

SOME THOUGHTS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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God's Will for the Christian on Divorce and Remarriage

I. Matthean texts

A. Mat. 5:31-32 - *It has been said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce." But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for grounds of sexual immorality,¹ causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

1. A woman who has been divorced by her husband for any reason commits adultery by remarriage. (This does not address the situation of a woman who divorces her husband. That is dealt with in Mk. 10:12.)

a. If she was divorced for a reason other than sexual immorality, her first husband is a cause of her committing adultery by remarriage.

b. If she was divorced for sexual immorality, her first husband is *not* a cause of her committing adultery by remarriage.

2. Whoever marries a woman who has been divorced by her husband for any reason (as opposed to having divorced him) commits adultery.

B. Mat. 19:3-9 - *But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery* (v. 9).

1. A man commits adultery by remarriage if he divorced his first wife for a reason other than sexual immorality.

2. A man does *not* commit adultery by remarriage if he divorced his first wife for sexual immorality.

¹ As D. A. Carson states in "Matthew" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 8:414:

[I]t must be admitted that the word *porneia* itself is very broad. In unambiguous contexts it can on occasion refer to a specific kind of sexual sin. Yet even then this is possible only because the specific sexual sin belongs to the larger category of sexual immorality. *Porneia* covers the entire range of such sins (cf. TDNT, 6:579-95; BAGD, s.v.; Joseph Jensen, "Does *porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina," *NovTest* 20 [1978]: 161-184) and should not be restricted unless the context requires it.

3. Explanation of disciples' reaction – This is a radical idea because in Jewish law the man could not commit adultery against his *own* wife; he could commit it only with another man's wife.² Moreover, even the school of Shammai permitted remarriage when divorce violated its rules of conduct (Carson, 411).

II. Thesis developed from Matthean texts – Only a divorce for sexual immorality extinguishes the "right to exclusive commitment" prior to a remarriage (which right is created by marriage but can remain after the marriage is dissolved) and then only for the guilty party.³ In such a case, the innocent party is free to remarry, but the guilty party commits "adultery" (violates the innocent party's continuing right to exclusive commitment) by remarriage. Where there is a divorce for some reason other than sexual immorality, the right to exclusive commitment remains mutual, so both parties commit "adultery" by remarriage. (This creates pressure for reconciliation.)

III. Thesis tested against other relevant texts

A. Mk. 10:2-12 - *And in the house the disciples again asked him about this. And he said to them: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she marries another after divorcing her husband, she commits adultery"* (vv. 10-12).

1. If the husband divorces his wife for any reason other than sexual immorality (Matthean exception assumed), the right to exclusive commitment remains mutual, so he commits adultery by remarriage.

2. If the wife divorces her husband for any reason other than sexual immorality (Matthean exception assumed for women), the right to exclusive commitment remains mutual, so she commits adultery by remarriage. (In that case, the husband also would commit adultery by remarriage.)

3. Explanation of omission of Matthean exception – Mark may think the exception so obvious that it need not be mentioned. After all, it concerns sexual infidelity, the heart of the union according to Genesis. Both Roman and Jewish law compelled the husband to divorce his wife if she were found to be in adultery (Keener [1991], 31), and it was assumed in the Roman world that general rules or laws contained implicit exceptions (Keener [1991], 27). Matthew reported the exception for his Jewish readers to make it more difficult for Jewish opponents to charge Jesus with contradicting Moses.

² Craig S. Keener, *And Marries Another* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 35.

³ Though sexual immorality is the only exception stated by the Lord, some believe the principle of the exception justifies divorce for other comparable assaults on the marriage covenant. See, e.g., Craig S. Keener, "Remarriage for Circumstances Beyond Adultery or Desertion" in Paul E. Engle and Mark L. Strauss, eds., *Remarriage After Divorce in Today's Church: 3 Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 111-115. I am not convinced this exception was intended merely to be illustrative.

