

Are Bible Translations Progressively Softening God's Word On Divorce?

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A study of various English translations of the Bible reveals a strange discrepancy concerning passages related to marriage. After World War II there is a noticeable tendency to slightly modify certain verses regarding divorce and remarriage to such an extent that over time they have been softened from how they were once translated. These modifications can be seen by comparing major translations made before WW2 with major translations that began appearing afterwards and particularly in the 1960's and forward.¹

To begin with, compare the subtle change made between the 1984 and 2011 editions of the New International Version.

Malachi 2:16 in the New International Versions, 1984 and 2011	
In the 1984 edition God hates divorce.	By 2011 God no longer hates divorce.
<u>"I hate divorce,"</u> says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. Mal 2:16a, NIV1984	<u>"The man who hates and divorces</u> his wife," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the LORD Almighty. Mal 2:16a, NIV2011

¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the underlying manuscript and linguistic factors that were taken into consideration by modern translators for their versions. In order to give a more thorough examination certain passages (noted with a footnote) will be discussed further in appendixes. The reader is encouraged to read the appendixes as well in order to gain a fuller understanding of some of the changed verses. I will point out that the majority of verses examined are translation issues, not issues of textual criticism. Only one verse discussed falls under the category of textual criticism and this is discussed more in-depth in an appendix. Throughout this paper I have attempted to focus mainly on what are considered "major" English translations of the Bible. The criteria for being considered "major" includes (but is not limited to) its standing in the English community, its preparation by a leading cleric (this is particularly true of early English translations), its sanctioning by a king, its publication by a major Christian publishing company, its preparation under the guidance of a translation committee, or its overall popularity (as evidenced by the number of copies printed and sold). There are numerous "minor" translations which have been produced throughout the centuries but the vast majority of these have had little to no impact on the English speaking world's understanding of Christianity. Most of these are translations that were prepared by lone individuals and simply vanished into obscurity. For this reason, "minor" translations are generally not focused on or referenced.

It is just a slight change, but it radically softens the passage’s message against divorce.²

Now let’s compare the 1901 American Standard Version with its 1995 update.

Matthew 19:9 in the American Standard Versions, 1901 and 1995	
In 1901 this verse taught that the man who married a woman who had been the victim of a divorce initiated by her first husband was guilty of committing adultery.	In 1995 this was no longer the case, as the entire last part of the verse was taken out.
And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: <u>and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.</u> Mt 19:9, American Standard Version, 1901	And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Mt 19:9, New American Standard Bible, 1995 ³

Now compare the subtle changes between the 1974 and 1996 editions of the Living Bible.

1Timothy 3:2 in the Living Bibles, 1974 and 1996	
In 1974 one of the qualifications for being a pastor was that he have “only one wife” which has often been interpreted to mean that he not have been divorced and remarried.	By 1996 that qualification had changed to that “he must be <i>faithful</i> to his wife”. The new version no longer implied that men who have had more than one wife were disqualified for church leadership.
For a pastor must be a good man whose life cannot be spoken against. <u>He must have only one wife</u> , and he must be hard working and thoughtful,	So an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. <u>He must be faithful to his wife</u> . He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good

² Before forming a final opinion on this verse see Appendix 3.

³ I realize that this is an issue of textual criticism (the only one examined in this paper). For a more in-depth explanation of form criticism and why I have taken issue with it in this passage please see Appendix 2.

orderly, and full of good deeds. 1Tim 3:2, Living Bible, 1974	reputation. 1Tim 3:2, New Living Translation (Living Bible Update), 1996 ⁴
The same became true for deacons (a Greek word which, in the New Testament, is used to describe anyone who is serving in church) in 1Timothy 3:12.	
1Timothy 3:12 in the New International Versions, 1984 and 2011	
A deacon must be <u>the husband of but one wife</u> and must manage his children and his household well. NIV1984	A deacon must be <u>faithful to his wife</u> and must manage his children and his household well. NIV2011

Now let's look at some of the older versions compared to the newer versions.

Matthew 5:32	
American Standard Version (1901) vs. God's Word Translation (1995)	
In 1901 the man who divorces his wife for a reason other than "fornication" "maketh her an adulteress" (presumably because she will be forced to remarry in order to survive) and whoever marries the woman who is put away is also guilty of "committing adultery".	In 1995, however, the man who divorces his wife for a reason other than "unfaithfulness" only "makes her <u>look</u> as though she has committed adultery" and whoever marries a woman divorced in this way only "makes himself <u>look</u> as though he has committed adultery".
but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, <u>maketh her an adulteress</u> : and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away <u>committeth adultery</u> . ASV, 1901	But I can guarantee that any man who divorces his wife for any reason other than unfaithfulness <u>makes her look</u> as though she has committed adultery. Whoever marries a woman divorced in this way <u>makes himself look</u> as though he has committed adultery. GWT, 1995
In 94 years the participants in a divorce and remarriage went from actually "committing" adultery to only "looking like adulterers".	

