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DID CHRIST FORBID DIVORCE?

The danger of depending upon private interpretations of ancient scripture and of applying to present conditions instructions intended for another age and for special conditions, has been repeatedly pointed out in these columns. The misapplication of an isolated text without regard to the associated context, has also been deplored and deprecated. We frequently receive requests to answer questions which need not be asked, if the writers would but make themselves familiar with the whole subject touched upon in the writings which they quote, and thus learn their purport and the reasons why they were given.

As an example, we will take Matthew xix: 9. On that one verse has been built up a religious theory concerning divorce, on which the whole of Christendom has gone astray. The most powerful of the religious organizations have laid down the rigid rule, that divorce must not be granted to any persons except for the cause mentioned in that text. This has been enforced by ecclesiastical edicts to the extreme of cruelty and absurdity. It has been done under the mistaken impression, that Christ laid down this inflexible law, and therefore that it would be sinful and unchristian to depart from it. But if the verses preceding it are carefully examined, it will be found that Jesus was answering a question put to Him by certain Pharisees who came to Him "tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" And further, "why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorce, and to put her away?" The Great Teacher replied to those queries and His answers must be understood in that light.

The entire subject under consideration was the custom that had prevailed in Israel from the days of Moses, under which a man who became dissatisfied with his wife could simply give her "a bill of divorcement" and send her away. It was founded upon that part of the Mosaic code which will be found in Deuteronomy xxiv: 1-4. The Pharisees wanted to know if that rule applied to "every cause." Jesus showed that rightfully it would apply to but one cause, that which he specified. And this was not at discord with the law as given by Moses. But because of the "hardness of men's hearts" the issuing of a bill of divorcement by the husband to the wife was permitted to extend over wider grounds than was originally intended.

Now, it should be observed that the Savior said nothing, in this connection, as to the general subject of divorce granted by legitimate authority, civil or ecclesiastical, nor did he say, according to the statement of Matthew, that a woman might not leave her husband except for the one cause mentioned. He was speaking to the question of the right of a man to put away his wife "for every cause," by his own act and personal authority. The right and power of a properly constituted tribunal was not taken into consideration or mentioned in any way. The right of a woman to refuse to live with a man who abused her, failed to support her, made her life a continual misery and her home a hell, was not the topic of discussion. Yet the answer of the Savior to the question of the Pharisees has been stretched out of all rational and fair proportions, and made to do duty in a manner far from that which he evidently intended.

But it will be asked, did He not declare: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder?" Certainly, but did He say that Deity, after joining together a man and a woman, could not put them asunder? Cannot He who binds also unbind? And if God bestows authority upon one who represents Him by His Divine commandment, to seal on earth and it shall be sealed in heaven, also exercise the same authority to loose on earth and it shall be loosed in heaven? Christ taught the doctrine that He who received His Apostles received Him, and he that received Christ received also Him that sent Christ? If so, that which they performed on earth in the way that God appointed, would be the same in the sight of heaven as if performed by the Father or the Son in person. A marriage solemnized in that manner and by that sealing power would be a joining together of the parties in the same sense as that union which took place "in the beginning," when God gave Eve unto Adam. No man nor any earthly authority would have the rightful power to put them asunder. If such human power was exercised, it would only stand under human law, but would not be recognized in the divine law.

But will it be argued, or asserted, that the marriages ordinarily performed, whether by a civil magistrate, or by a religious minister who has never received an appointment from Deity to act in the divine name, can be truly classed as those "whom God hath joined together?" Are they any more than temporal, earthly unions "until

death does them part?" Are they not mere civil contracts, under the laws and authority of mortal laws? In such marriages it is man and not God that joins the parties together. It is man and not God who also puts them asunder, when a decree of divorce is granted for what are deemed good and sufficient reasons.

We maintain that the teachings of the Savior concerning the subject introduced to Him by the Pharisees, cannot be reasonably stretched to affect the great question of the rightfulness of divorce by a competent court in cases of civil marriage, and by divine authority in cases of religious marriage. They were intended to strike at the root of the wrong existing among the people of his time, by which all that a man had to do to get rid of a wife "who found a writing of divorcement" and send her away, without a hearing before any tribunal or a decree from any court. And we maintain that they have no application or bearing upon the subject as presented for consideration by present customs and in the present age. The religious world has gone astray on this matter as on many other subjects of importance, through taking an isolated text of scripture and manufacturing from it a theory never intended by the author.

