

Truth *versus* Error

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By
Caswell Wilcox



**Caswell Wilcox (88 yrs) with great-grandson Stephen Wilcox (6 yrs)
shortly before he passed away on April 29, 1959**

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Forward

There are times in life when a child of God is suddenly and surprisingly presented with an overwhelming blessing as a special gift from the Father of Lights. Last week He convincingly showed me that throughout history, as the centuries come and go, His truth goes marching on. When searching for a favourite old book on sermons, my father and I uncovered a rare copy of a 1936 theological book authored by my great-grandfather Caswell Wilcox (1871-1959), titled Truth versus Error. Years ago I had heard that “Cassie” had written a book, but had never seen a copy, nor knew what it was about. Upon opening it, I was shocked and thrilled to find that generations ago my great-grandfather had stood against the prevailing culture of his day by proclaiming and teaching the same Biblical truth on marriage, divorce and remarriage as I do. Just knowing that he took such a firm public stand, regardless of what it must have cost him personally and socially, brings a joy and an assurance to my heart that I can not even begin to describe.

For when I was studying and researching the material for “Restoration of Christian Marriage,” I found that contrary to what is commonly believed and modeled in the modern church; divorce does not dissolve marriage whatsoever. The abundance of Biblical and historical evidence pulled me back to the original beliefs of the early church, isolating me from those who wilfully accept the permissive Christian culture that saturates this day and age. It was only after these findings were published through Theological Foundations on the internet, that I found other brothers and sisters from far and wide who were also called out to advance and defend the same Godly standard. Being “joined” by Caswell (or rather the other way around) is a personal encouragement to me like no other.

In the introduction to “Truth versus Error,” Caswell Wilcox wrote:

“In the rendering of the Scriptures, the conclusions I draw, and the construction and interpretation thereof, are original, and are the resultant fruits of years of study and meditation. The book has not been written in the interest of any denomination, sect, class, or cult; it is strictly non-sectarian...Every father and mother owe it to their children to provide for their future happiness by placing within their reach the best available treatise on the Scriptures, thereby fortifying them against errors, seducing spirits, and doctrines of men and devils (see Col. 2:22 and 1 Tim. 4:1). As

before said, the contents of this book are original...therefore I say unto you. "Be ye followers of me insomuch (and no more) as my sayings are in accord with the sayings of Jesus Christ as recorded in His Word."

The first section reproduced here, called Marriage versus Betrothal, is referring to the sin of fornication, premarital sex, and the (then) acceptance or even expectation that Christian young people engaged to be married would have sexual relations before the wedding night. It seems that in Caswell's day the church was intentionally turning a blind eye toward this activity. By means of their silence and unspoken indulgence, they (in effect) endorsed the activity. Evidently, when challenged, a number of pastors and elders had attempted to justify their complicity scripturally. Caswell breaks down their ill conceived misuse of scripture and renders straight forward Biblical correction, while showing gentle love and compassion to those caught in this sin. In this chapter you can catch a glimpse of where the church had already started down the road to the licentious lifestyles that are only symbolically opposed today.

The second section, titled Divorce, is devoted to the subject of divorce, particularly among "Christians." Everything in this chapter, written so long ago, could be stated today without amendment, except for an updating of the divorce and adultery numbers and percentages. Caswell urgently calls for the pastors and leaders of the church to repent, or have their people ruined by the false teaching and divorce indulgences that were becoming rooted in Christendom. He calls for each man and woman who claims to be a Christian to faithfully obey the marriage law of Christ, or if they chose to divorce, forgo such presumptuous claims, knowing that the Bible warns that all those who commit adultery will be named among the eternally condemned. Caswell, like God's Word, leaves no room to squeeze in between.

I am most honoured to be able to reproduce my great-grandfather Caswell Wilcox's teachings on these matters. Each word is carefully reprinted verbatim from the original publication, except where Biblical references in Roman numerals have been altered to reflect modern identification methods.

Stephen Wilcox
Author of [Restoration of Christian Marriage](#)
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Marriage versus Betrothal

The belief that fornication is justified by the Scriptures, and so expressed and actually taught by men holding high positions in the churches, namely pastors and elders, as well as laymen, may well be styled a doctrine of devils, whereby many are led to be deceived and defiled thereby. This doctrine is all the more baneful and destructive because of the fact that it is not openly or publicly taught, but is communicated privily in the ear and in the closets, because of the very nature of the communication, thus insidiously bringing in this damnable heresy (see 2 Pet. 2:1-3), clothed with the garb of respectability, which is as false and as base as hell itself, namely, that betrothal is (in effect) equivalent to marriage, and therefore the parties concerned are justified in conducting themselves as man and wife.

