

Original Contributions.

"Ye Are Not Under Law, But Under Grace."

REPLY TO ELDER S. C. ADAMS BY E. H. MOSS.

NUMBER IV.

I shall in this number call attention to what Bro. Adams has said about marriage and divorce. My convictions of truth compel me to deny, almost item by item, what he has written. We are told that the law of Christ on this subject is only a modification of the law of Moses. This I deny, not a word of proof is offered. It is mere assertion, and would be fully met by a simple denial. I shall however do more. Matt. 5:31, 32, "It was said also whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress; and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." Jesus first states the law of Moses and then gives his own law. To teach that this is a modification of Moses law, is to open the way for the conclusion, that the entire New Testament is only a modification of his law, and as we are free from that law, that we are left entirely without law. So far is this from being a modification of the law of Moses, that it is in direct opposition to it. As clearly as he has given any other of his laws, he says, "but I say unto you." By a purity of the reasoning used to escape the obligation here imposed, I could set aside any and all, of the requirements of the New Testament, or the law of Christ and the apostles. If I can make use of assumed and unproven modifications of the law of Moses, weak and beggarly laws, dead laws, statutory and commanded laws, and place in opposition to them, conditions and emotions of men's minds, I could release from every obligation imposed in the New Testament and open the floodgates for every pleasure and vice that men might love or find it in their minds to practice. By his own argument, it was wrong in the time of our Savior's ministry, for a man to put away his wife, except for the one cause, and if put away for any other, the sin of adultery was committed. How has what was then adultery ceased to be so? Moral truth and obligation never changes. The Pharisees evidently understood our Savior's language

here to be in opposition to the law, for we are told in the 19th chapter that they came to Jesus trying him, and asked him about this matter. Our Savior states the *divine law* of marriage from the beginning; tells them it was modified in the law of Moses because of the hardness of men's hearts; and then with all the sanctions of his authority, and to his disciples alone in the house (Mark 10:10), he restates the law of his kingdom or church. It was not then to restrain the loose and wicked practices of the Jews, but to state an unchangeable moral principle, that our Savior used this language. It was not spoken to the Jews, but in all three of its occurrences to his disciples. Reducing to an absurdity is fatal to an argument, if properly done; but it is equally fatal to the argument, in favor of which it is improperly used. Bro. Adams make two such disastrous attempts in this connection.

1. He says, "To say that Christians are under the law of Christ," which he improperly calls a modification of the law of Moses, is "to say, that Christianity is but a modification of Judaism." Admitting his position for the moment, I then say that his conclusion by no means follows. If this *part* of Christ's law was such modification would it follow that the whole grand structure must be so? Most certainly not. I will not now name this kind of argument, but I will say what it is not. It is not logical.

2. "It is to teach and practice that for 'the cause of adultery,' you can write her a bill of divorcement, give it into her hand and send her out of your house and then go and marry another." This is no more a necessary conclusion, from even his premises, than the other. It is a very serious charge for one man to make against the entire religious world. It is a hard saying against his own entire brotherhood, and the only relieving feature about it is, that it shows clearly the desperate weakness of his position. I know that not a single writer or commentator can be cited, who has taught such a thing, or advocated such a practice; and I know also, that all writers and commentators of note, who have written on this subject, are unanimously agreed, that Christ gave this as a law to Christians; and that its observance is an absolute necessity, in order to the

maintenance of a Christian character and life, with the single exception of Bro. Adams. I shall quote some, and I feel confident that Bro. Adams will not deny that they voice the general sentiment of Christians. Bro. J. W. McGarvey, in his commentary, (a work endorsed by our best minds, and published as part of a series, by and for the use of our brotherhood), says on Matt. 5:32, "It is perfectly clear that Jesus here prohibits divorce except for the single cause of fornication. * * In no part of the New Testament is there any relaxation of this law. * * It is clearly implied, however, that the marriage bond is broken, (by fornication); and it is almost universally conceded by commentators and moralists that the innocent party to such a divorce, may marry again. * * It is much to be regretted that in many Protestant countries the civil authorities have practically set aside this law of Christ, by allowing divorce and re-marriage for a variety of causes. No man who respects the authority of Christ can take advantage of such legislation." On the 19th of Matt. he says, * * Now the relation of father and mother can be dissolved only by death, yet the marriage relation is more intimate than that, and its obligations are more binding. * * Of course God who joined them together may put them asunder by prescribing the conditions of lawful divorce, but man has nothing to do in the case except to obey God's law. Any act of divorce, therefore, or any legislation by State or Church on the subject, inconsistent with the divine law, is open rebellion against the authority of Christ. * * He now, by his own authority, reaffirms the law which had existed in the beginning, and which he had already reenacted in his sermon on the Mount (5:32). * * Even in the Savior's day, then the hardness of heart among the Jews, was still an obstacle in the way of the original law, but motives to obedience, greater than any that had been known under the Jewish law, were about to be presented in the completed Gospel, and this made it wise to withdraw the temporary concession."

How clear, logical and strong this is! How perfectly consistent with the language of Jesus. How strong and clear the grasp of the difference between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. How

complete and sharp the contrast, in all these respects, between this language and that of the articles under review.

Bro. J. S. Lamar, in his commentary on Luke (belonging to the same series) on 16:18, says, * * "and its (the old law) very essence and spirit were to be lifted up out of the letter and incorporated in the kingdom of God as *its* organic law. * * will continue in the kingdom of God to remain true, that whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery." This with the qualification understood "saving for the cause of fornication."

Bro. I. Errett, in answering queries in the *Standard* of Sept. 9, 1882, says, "It (fornication) is the one exception to the rule forbidding married persons to enter into a new marriage contract, (Matt. 5:32), and the only Scriptural ground for divorce." Again, in the issue of Sept. 23, Scriptural marriage is the union of two hearts and lives in a covenant, which only death, or the crime of adultery can break." * * But we cannot meet the demands of the Gospel without meeting the demands of the State, unless, as already remarked, the laws of the State, contravene the laws of God. A mere legal ceremony will not hold good in the kingdom of heaven, otherwise the marriage of parties divorced for unscriptural reasons, would have the divine sanction. But as we understand it, where the demands of the Scripture are met by the parties entering into this relation, there must be obedience to the laws of the State, to make the marriage pleasing in the sight of God."

I might multiply these quotations from the writings of our brethren, but I forbear lest I weary the reader.

How does the following quotation from Bro. Adams appear, in contrast with the true and safe teaching of these quotations? "The 'teacher' (?) who thinks to find a law regulating civil marriage, in the true tabernacle or church of God, does greatly err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the kingdom of God they neither marry (Jesus never said it, for he spake only truth), nor are given in marriage. This institution pertains to this world, and is left to the powers that be to regulate." I deny this position. I am compelled by a conviction of the importance of the issue, to de-