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“Thou Shalt not Muzzle the Ox That Treadeth Out the Corn”

- by Luke B. Bennetch

It has been said that as conservative Mennonite churches, we teach against a salaried ministry and believe in a supported ministry; but we fail to practice either. That is possibly an overstatement but we should look at this subject and evaluate our practice.

1 Timothy 5:17, 18 says, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward.” These verses use an example from Old Testament times to teach a New Testament truth. The oxen that were used to tread out the corn were to be allowed to help themselves to the corn in which they were laboring.

Jesus sent His twelve disciples out to witness and commanded them, “Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.” (Matthew 10:9,10).

Luke 10 records the sending of the seventy. Jesus said to these Christian workers, “And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.”

Galatians 6:6 says, “Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” The word “communicate” means to share and distribute. The student is to share with the teacher.

These verses establish the teaching of a supported ministry. Those who receive the word should sense a responsibility to share with the ones who labored to bring the Word to them. A grateful heart should move us to share our possessions with our leaders who spend much time on our behalf.

Now the Apostle Paul practiced self-support. As a single

man, he sought to work to support himself so he would not be bound to any church for his support. At various times, he faced criticism in his ministry and he could say he had not been living off of the people he served. But he makes it clear that it is ordained of the Lord that “They which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” Notice this verse’s context: “If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.” (1 Corinthians 9:12-15).

Paul’s choice to support himself gave some advantage in facing criticisms about his ministry and challenging the laziness found in the Thessalonian church. In 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12 he writes, “For yourselves know how ye ought to

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follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

From Paul's experience, we should take warning that whatever is done for ministerial aid does not hinder the overall work of the kingdom. We must be careful to support our ministry in ways that still allow them the freedom to speak the truth without fear or favor of men.

The work of the ministry requires much time and energy. Meetings during the work day take the leader away from his place of work, and evening meetings cut into family time. So it may seem wise for a leader to start his own business and hire employees so the workplace and his income goes on while he must be busy with church work. But business generally brings a load of care with it that someone must tend to if the business is to go forward. And so, sometimes in the middle of the care of the churches, our leaders are also burdened with the care of business and family life.

One of the greatest needs in the church today is for leaders to be close to the people they lead. This closeness requires time. It is accomplished through visitation and sharing together. When adversity or death touches a member or their family, a leader should be there to stand with them. At times, leaders might spend some time with a struggling youth in their work place in an effort to get closer to them and help them. Maybe they take the day off to go with the youth group on a trip or to do some sightseeing with the same goal of building relationships. Collective outreach efforts or relief efforts are also ways to labor together and build closeness between the ministry and laity. But all of these things take time.

The church needs preachers to stand up and share the Word in our worship services. Leaders need to pastor their home congregations. Someone needs to be an evangelist, a teacher at youth Bible school, etc. They have weddings and ordinations to lead out in. There is visitation with members who are erring or struggling with sin. Anointing services are also the duty of a leader. And with all of these duties, our leaders need time to study the Word for personal strength and for preparation to share in these services. But all of these things take time.

Sometimes we hear the cry among the laity that our

leaders are too busy. At times we have a hurting heart express themselves that they wish their ministry had more time for them. Sometimes a straying youth concludes his pastor does not care because he does not seem to have time for him. We should not pass judgment on our leaders too quickly. Maybe we are slacking in our duty to support them.

What difference could we make in our leaders' experiences if we, as congregations, gave more support to our ministry? Are we afraid that if we gave more to them, they would become proud or lazy? Are we afraid that they would live above our standard of living and spend more on themselves? Usually when God-fearing, self-sacrificing people are given a gift, they return it in service to others. If we raised our level of support for our ministry, I am confident they would return it to the Lord in service through various ways.

When we send missionaries to another country, we generally establish a monthly support figure based on the needs of the family. While serving in that field of work, one is released from the care of daily making a living and can focus much energy on reaching out to others and building the church. His primary work is to touch the lives of those he meets and show them Christ and help them into a relationship with Him. There is visitation, helping the poor, taking the sick to the hospital, sharing food with the hungry, instructing the young in the faith, and holding services. We receive reports from time to time of all the work that is being accomplished and we praise God for workers in His vineyard.

