, once married, to remain with them. There has been a fundamental metamorphosis in the basis of things. The veil has been removed. That which was seen in symbol is now seen clearly. The patterns of things in the heavens have given way to the heavenly things themselves, which must be purified with better sacrifices.

Sins of the body have given place to sins of the mind as the main consideration. Under Moses, the Israelite who married the alien had to send her away. We do not, but we must go deeper. Passing over the state created by our act of unfaithfulness (in the spirit of 1 Cor 6:18-27, which is Paul's explanation of this very thing, see verses 12-17), we must purify the mind that lead to the act. This is the all important thing. Jesus illustrates the same thing when he says, Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart. This is Jesus' definition of adultery, and it is in the light and spirit of this definition that we must understand what he says about it. God does not care whether we are Jew or Greek, bond or free, married or unmarried, or how we got that way. He is concerned with us as we are now, and the state of our heart. He can wash us from the vilest sins known to man, if we have got them out of our heart. Adultery is in the heart. We can be the greatest adulterers that ever lived, and yet never touch a woman.

As with marriage to the alien, so I firmly believe with divorce and remarriage. The adultery is in the heart and mind. And, as with alien marriage, the sin is in the act that creates the state, and not the subsequent state itself. It is the act of disobedience and unfaithfulness that we must repent of, and it is the condition of heart and frame of mine that lead to the act that we must purify and forsake. When we are married to the alien, and confess our sin, we are not commanded to refuse them the communion that makes us one flesh with them, but we come under the general instruction to "Defraud (apostereo – deprive) ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time." And again "Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed."

It is the state we are in when we come to our senses. We are told not to become bondservants of men. But if we do, and realize our error, then we must make the best of it. It is no sin to stay in that condition. Rather the sin lies in failing to fulfill its obligations once we are in it.

There are many things we cannot undo, once done. By divorce and remarriage, we have done an injustice perhaps to one innocent person. By another divorce (putting away, separation) we shall only be doing injustice to a second innocent person, without helping the first, for we cannot return to the first. We have obligations to the second once we have entered into the covenant. And I Cor 7:5 show that these obligations do not consist solely of financial support.

Things cannot be returned to their original state. Israel's contract with the Gibeonites had to be honored, even though it was in violation of a command of God. We may think that inasmuch as God intended the Gibeonites to be exterminated along with the rest of the Canaanites, it wouldn't matter anyhow. But God thought differently. The contract, sin though it was, had to be honored, and its conditions fulfilled. And there was no sin in fulfilling the conditions of the contract, though the contract was sin.

I can find no passage where the term adultery is applied to the subsequent state. The adultery is always in the frame of mind that leads to the act, and the act itself. I can find no passage that justifies the term 'living in adultery' as applied to a remarried person. I can find no passage that gives me any reason to believe that the term is not applied exclusively to the act that creates the state – the act of divorce or "putting away" and the act of remarriage or making a new covenant, which, though unlawful and adulterous, is binding once it is made, just as is alien marriage.

I would not feel justified in insisting upon the dismemberment of a family on the basis of what so far I have found revealed on the subject. It does not help either to belittle, or to overemphasize, the attendant hardship upon those separated and their dependents, or the fact that if the separation we demand is not justified by clear Scripture, we are unnecessarily exposing both parties to further temptation (1 Cor 7:5)

Briefly, marriage with the alien is distinctly forbidden, and it is condemned in far stronger terms than divorce and remarriage. It is sin. It is corruption of the bride of Christ with the world. It is adultery of the gravest kind. Adultery of the mind and affections is far, far more serious than adultery of the body.

But the state created by the sin is accepted by God and the Ecclesia upon confession, and forsaking of the adulterous mind.

Where is there one passage to prove that the case, in a lesser way, is not exactly the same with the adulterous sin of remarriage after divorce?

I believe if we could only get God's true perspective of the relative gravity of sins of the mind and sins of the body, we would never receive the alien marriage without requiring separation and at the same time require separation in the case of a far less important sin.