Being thus established in the church, by the church, this evil has hitherto been practically immune and non-combatable. The Scripture used as a base for their unscriptural doctrine is found in 1 Cor. 7:36, which of all heresies and doctrines of devils appears to be the most damnable as well as the most groundless.

That some supposedly qualified ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ fail to comprehend the meaning of this text (1 Cor. 7:36) is proof that they have neither mental nor spiritual discernment; consequently they are blind leaders of the blind. Reason alone should teach us that anything so contrary to the nature and laws of God cannot be sanctioned by Him. God's law concerning this and many other sins is recorded in part in 1 Cor. 10:1-11, which we quote for the convenience of the reader: Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat (as we do), and did all drink the same spiritual drink (as we do); for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; neither be idolaters, as were some of them; neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents; neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon the ends of the world are come?" If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy (when they committed fornication, by what stretch of the imagination do men assume that they will escape who do so today), of how much worse punishment suppose ye, shall be thought worthy who despiseth the law of Christ (Heb. 10:28-29). "For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb. 12:25). Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

Peter also sounded a timely warning to the church, namely, Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11).

The fact that the subject under discussion was marriage and not cohabitation is shown at the beginning of the chapter, wherein he recommended marriage as a means of avoiding fornication, wherein he also mentions the fact that they had written him concerning marriage (see 1 Cor. 7:1). We quote Paul's judgment concerning virgins: "Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, so one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned: and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they have none; and they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:25-31).

It is obvious therefore when Paul said, "But if any man think that he behaveth himself improperly toward his (virgin) betrothed, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry," he was not legalizing fornication under the guise of betrothal but recommending marriage under such circumstances, as a remedy, providing she had attained marriageable age (see 1 Cor 7:36). When speaking of the present distress, Paul had reference to some abnormal condition prevailing at that time, presumably the persecution of the churches,

in which case wives were torn from their husbands, and husbands were torn from their wives and children, their property being either confiscated or destroyed, leaving their families destitute of food or clothing. Hence they become a burden on the already overburdened churches. It was for this reason, I believe, that Paul advised the Corinthian brethren to remain unmarried. It appears, however, that the conditions of which he wrote were not widespread, or that they soon passed away. This is signified in his letter to Timothy in which he advises the young Ephesian women to marry (see 1 Tim. 5:14).

And now, gentle reader, let us suppose a case for instance in which you are the fiancée and that you have accepted the aforesaid doctrine in all sincerity and good conscience, believing it to be scriptural, and have conducted yourself accordingly, and that your fiancé has become dissatisfied and refused to fulfill his part of the contract, or, as is frequently the case, let us suppose sudden death has overtaken him. It would be inconsistent with your profession as a child of God to pass yourself off as a maid, in the event of you marrying at some future time, and would also be most embarrassing as well as humiliating to play the role of a widow under the circumstances, as that would virtually be an admission of your intimate relationship with your fiancé.

Conditions would be still more complicated and acute if it so be that you are expecting to become a mother. Therefore such a doctrine is not only fatal to your spiritual life, but is baneful to all true earthly joys.

Divorce

*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?
Matt. 19:3*

This question was asked of Jesus by the Pharisees. This is our Lord's reply to the above questions as propounded by the proud Pharisees as recorded in Saint Matthew 5:31-32; 19:4-9: "It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. 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. And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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."

Had the above question been asked in this our day almost any boy or girl of teen age might have answered in the affirmative. It is lawful in many countries for a man to put away his wife for nearly every cause, and the few last remaining obstacles thereto are fast being removed. So rapid a pace have the nations set for themselves in that direction that except an almost immediate halt is made in their mad career they will soon arrive at the place where it can be said in truth concerning divorce (as was said of men in old time – see Judges 21:25), Every man did what was right in his own eyes, regardless of the law of Christ.

To such an extent has the divorce evil increased that in the United States of America one out of every seven marriages ends in divorce, while in other countries conditions are fast becoming as bad or even worse.