Now what would happen if we would release some more Christian workers here in America from at least some of the daily duty of making a living? Suppose we took care of half or more of the cost of living for our ordained men. How much more could they accomplish in visitation, studying for sermons, caring for lost souls, and taking time with members? How much less burdened would they be with all the cares of life and they in turn could help us to carry our burdens?

This subject is a bit awkward because we usually look to our leaders to help us establish the ways of the church. But on this matter who will do some calculations, keep some records, and promote more support for our leaders if we as laity do not? Maybe we should consider asking our deacon to schedule an offering once a month for our leaders instead of only a few times a year? Maybe we should have some of the older and wiser brethren in each congregation pay attention to ministerial aid and make some recommendations to us. Maybe some retired deacons could help us evaluate our present practices.

No matter what is done in an organized way, each of us can do our part by supporting our leaders in personal ways. We can put an envelope with some money in their car at

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Pastoral Implications of Open Theism

- by Thomas K. Ascol

Part 1 of 4

In many respects, open theism is a perfect theological fit for the contemporary American *zeitgeist*. In an age where empathy trumps truthfulness, we are more comforted by someone who feels our pain than by someone who speaks honestly, unequivocally and consistently. Disappoint us if you will, fail to keep your promises if you must, but do not cease to reassure us that you really feel for us. The God of open theism perfectly fits this criterion.

Greg Boyd claims that the differences between the openness and orthodox views of God are “relatively unimportant,” “peripheral,” and “minor.”¹ Other chapters have thoroughly debunked that notion from biblical, doctrinal, and historical perspectives. Open theism cannot legitimately be classified as a subset of evangelism. It is a radically different understanding of reality and therefore of the real God. Its implications for the Christian life are as far-reaching as they are devastating.

Some of these implications are self-consciously held and celebrated by the proponents of open theism. For instance, Boyd finds it pastorally helpful to be able to counsel a person who has experienced great tragedy that God was as surprised as everyone else at what happened. In Boyd’s mind, this makes God kinder and gentler and therefore more trustworthy.² Other implications are more subtle and may well be renounced by open theists but, as will be seen, are nevertheless inherent in their system of thought. One cannot possess a forest without owning the trees, no matter how vehemently he might protest to the contrary.

Undermines Confidence in Scripture

Boyd argues that “if we simply accept the plain meaning of Scripture” we will concur with open theism’s claims that sometimes God “regrets how decisions he’s made turn out,” “questions how aspects of the future will go,” “experiences frustration because free agents choose unlikely courses of action,” and “genuinely changes his mind about intended courses of action.”³ His optimistic overstatement notwithstanding, the openness perspective actually calls into question Scripture’s “plain meaning” and violates fundamental principles of interpretation. The result is a huge cloud of doubt left hanging over the perspicuity and reliability

of Scripture.

A long standing principle of hermeneutics declares that passages which clearly assert a doctrine or principle are to be used to shed light on narrative passages.

Interpret historic material by didactic material. Historical material is narration, the accounts of what happened in the past. Didactic material is teaching material. It is important for the didactic material to interpret the historical material rather than the other way around.⁴

The importance of this guiding principle can be demonstrated by applying it to the Bible’s teaching on the sinfulness of mankind. Romans 3:23 makes a straightforward affirmation of the universality of human sinfulness, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” This didactic passage sheds light on other passages that are narrative or testimonial. For example, the story of Daniel’s life might lead one to believe that, because there is no record of any sin he committed, he was a sinless man. If the narrative passages in his life were all that we had than we, at best, could not refute such a claim.

If the principle articulated above is followed, there will be no danger of reaching that conclusion. Though the narrative might suggest that there is no sin in Daniel, the didactic passage assures us that there was. By giving priority to clearly stated teaching regarding sin and using the light that it sheds on the story of Daniel’s life, we will resist making any claims of sinfulness for him.

Open theists turn this principle of interpretation on its head. John Sanders goes to great lengths to establish patterns from narrative passages on divine-human relationships and then uses those patterns to reinterpret clear, didactic Scriptures. The stories of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Gideon, Moses, and David are all cited as examples of God changing his mind, repenting, being disappointed, or caught off guard by what happened.⁵ The survey of these stories is set forth as evidence “that God is in a dynamic give-and-take relationship with humans and in which God sometimes does not get what he wants.”⁶

Efforts to interpret these texts in the light of didactic passages that assert God’s sovereign control over people

and events (what Sanders calls “pancausality texts”) are charged with “hermeneutical malpractice.”⁷ Statements like the following are all reinterpreted in light of narrative “evidence” of the openness of God:

‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?’ says the Lord. ‘Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand. O house of Israel!’ (Jer. 18:6)

A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. (Prov. 16:9)

The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. Prov. 21:1

Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? (Exod. 4:11)

Some of the results would be amusing if the stakes involved were not so high.