Is not the bride of Christ "one flesh" with him? Does not Paul say, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This a great mystery: but I speak concerning CHRIST AND THE CHURCH."

This is the real meaning of Gen 2:24. Here are the realities of faithfulness and chastity and "one flesh", and on the other hand unfaithfulness and adultery. These are the eternal things that cannot be shaken. Present marriage is but a fleshly and shadowy symbol, a convenience for the time to perish with the using. Let us not let its petty problems and difficulties loom out of proportion the big responsibilities we have to guard. Let us put first things first, and learn from God' merciful treatment of the big things how we shall act in regard to the little ones.

Every principle of Scripture and reason tells us that it is far worse to be united in marriage to a worldly unbeliever, a continual and intimate influence for evil, than to a repentant believer who is now resolved to faithfully obey God and help us in the race for eternal life. The Scriptures teach us to accept the former condition; where is there Scripture to tell us to disfellowship the second?

Bro Jannaway said, Christadelphian 1892, page 7, "God's estimate of alien marriages was that they were the most potential of all influences in drawing away the heart from Himself (Exod 34:12-16)."

Bro Roberts (Chdn 1875, p 517): "There can be no doubt about the duty of believers to restrict their matrimonial alliances to believers. And there can be no doubt that sin is committed where this rule is transgressed. But it does not follow that being so married - a believer to an unbeliever — the parties ought to separate. New duties come into operation which require them to keep together. Not to speak of their duty to each other and to their children, the law of the land holds them to the contract, and we are commanded to be subject to kings and governors, and the ordinances of man in all matters where we are not called upon to disobey God."

Does not this apply with equal force to remarriage after divorce?

Bro Roberts (Chdn 1891, p 262): "How could a believer of the Scriptural type take the world into the closest of friendship in husband or wife, without being disobedient, AND WITHOUT BEING POLLUTED?... We have the picture of Ezra .. The severe remedy of putting away the strange wives followed - Coming on to ecclesial times, we have the same law of separation enjoined ... How then could man or woman, aiming to be holy to God both in body and spirit, safely or innocently make themselves one flesh with another that was not so?"

Bro Roberts (Chdn 1897, p 333): "He has violated every principle of the calling to which the Gospel has called him in making himself one with the world in the person of his wife. He has put his will which ought to be untrammelled in the service of God, under mortgage to an enemy of God ... He has sacrificed his power to perform his duty by marrying an unbeliever ... Such a marriage is a violation of every principle of loyalty of 'those that are not Christ's?' "For two, saith he, shall be one flesh" (1 Cor 6:15). Though Paul here was arguing against fornication, his remarks have application to union with those who, not being his, belong to the HARLOT COMMUNITY." "What we do know is that marriage with the alien is forbidden: that disobedience has always been disastrous."

Bro Jannaway (Chrn 1892, p 7): "Separateness from the world cannot exist where alien unions are indulged in."

Bro Jannaway (Chrn 1892, p 47): "Alien marriages are as powerful to lead away from the Truth today as they were in Old Testament times."

Christadelphian 1878, p 401: "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." (1 Cor 10:8; Num 25:1-15) The sin of Zimri consisted in unlawfully taking an idolatrous woman — a woman forbidden him for divine reasons. And, therefore, he committed fornication. Then if the conjugal relation between the people of God and the alien were so offensive then, is it less so now? If such alliances turned away the hearts of the Israel after the flesh, will they not turn away the hearts of the Israel after the spirit? And if this reference by Paul to the case of Zimri and his erring brethren mean anything at all, does it not mean that for a brother or sister of Christ to marry an alien is to "COMMIT FORNICATION" or as Paul put it in another place, to "DEFILE THE TEMPLE OF GOD"?

Christadelphian 1878, p 468 **Marriage with the Alien — "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnants of those nations, even those who remain among you, and shall MAKE MARRIAGE WITH THEM, know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of those nations from before you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish off this good land" (Josh 23:11-13) ... It is evident that marriage with the alien may cause departure from the truth, and may end in forfeiture of eternal glory ... It is almost impossible for any but those married to an alien, to know what a great hindrance a partner is who is opposed to the truth.

