

# THE ATLANTIC MESSENGER.

MONTHLY]

Devoted to the Relief of Baptist Destitution in Eastern North Carolina.

[25 CENTS PER YEAR.

VOLUME SIX.

MOREHEAD CITY, N. C., JULY, 1905.

NUMBER TWO.

## Whatever He Would Have Me To Do.

I asked the Lord to let me do  
Some mighty work for him;  
To fight asunder His battle hosts,  
Then sing the victor's hymn;  
I longed my ardent love to show,  
But Jesus would not have it so.

He placed me in a quiet home,  
Whose life was quiet and still,  
And gave me little things to do,  
My daily life to fill;  
I could not think it good to be  
Just put aside so silently.

Small duties gathered around my way,  
They seemed of earth alone;  
I who had longed for conquests bright,  
To lay before His throne,  
Had common things to do and hear,  
To watch and strive with daily care.

So then I thought my prayer unheard,  
And asked the Lord once more  
That he would give me work for Him.  
And open wide the door—  
Forgetting that my Master knew  
Just what was best for me to do.

Then quietly the answer came:  
"My child, I hear thee cry;  
Think not that mighty deeds alone  
Will bring thee victory;  
The battle has been planned by Me;  
Let daily life thy conquests see."  
—Selected.

## The New Testament Law of Divorce.

PROF. A. T. ROBERTSON, D.D.

(Delivered before the Preachers' Conference.)

The word "divorce" occurs but twice in in the New Testament (Matt. 5:32; Mark 10:4) though the subject is discussed three times by Jesus and once at length by Paul. Perhaps the translators felt difficulty in using the word "divorce" because of the various ideas gathered up into it. They use instead "put away." Perhaps no modern sociological problem is so difficult to handle as the question of divorce. The diversity of opinion among Christians themselves is well illustrated by the recent Episcopal Congress in Boston, when a compromise position was reached after days of debate, viz., divorce only for adultery and remarriage for the innocent party alone after an interval of one year. The Roman Catholics will not grant divorce for adultery or any cause except by special dispensation and Roman Catholic theologians either deny that Jesus taught this or say that the New Testament needs the light of tradition to make it clear. Uniform divorce laws in the states of the Union are greatly needed, but our people are much divided on the matter all the way from South Carolina where no divorces at all are granted, to South Dakota where divorces can be obtained by six months' residence. Louisville is half way between. A national divorce law is urgently needed. We appeal to the New Testament, but our state laws are not patterned after the New Testament teaching. The Christian, especially the Christian minister, must in such conflict, regulate his conduct by the Word of God. The New Testament is not exhaustive on the matter of divorce and remarriage, though the general tenor of its teaching seems reasonably clear. However, nearly every point raised has been vigorously challenged on various grounds by modern scholars. Twice Jesus spoke of divorce

voluntarily (Matt. 5:31; Luke 16:18) and once he was asked about it by the Pharisees who wished to tempt him (Mark 10:2-12; Matt. 19:3-12). Once the question is involved, the case of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:1) though this passage is probably not a part of the Gospel of John. In the Old Testament stoning was the penalty for a woman guilty of adultery, though a number of arguments show that it was not considered obligatory on the husband to execute this law. The bill of divorcement granted by Moses proves it, to go no further, and in the story above mentioned, Jesus calls for entire innocence on the part of the accusers before they attempt to stone the woman.