B. Lk. 16:18 - *Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and the man who marries a woman who has been divorced from her husband commits adultery.*

1. If the husband divorces his wife for any reason other than sexual immorality (Matthean exception assumed), the right to exclusive commitment remains mutual, so he commits adultery by remarriage.

2. If the woman was divorced (as opposed to having divorced her husband) for a reason other than sexual immorality, the right to exclusive commitment remains mutual, so a man who marries her commits adultery. If the woman was divorced for sexual immorality, she remains under the marital obligation of exclusive commitment, so a man who marries her commits adultery. (But in that case, her first husband is free to remarry.)

3. Explanation of omission of Matthean exception - Same as for Mark above.

C. Rom. 7:1-3 - *Or do you not know, brothers - for I am speaking to men who know the law - that the law has authority over a man only so long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law as it relates to her husband. Therefore, she will be considered an adulteress if she becomes another man's while her husband is alive; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law so that she is not an adulteress if she becomes another man's.*

1. It is not certain that Paul is referring to remarriage to another man after a divorce. Divorce is not mentioned and the normal word for marrying a man is not used. It may simply be a statement that a woman who joins or lives with another man while she is still married to a living husband is an adulteress.

2. If one assumes Paul is referring to remarriage after a divorce, it does not follow that remarriage after *every* divorce results in adultery. Paul's point that death separates one from the obligation of the law would stand if adultery resulted only in the case of remarriage after a certain type of divorce.

3. Paul is not referring to Christ's teaching on divorce and remarriage but to either the O.T. law or the civil law of Jews and/or Gentiles.

D. 1 Cor. 7:10-11 - *To the married, I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband, but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

1. A Christian wife must not divorce her Christian husband (except for sexual immorality). If she does, she must not remarry anyone other than him because, in the absence of immorality, the right of exclusive commitment remains and remarriage to another would be adultery.

2. A Christian husband must not divorce his Christian wife (except for sexual immorality).

3. Explanation of omission of Matthean exception - Paul apparently was addressing the propriety of divorce on ascetic grounds, on the grounds that abstinence from sexual relations was spiritual. The Matthean exception is not relevant to that issue.

E. 1 Cor. 7:12-16 - *To the rest I say (I, not the Lord): If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she agrees to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has an unbelieving husband, and he agrees to live with her, she must not divorce her husband. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through the brother. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever separates, let him or her separate. The brother or sister has not been made a slave in such circumstances. But God has called you (us) in peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?*

1. Christians married to non-Christians are not to divorce their spouses (except for sexual immorality).

2. If the non-Christian spouse divorces, the Christian spouse is not obligated to effect a restoration of the marriage. Such a one-sided obligation would amount to the enslavement of the Christian by the divorcing non-Christian.

3. Unfortunately, Paul does not say whether not being a slave includes a right of remarriage, i.e., whether there is a continuing right to exclusive commitment.

a. According to Paul, Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage during his earthly ministry (i.e., the teaching recorded in the Gospels) covered marriages between two Christians but *not* marriages between a Christian and a non-Christian (1 Cor. 7:10-13).⁴ Therefore, it cannot be assumed that a Christian who was deserted by a non-Christian spouse has a continuing obligation of exclusive commitment.

b. I lean toward the view that there is a right of remarriage in such cases. If a one-sided obligation to effect a restoration of the marriage constitutes enslavement, it seems

⁴ As Anthony C. Thiselton states in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 525:

The whole of the previous statement about married Christian couples received added point from Paul's citing a tradition concerning **a saying of the Lord** in the context of the previous issue, but on the question of what should be the attitude of a person when one of a married couple comes to faith and the other does not was not a situation addressed in the teachings of Jesus. So Paul now disengages the present pastoral issue from traditions about sayings of Jesus.

the same would be true of a one-sided obligation of exclusive commitment. Both obligations give the non-Christian a measure of control or authority over the innocent Christian.

c. A possible rationale for God permitting remarriage when a non-Christian deserts a Christian spouse but not when a Christian deserts a Christian spouse is that a demand for exclusive commitment is not effective in creating pressure for reconciliation where one party is wholly indifferent to the demand.

