

may not return to the first husband. According to this, it is not an allowance of divorce, but a forbidding of "wife trading". The Septuagint translation of these verses supports this rendering of the Hebrew and it is followed in the Revised Standard Version. Actually the propriety or impropriety of divorce is not taken up in Dt. 24 according to this interpretation. Divorce is just accepted as a regular social custom, but its grosser evils are regulated. Careful attention to the Hebrew of Dt. 24:1-4 gives a similar interpretation. There is here no blanket approval of divorce for indiscriminate causes.

But the Pharisees in tempting Jesus tried to get him to side with either Hillel or Shammai and thus secure the hatred of the other side (Matt. 19:3-9). Christ answered them with reference to the institution of marriage at Creation. The Pharisees answered why then did Moses "command" to give a writ of divorce? Jesus answers that Moses "suffered" divorce for unspecified causes, but this was not God's moral law and did not have divine approval. The civil legislation of Moses winked at various sins like polygamy, slavery, etc., without giving them divine approval. The civil legislation was based on moral law, yet it was a practical regulation of the people. It did not deal with all possible matters. Moses' lack of prohibition of these things does not make these things right as is clearly seen by other passages in the Old Testament (Mal. 2:16). Actually the Pharisaic mistranslation of Dt. 24:1-4 would have been avoided if they had used good principles of translation. Jesus' translation is accurate and in full accord with the Old Testament itself. That divorce does have one proper ground, fornication, Jesus makes clear in His additional statement (Matt. 5:32).

From the above detailed treatment it can surely be seen that Christ in these verses is by no means contradicting the basic law of Israel. The authorities accused him of many things but they did not accuse him of that. The early Christian Church agreed fully with the Jews on the authority and full truthfulness of the Bible. The attitude of Paul in II Tim. 3:16 is the same as that of Josephus in "Against Apion" 1:8. The Christian Church was built upon the Old Testament as is clearly seen by the use of at least six hundred quotations from it in the New Testament, and many many such quotations in the early Church Fathers. Dr. J. Gresham Machen used to emphasize that Christianity was from the beginning a book religion. The only thing novel about its attitude toward the Old Testament was that it put the words of Apostles on a par with the words of the Prophets of old in authority. The Church as a whole has always believed the Bible. Those who did not, like Marcion in early times and the higher critics of today, have been recognized as heretical. In these attitudes the Church has merely followed the leading of its Master who said: "Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writing, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46, 47).

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