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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

THE LAW OF GOD

The Seventh Commandment

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14)

The Bible has much to say about lust, uncleanness, fornication and adultery, **all** of which are forbidden of God. Man's Creator is intrinsically pure and holy. *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"* (Habakkuk 1:13). In the Holy Scriptures, lust and uncleanness are broad terms which cover all manner of sexual sins, but adultery and fornication are much more specific, having different meanings. Adultery is one thing and fornication another; Hebrew, Greek and English dictionaries all make this clear. Fornication is illicit sexual relationships **outside** of marriage; adultery is illicit sexual relationships **within** marriage. For a married person to have a relationship with another person other than their matrimonial partner is to commit adultery. Because the seventh commandment is concerned with adultery, therefore involving **married** persons, it is essential that the institution and state of marriage is rightly understood.

Marriage is a Divine institution; it was established by God at creation (cf Genesis 2:21-25). Marriage is a **one man, one woman** relationship for life; it is an honourable estate; it is for the mutual comfort and blessing of both man and woman. To this must be added another aspect of truth which is of profound importance concerning this subject, namely that marriage signifies the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and His Church. *"Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2). "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ*

*and the Church" (Ephesians 5:31,32). Our Lord Himself said, "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). This is a sacred union, "They twain shall be **one flesh**", united as such by God the Creator, never to be separated. No man (or woman) is to put asunder that which God has so joined. Thomas Watson, the Puritan said, "In marriage there is but one heart in two bodies".*

Every man is to have his **own** wife and every woman is to have her **own** husband (cf 1 Corinthians 7:2). This is clear unmistakable language. No man must have another man's wife and no woman must have another woman's husband. There are to be no rivals, no concubines, no courtesans, no other lovers. The marriage bed is to be undefiled (cf Hebrews 13:4) and any breach of this is **adultery**. In response to the clear statements of Holy Writ, the majority of Christians in our day say that this is the ideal, but we live in a fallen world where adultery always has and will be a fact of life, so we have to live with it. Worldlings might well talk along these lines, but for Christians to speak in such a manner is deplorable, yet so many do and by it they totally dismiss God's holy commandments; nothing could be more serious.

Anyone commencing to study the subject of adultery in the Word of God soon discovers that in addition to being intertwined with marriage, it is inseparably connected with divorce, making it impossible to deal with one without the other. However, because the matter of '**Divorce**' is covered elsewhere in this magazine, it will not be dealt with in detail in this article, only so far as is necessary to show its relevance to the seventh commandment.

It is doubtful if there is any matter which causes more concern within the Church or yet brings greater disaster upon society than marital breakdown; yet in the main it is treated by church leaders in a most unbiblical manner. Divorce is accommodated and remarriage of divorced persons is an accepted practice; this is **lawlessness**.

"To the Law and to the Testimony", what saith the Scripture? It has already been stated that the words 'fornication' and 'adultery' identify two different forms of relationships, namely unmarried and married. In the Greek, fornication is 'porneia' and adultery is 'moicheia'. Scripture is clear and authoritative; "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11,12). "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (Luke 16:18). "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Romans 7:2,3). In each case in these verses, divorce and remarriage is said to be adultery (adultery - moicheia; adulteress - moichalis).

A married man or woman who has had an **isolated** sexual relationship with another, has most certainly committed adultery, but a married man or woman who has divorced and remarried is living in **habitual** adultery. To suggest and say otherwise is tantamount to saying that the words of Christ in Mark 10 and Luke 16 are not true, and Romans 7:2,3 is unsound teaching which can be ignored; this seems to be the assumption of many.

The writer is well aware that some readers will immediately say that the key Scripture to this matter has either been missed or deliberately overlooked, for in the Bible there is one **valid reason** given for divorce, and that is adultery. Many ministers and elders go further by saying that adultery dissolves the marriage union, therefore those concerned are at liberty to remarry. The Scriptures which are quoted to support this **opinion** are found in Matthew's gospel, *"It hath 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"* (Matthew 5:31,32). *"I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"* (Matthew 19:9). In these verses the Lord uses **two words** for sexual impropriety: adultery which is 'moicheia' and fornication which is 'porneia'. Dare any man suggest that the Son of God was careless in His phraseology, using language which contradicted Himself, undermining a Divine institution, shattering His holy Law! If Christ wanted to speak in a general manner on unchastity why use two distinct and specific words? These are not interchangeable terms which many make them out to be, thereby in their view, creating Biblical grounds for divorce, with another marriage (so-called) often ensuing.