4. It cannot be assumed from the fact Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage does not regulate mixed marriages that a Christian who wrongly divorces a non-Christian spouse is free to remarry. The principle that a wrongful divorce by a Christian does not relieve the Christian of the obligation of exclusive commitment seems fully applicable.

5. Explanation of omission of Matthean exception – Even though Jesus' teaching in Matthew was not addressed to mixed marriages, the exception undoubtedly applies to mixed marriages. Mixed marriages cannot be more sacred or binding than a marriage of two Christians. Paul does not mention the exception because the issue was whether the Christian should divorce his or her spouse because that spouse was a non-Christian.

F. 1 Cor. 7:27-28 - *Are you bound to a woman? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a woman? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if the virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will have hardship in this life, and I would spare you that.*

1. This is addressed to men who are betrothed to virgins. If betrothed, they need not break off the engagement as some "spiritual" ascetics apparently were urging. If not betrothed, it is wise for them, in view of the "present distress," not to seek a wife. But in any case neither the man nor the virgin sins if they marry.

2. The claim that "bound" and "free" is a reference to married and divorced people is totally alien to the context. In addition, verse 28 shows that this cannot be the meaning. If divorced people were in view, v. 28a would contradict what Paul said in 7:10-11 and the reference to virgins in v. 28b would be irrelevant.⁵

G. 1 Cor. 7:39 - *A wife is bound as long as her husband lives, but if the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.*

1. Paul concludes by reiterating for the virgins who go through with their marriages what he previously said to the married Christians. They are to remain married for life, but if their husbands should die, they are free to remarry. It is in no way sinful or unspiritual to

⁵ See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 331 (n. 38).

do so. Paul probably omitted the exception because his emphasis was on the fact the marriage bond did not continue after death of the husband.

2. Since the widow is a Christian, her new husband must be from the community of believers.

IV. Conclusion - The thesis fits all the passages.

The Church's Response to the Divorced and the Remarried

I. Those Wrongly Divorcing After Becoming a Christian

A. Must they repent by marrying the spouse again? Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:11 that they can remain unmarried. Note that the marriage has in fact been dissolved (they are "unmarried") and that this dissolution was accomplished by a sinful act (a divorce contrary to the Lord's will).

B. The obligation of exclusive commitment remains, however, so they must remain single or remarry the original spouse.

II. Those Wrongly Remarrying After Divorcing as a Christian

A. Is the remarriage wrong where the divorce was not for sexual immorality but afterward the other spouse remarried or engaged in sexual activity? In other words, does the status of the parties in that case become the same as in the case of a divorce for sexual immorality (i.e., the adulterous/immoral partner is the guilty party and the other is the innocent party)? I find no clear answer in the Bible, but I reason that remarriage is not wrong in that case. Since the only remaining marital obligation after the divorce was the obligation of exclusive commitment (see I.A. above) and since a violation of that obligation during the course of a marriage, in the form of sexual immorality, can free the other spouse from that obligation (and does if he or she divorces), it seems likely that a violation after a divorce would have the same effect.

B. Must those who wrongly remarried repent by divorcing the second spouse?

1. The critical question is the nature of the adultery that is committed when a Christian remarries sinfully. Is it "literal adultery" or "metaphorical adultery"? Literal adultery occurs when: (a) a married person (b) has sexual relations (c) with one to whom he or she is not married. If Jesus meant that a Christian who remarries after an unscriptural divorce commits literal adultery, then that Christian is (a) still married to the spouse he or she presumed to divorce (b) and is having sexual relations (c) with the woman or man he or she presumed to marry but who is not really his or her spouse. This is a common understanding of the Lord's teaching, but several things make me think Jesus probably was not referring to literal adultery.

a. First, in Mat. 19:6 (and Mk. 10:9) Jesus commands people not to separate a marital union. This suggests to me that people have the ability to do just that. Why command someone not to do what he or she cannot do in the first place? I suppose one could argue that Jesus actually was saying that a husband or wife should not *try* to separate a marital union, but that qualification is not apparent from the context. It seems to be a straightforward command not to divorce because divorce separates what God has joined together.