### DID JESUS ALLOW DIVORCE AT ALL?

Moses did, though from the beginning it was not so. The ideal of God in this matter was one man and one woman united for life. The bill of divorcement was a concession, Jesus said to the tempting Pharisees, to the hardness of heart of the people though it was itself an improvement on the tax customs of the time. The Pharisees were divided themselves on the subject, the school of Schammai interpreting "unseemly thing" in Deuteronomy to be unchastity or indecency at any rate, while the school of Hillel took it to be "anything unseemly," bad cooking or bad looks. Jesus was asked if Hillel was right in granting divorce "for every cause." The master had no hesitation in answering that Hillel was not right. Schammai was nearer to the truth. But Jesus made the restriction more binding than did Schammai and confined divorce to one cause, "fornication," a general term and so including adultery. Jesus had allowed divorce for this cause also when he spoke of the matter in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:32). It is true that Mark and Luke do not mention this exception and make the denial of divorce absolute, but it can be replied that this exception might have been considered obvious. Moreover Matthew does give it twice. It can be confidently replied then that Jesus does permit divorce on the ground of unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. In 1 Cor. 7:11 Paul in giving the command of Jesus against divorce, speaks of the contingency that the wife may leave her husband.

Did Jesus permit re-marriage for the guilty party? In Matt. 5:32 the Master says that the man who marries a divorced woman, save one who has the right to divorce, commits adultery. Clearly then she also commits adultery, if she has no proper ground for divorce. Jesus repeats this position in Luke 16:18 and later in Mark 10:11 and Matt. 19:9. There seems no escape from this teaching as meant by our Lord, that one who has no ground for divorce has no ground for re-marriage. This is true of the husband who divorces

her if he marry another, of the woman herself, and of the man who marries her when she is divorced. In fact it is making the wife commit adultery to divorce her without just cause (Matt. 5:32.)

### DID JESUS ALLOW RE-MARRIAGE OF THE INNOCENT PARTY?

The Roman Catholics say that "put away" is merely separation from "bed and board" and does not involve the right to re-marriage. But apollo is the recognized term in the Greek of the time for divorce. Some of the German writers (Keim, Bleek, etc.) say that this phrase "except for fornication" is not genuine in Matthew. But there is no evidence to support it, though the manuscripts do vary in Matt. 19:9. The denial of the right of remarriage to all parties where no divorce should be granted and the denial of remarriage to the guilty party, seem to involve the admission of remarriage for the innocent party. This, of course, would not be true in a divorce where both parties were innocent, for no proper divorce can be granted in such a case. But it is the lack of clear statement here by the Master that gives occasion for dispute, though the position of Christ seems plain enough taken as a whole.

### DID JESUS ALLOW THE WOMAN TO DIVORCE HER HUSBAND?

In every sentence but one where Christ mentions the subject, he speaks of the husband's putting away of the wife. This exception is in Mark 10:12: "And if she herself shall put away her husband and marry another, she committeth adultery." It has been objected that Jewish law and custom did not contemplate the woman's exercising a prerogative which was the exclusive privilege of the husband. As a matter of fact it was very unusual as the Old Testament will show. Josephus, speaking of Salome's divorcing her husband Costobarus, condemns it (Antiquities, Book XV., ch. 7, Sec. 10). He does the same concerning "Herodius who took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and divorce herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod" Antipas (Ant. Book XVIII., ch. 5, Sec. 4). But these exceptions show that it was possible. At any rate Jesus speaks of it as a possible case and condemns it. He grants no exception as in the case of husband divorcing his wife "for the sake of fornication." We are left to argue the equities of the situation. Mark, who alone gives this saying of Jesus, does not mention the exception in the case of the husband as Matthew does, but forbids absolutely divorce for either husband or wife. We may argue then that Jesus did not treat the wife differently from the husband. Moreover, in 1 Cor. 7:11 Paul presents the alternative of the wife's leaving her husband when he is speaking of the command of Jesus. And yet here Paul says "let her

remain unmarried or return to her husband" But a little further down he mentions the unbelieving husband or wife indifferently in the case where one is a Christian and the other is a heathen (1 Cor. 7:12-16). It is noticeable that at the present day far more women obtain divorces from their husbands than the other way. It must be said also that they have far more cause to do so. The question of the re-marriage of the wife is wrapt up in the point of her right to a divorce. If she is allowed a divorce against her husband for fornication, then she would be allowed to re-marry.