Marriage in the sight of God is a sacred and holy estate. It should be entered into only by parties fitted for its duties and responsibilities. It was intended "in the beginning" to be an eternal contract. As related in Genesis, the first pair were beings in whom there was no death when God joined them together and made them "one flesh." This was the divine pattern. But mankind, through many successive centuries, have departed from the ways of God and established governments, laws, customs, ordinances and ceremonies of human origin. He has permitted these things to exist as He never interferes with man's free agency. The world goes on under human direction, and the Eternal Father allows the generations of humanity to manage their affairs according to their choice. And so, nations have instituted marriage laws and customs which have to be observed, so that order may prevail and peace may be established.

Marriage is regarded by most of them as a civil contract entered into under human law and dissolvable by the same law. Different countries have different enactments concerning it, but, in the majority of instances, it has been decided that there are many legitimate causes for the separation of married persons whom it is really a sin to keep in marital bondage. As we have shown, these are human enactments, both as to marriage and to divorce, and therefore, man does not in these cases put asunder that which God has joined together, for the entire arrangement concerning them is human and not Divine.

That the laws relating to divorce are various and conflicting, and that there is a deplorable looseness in their interpretation and administration, is readily conceded. Reform in these particulars is imperative. Marriages are contracted and divorces are obtained without regard to the sanctity of the proper relations between the sexes, and the consequences are the rupture of family ties, the desecration of the home, and confusion in family names and associations. But all this does not argue against legal divorce, for good and sufficient reasons, after proper judicial hearing and decree.

People who have fretted themselves over the text which we have cited and explained, and sectarian ministers who have founded their opposition to rational judicial and ecclesiastical divorce on their misapprehension of that saying of the Savior, would do well to study the whole question in the light in which we have presented it, and as it appears in a review of the entire portion of the chapter in Matthew relating to it. They may thus come to a better understanding of the purpose of the Savior, and form clearer ideas of the justice and mercy of God, and the rights and privileges of persons who have unfortunately contracted marriages that are utterly incompatible, and in which God is no more responsible than He is for the follies and errors and sins of individuals or of nations.

THE UTAH ART INSTITUTE.

On Monday, Sept. 15, the Utah Art Institute opens its annual exhibit, in Provo city. This is always an interesting and profitable exhibition; interesting as showing the progress of art in all its branches in this State, and profitable because it gives hints and suggestions for practical use, as well as for further advancement in artistic work.

The exhibit includes not only sculptures, oil, water color, pastel and other paintings and drawings, but plans in architecture adapted to town and country, for homes, barns and farms; workings in needlework and lace; silk fabrics; designs and specimens of various kinds for utility as well as adornment. It should therefore be attractive to farmers, mechanics, workers in various industries and to all lovers of the beautiful.

The Art Institute was established by State law and has a governing board, including well known artists and ladies and gentlemen of taste and talent, some of whom have spent much time and money in both hemispheres to advance its interests, and it should receive popular support.

Prizes are offered for competition in the various departments of the exhibit, and our ambitious friends of both sexes should vie with each other in friendly contest, to secure the money or medals offered in a generous spirit by friends of art and industry. The exhibit will be open for the week commencing on Monday, Sept. 15, and should be daily attended by crowds of the citizens of our State, and particularly those of Utah county and places with which Provo has railroad connection. We wish the Art Institute unbounded success. Further particulars may be had of the secretary, Mrs. Alice Merrill Horne.

ONE OF THE SIGNS.

Since the disastrous outbreak of the volcanoes in the West Indies, attention has been fixed on other fiery eruptions in the earth's crust, and it is really astonishing how great is the volcanic activity at the present time. A western contemporary makes a note of this fact, and adds the comforting assurance that the present activity of volcanoes is not a sign that the earth is about to be visited by universal disaster through the bursting of its crust. The earth, we are told, has been proved to be solid to the core; volcanoes are the product of local causes. There is, in fact, no "crust" to break.