If adultery is a valid reason for divorce and by this another marriage legitimised, then we are in effect saying that the Lord taught that by adultery, resulting in divorce, a door is opened for persons to live in habitual adultery. When analysed, such theories show contempt for God's holy Law and are therefore blasphemous.

The setting of the cause *"for fornication"* is found in Deuteronomy 22 which will not be expounded here, for it is explained in Mr Hinton's

article on page eight and also in the recommended reading listed at the back of this magazine. Suffice it to say that fornication and adultery are **not** one and the same, and if words have any meaning whatsoever, then all the verses referred to speak with one voice. If a divorcee remarries, that person immediately enters into a life of adultery, as does the one they marry. Whatever adjustments may have been made in the days of Moses because of the hardness of the hearts of the people, or today's theories, they were **never** included in the creation institution of marriage. Christ in His teaching upon earth, restored the primal meaning of the sacred ordinance of marriage and with the utmost clarity the New Testament sets out that divorce and remarriage is adultery; that which is an open defiance of God's Law which says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*". The fact that great numbers of professed believers daily live in this state goes to show the exceedingly low level to which the Church has sunk.

Marriage is a union never to be dissolved, neither should any marry a divorcee; to do so puts a person into a state of lawlessness. When the Lord was questioned by the Jews on the matter, He referred not to the law of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 24. He would not be moved from the creation ordinance, it was how it was "*at the beginning*" (cf Matthew 19:3-9); it is upon that creation foundation that the Decalogue rests. Destroy that original foundation and **the Law of God is destroyed.**

The monogamy of marriage, divorce and adultery cannot be treated in isolation, they are inseparable subjects. What erroneous teaching and faulty guidance is given today and what havoc is created in the churches. This state of affairs now permeates society because no standard remains. The Church having forsaken the Law of God, now has adulterers within her midst and therefore cannot minister consistently and with conviction. The salt has lost its savour resulting in truth falling in the street (cf Isaiah 59:14).

Many will retort that if a divorcee is a believer then they are forgiven, they are justified before God, therefore their position is different. When engaged in that wondrous discourse, the sermon on the mount, the Lord was addressing the multitude **and** His disciples (cf Matthew 5:1,2). As He came to that part of His sermon in which He dealt with divorce, remarriage and adultery, He made no distinction by saying that if the ones concerned were Christians, then the situation would be different because they are forgiven and justified. The Law of God is as applicable to saved sinners as it is to unsaved sinners. Do we all recognize this and accept that Law which says, "*Thou shalt **not** commit adultery*" or are we so naive as to imagine that if a person is a believer, then this is a section of the Law which can be ignored by them?

The conclusion is that divorce has no place in God's plan of marriage, neither can Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 be cited as valid reasons for the remarriage of divorcees. The formation of such a union is the promoting of ongoing adultery, a blatant disregard for the seventh commandment.

W.H.Molland

The vast majority have adopted an unbiblical approach to the question of divorce and remarriage. This unbiblical approach is so widespread that many are shocked when they see the plain, simple teaching of the New Testament. The Anabaptist's desire to return to primitive New Testament standards led them to the position that any remarriage was prohibited while the original partner was still living. This is what can be seen when you take the following passages together: Matthew 5:32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:6-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-13 & 39. This was the position of the early Church for the first five centuries, as proven by the book by Heth and Wenham, "Jesus and Divorce, The Problem With the Evangelical Consensus" (1984, 287 pages). All Greek writers and all Latin writers (with one obscure exception), agree that remarriage following divorce for any reason is adulterous. Their study included 25 writers and two councils.