For instance, Proverbs 16:9 and 21:1 are taken to mean only that “God directs his people’s steps (16:9) and guides the king of Israel (21:1) when he seeks God’s wisdom.” Exodus 4:11 becomes nothing more than “a general statement that such things happen in God’s world” and an admission that He takes “full responsibility” for creating such a world where defects are possible.⁸

With its presupposition that God has only limited knowledge of what will happen in the future, open theism must reconstruct plain statements of Scripture to the contrary. The story of Joseph provides a case in point. At the end of the narrative, Joseph makes his famous declaration to his

frightened brothers, which reflects his simple and complete confidence in God’s sovereign, detailed arrangement of his life. It is his divinely inspired explanation of the events of his life: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Gen. 50:20).

Sanders’ interpretation of this verse is dismissive at best. He writes “I take this to mean that God has brought something good out of their evil actions.” He further comments, “Although he [Joseph] acknowledges that they sold him into Egypt, he suggests that everyone look on the bright side – what God has done through this. Their lives and those of the Egyptians have been spared the devastating effects of the famine.”⁹ From a profound, theological declaration of God’s unmitigated providence, Sanders reduces Joseph’s words to, “Serendipity!”

Whether intentional or not, the openness reading of Scripture, if followed consistently, renders direct teachings of the Bible vacuous if not incomprehensible.

To be continued in the next issue of the FCM Informer.

Taken from *Bound Only Once*

1 Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 8, 20, 89.

2 *Ibid.*, 103-6.

3 *Ibid.*, 87.

4 James M. Boice, *Standing on the Rock, Biblical Authority in a Secular Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 82.

5 John Sanders, *The God Who Risks, a Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 41-75.

6 *Ibid.*, 81.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, 84-85.

9 *Ibid.*, 55.



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church. We can share our garden things with them. We can share with them from our businesses. We can offer to take them to meetings or buy a plane ticket for them for a distant appointment. We could give more in the ministerial aid offering that is lifted periodically. We can offer to help them with projects around their house that keep getting pushed off because they are busy with the work of the church.

Another important way to help them is by being what we should be and helping our families to love the Lord so there is less work that they must look after. We too should visit the sick, the erring, and the hurting. We should be along

for outreach and relief efforts as much as we can. We should be building relationships with our youth and helping them form solid Biblical convictions.

May God grant us the wisdom to find our way in supporting our ministry. May we be open to the leading hand of God as we evaluate our present practices and the challenges we face today. May we each be living self-sacrificing lives so others can be blessed by our efforts and God’s kingdom be built and strengthened.

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The Case for the Hymnal

- by Paul E. Peak

Editor's Note

The author of the article below is not an Anabaptist and would have a different view than we about the use of instruments. However, we resonate with his concerns relating to hymnals.

Tuning pianos in churches has given me opportunities from time to time to observe the facilities and equipment of many houses of worship throughout our country. I have been especially interested to see the music, musical instruments, choir rooms, and other musical features that are found in churches of different denominations and styles. Perhaps most interesting to me is the presence or absence of hymnals in the pews. Several years ago, while tuning a piano in a brand new church, I discussed the absence of hymnals with the pastor. Evidently our conversation bore fruit, because the next time I tuned there, brand new hymnals were in every seat.

The hymnal can tell many stories about the church where it is found. Its content tells what the church believes. Its wear can be a hint about how much they believe it. Its absence strongly suggests weaknesses in the church's knowledge of the basic doctrines of the church. Without a doubt many church leaders of the past would agree with this assessment. The hymnals of John and Charles Wesley were doctrinally organized and rich in theological truths. John Wesley's preacher boys had at least three books: a Bible, a book of Wesley's sermons, and a hymnal. Luther had all of his preachers study music, believing that the study of music was overshadowed in importance only by the study of theology.