Now this may be perfectly correct. At least, it would be unwise to take a panicky view of matters beyond human control. But for all that, we are told that among the peculiar signs of the "end" are famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. This may not mean the "end" of the earth in the sense of its total destruction, but it certainly means some important changes in the earth's history—the end of one chapter and the beginning of another—and for that reason it is well to watch for the "signs" that are multiplying on all sides.

There is much uncertainty as to the correct understanding of much of the scriptures pertaining to this subject, but it is absolutely certain that watchfulness is needed at all times by all who desire to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. A French scientist points to what is taking place in space in the so-called Nova, or new stars. Suppose, he says, that following upon an extraordinary twisting movement a whole portion of the sea bottom should give in. The water would be decomposed by heat, the hydrogen would burn, and it would burn more as it had access to more oxygen. Then he continues: "After this frightful catastrophe had produced in this manner the appearance of a new sun, the time would come when its ephemeral light would begin to be extinguished. 'It might happen that the phenomenon would not diminish in intensity over the whole surface of the globe. . . . One region might become less active because the elements that favored conflagration were exhausted there. . . . Little by little the dark points would become more definite and would extend, . . . so that, brought around periodically by the rotation of the globe, they would give rise to a variable star. This is just what happens in the Nova; first we find differences of brilliancy without periodical variation. . . . then, little by little, a periodicity becomes established, indicating clearly the duration of revolution. Finally, the star fades out little by little and dies as a sun to be revived as a fertile globe.'"

"In our hypothesis, our earth would cool off relatively soon, because the 'climatic' conditions would not be the same as at its formation. The waters would condense, the seas and continents would be differently distributed over its surface, and another era of life would begin."

According to this theory, there are natural forces or energy stored up, enough to convert the earth into a vast fiery globe. The volcanic activity may not indicate that this is the immediate fate of the earth, but it is a reminder of the prophetic word. And who can say that it is not the voice of the Almighty, to this generation?

KINGDOM OR SOVEREIGNTY.

Recently a suggestion has been made, by Prof. Dalman that the well known expression in the New Testament, "the kingdom of God," is not the correct rendering of the corresponding phrase in the original, but that it should be rendered the "sovereignty of God," instead of "kingdom." He argues that, as our Lord spoke Aramaic, it is important to know Aramaic usage in order to interpret correctly the words of the Gospels. And this is one of the changes that Aramaic research is thought to have found sufficient ground for.

The change is not very material, for where there is a "kingdom," there is sovereignty, but in most places where the phrase occurs we think the word "sovereignty" would rather improve the text. The following expressions are to be noted: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand;" "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you;" "no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;" "behold, the kingdom of God is within you;" "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy;" "for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," and "now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down."

The reader can substitute the word sovereignty for kingdom, in all these places, and test whether the sense thereby is rendered clearer, or the truth is more forcibly expressed. We presume it will make no great difference. The prayer of the devout follower of Jesus will be, as it has ever been, "Thy kingdom come," and in that is a petition for the prevalence in all lands, and among all nations, of the sovereignty of the Almighty, as it is established and acknowledged in heaven. That is the great point.

AMERICAN SUPREMACY.

In Leslie's Weekly for Sept. 4, appears an address delivered by Mr. George H. Daniels of the New York Central, on "American Railroads and Our Commercial Development." The address was given before the Chautauqua Assembly, August 11. The lecturer shows that the United States is leading the world in industries and transportation. He gives interesting figures on "our commerce in the Orient," on "the influence of railroads," and a number of topics of great importance.

As an illustration of the ability of Americans to compete with the home-manufacturers of other countries, he read an item of an English publication, in which it was stated that today many a foreigner sits down to his breakfast made up of cereal manufactured in Niagara Falls, beefsteak from Omaha, bacon from Mohawk valley, and bread from wheat ground at Minneapolis.

On his way to his office, if he lives in London, he can ride on a car built in New York, propelled by machinery manufactured at Schenectady. In his office he sits in a revolving chair made in Chicago; he has a roll-top desk made in Buffalo, his letters are written

on a typewriter made at Ilion, New York. He signs them with a New York fountain-pen and dries them on a blotting sheet from New England.

This illustrates very well the success with which American manufactures are received abroad. The fact itself is gratifying. It should be remembered, though, that the position as a leading nation is one that entails responsibility. The place can be held, only as long as it is used for the benefit of mankind. That is why intelligence, freedom, wealth and power have been entrusted to the American people. It will be retained as long as it is used right, and no longer.