(1) That husbands and wives can in fact separate what God has joined together is confirmed by 1 Cor. 7:10-11, where Paul indicates that even a sinful divorce effectively separates a marital union, rendering the parties "unmarried." He writes: "Now to the married, I command (not I, but the Lord) the wife not to separate from her husband – but if she does indeed separate, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to the husband – and the husband not to divorce his wife."⁶ Marriage apparently is not some kind of metaphysical union that cannot be dissolved contrary to the will of God. Rather, it is a union that husbands and wives can choose to dissolve despite being commanded not to do so.

(2) Likewise, in Jn. 4:18 Jesus tells the woman at the well that she was married five times before (had five husbands) but now is just living with a man. As Keener (2006) notes (p. 107): "Jesus does not say to the woman at the well, 'You were married once and have lived with five men since then.' Rather, he says, 'You were married five times but are just living with someone now.'"

(3) We recognize that a sinful divorce separates the marital union in that we disapprove of sexual relations between the divorced parties. They no longer are married and therefore lack the divine basis for sexual intimacy. The notion that such couples are still married leads to conclusions that virtually all consider unacceptable. Lewis Smedes gives the following example:

After a few years, [the sinfully divorced and remarried Christian] visits his former wife who herself had remarried. He sleeps with her one night, but of course he is not committing adultery with her because he is still morally married to her. He is committing adultery, rather, when he sleeps with his own wife.

b. The second reason I think Jesus probably was not referring to literal adultery is that he does not expressly relate the offense in question to sexual relations. Rather, he describes the "adultery" simply in terms of divorce and remarriage.

(1) Of course, sexual relations would be presumed in the case of remarriage, but given that sexual relations are not *essential* for a valid marital union (as Joseph and Mary make clear – Mat. 1:24-25), "remarriage" seems a rather obscure way of referring to

⁶ The Greek word *cwrivzomai* is used in Greek literature and legal documents as a technical term for divorce, and as noted, it renders the parties "unmarried." The word also refers to dissolution of a marriage in 1 Cor. 7:15.

sexual relations. If the sin was having sexual relations with a nonspouse, why not say that any man who divorces his wife and "knows" another woman commits adultery?

(2) We recognize that the sin relates to the remarriage itself rather than to sexual relations within the remarriage in that we do not condition our disapproval of a remarriage on whether the couple has sexual relations. We do not say to sinfully divorced parties who, for one reason or another, have no interest in sexual relations that remarriage is acceptable in their case because it does not result in adultery.

c. The third reason I think Jesus probably was not referring to literal adultery is that even sinful marriages appear to result in valid marital unions. The sinful marriages in Ezra 9-10 are a case in point. I address below the significance of the fact the Israelites were required to divorce their foreign wives, but the point for now is that the marriages still were marriages despite having been entered into contrary to the will of God. The women are called "wives" and they apparently were required to be "put away" in accordance with the Law. Solomon's sinful taking of "many wives" is another example.

d. The fourth reason I think Jesus probably was not referring to literal adultery is that there is precedent for "adultery" being used metaphorically. The term was regularly used in the O.T. for spiritual idolatry, for giving to foreign gods what rightfully belonged to Yahweh alone (e.g., Jer. 3:8-9). (It also is used metaphorically in Mat. 5:28, but there the metaphorical use is signaled by the phrase "in his heart.")

e. If Jesus was not referring to literal adultery, then what did he mean in saying that one who sinfully divorces and remarries "commits adultery"?

(1) I think Peter Lockery is correct in suggesting that the "adultery" begins with the sinful divorce and is completed *in the act of remarriage*.⁷ Upon remarriage, the commitments that were made to the first spouse are wrongfully (but effectively) given to the second spouse. It is "adultery" in the sense the second spouse is given what rightfully belonged to the first spouse.⁸ As Lockery puts it, "Serial monogamy is morally equivalent to marital adultery."