(Dorea Ministries, British Columbia)

Marriage and Divorce

by D.C.Hinton (Uxbridge, England)

Living in a day when marriage is either considered to be a ceremony with little meaning or of no importance at all, we do well to consider seriously its true meaning afresh. In doing so it is imperative that we base our conclusions solely upon the statements of Scripture and not upon the teaching, practices or even customs of men. Nor must we allow sympathy for others, even if they be our own relatives, to colour our conclusions.

The bringing together of a man and a woman to be "*one flesh*" was a Divine institution and its principles were to apply universally down through the centuries. This was to be binding on all people, not just believers in our Lord Jesus. That is why the Lord took His questioners back to "*the beginning*" (Matthew 19:4). There, in the garden of Eden, Jehovah made clear His views on marriage before sin entered to mar His creation. His principles never change.

Marriage was to be the foundation of family life and was to establish a new family unit. This is seen as the apostle quotes Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31: "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh*". Previously the man would have been under the headship of his father, but now in marriage, he is the head of a new family. The fact that in Genesis 2, father and mother are mentioned, before either of these relationships existed, proves that principles are being laid down for future generations.

It is important to be clear as to when a marriage is regarded by God as taking place. With Adam and Eve this was as soon as God had presented Eve to Adam. "*And Adam said, This is **now** bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*"; Adam was then described as "*her husband*" (Genesis 3:6)

and Eve as his wife (cf Genesis 3:17&20). This was despite the fact that the marriage was not consummated until chapter 4. Thus we read "*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived*". Therefore the argument that marriage is only effective in the sight of God when it is consummated is totally flawed. Note the order inspired by the Holy Spirit in Ruth 4:13, "*So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the **Lord** gave her conception, and she bare a son*".

Moreover the fact that marriage was Divinely instituted and is a union produced and recognized by God today, causes us to realize how important is the statement, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:6). Man has no authority to legislate in this sphere.

In this land there is a legal ceremony which is to be carried out before the marriage is legal. Surely this is when marriage is Divinely recognized. It is clear with respect to believers, since their vows are uttered in His presence. Other lands have other procedures which are equally valid as recognizing a new relationship.

God only provided one wife for Adam and that was Eve. This was to be a pattern for the future and we must not take as our example the subsequent practices of either the patriarchs or of Israel. It is significant that the first mention of plurality of wives comes in connection with the evil man, Lamech (cf Genesis 4:23). The requirement that an elder must be "*the husband of one wife*" (1 Timothy 3:2) does not mean that other men could have more than one wife. He was to be a 'one wife man', meaning his affections were to be given to one woman only.

When considering the subject of marriage, we must not forget its spiritual significance. Eve was created to be a help meet for Adam. This was a role that could not be fulfilled by any of the animal creation. "*And Adam*

gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:20). She was to support him in every way and was to enable him to reveal the full depths of his character - his love, care and every other devoted trait. This is applied to the relationship between the risen Christ and the Church, *"the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"*. The full display of Divine love and care is to be seen in Christ's relationship with the Church. The apostle develops this thought in a later chapter. The marriage union, the most intimate that can be experienced on earth, is a picture of the unique union between Christ and the Church. *"This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church"* (Ephesians 5:32). It is essential to keep this in mind when considering the permanence of marriage. Anything which would spoil this application is obviously contrary to the mind of God and should not be tolerated or practised.

The Holy Spirit in the Scriptures takes great care to stress and emphasize the permanence of marriage. It is clearly taught that this is a union which can be severed only by the death of one partner. The 'law of last mention' is very important here as we quote the last references in the Scriptures to this subject. *"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband"* (Romans 7:2). *"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 7:39).

Some will suggest the gospels were written later, but they record teaching given earlier. Also the objection that the apostle says, *"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 7:12), and therefore his teaching is not relevant, is invalid. The fact that the Holy Spirit has permitted his word to remain on the page of Holy Scripture, is proof positive that this

is part of Divine inspiration. In fact the references quoted above just reinforce the words of the Lord Jesus in Mark 10:10-12 and Luke 16:18 concerning the indissolubility of the marriage bond.