Salt Lake Stake conference tomorrow.

As the nights get longer the coolness gets stronger.

There is not much of a breathing spell between conventions.

Three meetings in the Tabernacle Sunday, Sept. 14: 10 a. m., 2 p. m. and 7 p. m.

If you see an automobile coming along and it looks as though it wanted the right of way, just let it have it.

The Theological classes of the Sunday schools are expected to attend the Salt Lake Stake conference tomorrow morning.

Hon. Tom Johnson is mentioned as often as the President, but the circumstance does not necessarily precede the position.

The mountain lions of Colorado will please take due notice that President Roosevelt is coming and govern themselves accordingly.

The German emperor is reported to have said: "I am sorry I can never go to America." To be a mighty ruler has its disadvantages.

If St. Louis could only have deferred her boodle sensation until 1904, it would no doubt have been a drawing card for the World's Fair.

Scientists glory in the discovery of another germ—that of infantile summer complaint. It is hoped the discovery of the remedy will follow.

There will be no ward meetings in this city tomorrow evening in consequence of the Stake conference assembling at 7 p. m. A general attendance is desired.

The State of Utah will indulge in a general election on Tuesday, Nov. 4 next. This is not published as news, but because so many people keep asking about it.

A railway manager was bitten by a rattlesnake in New Mexico, but recovered without serious inconvenience. What became of the snake was not related.

New York reports a noted violinist being sent to an insane asylum. Perhaps he will there meet with some of those who used to live near him when he was beginning his career.

Gen. Firmin of Hayti, with his sword, rooster feather and about seventeen men, proclaiming that the loss of Crete-a-Pierrot must be avenged. Bombastes Furioso rediivus!

The London Mail wants the United States to put down the anarchy in Hayti and Central America or let somebody else do it. That sounds much better than if it had said somebody else would do it, as is customary.

The obtrusive law and order element of Louisville, Ky., are moving with all their might to prevent the debate between Dr. Young Corbett and Prof. Terry McGovern taking place, the subject being, "Who is the best man?"

The anthracite coal strike is (not) now in the way of peaceful and satisfactory settlement. The reader can use the parenthesized word or leave it out, and in either case be fully abreast of the reports coming from the troubled region.

When Emperor William bade goodbye to our "khaki brigade" he was as gracious and affable as could be desired. He promised a strong representation to our World's Fair, and it is to be hoped he will be one of the party.

A prominent Chinese official recently resigned because he was accused of being ignorant. Even if the charge were true he need not have been so sensitive, as the empress did not consider ignorance a disqualification. She refused to accept the resignation.

The failure of the Baldwin-Zelger Polar expedition was caused by the authority on shipboard not having been settled before starting out. In view of a long line of precedents, we feel justified in saying that if it hadn't been that it would have been something else.

The growth of the forest fires in Oregon and Washington is accompanied by a corresponding increase of sorrow and dismay. They greatly exceed anything of the kind in the history of the country, at least in recent years, and the end is not yet; how far off it may be no one can tell.

If that revolutionary General Herrera is wise, he will not allow any shells or other undesirable objects to drop too close to the persons or property of any of Uncle Sam's offspring—because, while the old fellow is always in a good humor and disposed to be friendly, a little thing like that vexes him.

A few days ago the "News" jocosely remarked that the automobile was no respecter of persons. Little did we expect a confirmation so soon and so shocking as was furnished in the death by such means of Mrs. Stewart, wife of the Nevada senator, in Oakland, Cal., yesterday. It was a shocking and most sorrowful calamity.

That the planet Mars is inhabited by intelligent beings is the conclusion that will be set forth by Prof. G. W. Hough, as a result of his observations from the Dearborn observatory. He also admits the possibility of Venus and Mercury being inhabited, but he doubts whether the other planets are fit habitations for intelligent beings. That

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Staples Department.

We wish to draw special attention to the great variety of New Fall Goods now being opened, including beautiful lines for ladies' Waists in French Flannelette, Plain, White, and Colored, Flannelette, Outing Flannelette, White Mercerized Knapped Marseilles, White Mercerized Madras, etc.—the very latest in Waists. We also invite your investigation of our Blankets, Quilts, Bed Spreads, Elder Downies and a thousand and one other useful articles, all of which are in the very best and latest styles and offered at prices to suit you.