Matthew 19:9 is the most pivotal passage in the New Testament regarding divorce and remarriage. It has come to be known as the "exception clause"

⁴ See Appendix 1 for further examination of this passage.

because in it Jesus appears to be giving an exception to his elsewhere total prohibition of remarriage after divorce (Mk 10:11-12, Lk 16:18). Now let's focus on older and newer translations of Matthew 19:9.

Matthew 19:9 in the King James Versions, 1611 and 1984	
In 1611 the translators of the King James version chose a word that was understood to mean "premarital sex" to translate Jesus' exception to divorce and remarry.	In 1984 the translators of the New King James version chose a phrase that would be understood to mean "adultery" and put a footnote at the bottom of the page indicating that it could be translated as "fornication".
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.	And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality , and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.

It has been alleged that in 1611, the year that the King James Version was published, that the word "fornication" was understood by English speakers to include the idea of adultery. However, *this allegation is just simply not true* and it can be easily demonstrated by looking at literature and dictionary entries before, at the time of and after the era of the King James:

Literature:

Robert Manning

Handling Sin (1303): The first [sin] is '**fornication**,' when two unmarried have misdome, As single boy and single girl, When they sin together eagerly; The least it is of all seven⁵, Yet it causes one to lose the bliss of heaven. **The other** is '**adultery**,' When a married person and a married person together have intercourse⁶

⁵ That is, of the seven-fold nature of the sin of *lechery* (lust) which this passage is discussing.

⁶ Lines 7351-7358. Frederick James Furnivall, *Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne," A.D. 1303: With Those Parts Of The Anglo-French Treatise On Which It Was Founded, William of Wadington's "Manuel Des Pechiez,"* Vol. 2 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1903), p. 235. I have modernized the Middle English of this passage for contemporary readers. For those who wish to read the original Middle English I place it here:

John De Thoresby

The Lay Folk's Catechism (1357): And from this sin comes many different kinds [of sins]. One is **fornication**, fleshly sin Between one unmarried man and one unmarried woman, Because it is against the law And the permission, and the tradition that holy church observes, It is deadly sin to them that do it. **Another** is **adultery**, that is a breach of the marriage vow, Whether it is done bodily or with an incubus/succubus, It (adultery) is more grievous and greater [a sin] than the other [sin of fornication].⁷

Dictionaries:

Robert Cawdrey's

Þe first ys '**fornycacyon**,'
whan two vnweddyd haue mysdon,
As sengle knaue and sengle tarne,
whan þey synne to-gedyr ʒerne;
Þe leste hyt ys of allë seuene,
ʒyt hyt forbarreþ þe blys of heuene.

Þe touþer ys '**awoutry**,'

Whan weddyd and weddyd to-gedyr lye

⁷ Lines 546-553. Thomas Frederick Simmons & Henry Edward Nolloth, eds., *The Lay Folks' Catechism; or, The English And Latin Versions Of Archbishop Thoresby's Instruction For The People* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1901). p.94-96. I have modernized the Middle English of this passage for contemporary readers. For those who wish to read the original Middle English I place it here:

Ane is **fornication**, a fleshly syn
Betwix ane aynlepi man, and ane aynlepi woman,
That forthi that it is ogaynes the lawe
And the leue, and the
lare that hali kirk haldes,
It is deadly syn to tham that dos it.
An other is **auoutry**, that is spousebrek,
Whether it be bodily or it be gastely,
That greuouser and gretter is than
the other.

*A Table Alphabeticall (1604): fornication, vncleannes betweene single persones.*⁸

Edmund Coote's

*The English Schoole-Maister (1596): fornication: vncleannes betweene single persons.*⁹

Thomas Blount's

*Glossographia Anglicana (1656): Fornication: Whoredom, Leachery, spoken of single persons, if either party be married then tis Adultery.*¹⁰

R. Brown's

*The English Expofitor Improv'd (1719): fornication. Whoredom committed between single Persons, whereas if either, or both Parties so offending be married, it is called Adultery, and is punishable with Death by the Common Law.*¹¹

John Kersey's

*The New World Of Words (1720): Fornication, the Act of uncleanness between single Persons, so call'd because usually committed in Stews, under Vaults or Arches, in Latin, Fornices.*¹²

As it is translated the King James teaches that only pre-marital unchastity (presumably that had occurred before the wedding, but was discovered afterwards) could justify a man in putting away his wife and remarrying. (The classic case of a man marrying a woman whom he believed to be a virgin only to find out after the wedding that she was not.) In all, ten out of the eleven major

⁸ *A Table Alphabeticall, Conteyning and Teaching the True Writing, and Vnderstanding of Hard Vsual English Wordes, Borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French. &c. With the Interpretation Thereof by Plaine English Words, Gathered for the Benefit & Helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or Any Other Vnskilfull Persons* (London: Printed by I. R. for Edmund Weauer, 1604).