Christadelphian 1893, p 264: "The apostle uses "harlot" in its natural sense; but the word has also a spiritual sense, and the principle he sets forth is so applicable to the one as to the other. His question in ver. 15 may, therefore, be paralleled by the following: "Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of those who constitute the mother of harlots or her daughters?" The only permissible answer is, "God forbid." Marriage with a member of the apostasy is, therefore, expressly forbidden ... To unite that body (of a believer) with one who has not been bought with Christ's blood is to defile it. And it is written, 'If any man defile the temple of god, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' What is the extent of the defilement arising out of a marriage between one in Christ and one out of Christ? Is it confined to the married believer? No, for he is but a member of the 'one body' ... To marry such an one, therefore, produces the same consequences as the touching of a dead body under the Mosaic law. That is, a brother defiles himself, and if not purified, he defiles the antitypical tabernacle or temple of God. What is the process of purification? TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HE HAS SINNED AND TO ASK GOD FOR FORGIVENESS THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST ... To what extent is this process of purification (recorded in Ezra) applicable to Israel after the spirit? In principle, the whole of it, except the putting

away of wives. Why is this not necessary? Because god has forbidden married believers to put away their unbelieving partners ... God promises to dwell in a believer, but not in an unbeliever. The basis for the fulfillment of the promise is, Be ye separate, Touch not the unclean thing. How then can God dwell in a believer who contaminates himself by becoming "one flesh" with an unbeliever?

The case of Ezra sending away the alien wives and children of the Jews was not because they had previously been divorced, but because believers had married unbelievers, showing the greater seriousness of the latter step.

The Law permitted (without approving) divorce and remarriage for the 'hardness of their hearts' but even the law did not permit believers to marry unbelievers, or to stay married to them once it was done, as the case of Ezra shows. Shall we permit the more serious of these offences without requiring separation in the other case, where He has said nothing about separation, but only repentance. Would not we, with our natural reasoning, say that for one who has married an unbeliever to show their repentance they must bring forth fruits meet for repentance by putting them away? But God does not ask this. Nor does he ask it in the case of the lesser sin of marriage.

According to Clapham, remarriage after baptism is adultery, and must be forsaken. The remarried person is still 'one flesh' with the former partner. But on the other hand, remarriage before baptism need not be forsaken, and the remarried person is 'one flesh' with the latter partner.

Then suppose: A man accepts the truth. His wife accepts later. After his baptism, but before hers, they are divorced, and both remarry. Then according to Clapham's clauses b and c, he is 'one flesh' with and bound to her, while she is quite legally and acceptably separated from him and is one flesh with and bound to her second husband. This is a very possible case and shows the improbability of two sets of laws on the matter.

But to further show the confusion, let us also suppose the two people that the above two marry also have the same history reversed. That is, were originally married, and were divorced and remarried while one was in the truth and the other out. I believe, seriously speaking, that it would be impossible for anyone to say who was who and what was what, and who was properly married to who, according to Clapham's clause 'b' and 'c' which are well intentioned but impossible of logical application.

Clapham says, "It would be contrary to the character of God to require such a man (married before baptism) on his coming to a knowledge of the Truth, to leave a woman to whom he has been united, perhaps for many years, with inevitable hardship and apparent injustice to herself and probably also to the family. Therefore, we cannot endorse this view."

At the outset, this is a dangerous argument for anyone to use, because if anything would appear to the natural mind as contrary to the character of God, it is the crucifixion of Christ. We must determine God's character by what He does and what He tells us about Himself, not what we think He should do. He can compensate for any hardships if they are necessary, and He is the one to say whether they are necessary, and whether they are, or are not, contrary to His character.

But, if this argument regarding the character of God, and the inevitable hardships, has sufficient weight here to rule and the acceptance of the necessity of separation, and enable Clapham to say, "Therefore we cannot endorse it", does it not apply equally to a man who has left the truth, divorces, remarries and then lives many years and raises a family with a second wife, and then sincerely repents of his former errors and desires to return to the truth, the wife and children in this case being just as innocent as in the first case.