There are also incidental references in the Scriptures which go to underline this indissolubility. The Lord Himself said, "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery **against her***" (Mark 10:11). Notice the words "*against her*". Whatever legal process had been gone through, in the sight of God the original wife was still his wife. The same thing is seen when John the Baptist rebuked Herod for 'marrying' Herodias, "*his brother Philip's wife*" (Matthew 14:3). Even though adultery had taken place and she was living with another man, God still viewed her as Philip's wife.

This subject inevitably leads to the matter of divorce and remarriage, which is so prevalent today. The Scriptures previously quoted, Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39, make it crystal clear that the marriage union cannot be broken or annulled in the sight of God - it exists as long as both parties are alive. This view is corroborated by the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the following passages:

i) Mark 10:11, "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her*".

ii) Luke 16:18, "*Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery*".

In the light of this, how do we interpret the Lord's words in Matthew 5:32, "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery*", repeated in Matthew 19:9?

On the surface, the Lord would appear to countenance remarriage following divorce on the grounds of immorality. This would mean that He contradicted the clear statements already quoted and this is unthinkable. The Saviour's words must, therefore, be interpreted in a way that does not contradict either the quotations from the epistles or the words recorded in the other gospels. *"No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation"* (2 Peter 1:20); or "is of its own solution" (Newberry).

Much has been written about the meaning of fornication in these verses. Sometimes, when writing to the Gentiles, it is used to describe immorality of every kind, both before and after marriage. Examples are 1 Corinthians 5:9, *"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators"*; 1 Corinthians 6:18 *"Flee fornication"*. In neither case can we possibly restrict the application of the verses to a particular form of immorality, since that would mean there was nothing wrong with other forms. The Corinthians would attach the Gentile meaning to the word, giving it a wide application. All should be aware that many words in Scripture do not have precisely the same meaning on each occasion they are used. A few easily recognized examples are salvation, peace, coming, faith. Therefore we will not be surprized that the word 'fornication' is used in different ways in different Scriptures. Moreover, the fact that Matthew wrote his gospel with the Jewish nation particularly in view must be born in mind when considering Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

Furthermore, in these verses, two different Greek words are used, namely 'fornication' and 'adultery'. Since the Lord would not have chosen different words merely for the sake of variety, there is obviously a difference in meaning between the two. To deny this is tantamount to a denial of plenary inspiration.

It is well known that with the Jews the betrothal period was considered to be the start of the marriage. During the time between the betrothal and

the wedding feast the woman was often referred to as 'the wife'. This period of betrothal had a legal standing, different in every way from the modern idea of the engagement period. Thus Joseph was told by the angel, "*Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife*" (Matthew 1:20). This was "*before they came together*" (Matthew 1:18). Legally Joseph was entitled to "*put her away*" on the ground of fornication, that is seeming immorality during the betrothal period. It is firmly believed by the author, that this is the limited period to which the Saviour referred in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. Once the marriage had been celebrated at the wedding feast, the Saviour's words would give no authority for "*putting away*".

To quote another, "We believe that every fair minded reader will follow us in concluding that the parenthetical phrases "*saving for the cause of fornication*" and "*except it be for fornication*" in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 respectively, are not to be taken to contradict the whole trend of His remarks wherein He is setting forth the indissolubility of the marriage relation and the union into one flesh of two bodies, but simply to allow of the termination of a betrothal contract if the woman is found guilty of impurity before the marriage is consummated".

The fact that the Saviour was referring, in Matthew, to a circumstance that could only apply to a Jewish situation is borne out by no reference being made to it in either Mark or Luke. These two records are definite. "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery*" (Mark 10:11,12). "*Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery*" (Luke 16:18). These verses clearly teach that even if a couple are divorced according to the law of the land, this has no Divine approval and their marriage is still valid in the sight of God.

In the light of the above, no one who has been divorced and seeks 'remarriage' can truthfully vow in the sight of God "I do solemnly declare that I know not of any **lawful** impediment why I may not be joined in matrimony to" as long as the original matrimonial partner is still living. Neither can such a one say truthfully before God "I do take thee to be my **lawful** wedded husband/wife". To make such statements is to profess that the laws of men override the commands of God. This leads to the further truth, that believers should never participate in a ceremony where those who have been divorced are involved.

