

The “Truth” Commentary on Matthew – A Warning (Ezk. 3:21)

I recently obtained a copy of the Truth Commentary on Matthew, written by Kyle Pope and edited by Mike Willis. [Within its introduction, the commentator wrote: “Mike’s work in editing this volume was indispensable. He not only caught errors that had been missed by four sets of eyes that proofed this text before him, but he offered valuable suggestions and insights that I had not considered” (p. 7).]

While I am thankful that most of the commentary teaches truth with simplicity and clarity, there is a noticeably different, shrouded-style of writing in the author’s remarks regarding divorce (5:32; 19:3-9; Appendix). When it comes to putting away, the teaching is highly suggestive of the original definition of mental divorce (a *second* “putting away”).

Please consider the following quotes from this commentary:

Regarding Divorce (Matthew 5:32)

“Christians are commanded to submit to civil government (Rom. 13:1-6), and to follow the ordinances it imposes (1 Pet. 2:13), unless they require the violation of God’s laws (Acts 5:29). When it comes to marriage and ‘putting away’ Christians cannot exclude civil government from any role in identifying who is and who is not married – that would not be submissive to civil authority. Scripture does not teach a so-called ‘mental divorce,’ any more than it teaches a *mental marriage*. At the same time, just as Christians cannot yield to civil authority the right to define unlawful unions as ‘marriage,’ neither can we yield to civil authority the right to define when souls concerned with following God’s will can act within the ordinances of God (see Appendix).” emp. his, **p. 155**

Regarding Divorce (Matthew 19:9)

“It is important to note, as we have seen throughout this discourse, that Jesus in this text speaks of **divorce** as an action one party takes against another. **Current conditions in the United States can easily skew our perception of this matter**. We should remember, it was not until January 1, 1970 that the first ‘no-fault’ divorce law was passed in the United States. **In the years since then individual states all followed suit, but it has only been since October 15, 2010 that all fifty states and the District of Columbia have allowed ‘no-fault’ divorce (see Appendix). This is not biblical language when it comes to divorce.” pp. 613-614**

“What constitutes ‘putting away’ is not always an easy question to answer. The NT does not outline a procedure, but neither does it teach a so-called ‘mental divorce’ – **something must happen to constitute a ‘putting away.’** The nature of what constitutes ‘putting away,’ however, has clearly varied throughout history. Christians must obey civil authority (Rom. 13:1-7) and the laws which it enacts (1 Pet. 2:13-17), but **we must never surrender to earthly authorities rights that properly belong only to God (see Appendix).” p. 614**

Regarding Divorce (Appendix)

“We are to obey civil authorities (Rom. 13:1-7) and the laws they enact (1 Pet. 2:13-17), **but what about times when civil authority assists in the violation of what God commands? In cases where civil law commands the violation of divine ordinance we clearly must ‘obey God rather than men’ (Acts 5:29).** Yet, the very teaching of Jesus against divorce and remarriage acknowledges conditions in which human beings ‘put away’ a mate ‘and marry another’ contrary to divine law (cf. Mark 10:11-12). Whether civil authority grants this or not, it is contrary to God’s command. In modern times, when is it that a mate is actually ‘put away’? We have seen that through most of human history this was not something that the civil government determined, but now it has presumed that right. We cannot just ignore our obligation to submit to civil authority. The Bible doesn’t teach a so-called ‘mental divorce,’ but **neither can we yield to wicked schemes of men to manipulate or ignore divine law in order to satisfy their own desires.” pp. 1169-1170**

“**Something must actually happen that properly determines when one has been ‘put away.’** At the same time, we must be careful as Christians never to make excuses that would allow us to violate God’s laws, or **misjudge the sincere efforts of those trying to balance obedience to the Law of Christ and submission to a civil government disinterested in what Scripture teaches.” p. 1170**

What is more, the *absence* of significant truth within brother Pope’s commentary is also alarming:

- No discernment between the obligation we have to **the law of God** (by which He binds us, Rom. 7:1-3; cf. Mt. 16:19; 18:18) versus the (physical) **marriage** relationship (Mt. 19:6; I Cor. 7:10-11, 15).

- No acknowledgement that the Lord's command, "...*let not man put asunder*" in Matthew 19:6 necessarily implies man's ability to do so (cf. Mt. 6:3; Lk. 21:21; Jn. 14:1, 27; Rom. 6:12; 14:3, 16; Eph. 4:26; I Tim. 5:16).
- No emphasis on Mt. 5:32b and 19:9b, where Jesus *indisputably taught* that every person who has been wrongfully put away "*is put away*" by God's definition (cf. Lk. 16:18), and thus becomes an adulterer when they marry another.

The Lord never discussed the issue of **HOW** (the procedure whereby) *someone* puts away their marriage partner, because whatever the society's accepted procedure to accomplish it may be, is irrelevant. The only reason why men inject "civil law" into the conversation is to divert us from the Lord's (and Paul's) clear teaching on *the reality* of a sinful divorce. To teach that man somehow *cannot* sunder the physical marriage is to make the word of Christ "of none effect" (Mk. 7:13).

In the first century, when the New Testament was written, man was able to unjustly divorce using the laws of that time, just as man does today. Hence, Jesus simply stated **WHAT** happens when people are *put away*:

Mt. 5:32, "But I say unto you, That **whosoever SHALL PUT AWAY his wife**, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and **whosoever shall marry her that IS DIVORCED committeth adultery.**"

Mt. 19:9, "And I say unto you, **Whosoever SHALL PUT AWAY his wife**, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and **whoso marrieth her which IS PUT AWAY doth commit adultery.**"

Cf. Lk. 16:18 (Without The Exception), "Whosoever **PUTTETH AWAY his wife**, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and **whosoever marrieth her that IS PUT AWAY from her husband committeth adultery.**"

You see, when the reality of a wrongful divorce is denied (in spite of what Jesus said), the second "putting away" (for post-divorce fornication) – *as well as marriage to another* – is an *inescapable* possibility. Nevertheless, the law of God (by which we are bound) does *not* teach "Once Married, Always Married" (or, *The Impossibility Of Divorce, Except For Fornication*).