Suppose he has married the second wife while he was away from the truth, and she knows nothing about the laws of God concerning marriage and divorce. Suppose she learns of the Truth and desires to be baptized, some years before he repents and desires to return. Would she be accepted and permitted to remain with him? She was married to him before her baptism. She comes under clause c. So she is accepted and goes on living with him as his wife, he having left the truth. But then he decides to come back. He comes under clause b, and so he must separate from her as a condition of return.

If he refused to separate, would you receive him? If he refused to separate, and you refused to accept him, would you then tell the woman she must leave him to remain in fellowship, after you had fellowshiped her for years while married to him?

Would it be right for her to stay living with him while he was out of the Truth, but when he wants to return to the truth, to have to leave him because he could not be received back while he was living with her?

Or would you go on fellowshiping her while she continued to live with him, but refuse to fellowship him as long as he lived with her?

In answer to the problem on page 5, according to the Clapham clauses, the two brethren would be considered as married to their first wives, while the two sisters would be considered as married to their second husbands, or if it were reversed, both brethren would be considered as married to the same sister, and both sisters would be considered as married to the same brother. In either case, two could be received while living with the other two, but the other two could not be received while living with them.

Marriage is a contract for life.

Divorce is a sin, but, if committed, it breaks the contract.

Once broken, it would require remarriage of the pair of them to renew the contract and live together legally.

Remarriage to someone else after divorce is a sin, but once committed, it is another solemn contract, perhaps with an innocent party.

Jephthah's vow was a sin, and so was Joshua's covenant with the Gibeonites, but both had to be honored, once made, and there was no sin in the honoring of it, only in the making of it.

It is impossible and unscriptural to interpret "one flesh" as inseparable unto death, for the following reasons:

- 1) We are told "Let not man put asunder" showing that it is possible for man to put asunder (but not righteously).
- 2) For the "hardness of their hearts" God permitted divorce, showing that His will from the beginning was that they should be "one flesh" and not "put asunder", but that separation of the "one flesh" could be made. He speaks of the second partners as 'wife' and 'husband' respectively,
- 3) God forbade, as an abomination, the returning to the former partner, who had once been "one flesh" and had been "put asunder".
- 4) The quotation regarding "one flesh" is used by Paul in connection with intercourse with a harlot. I have heard of no one who would interpret this as a lifelong union, that could not be "put asunder".
- 5) Clapham agrees that "one flesh" can be separated before baptism.

God decrees that man and wife are "one flesh". This is His Law. But if they break that law by divorce, if man, contrary to command, does "put asunder", a new state of affairs is created, and if they remarry, they have made it impossible to return to the former state of "one flesh".

I believe that the following conclusions are in harmony with scripture, and that they are the only conclusions that are not attended by insuperable difficulties.

- 1) Divorce is a sin. It is adultery. The offender is an unforgiven adulterer and must be disfellowshipped. Upon an apparently sincere confession of error and profession of repentance, he must be received back. The contract has been broken, and are no more "one flesh" but may remarry each other, if neither marries another in between.
- 2) Remarriage (to someone else) is a sin. It too is adultery, but it is the intention and act of remarriage that is the adultery, just as it is the act of divorce (not the staying divorced afterwards).

- 3) Once the sin of remarriage has been committed, it has created a new state, just as the sin of divorce created a new state, and just as the sin of marriage with the alien created a new state. This new state is the result of sin, but it is not sin itself, just as the new state resulting from marriage with the alien is the result of sin, but not sin in itself.
- 4) Remarriage is a contract. It is an unlawful alliance, just as is marriage with the alien, just as was Joshua's covenant with the Gibeonites, but still its obligations must be fulfilled, and cannot be evaded, once the sin has been committed.
- 5) These things, marriage, divorce, and remarriage can never be undone in the sense of returning to the original state. Only confusion can result in trying to go back part way.
- 6) The general principle is, in what state you are when you 'come to yourself,' so remain and make the best of it, and 'sin no more'. God will determine your degree of guilt, and whether He will forgive.