There is another question which needs to be addressed. What are the implications of this teaching on reception to the fellowship of an assembly of the Lord's people?

There can be no argument that those guilty of immorality must be disciplined and put away from the assembly (cf 1 Corinthians 5). Where there is a cessation of such behaviour and true repentance, there should be restoration in due course. However, if there should be a divorce and either party 'remarry' while the original partner is still alive, then according to the several Scriptures previously expounded, they will be living in adultery. Such cannot be allowed into fellowship while they continue in that state, since we cannot receive sin into the assembly.

This brings us to the vexed question as to the position of those who have been saved subsequent to their divorce and 'remarriage'. If the former reasoning, based solely on Scripture, has been followed then we will have to agree that 'remarriage' does not invalidate the original marriage. Therefore such are, in effect, living in adultery. Their sin is remitted by God at the moment of their salvation. Some will argue that because of this they should be received into the fellowship. However, reception depends among other things, upon a willingness to "*continue steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine*" (Acts 2:42), and we have already seen what this

doctrine was in connection with holiness of life and testimony. The whole point is not their standing in the sight of God as the result of their salvation, but their present position on earth, which is that of living in adultery. The local assembly, the temple of God (cf 1 Corinthians 3:17), is to be holy. If this standard is to be maintained those living in an adulterous relationship cannot possibly be received. We must remember that if such were to be received, we would be saying that God has two standards, one for the saved and a different one for the unsaved. The suggestion is that for unsaved folk to live in adultery would be sinful, but if saved, their relationship becomes holy. Salvation does not make sinful deeds holy. If we believe that those saved after such a 'remarriage' should be received into the fellowship, then we must face up to the following situation. A brother in fellowship marries an unsaved divorcee and as a consequence has to be put away from the assembly. Subsequently she is saved. By the reasoning of some, she could be received into fellowship but not her 'husband'!

Some will quote 1 Corinthians 6:11, "*Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*", and by this quotation seem to suggest that the Corinthians continued in their pre-conversion relationships. However it is evident that those addressed, while living in sin in the past, had changed their way of life as a result of their salvation. Their present position, not only in the sight of God but also in the world, was completely different. This is not so with those who continue to live in an unholy and unscriptural relationship. Take the position of a man and a woman living together but unmarried prior to conversion. Are they to be received because God has forgiven them, even if they continue to live in such a way? Again if a person was a partner in a business carrying on illegal or fraudulent activities and he was saved, if he continued in the same way of life should he be received? Of course not. Similarly with those who continue to live in sin. This is the crux of the matter, their

present way of life. We must remember there are some steps taken before salvation, the consequences of which we cannot eradicate subsequent to salvation.

Some will argue that the Lord did not condemn the woman taken in adultery (cf John 8), and therefore we should be equally compassionate. The Lord, of course, stressed that He had not come to judge, but He did tell her "*go and sin no more*". It is this continuing in sin that bars from reception.

Others will direct us to the words in Romans 15:7, "*Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God*". Leaving aside just what is referred to by 'reception' in this verse, the overriding words are "*to the glory of God*". It will not be to His glory to allow into the assembly those living in an unholy way. The fact that the local assembly is called the temple, the sanctuary of God, emphasizes this truth (cf 1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

Again 1 Corinthians 1:9 is quoted, "*Ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord*" suggesting that we are denying this fellowship if such persons are not received. Yet this fellowship is not that of the local assembly, but the fellowship with Divine Persons, which is automatically the portion of all who are saved. This is a position into which every believer is brought, whether appreciated or not.

It is claimed that to refuse to receive those who are saved subsequent to 'remarriage' will take the heart out of gospel preaching. We have no idea when preaching, what problems will have to be faced by those who trust the Saviour, or what will need adjustment before reception. We need not be surprised that Satan will seek to make it increasingly difficult for the testimonies of the Lord's people. These difficulties will multiply as we approach His coming. It is not ours to seek to improve society, or to

water down the Word of God to make the corruption in society more palatable. It is ours to "*preach the Word*" and represent God's holy standards aright.