It has been said that the common man learns his theology from the songs he sings, not from the sermons he hears. How can this be true? Primarily, because the repetition of singing hymns week after week drive the text deep into the heart of man. Also, songs are easily memorized, thus coming back to the mind over and over. In addition, music makes the words more readily acceptable, as honey with medicine. Thus, the texts of these songs are crucially important. The texts can be the Word of God hidden in our hearts, or it can be texts which are often frothy, repetitive, or sentimental and mean little and teach nothing. Certainly not all modern choruses fit this description, but few can match the power and majesty of a great hymn!

What are some other benefits of hymnals? Hymnals...
...help to develop musicianship and part singing in the congregation;
...give people coming into the church an opportunity to read hymns during the prelude and other times of

meditation. There is something to be said for the tactile sensation of touching and holding this precious book which contains such priceless texts;
...contain many links to our heritage that we must not lose;
...have historically gone hand-in-hand with the Bible.
We could say that the Bible is God speaking to us and the hymnal is our response to God.
...encourage the singing of more hymns, rather than an overabundance of "tiny-hymns" or repetitive choruses;
...assist in keeping the entire congregation singing, not just a select few.

I understand that many feel that the use of overhead projection systems easily replaces the hymnal, and is actually better because it keeps people's heads up, keeps their hands free to raise, and assures that everyone can see all the words. There are certainly positive outcomes. However, how about people who want to sing bass, tenor or alto? How about our youth who need to overcome their ignorance and fear of written music, so when they audition for one of our high school or college choirs, they do not just see "black sheep jumping through a fence." How about the tendency of churches that use only overhead projection to sing choruses almost exclusively, robbing their youth of the musical and poetic links to our Christian heritage? And how about the verses that always get left out? At least the congregation can read them later. People can even lift their heads, hands, and voices and hold a hymnal at the same time!

I believe in congregational singing! I believe in singing choruses, even some of the new ones. I believe in using the best of what Christian song-writers today are giving us. I am not even opposed to the use of overhead projection for songs not in the hymnal. But, *I believe even more* in singing hymns that have stood the test of time, songs that state in clear and beautiful language what we believe, who we praise and why we worship Him. Hymnals are the repositories of those great anthems. Please do not discard those hymnals.

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Dr. Paul E. Peak is a graduate of Southwest Virginia Community College, holds three music degrees from Shenandoah University, and additional degrees from Cincinnati Conservatory and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is minister of music for Hobe Sound Bible Church in Florida.

Something to Die For

- by Don Kistler

Proverbs 23:23 tells us to “buy the truth and do not sell it.” The Hebrew word translated “buy” means to get it no matter what it takes. The very idea of buying something means that it comes at a cost. To know the truth costs something: it will cost time, it will cost effort, and the experiences that bring understanding of the truth will be costly.

If truth could be bought with ease and pleasure, many professing Christians would have it. Those who are lazy will accept error for truth rather than use their minds to discern truth from error. For most, an error that comes easy is better than a truth that makes them sweat.

But God has made us reasonable creatures, and such behaviour is unbecoming us as God created us. In a day of fast food for our bodies, we have become fast-truth junkies. Our spiritual appetites are at an all-time low; we want our truth given to us in twenty-minute snippets in sermons like we want our news given to us in eight minute segments. John MacArthur calls these “sermonettes for Christianettes.” And that is all that these short devotional talks will ever produce at best. Paul said of such people in the physical realm, “He who will not work, let him not eat.” And the same should be said of those who will not work in the spiritual realm.

God is a God of truth. His Word is truth. His law is a law of truth. We are sanctified by the truth. Sin is committed against the truth, and it is the truth that shall set us free. Are we unaware that the God of truth is insulted to have His precious truth treated with such contempt and to be so greatly undervalued?

Those who have gone before us have given their lives for the truth. Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, Hus, and Tyndale are just a few of those who died either for trying to give us the truth or for being unwilling to compromise the truth. For them, the truth was worth dying for. But how few today will say that it is even worth living for?

For the faithful, danger, loss, disgrace, imprisonment, exile, pain, and their own lives and families were not too dear a price to pay to stand for and die for the truth. Our forefathers in the faith had heroic spirits. Paul said that he was ready not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13).

The Proverb quoted said that we are to buy truth. And the only place to buy it is from the shop where it is sold. Psalm 89:2 says, “Thy truth is prepared in heaven.” And as Jesus said in John 17, “Thy Word is truth.” God loves His truth, and He loves it precisely because it is His truth.