One thing seems to me to be inescapable. It is impossible to regard remarriage as a 'state of sin' and 'living in adultery' when committed after baptism, and not before. There is no warrant for any such distinction, and I think this is the fatal error in Clapham's stand. If it is a continuous 'state of sin' it MUST BE FORSAKEN AT BAPTISM. If on the other hand, those who have divorced and remarried before baptism are not considered in a 'state of sin' and 'living in adultery' but need only repent for the act of sin which created the state they are in, then this MUST BE TRUE of those who do the same after baptism. The guilt is far greater in the case where the knowledge existed, but, if there is genuine repentance, there is no limit to God's forgiveness. "her sins, which are many, are forgiven her" "Which of them will love him most? ... He to whom he forgave most." There is no hint of different conditions in different cases. Sin must be forsaken, whether committed before or after enlightenment and baptism. Only endless confusion can arise from having two sets of laws.

Each partner in a marriage is "bound by the law" to the other as long as the other liveth. This is the law. But if the law is broken, a new state is created. The law no longer applies. It has been violated by an act of sin. They are no more "one flesh". Man has "put them asunder" in direct violation of the law that bound them unto death as one flesh.

We have a law to come out and be separate, and not to marry the alien. But if we break that law, it no longer holds us in regard to that person, and we are under a new law to give them their due according to our contract with them, and 'defraud them not'.

"One flesh" is a breakable law, not an unbreakable fact — otherwise man could not "put asunder". This is the "law of the husband" that is binding unto death unless broken.

Jesus was talking to the Pharisees when he expressed the laws of divorce "from the beginning". There is nothing to prove that acts of unbaptised persons are not considered sins when they are in violation to God's law, though they may be in ignorance of it. Everything proves just the opposite.

A man is a thief in the sight of God if he steals in ignorance of God's law.

A man is a murderer in the sight of God if he murders in ignorance of God's law.

A man is an adulterer in the sight of God if he commits adultery in ignorance of God's law. (1 Cor 6:9-12).

Intercourse with a harlot constitutes "one flesh" (1 Cor 6:16). "One flesh" is "joined together by God" (Matt 19:6). Can a man who has had intercourse with a harlot never be "put asunder" from her? Is he forever after forbidden to marry another?

Lustful desire is adultery (Matt 5:28). Adultery creates "one flesh" (1 Cor 6:16) Does one instance of lustful desire

prohibit any other marriage?

What actually constitutes the "state of adultery?" Is it being married? If so, it is not cured by separation, but only divorce. Is it the actual act of intercourse? If so, if a remarried couple refrained from this, would they be living in a "state of adultery"? Is it both? If it is both, the first argument stands. They do not cure it by separation. Only by divorce.

Clapham says they must "break the unlawful alliance". Booklet, p 11, pars 2. Does separation break the alliance, or is divorce necessary?

I do believe that remarried persons are living in a continual state of being unforgiven and unrepentant sinners.

The patriarchs, having more than one wife, were not living in adultery. Their state was not wholly pleasing to God, but it was regular and legalized; it was not adultery. Neither are a man a woman who have been divorced and remarried "living in adultery". They are living in a state which is the result of adultery, just as are those who marry out of the Truth.

I believe that when a couple who have been remarried come to a knowledge of the Truth, they must confess that in the sight of God they have committed adultery by their marriage, not that they are now living in adultery. They are living in a perfectly regular and acceptable state, though they are still unforgiven adulterers.

I believe the same of those who marry out of the truth, and I believe the same of those who divorce and remarry after baptism. God is not a respecter of persons and I believe the same uniform law and conditions hold good throughout. The guilt of sin is increased by the amount of knowledge possessed, but the consequences are the same throughout.

God treats those who are married to the alien just the same if it is done before baptism or after. The consequences are the same, although the degree of guilt varies.

So I believe God regards those who commit adultery by divorce and remarriage both before and after baptism.

We cannot have two laws as Clapham does (clauses b & c) because it is quite possible and probable to encounter both types in the same case, that is, one partner in the truth, and the other out, and the application of two laws here works impossible.