No doubt we will be accused of overriding the opinions of distinguished brethren of a past day. However we must base opinions and convictions on what the Scriptures teach. We are responsible to base all our teaching on the Word of God. It may be reasonably asked if godly men of a former generation had been able to anticipate the confusion stemming from their teaching in a society corrupt beyond their thinking, would they have had second thoughts?

Some will ask why there should be such varying views on this very important matter. The sad answer is that this applies to every New Testament truth. Regarding divorce the varying views seem to stem from a concentration upon Matthew 5:32 alone, while ignoring the overall teaching of the Scriptures. It is not a good rule of exposition to allow unclear Scriptures to override those which are very clear.

We must always bear in mind that it is the holiness of God's house that is of paramount importance, not the feelings of any individual believer. While it may seem harsh and unfair to refuse the fellowship to such believers, this was exactly the position of some of the priestly family in a bygone day. Was it the fault of the priest that he was born with a flat nose or was a dwarf? Yet such were banned from approaching the altar (cf Leviticus 21).

We trust this article will provoke a study of the Scriptures to ascertain "*What saith the Lord?*"

(Taken from 'Assembly Testimony' and re-printed by kind permission.)

Recollections of Spiritual Work in the County of Devon in Generations Past cont'd

The main figure in these reminiscences is a Mr William Surridge, born 1823, a miller in the village of Bridford, who was much used of God in that area in the last century. These details were written by his son, Mr Fred Surridge, in the middle of the present century.

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old" (Psalm 44:1).

A Little Child's Testimony

During this time of spiritual revival there were many bright trophies of grace. Let me mention one: - little George, the tailor's son, who died at an early age. After a short but bright testimony as a young Christian, he was laid low, and upon the day of his death he sat up and began to sing, "Now in a song of grateful praise, To my dear Lord, my voice I'll raise". With a sudden interruption, and a heavenly smile, he cried out, "Yes, Lord Jesus, I see you waiting for me, I'm coming, but first let me finish my little song". Then he continued to the end, "And when to that bright world I rise, And claim my mansion in the skies, Above the rest this note shall swell, My Jesus hath done all things well". With that he lay back and was gone.

As soon as the parson heard of his death, he called and asked to be allowed to bury him, for he said, "I could bury that dear lad with a clear conscience, although he has not been christened, and that is more than I could say about many of my flock who have been. I would esteem it an honour if you will allow me to bury him".

Parson Buckingham's Counsel

The work in the school house continued to bear much fruit. As one after another was brought to the Lord, a dear old Christian remarked, "I do not

see how the Lord could help blessing such a clear simple gospel as is preached there".

The godly parson of Doddiscombsleigh, whose church, father had left, still kept up a close acquaintance, and used to call nearly every Monday to enquire how the work was going on, and to give him counsel. Being a converted man, and having had long experience, he could very plainly see what the Lord was doing through my father. One Monday morning he surprised father by asking him if he and his little flock had commenced yet to remember their Lord's death on the first day of the week. Father answered, "No Mr Buckingham, we have not thought of presuming to do such a thing". "Then you ought to have done", said the parson, "for that is the apostle's doctrine and that is your path". This conversation was used to awaken father to his responsibility of not only preaching the gospel, but also to care for the flock. So he collected together the creeds of the various denominations, to test them by the Word of God, and he was not happy that any of them were quite correct, especially on the subject of the Lord's Supper. He could not find any that were following the apostle's doctrine by keeping the feast on the first day of the week, as parson Buckingham had suggested. It was sometime after this before he heard a company of the Lord's people who did. So already having identified himself with the Baptist friends, he followed their example of observing the Lord's supper once a month.

Thereafter the work at Christow, here at Bridford Mills and at Dunsford, was blended as one and a Mr Adams, Mr Pike and father used to take their turn as preachers and pastors at each place.