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Z. C. M. I. T. G. WEBBER, Superintendent.

Mars is inhabited is quite generally accepted as possible. Why the other planets should be uninhabited, is not easy to understand. Whatever their conditions may be, life certainly may assume forms corresponding to those conditions.

The renowned battleship Oregon is on her way to Panama (if necessary), via San Francisco, to look after things. The cheering announcement is made that she has enough ammunition aboard to blow a canal through the Isthmus. Maybe this would be the cheapest and most expeditious way of doing it.

ON RELIGIOUS TOPICS.

New York Examiner.

Why be so particular, anyway? The worst manuscript I tell the story of Christ and His salvation so that a way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein; the best manuscript could hardly do better; even the autographs themselves, if we had them as they came from the hands of Matthew, Luke, John, Paul, and the rest, would add very little to our real knowledge of the gospel beyond that which we gain from the most faulty New Testament manuscripts that have reached us from the Dark Ages. Why, then, insist on having just the right word, and just the right order of words, and just the right spelling, and just the right punctuation, in every case, especially when the original standards have been lost, so that we can only have a high order of conjecture at best?

New York Observer.

The best sociology is sociology. The sermon on the Mount, sanely interpreted, must save society. It will not, however, save society simply because it is itself an ethical code of exalted nature, but because the grace of Him who spoke the sermon is sufficient to supply the motive and impulse which will move mankind to put its rigorous yet rewarding precepts into practice. Social discourses will vanish as fast as when this or that social theorist does unto his brother as he thinks, or would have him do unto him, but each social unit does to his brethren as Christ would have him do to all. The Christ of the cross is as splendidly generous. Where his liberal dictates and considerate programs are carried out in the spirit of the ministering Master, there is no strong crying or lamentation among the masses, no vituperation between man and man, no acrimonious debating between capital and labor.

The Christian Statesman.

The statesmanship which attempts to use mere secular education, without moral or religious ideas, as a means to the same end, is equally unwise with the mistaken philanthropy which relies on baths and pictures and games and lessons in housekeeping to reform the sinner. Not that we would denounce or discourage either. God help and bless every one who is tugging with his might at the mass of this world's evil and misery, even though in his blindness he is using but his bare hands and sees not the lever which would multiply his strength.

Boston Watchman.

The doctrine of the divine right of kings was bad enough, but not so intolerable as the doctrine of the divine right of plutocrats to administer things in general, with the presumption that what it pleases them to do is the will of God. . . . We do not wonder that laboring men who imagine that Christianity involves such a conception of God as this, are using but their bare hands and sees not the lever which would multiply his strength.

Chicago Interior.

Indubitably God does appoint men each to His special work and place in the world, but it does not follow from that that every man is in the place where God wants him to be, nor by any means that every man who is in the right place is doing the right thing there. It used to be the boast of the old-time monarchies that their power was derived from divine commission, and that therefore "the king could do no wrong." But when the action of kings got unhinged from this lofty hypothesis, the common people concluded that the kings were a lot of hypocrites and treated them accordingly. No matter how sincerely Mr. Baer may feel that he is discharging his stewardship in his present position "as unto the Lord," his cavalier announcement of his feeling will strike his employees as haughty and that they will hate him for it.

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Z. C. M. I. T. G. WEBBER, Superintendent.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

The North American Review for September opens with a discussion of the question: "Will the Novel Disappear?" Jas. Lane Allen, W. D. Howells, Hamlin Garland, H. W. Mabie, and John Kendrick Bangs are the contributors to the discussion of this subject. The "New Philippine Government" is considered by Sidney Webster. "Why Ancient Civilizations Flourished in the Arid Regions," is pointed out by E. W. Hilgard. Among other topics to which the current North American gives space are these: "Americans in Europe as Seen From a Consulate," by H. G. Dwight; "Political and Economic Situation in Colombia," E. A. Morales; "The Law of Polygamy," E. A. Adams; "Grieg as a National Composer," A. M. Wergeland; "Sanitary Problems of Isthmian Canal Construction," Geo. M. Sternberg, and "The Navy's Greatest Need," by Lieut.-Commander Roy C. Smith, U. S. N.—Franklin Square, New York.

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