Forgiveness is complete regardless of the magnitude of the guilt. It is possible in the one case for God to forgive without requiring separation, it is just as possible in the other, and it is wholly unreasonable, and without proof, to say that something else is necessary as 'fruits meet for repentance'.

The magnitude of guilt by reason of knowledge is no barrier to the forgiveness of God, if the conditions of mind and heart warranting it are present. Nor does the magnitude of the guilt alter His laws regarding the matter. The repentant frame of mind is the whole thing in both cases.

Either Walter Livermore or Bro Dowling must be right, for they alone are consistent in their position. Clapham, I believe, disproves itself. If they are right in clause b, they prove that Walter is right. If they are right in clause c, they prove that Bro Dowling and Bro Jannaway are right, but in either case it seems to me that they prove themselves to be wrong.

I am not prepared to accept Walter Livermore's stand (though his writings are on the whole the most logical and reasonable and considered and temperate of anything I have read on the subject, and he is one of the very few that have not changed their ground) because I cannot share his view of the inseparability of the "one flesh".

I believe it can be put asunder, but NOT RIGHTEOUSLY. If it cannot, there is no point in forbidding it. We are married, and become "one flesh". Then we go into a harlot and become "one flesh" with her (I Cor 6:16). We could do this repeatedly. Is the "one flesh" in each case an eternal and inseparable thing. One flesh cannot be so stressed to extremes.

I believe the whole secret lies in the fact that "one flesh" cannot be separated – RIGHTEOUSLY, but it can be separated.

And I believe it can be reconciled. I believe it can be reconciled after unfaithfulness and whoredom, but not after a

new marriage covenant has been entered into. I am not fully established on this point (and it is not an important one) but it is based upon Deut 24, the symbol of Ezekiel and Hosea, and I Cor 6:27.

There is a difference between adultery and remarriage (although remarriage includes adultery). Adultery is not a covenant. Remarriage is. Adultery does not made reconciliation impossible. Remarriage does.

God hates putting away (Mal 2) but here the context shows that the putting away is treachery (margin: unfaithfulness) – not the subsequent separation by the innocent from the unrepentant guilty. It is the unfaithfulness that 'puts away' and breaks the 'one flesh'. Therefore Christ said, If you put her away except for fornication, you cause the adultery, but if it is for fornication, she has already broken the 'one flesh'.

I believe unfaithfulness breaks the "one flesh" and releases the innocent person from continued contamination with the guilty. Otherwise, if one partner goes astray to harlotry, the other would be forever bound as "one flesh" to a harlot – the temple of God bound to the temple of idols.

The "one flesh" must be dissolved when one partner becomes putrid and corrupt, or how is the separateness and purity of the other to be preserved? Doth not nature teach you? If your hand (your flesh) offend you, cut it off.

But still they should remain unmarried – hoping for a repentance and cleansing of the other. Let them remain unmarried, or let them be reconciled. I think that Walter makes this beautifully clear as he traces the obvious and perfect connection between Matt 19:3-9 and the immediately following verses, 10-12. I had never seen this before.

God will be reconciled to Israel and become her Ishi (husband) and the land shall again be Beulah (married) to Him although their corruptions and whoredoms and adulteries have been legion, and they have been one flesh with many adulterous nations.

And Hosea took back his unfaithful and adulterous wife, as a symbol of the love and forgiveness of God to Israel.

A QUESTION: Adultery is unfaithfulness to another. Does this not prove that the first wife is still considered as the real wife? Could it be called adultery if the first marriage is already broken?

THE ANSWER: Adultery breaks the marriage. The term adultery is applied to the whole act of divorce and remarriage as a unit.

The insurmountable barrier to Clapham's position is this: If the second marriage is "living in adultery", then remarried partners must, at baptism, separate. How can we get around this? We cannot. It is a stone wall, and we keep coming back to it. If Clapham is right on this point, they force us to accept Walter Livermore's position. It is the only logical one.

I don't believe there is such a thing as "living in adultery" (I am not now taking into consideration promiscuous harlotry, or more than one man having continuous dealings with the same woman — that would be "living in adultery").