The School house rapidly became too small for the meetings and had to be enlarged. In the year 1875 it was pulled down and rebuilt. This again was enlarged in 1881. The expense of these first two buildings was borne mostly by father himself, but in this second enlarging, the assembly

expressed a wish to help. "Very well" said father, "here is a bill that has just come in for slate and it is six pounds. Do you think you could manage that?" This they agreed to do, and a collection was to be made on a certain Sunday. In the meeting was a working man named John Partridge, with his wife and four children. He only earned about ten shillings a week, and they had just saved up ten shillings to pay the shoemaker, who was to call for it the following week. But they longed to give the ten shillings to the Lord for the building and they made it a definite matter of prayer. After this they were strongly impressed to give it to the Lord, which they did on the Sunday morning. The next day whilst working in the nursery, John knocked half a sovereign out of a lump of earth. The same Lord, who could guide Peter to the fish with the shekel in its mouth, guided John on that Monday morning to the lump of earth that was keeping the half sovereign, to pay the shoemaker, to honour the Lord and to reward his faith.

The first funeral

About the year 1870, a godly brother and his wife living in the adjoining parish, to whom I have already referred as the giver of the ten shilling gift towards the second chapel, lost their little son. The parson who had been such a help to father, called again and said, "I expect you would like to bury this child yourself, being one of your little flock?" "Yes, I should" said my father, "But of course, that is out of the question". "Well" he replied, "I have called on purpose to give you permission to go into my churchyard and bury this child in your own way". "Thank you very much for such an offer" said my father, "but I would not wish to do so as I am sure it would bring you, as well as myself, into a lot of trouble if I attempted to do so". "No matter" said the parson, "if you would like to do it, I will bear all the responsibilities". "No" said Dad, "for while I know you to be very friendly, and I also know the bishop well enough to think he would not interfere, there are others who would cause a lot of trouble if I did it". "Well, well, if you are afraid of that" said he, "I will

give you a written guarantee to take all the consequences". In the end, after much talk and persuasion, father accepted the offer and buried the child in the churchyard.

It was the first time that a dissenter was known to conduct a funeral in a churchyard. It was also the first step towards the passing of the Burial Act. After this, father never gave up the privilege of burying those in the assembly who died. His mode of procedure, in order to give no offence, was to hold a short service outside the gates, then lay the body in the grave, spend a few minutes in silent prayer and withdraw.

To be continued -----

Announcements and Information

Recommended reading material on the subject of Marriage and Divorce:

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage by John Coblentz
98 pages £2.55 postage paid

Christian Marriage and Divorce by L.S.B.Hyde
45 pages £3.08 postage paid

Marriage Divoree by W.H.Molland
24 pages postage only 31p stamp

Preachers at the undermentioned services:

Lord's Day morning	20 October 1996	Mr J.Hooper (Saltash)
Lord's Day morning	17 November 1996	Mr D.C.Wort
Lord's Day morning	15 December 1996	Mr M. Abbott

Editorial

The seventh commandment in this series of articles entitled 'The Law of God', necessitates thorough and detailed examination. Marriage is the greatest domestic subject to be found in Holy Writ and the reason for this should be obvious because it is the very foundation upon which family life is built, but more importantly, it is the figure of the bond and indestructible union betwixt Christ and His Church. From the beginning of time, the Law of God concerning marriage is that it is indissoluble. How could it otherwise prefigure the bonding of Christ to His bride - the Church? If God had made the bond of marriage to depend upon what the wife does, or fails to do, would not Eden have been the time and place for the introduction of divorce and the establishing of the right to remarry? If any woman did enough to justify her husband divorcing her, then Eve must be that woman. If God had intended to make provision for divorce with the right to remarry, then why was a second rib not taken from Adam and a fresh wife provided for him at that time? No! Adam must cleave to his wife. It is this which gives the sense and depth of meaning to our Lord's words, "*In the beginning it was not so*" (Matthew 19:8). Let those who are so quick to quote the divorce precept of Moses, remember that this was not given to those who kept the faith, but to those who were hard of heart (cf Mark 10:5). Tragically through the writings of men and the teaching and practice of the majority of ministers and churches today, many Christians have been deceived and taken the irreversible step of divorce. What can such people do? They certainly have to live with the consequence of their actions. They have forfeited many of the blessings and privileges of God's people in this life; they must walk humbly and quietly with their God, magnifying His grace which has been given to them in salvation, yet should they always exhibit a truly contrite heart on account of their irrevocable situation.