One of the marks of a true believer is that he loves what God loves; but God loves His truth. How much we love something is conspicuous in what we are willing to pay for it. Is it not rather obvious, then, that we love our things more than we love God’s truth? We would be highly offended at

those who use God’s name in vain. Why are we not more greatly offended at those who use His Word in vain?

And yet what do all our possessions do for us? Yet God’s truth frees us (John 8:32); it renews us (James 1:18); it confirms us (Proverbs 12:19); it sanctifies us (John 17:17); it defends us (Psalm 91:4). In essence, it does all for us that God Himself does, for God works by His almighty Word, and His word is truth.

And if His truth is so precious, so beneficial, how is it that it is so neglected by us? Especially when it is the basis for our salvation, since we are born again through the living, abiding Word of truth!

The truth of God endures forever; it is the faith that has been once for all delivered to the saints. It has already been delivered, and it has been delivered once, and it has been delivered once for all. In other words, there is no new truth! There may be new application of old truth, but there is no new truth where God is concerned.

Paul realized that truth almost always comes at a high cost. He became the enemy of some because He insisted on telling them the truth.

But to buy the truth is only half the command given in the Proverb. The other half is this: “do not sell it!” And just as the Hebrew construction told us to buy the truth no matter what it costs, the same construction applies to this part of the mandate: “do not sell it at any cost!”

Buying and selling are opposites. So if we are to buy the truth at great cost, we are not to sell the truth for great ease. If we are to buy the truth even at great cost, we are not to sell the truth, for that cheapens it. We are not to sell the truth for personal gain, since we are to buy the truth at personal cost.

Jesus asked the famous question, “What shall it profit a man to win the whole world and lose his own soul?” And we cannot sell the truth without losing our souls. So no matter what is gained by compromising or selling the truth, it comes at a much higher cost, our very soul!

Some, under the guise of “scholarship,” are today selling the truth of justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ. It will cost them their souls. Some, under the guise of “unity,” are selling the truth of the exclusivity of Christ being the only Saviour and Mediator for sinners. It will cost them their souls. Some even use the truth of Scripture to justify their wickedness – it will cost them their souls.

Paul told Timothy to “guard the truth.” That is the best any of us can hope to do. We are not to alter it; we cannot hope to improve upon it; all we can do is be faithful to it, to guard it.

And yet Scripture tells us that the truth that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable. Truth is not like a bullet we put in our theological gun to shoot down others with. Jesus

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On Divorce and Remarriage in the Event of Adultery

- by John Piper

I have recently come to the conclusion that the exception clause in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 is not intended to provide a loophole for divorce and remarriage when one of the partners commits adultery.

I began, first of all, by being troubled that the absolute form of Jesus' denunciation of divorce and remarriage in Mark 10:11,12 ("And he said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another she commits adultery against him.'") and Luke 16:18 ("Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.") is not preserved by Matthew, if in fact his exception clause is a loophole for divorce and remarriage. I was bothered by the simple assumption that so many writers make that Matthew is simply making explicit something that would have been implicitly understood by the hearers of Jesus or the readers of Mark 10 and Luke 16. Would they really have assumed that the absolute statements included exceptions? I have very strong doubts, and therefore my inclination is to inquire whether or not in fact Matthew's exception clause confirms to the absoluteness of Mark and Luke.

The second thing that began to disturb me was the question, Why does Matthew use the word *porneia* instead of the word *moicheia* which means adultery? Almost all commentators seem to make the simple assumption again that *porneia* means adultery in this context. Even though I am ready to admit that now and then *porneia* is used in a sense which can include adultery, the question nags at me why Matthew should not use the word for adultery, if that is in fact what he meant. Then I noticed something very interesting. The only other place besides Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 where Matthew uses the word *porneia* is in 15:19 where it is used alongside of *moicheia*. Therefore, the primary contextual evidence for Matthew's usage is that he conceives of *porneia* as something different than adultery. Could this mean, then, that Matthew conceives of *porneia* in its normal sense of fornication rather than adultery?

The next clue in my search for an explanation came when I stumbled upon the use of *porneia* in John 8:41 where the Jewish leaders indirectly accuse Jesus of being born of *porneia*. In other words, since they don't accept the virgin birth, they assume that Mary had committed fornication and Jesus was the result of that act. On the basis of that clue, I went back to study Matthew's record of Jesus' birth in Matthew 1:18-20. This was extremely enlightening.