This commentary contains the same fundamental arguments that have been given time and again to justify a second "putting away:"

- Doubt / denial of "when" a person is actually put away (cf. Gen. 3:1).
- The citing of **Acts 5:29** to *refute* civil authorities' ability to facilitate a sinful divorce.
- Denial of belief in "mental divorce" while refusing to specify when and how one is actually "put away," when the "*civil government*" is "*disinterested in what Scripture teaches.*"

Since "the devil is in the details," notice how brother Ron Halbrook (who also *denies* teaching "mental divorce") illustrates the result of this teaching. The following quote is taken from his "*Notes and Thoughts For Further Study*":

"If he has unlawful sexual relations with another (whether before or after he wrongfully puts away his true mate), his true mate has scriptural grounds to reject or put him away. That might involve countersuing in the courts if he has a suit for divorce pending. But if he has already been granted a divorce by the courts of man, the laws of man make no provision for her to act. So far as the courts of man are concerned, legal issues such as property rights have already been settled and there is nothing else to be said in the realm of human law. But if he commits adultery (before or after his action in the courts of man), there is something else to be said by divine law-by the moral and spiritual law of the court of God. She now may put away, reject, or divorce him as a moral and spiritual act." (emp. mine)

Here, Ron tells us how *civil law* serves its purpose. He says that civil divorce was by "**Human Law**" (the courts of man), and the subsequent action was by "**Divine Law**" (the court of God). Although brother Halbrook would also require *both*, he *asserts* that the unjustly put away person may act upon "divine law" *after* "human law" has granted a petitioner's divorce.

He reasons that if the intent ("for fornication") is later coupled with what "*has already been granted*" by "*the courts of man*," then (abracadabra!) you have a "*scriptural divorce.*" And we all know that a "scriptural divorce" results in the "right" to marry *another*! What proponents of this argument fail to accept is that "*the court of God*" has already *ruled* on this matter (Psa. 119:89; Jn. 12:48; I Pet. 1:24-25)!

Both Jesus and Paul told us that *after* an unjust divorce (which involves "*the courts of men*"), the couple was "*unmarried*" [I Cor. 7:10-11]; which is also used interchangeably with being "*put away*" – Mt. 5:32b; 19:9b; Lk. 16:18b]. Hence, it is impossible for "*unmarried*" people to "put away" or separate a marriage that has *already been* sundered!

Brother Pope refers to **Acts 5:29** three times in this context, implying that the recognition of a sinful divorce is somehow obeying men rather than God. This convoluted reasoning is easily dispelled by the following Biblical truths:

- 1.) Wrongfully divorced people are “*unmarried*” (sundered, put away; I Cor. 7:10-11; Mt. 5:32b; 19:9b; cf. Lk. 16:18).
- 2.) When people are involved in a sinful divorce they must “*remain unmarried, or be reconciled*” (I Cor. 7:10-11; cf. Mt. 19:12).
- 3.) To obey (follow) God, is to understand that some will *not* be “*able to receive*” the fact that unfortunate victims of wrongful divorce will have to become “*eunuchs*” for the kingdom’s sake (Mt. 19:9, 11-12).

Obviously, to refer to **Acts 5:29**, in an effort to teach the opposite of what Jesus and Paul taught is to **obey MEN, NOT GOD** (cf. Acts 19:15)! Notice *how* brother Halbrook also misused **Acts 5:29** in his sermon at Wilkesville, OH (June 14, 1990):

“...Because **God rules over all cases of marriage, divorce and remarriage**, that’s why. And so, in conclusion from this, **we learn that an unscriptural divorce RELEASES NEITHER PARTY FROM MARRIAGE**. When you have an *unscriptural divorce*, as men count it, *it’s not so with God*. That bond is still intact. **And that little piece of paper is nothing in the sight of God**. Just as well use it as Kleenex and blow your nose and drop it in the toilet. **It doesn’t mean a thing to God. God’s law rules over the laws of men...**” (emp. jhb). [Play Clip!](#)

Thankfully, *The Commentary of the Gospel of Luke* written by Colly Caldwell remained true to the text when it came to the topic of divorce and remarriage. Regarding divorce, the commentator stated that (right or wrong) its effect was “*to bring about the dissolution of a marriage.*” **p. 880**

Moreover, at the close of his comments on Luke 16:18, brother Caldwell accurately taught *against* the possibility of a second “putting away” (or “mental divorce”) by stating the following:

“Notice that Jesus does not say that this second husband is free to marry her if her first husband married prior to her second marriage. The conjunction ‘and’ clearly indicates that both divorced partners commit adultery along with their other partners when they remarry. Jesus does not say that whoever marries first frees the other. He says that both he *and* she commit adultery. Obviously one marries before the other yet *both* commit adultery.” emp. his, **p. 881**

However, the “Truth” Commentary on Matthew promotes error regarding divorce and paves the way for adulterous remarriages. Regrettably, many unsuspecting members of Lord’s church will likely be influenced by this leaven for generations to come (Rom. 16:17-18).

Dear brethren, we must not allow this false doctrine to grow like cancer within the body of Christ (cf. II Tim. 2:15-18). John wrote, “*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. 24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*” (I Jn. 2:23-24; cf. II Jn. 9-11).

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