I believe Clapham and Walter err on the same point — the inseparability of the "one flesh". The Law hath dominion is built upon this one idea. It takes it for granted, and its whole case stands or falls with it. But whereas Walter is temperate and analytical and logical, I am afraid that Clapham is not. In fairness, it must be said that Clapham is not the greatest offender in this respect, however.

I agree with Walter Livermore, and I can't see how it can be denied, that God's laws from the beginning (not the Law of Moses) apply to all His creation. The law in Genesis 2:24 has no limitation.

"All have sinned" and "sin is transgression of law" — "Where there is no law there is no transgression". Therefore, if all have sinned, all must be under law.

Otherwise what sins are forgiven at baptism? Sins against God's universal laws, committed in ignorance. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent" — to repent of what?

Jesus, when speaking of "one flesh" was speaking to the Pharisees (not about the Law of Moses which modified that universal law 'for the hardness of their hearts') but about the law "from the beginning". He says, for all men and all time, "WHOSOEVER ...

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her" (Mark 10:11-12).

How, asks Walter, could he commit adultery against her by remarriage, if the putting away dissolves the first marriage?

This at first appeared to me to be a good and strong point. If the second marriage is adultery against the first wife, surely this must mean that she is still considered his wife.

But think a minute. There are two lines of reasoning which show that we cannot build too much on this, although I was hoping it would be a starting point for a new perspective.

1st: It is the "putting away and marrying another" that is the adultery. That is, the adultery against her is not committed after the putting away, as Walter's reasoning would necessitate. The putting away is part of the adultery. The whole thing is the "adultery against her", starting with the conception in the heart.

2nd: But there is another point altogether, which changes the whole complexion. This is the only passage where it is said, "He committeth adultery against her." The natural assumption is that the "her" is the first wife — I have never heard anyone suggest anything else — but when we come to look into it we find it unmistakably means the second wife — the "another" whom he marries.

The diaglott says, "Whoever shall dismiss his wife, and marry another, commits adultery WITH her," meaning obviously the second woman.

The word translated "with" (epi) when used with an accusative as it is here, is also translated "to, upon, on, unto, at, among, over". Where it is translated "against" as in this case in the AV, it always appears to refer to the direct agent or recipient of the action.

I believe an examination of this passage, and the uses of this word, shows conclusively that it is the second woman to, upon, or unto or with, whom the adultery is committed. The same word (and with an accusative) is used in verse 16, same chapter, "He put his hands upon them." Also in Matt 1:16, "Lighting upon him", again, "Take my yoke upon you."

With the accusative, epi is translated "against" 33 times, and "in, into, on, over, to, unto & upon" 354 times.

Walter Livermore quotes a case where a man is considered legally divorced in Michigan, but a bigamist in Ontario, where he is arrested on this charge. If he were a brother, what would we do? Clapham cannot answer, because it has already conceded half of Walter's argument, and should logically concede the other half. If the man was a brother before his remarriage, it would agree with Walter in handling the case, and also with the Canadian government. However, if he were remarried before he was baptised, Clapham would take issue with Walter over the necessary ecclesial attitude, and would side with the Michigan legislature. What shall we say?

First, we are under God's laws, and man's. We must obey both whenever possible and God's at all times.

The pair had broken God's law when divorced in Michigan, obviously not for adultery, or Canada would recognize the divorce. God's law had been broken again, when the man remarried, also man's law in Canada. What is necessary?

First to get right with God. Repentance for both sins of divorce and remarriage. Now God's laws permit divorce (separation, putting away, bill of divorcement) for unfaithfulness. And all man's laws (except the Pope's) permit this, too. Here is no disagreement. God's law neither requires nor permits going to law. Divorce in God's sight does not require this, and it is not necessary to satisfy the laws of men, because God does not sanction remarriage anyway. To God they are divorced. To man they are separated.