The writer of late saw in a English newspaper where a bill was introduced in the House of Commons which, upon becoming law, will so facilitate divorce that whereas only a few can obtain it at the present time it will then be accessible to tens of thousands – and that in Old England where the marriage law reads: “I, John. Take thee, Mary, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to God’s holy ordinance.” While this may not be the exact counterpart of the Mosaic marriage law it is most surely and undeniably in accord with it.

The firm and uncompromising attitude that Jesus took toward the marriage law when replying to the Pharisees shows the high regard He holds for the sanctity of wedlock, and will in no wise consent to its dissolution for any cause, save one, by any potentate or power but death (see Rom. 7:2), but insists upon it being strictly and faithfully carried out under pain of physical death under the law of Moses and eternal death under the law of Christ. Speaking as He did, with no uncertain sound concerning divorce Jesus emphatically warned the Pharisees to beware of violating the marriage law – a warning our present day preachers and statesmen as well will do well to heed. Any presuming to disregard it most certainly will bring condemnation upon themselves and likewise eternal damnation, except they repent. In the presence and face of such great and imminent danger it is not surprising that God’s watchmen from their high towers are loudly crying out to the masses as they unheedingly rush along, “Stop, Look, and Listen.” That is to say, search the Scriptures (see John 5:39).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The law concerning marriage and divorce is something over which man has no control. It is true the law was given by Moses, and equally as true in respect to marriage and divorce; it was sustained by Jesus Christ in its entirety as given by Moses (see Deut. 24:1; Matt. 5:32).

The law is absolutely inflexible and as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Therefore a marriage once properly performed can never be disannulled except for the one cause given in Deut. 24:1, and Matthew 5:32.

Now, strange to relate, the writer has never known, read, nor yet heard of a case where divorce was ever secured, applied for, or even contemplated, on scriptural grounds (except in the case of Joseph and Mary – See Matt. 1:18-19 – and King Henry the 8th of England). That is to say for the cause of fornication, which is misconduct before marriage, and not after as is commonly supposed; whereas millions untold have been divorced upon grounds for which there is not one line of Scripture in justification thereof, and chiefly for the cause of adultery. Now the definition of the word fornication as given in the new Universities Dictionary is: The illicit sexual intercourse of unmarried persons. That is to say, adultery committed by unmarried persons. Whereas adultery (strictly speaking) is defined as a violation of the marriage-bed. That is to say, misconduct after marriage. The writer has failed to find where any provision has been made for securing a divorce for that cause. Hence we assume that misconduct before marriage is the only scriptural ground upon which divorce can be obtained. No provision whatsoever has been made for the dissolution of wedlock for any cause save misconduct before marriage; such not having previously been disclosed to the bridegroom to the end that he might be deceived. As proof of this statement we cite from Deut. 22:13-21:

“If any man take a wife, and go into her, and hate her, and give occasion of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid; then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel’s virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate; and the damsel’s father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; and, lo, he hath given occasion of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter’s virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; and they shall amerce (fine) him an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel; and she shall be his wife; and he may not put her away all his days. But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel, then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father’s house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.”

See also Deut. 24:1: “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it came to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he had found some uncleanness in her (that is to say found her not a maid), then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.” We note that in Deut. 22:20-21 the penalty for misconduct before marriage was death, whereas in Deut. 24:1 the penalty was divorce if her husband so willed. This appears to have been a new dispensation graciously granted by

God at the hand of Moses as an act of mercy owing to the propensity of the children of Israel to commit fornication, whereby the death penalty was dispensed with and the ordinance of divorce instituted in its stead.

We assume this is what Jesus had reference to when He said, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (see Matt. 19:8).

Whereas on the grounds of adultery, desertion, non support, cruelty, drunkenness, insanity, incompatibility, or any other cause that might be brought forward as grounds for disannulling wedlock, we have failed to find any Scripture in justification thereof. The only alternative known to the writer is either to make the best of a bad situation and patiently endure it to the end, or resort to the strong arm of the law, which still stands according to the words of Paul, viz., "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for manstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim. 1:9-11).

Now it is written in the law of Moses concerning adultery: "And the man that comitteth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death' (Lev. 20:10). Notwithstanding the fact that while tens of thousands of divorces are granted for the cause of adultery the transgressors invariably go free, thus escaping the just reward for their crimes. Therefore the wicked flourish like a green bay tree.