### DID PAUL EXTEND THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND GRANT DIVORCES ON OTHER GROUNDS?

In Eph. 5:22-38 Paul gives the noblest picture of the sanctity and dignity of the marriage relation, for he compares it to the mystic union between Christ and the glorious church of the redeemed for whom Christ died. This is no temporary bond to be snapped at will. Jesus is today the head of his church and it is being purified by him and made without spot or wrinkle. Moreover in Rom. 7:1-6 Paul argues that the Christian is set free from the bondage of the law as the woman can have a new husband only on the death of the former husband. But in 1 Cor. 7:12-16 Paul speaks of the problem in family life presented where the husband is a Christian and the wife a heathen and vice versa. He has two things to say about this new problem that had not arisen when Jesus spoke on this subject. His first word is that the Christian must not force a separation. If the heathen husband or wife is willing to continue the union, the Christian must be willing to do so. The marriage is legitimate and the children are legitimate. But the other word is this: Suppose the heathen husband or wife is not willing to keep up the marriage relation and insists on separation, then what? Well, let the unbelieving husband or wife go, says Paul. He uses the word "depart" here (chridespho) not the technical word "put away" (apolluo).

It would seem that this is a case of voluntary separation, not a legal divorce. If this be true, there could, of course, be no re-marriage in such cases, for the marriage had never been legally annulled. This alternative is not even raised by Paul in this connection. It may be properly said then that Paul did not advocate divorce for anything save fornication, though he does not even indicate this exception save by implication.

### MAY WE RIGHTLY GET DIVORCE ON OTHER GROUNDS THAN FORNICATION?

If so, they must be grounds in harmony with the teaching of Jesus. Now in the nature of the case there can be no other reason that so snaps asunder the bond of marriage as adultery. This sin breaks the marriage tie and the

divorce is merely breaking the bonds of the marriage ceremony. The real divorce has already taken place. This cannot be said of anything else. It should be said that Paul has offered in Cor. 7:12-16 the right solution for other modern inequalities in the marriage relation. Endure them if possible. If they are unendurable, then separate either voluntarily or legally, but with entire divorce giving right to re-marry.

If this solution of the grave problem married life such as drunkenness, etc., were adopted, the teaching of Jesus would be observed, the divorce laws would be easily simplified and unified, marriage itself would be put on a more stable basis, society would be greatly purified, and the salvation of the home would be insured. If divorce were thus difficult and meant only one thing, married people would get over petty troubles and live together instead of airing them before the public in the divorce courts.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.—Baptist Argus.

## Sunday's Paraphrase and Discussion of Rom. 6:3-4.

The Rev. Prof. William Sandy is an Episcopalian minister, and a professor in Oxford University, England. His rendering and paraphrase of Rom. 6:3-4 constitute a very interesting passage. This paraphrase is to be found in his excellent volume on Romans in the International Critical Commentary Series—a commentary which is recognized by all the world as constituting the greatest achievement of modern scholarship in that particular line of work. The volume on Romans is the very best of the series that I have examined. The paraphrase in question is as follows:  
3 "Surely you do not need reminding that all of us who were immersed or baptized, as our Christian phrase runs, 'INTO Christ', i. e. into the closest allegiance and adhesion to Him, were so immersed or baptized into a special relation to his DEATH. I mean that the Christian, at his baptism, not only professes obedience to Christ but enters into a relation to Him so intimate that it may be described as actual union. Now this union, taken in connection with the peculiar symbolism of Baptism, implies a great deal more. That symbolism recalls to us with great vividness the redeeming acts of Christ—His Death, Burial, and Resurrection. And our union with Christ involves that we shall repeat those acts, in such sense as we may, i. e. in a moral and spiritual sense, in our own persons.

4 "When we descended into the baptismal water, that meant that we died with Christ—to sin. When the water closed over our heads, that meant that we lay buried with Him, in proof that our death to sin, like His Death, was real. But this carries with it the third step in the process. As Christ was raised (Concluded on fourth page.)