(2) Under this view, the reason for the "adultery" is not that the first marriage remains in existence after a divorce but that the maritally-created right to exclusive commitment remains. Remarriage violates that surviving right by transferring it to the new spouse. Thus, "the adultery does not consist in the act of sleeping with one's second wife, but in

⁷ Peter F. Lockery, *Divorce and Remarriage in the NT and Its Implication for the Church Today* (Th.M. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary 1987).

⁸ The only exception is where a spouse is sexually unfaithful, in which event he or she forfeits any right to exclusive commitment.

the act of actually *taking* a second wife. [It] is a 'one time' act⁹ (even though it has lifelong consequences) . . ." (Lockery).

2. Assuming it is correct to view the "adultery" as a metaphorical reference to a sinful remarriage, the next issue is the nature of the repentance required for that sin. Specifically, must one who sinfully remarries manifest one's repentance by divorcing the second spouse? I do not believe that is necessary. In fact, if the second marriage is a valid union, as I believe it is, one actually compounds one's sin by divorcing the second spouse.

a. Those who insist on divorce in the case of sinful remarriages often argue by analogy from the case of a thief. As a thief is required to prove his repentance by making restitution, so one who sinfully remarries must prove one's repentance by surrendering "the fruit of one's sin." Putting aside the fact the analogy is dubious in that divorce does not constitute restitution, 1 Cor. 7:10-11 (quoted above) makes clear that repentance does not always require trying to "undo" one's sin. In those verses, Paul says that if a woman divorces her husband contrary to the Lord's command, "let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to the husband." He does not demand that the sinfully divorcing wife relinquish the fruit of her sin (her unmarried state) as proof of her repentance but gives her the option of remaining *unmarried*. If a sinfully divorcing spouse is not obligated to remarry the divorced spouse as proof of repentance, I am hard pressed to imagine why one who sinfully remarries must destroy his new marital union to demonstrate repentance.

b. David had Uriah killed in order to take Bathsheba as his wife, so his marriage to her was the fruit of his sin of murder. Yet, David was not required to manifest his repentance by divorcing Bathsheba, by surrendering the benefit of his sin. The fact Bathsheba was a widow at the time of her marriage to David and thus legally free to remarry does not alter the fact David gained her as the result of a sinful act. Indeed, Nathan's rebuke emphasizes David's taking of Uriah's wife to be his own. If one who gains a spouse through sin is required to divorce that spouse as proof of repentance of that sin, why was not David required to do so?

c. Solomon's taking of many wives is another case in point. Despite the fact God specifically forbid Israelite kings from taking "many wives" (Deut. 17:17), there is no indication that Solomon was required to dissolve the marriages he entered into contrary to that command.

d. Ezra 10 does not prove that every forbidden marriage must be split apart. The separation was required in that case, not because the marriages were sinful, but because the pagan wives would pull the Israelites from God. Separation was necessary to preserve the spiritual life of the nation. This was more important in terms of salvation history than honoring the sinfully-given marital commitments. Paul, on the other hand, makes clear that Christians are not to divorce their non-Christian spouses.

⁹ As Carroll Osburn shows in "The Present Indicative in Matthew 19:9," *Restoration Quarterly* 24 (1981): 193-203, the fact "commits adultery" is a present indicative verb is not inconsistent with the adultery being a one-time act.

e. Paul's insistence that Christians not divorce their non-Christian spouses is more significant than often is appreciated. It is apparent to me from 1 Cor. 7:39 that Paul considered it sinful for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. (If a Christian widow must marry a Christian, it seems inescapable that a never-married Christian must marry a Christian.)¹⁰ If that is correct, then Paul's command that Christians not divorce their non-Christian spouses shows clearly that marriages entered into sinfully need not be broken up. One can avoid this conclusion by claiming that Paul's command not to divorce a non-Christian spouse referred only to situations where the couple *already was married* when one of them became a Christian. But if that is the case, then those who claim that all sinful marriages must be dissolved are compelled by logic to demand dissolution of marital unions created by a Christian marrying a non-Christian (sinful mixed marriages).