In these verses Joseph and Mary are referred to each other as husband (*aner*) and wife (*gunaika*). Yet they are described as only being betrothed to each other. This is probably owing to the fact that the words for husband and wife are simply man and woman and to the fact that betrothal was a much more significant commitment than engagement is today. In verse 19, Joseph resolves "to divorce" Mary.

The word for divorce is the same as the word in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. But most important of all, Matthew says that Joseph was "just" in making the decision to divorce Mary, presumably on account of her *porneia*, fornication. Therefore, as Matthew proceeded to construct the narrative of his gospel, he finds himself in chapter 5 and then later in chapter 19, in a difficult situation. He has before him the absolute sayings of Jesus that if a man divorces his wife

and marries another he commits adultery; that is, he commits a grave injustice. Nevertheless, the one divorce that Matthew has contemplated with his readers in chapter 1 has been described by him as a "just" possibility. Therefore, in order to avoid the jarring inconsistency between what he has said about Joseph and what Jesus says about divorce, Matthew inserts the exception clause in order to exonerate Joseph and show that the kind of divorce one might pursue during a betrothal on account of fornication, is not included in what Jesus had said. This interpretation of the exception clause has several advantages: 1) it does not force Matthew to contradict the plain, absolute meaning of Mark and Luke; 2) it provides an explanation for why the word *porneia* is used in Matthew's exception clause instead of *moicheia*; 3) it squares with Matthew's own use of *porneia* for fornication in Matthew 15:19; 4) from a redaction-critical

**This is what I have
taught to my church
and I see no warrant for
anything different in
1 Corinthians 7.**

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standpoint it is very astute edition which promotes the truth of Jesus' own absolute command and the rightness of Joseph's intention in resolving to divorce his betrothed, Mary.

There is on more piece of evidence. It is usually assumed by evangelicals that when Jesus said the absolute form of his command, in Luke 18 for example, he was assuming that divorce on account of adultery was taken for granted and that a spouse had the right to remarry when divorced in this way. But there is very strong evidence in Luke 16:18 that Jesus did not assume this but in fact contemplated the possibility of an exception clause and rejected it. Luke 16:18 says, "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." What is the situation of the woman in the second half of this verse? It seems to me that if we take the verse as a unity (and I can see no reason not to) the situation is that a man has divorced his wife and married another. That is, he has deserted his wife and illegitimately gone of with another and formed a new marital relationship. He has committed adultery against his first wife and left her "divorced." If the traditional view of Matthew's exception clause is correct, then this woman is free to remarry. But Jesus says just the opposite in the last half of Luke 16:18. He says that the woman who was divorced is not a candidate for remarriage because if a man marries her, he commits adultery. The only way to escape from this implication is to say that the two halves of the verse don't have anything to do with each other. But against that assumption is the active voice of the word "divorce" in 18a and the passive voice of the word "divorce" in 18b. In other words, the verse pictures a man divorcing in 18a and a woman divorced in 18b and it seems to me completely unnatural to think of this woman divorced in 18a and in 18b as two different women. The force of this argument has been felt by the translators of the NIV in Matthew 5:32. They translate "anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness (sic!), causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman *so* divorced commits adultery." The fact that they insert the word "so" shows that they think of the woman in the second half of the verse as the same woman in the first half of the verse. But when they get to Luke 16:18, they simply translate, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Why don't they use the word "so" in Luke 16:18? I think the reason is that as soon as they do, it will show that Jesus did consider the situation of an exception clause on the ground of adultery and rejected it. This is in fact the case.

This is what I have taught to my church and I see no warrant for anything different in 1 Corinthians 7.

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was full of grace *and* truth. Truth is to be spoken in love. But love rejoices in the truth.

Those committed to the truth are often accused of being divisive; yet Paul is very clear in Romans 16 that it is those who teach contrary to the truth who cause divisions. There is one sense in which it is true that truth divides: it divides from error and from unbelievers!

It is bad enough that we suppress the truth by unrighteousness. When we sin, we do, as it were, tell lies about what it means to be a Christian, a follower of God, who is truth Himself.

But it ought never to be the case that we lie against the truth by selling or compromising it. One reason is that souls are at stake, ours among them. But the primary reason is because the truth does not belong to us. It is the gospel of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the truth of God. It has been entrusted to us, and what a sacred trust that is!

We must buy the truth and then guard it and protect it and defend it and declare it. But we must never sell it at any cost.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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