The Canadian laws would not recognize the first divorce in Michigan (nor would the Pope). But when the man had married again, this second sin had, in the sight of God, established his divorce as actual (though not righteous). He was no more one flesh with the first wife. He could not go back

And God recognized the second marriage as actual, though not righteous — both acts cutting him off from God and requiring sincere penitence before he could be received back..

But if the man wanted to live in Canada, he would have to separate from the second woman to satisfy Canadian laws, for we must be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. He had sinned both against the laws of God and against the laws of man. Man was not concerned with his frame of mind and heart. God was. Man, on the other hand required a different form of satisfaction.

Man's requirements are often more exacting than God's. If we steal, and truly repent, God says, "Steal no more," and receive us back. This is not enough for man. We would have to pay the penalty and go to jail. God does not even require restitution: man would not be satisfied with restitution -- we should still have to go to jail.

If we repent of adultery, God says, Go and sin no more, but in some places under man's law, adultery is a punishable offence, and again we would have to go to jail.

In Germany a German may not marry a Jew. Suppose a believing German married a believing Jew. Would God recognize their marriage? Of course. But if they went to Germany, would Germany recognize it? They would not, but would say it was invalid as racial pollution and adultery. Therefore if the couple chose to live in Germany they would have to live apart in conformity with the laws of man under which they were.

Doubtless there were places in the earth in David's time that forbade a man to have more than one wife. This is almost a universal law at present. What would David have to do if he went to those places? He would have to obey their laws and limit himself to one wife.

The laws of man are so varied that it is very possible and easy to imagine many cases of confusion such as Walter quotes. The only thing we can do is try to satisfy both God and man, and be sure we do the first. Beyond that we can only do our best and take the consequences.

Walter's conclusion about the confusion of fellowship that would result does not present an insurmountable difficulty. No one would fellowship the man if he chose to live in Canada as a bigamist and adulterer in the eyes of Canadian law. No one would refuse to fellowship him if he fulfilled God's requirements, and chose to live in a place where his state was not obnoxious to the laws of man, or else, if he could, change the state.

We could not refuse to fellowship David, with all his bloody past and many wives, if he presented himself to us as fulfilling all the present requirements of fellowship. The past is dead. The past is nothing. In whatsoever state you are, serve God, and be content. Be right with Him now in your heart. The past can't be undone, but "Sin no more". "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow". The deepness of the dye presents no difficulties to God.

What if the extreme case came up of having among us a couple who had been previously married to each other and were now married to other people? This could easily happen under Clapham's clauses anyway. It is their present attitude and position before God that counts. We are all sinners, washed in the blood of Christ. The flesh is nothing. It is corrupt from beginning to end. We have all failed miserably. "Such were some of you", says Paul, after listing some of the worst excesses of the flesh, "but ye are washed, ye are sanctified by the blood of Christ."

Perhaps the polite world looked with scorn and loathing at Paul's unreserved fellowship of these erstwhile degenerates. We know they so looked on Christ. But God, and the children of God, looks on the heart. "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone."

I would far rather see the Ecclesia full of genuine repentant and sincere divorcees living with the second partners and all faithfully striving to help one another in the race for life, and putting the past behind them, than to see the Ecclesia full of members married to ungodly and worldly outsiders, with their hearts and minds inevitably half with their alien partners.

No one seems to foresee and dread the latter eventuality, if we, as we are commanded, receive back these adulterers with the world without requiring them to separate from the worldly alliance.

But we must erect a manmade barrier against the first happening. The only consideration should be, does God require it? If not, we have no right to, whatever we fear the consequences to be.

It is God's truth, and God's ecclesia. If we do what He requires, He will see to the safety of His own.

People that are held from sin by the fear of ostracism and encouraged to sin by the removal of this fear are not material for God's building. The true ecclesia of God contains none of such, and an ecclesia whose members are restrained only by fear has nothing to live for. Fear will never give us the power to overcome the flesh. It will only drive it underground to fester. We must have love and zeal, and love does not need bars and gates. It is held to the path of truth by an irresistible attraction. If love is present, we have nothing to fear. If it is not, nothing will help us, what ever fearful restrictions we make in our anxiety to restrict where we cannot persuade.