f. John's declaration that it was not lawful for Herod to have his brother's wife does not prove that every forbidden marriage must be split apart. John did not say that Herod was required to divorce Herodias. He simply may have been calling Herod to acknowledge his sin. But if he was calling for a divorce, note that Herod's remarriage to Herodias was unusual because of the relationship of the parties. Having sexual relations with the former wife of a living brother was considered incestuous under the Law (Lev. 18:16, 20:21).

g. So, in my opinion, those who have sinfully remarried should be accepted into the fellowship upon confession of their sin. I think wisdom dictates that the confession be made publicly to ease concerns the members may have about the couples' submission to Christ. The confession should be along the lines of: "Though the Lord in his mercy has blessed me in my marriage, it was sinful for me to have married X. I chose self over the Lord, and hereby repent publicly of that sin. I am convinced the Lord has forgiven me, and I ask that you receive me into your fellowship as a penitent sinner who is devoted to honoring the Lord Jesus in every aspect of his/her life. I ask for your prayers that I may have the strength to live out that commitment."

III. Those Wrongly Divorcing Before Becoming a Christian

A. What is a wrong divorce when non-Christians are involved? According to Paul, Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage during his earthly ministry (i.e., the teaching recorded in the Gospels) covered marriages between two Christians but *not* marriages between a Christian and a non-Christian (1 Cor. 7:10-13). Since the divorce and remarriage texts in the Gospels do not regulate mixed marriages, the most reasonable assumption is that they also do not regulate marriages between two non-Christians.

¹⁰ Modern commentators who recognize that Paul here limits the widow's marriage pool to Christians include W. Harold Mare (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*), Gordon D. Fee (*New International Commentary on the New Testament*), Richard E. Oster (*College Press NIV Commentary*), Bruce Winter (*New Bible Commentary 21st Century Edition*), Anthony C. Thiselton (*New International Greek Testament Commentary*), and David E. Garland (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*).

B. Even if the teaching in the Gospels applied to marriages between non-Christians, there would be no problem with baptizing someone who had been wrongly divorced. Even Christians are permitted to remain unmarried if they wrongly divorce. The difficult issue involves remarriage.

IV. Those Wrongly Remarrying Before Becoming a Christian

A. What is a wrong remarriage when non-Christians are involved? As noted above, the most reasonable assumption is that the divorce and remarriage texts in the Gospels do not regulate marriages between two non-Christians. If this is correct, there is no basis for insisting that non-Christians who remarried after divorcing for some reason other than sexual immorality are guilty of adultery.

B. This is supported by the absence of any reference in the N.T. to forced divorces following conversion. Given the prevalence of divorce, there certainly were many Jewish and Gentile converts who had divorced for some reason other than sexual immorality and remarried prior to conversion.

C. The idea that becoming a Christian compels one to divorce one's present spouse seems contrary to Paul's point in 1 Cor. 7:17-24. Paul there gives the basic principle that the Christian should not use the fact he has been called into fellowship with Christ as a basis for changing his social relationships (in that particular case, his or her marital status). As far as a person's being a Christian is concerned, as far as that is the determining factor in the decision, he is to continue in the setting he was in at the time of his conversion. (See 1 Corinthians lessons.)

D. If the early church was forcing people to divorce upon conversion, especially if women were divorcing their husbands, the charge of home wrecker would have featured prominently in the accusations of early opponents of Christianity. This is not the case.

V. Those Divorcing Before Becoming a Christian and Wrongly Remarrying After Becoming a Christian

A. If, as argued above, the divorce and remarriage texts in the Gospels do not regulate marriages between non-Christians, there is no basis for insisting that a divorce between two non-Christians does not extinguish the right of exclusive commitment. (It certainly is conceivable that God, in deference to the hardness of their hearts, holds pagans to a lower standard. After all, he made such a concession for the Jews – see Mat. 19:7-8.)

B. If it cannot be demonstrated that the right of exclusive commitment continues after non-Christians are divorced, there is no bar to remarriage after the non-Christian converts.