⁹ *The English Schoole-Maister* (London: Printed by the Widow Orwin, for Ralph Iackson and Robert Dexter, 1596).

¹⁰ *Glossographia Anglicana* Reprint of First Edition, (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1972).

¹¹ *The English Expofitor Improv'd: Being A Complete Dictionary, Teaching The Interpretation Of The Moft Difficult Words, Which Are Commonly Made Ufe Of In Our Englifh Tongue* (London: Printed for W. Churchill at the Black-Swan in Pater-noster-Row, 1719).

¹² *The New World Of Words: or, Universal English Dictionary* (London: Printed for J. Philips, 1720).

English translations before World War II translated this passage to reflect pre-marital sex, not adultery. The only exception was the *Geneva Bible* which was created to reflect the theology of John Calvin, who himself believed that the passage was talking about adultery.

Wycliffe Bible (c.1380)	And Y seie to you, that who euer leueth his wijf, but for <i>fornycacioun</i> , and weddith another, doith letcherie; and he that weddith the forsakun wijf, doith letcherie.
Tyndale New Testament (1525)	I saye therefore vnto you whosoever putteth away his wyfe (except it be for <i>fornicacion</i>) and maryeth another breaketh wedlocke. And whosoever maryeth her which is diuorced doeth commyt advoutry.
Coverdale's Bible (1535)	But I saye vnto you: Whosoever putteth away his wife (excepte it be for <i>fornicacion</i>) and marieth another, breaketh wedlocke. And who so marieth her yt is deuorced, commytteth aduoutrye.
Matthew's Bible (1537)	I saye therefore vnto you, whosoever putteth away hys wyfe, (except it be for <i>fornicacion</i>) & marieth another, breaketh wedloke. And whosoever maryeth her, which is diuorced, doth commit aduoutry.
The Great Bible (1539)	I saye vnto you: whosoever putteth away his wyfe (except it be for <i>fornicacion</i>) & marieth another, breaketh wedlocke. And whoso marieth her whych is deuorced, doeth commyt aduoutry.
Bishop's Bible (1568)	I say vnto you: whosoever putteth away his wyfe, except it be for <i>fornication</i> , and maryeth another, committeth adulterie: And who so maryeth her which is diuorced, doth comit adulterie.
Douay-Rheims Version (1610)	And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for <i>fornication</i> , and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

King James Version (1611)	And I say vnto you, Whosoeuer shall put away his wife, except it be for <i>fornication</i> , and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery.
Revised Version (1885)	And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for <i>fornication</i> , and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.
American Standard Version (1901)	And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for <i>fornication</i> , and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.

The implication of the pre-WWII major translations is that there is nothing that can happen *after* a wedding which would justify a couple in getting a divorce. Only something which happened *before* to invalidate the wedding and was discovered afterwards could justify a husband in divorcing and remarrying. However, after WWII major English translations en masse started translating this passage to solely reflect something which happened *after* the wedding.

Revised Standard Version (1946)
And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for <i>unchastity</i> , and marries another, commits adultery.
Amplified (1965)
I say to you: whoever dismisses (repudiates, divorces) his wife, except for <i>unchastity</i> , and marries another commits adultery, <i>and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.</i>
Good News Translation (1966)
I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife, and she has not been <i>unfaithful</i> , commits adultery if he marries some other woman.
New King James Version (1982)
And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for <i>sexual immorality</i> , and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.
New International Version (1984)

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for <i>marital unfaithfulness</i> , and marries another woman commits adultery.
New American Standard (1995) And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for <i>immorality</i> , and marries another woman commits adultery.
New International Readers Version (1996) Here is what I tell you. Anyone who divorces his wife and gets married to another woman commits adultery. A man may divorce his wife only if she <i>has not been faithful</i> to him.
English Standard Version (2001) And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for <i>sexual immorality</i> , and marries another, commits adultery.
The Message (2002) I'm holding you to the original plan, and holding you liable for adultery if you divorce your faithful wife and then marry someone else. I make an exception in cases where the spouse has <i>committed adultery</i> .
Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004) And I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for <i>sexual immorality</i> , and marries another, commits adultery.
New Living Translation (2007) And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife <i>has been unfaithful</i> .

When comparing the major pre-WWII translations with those made afterwards it becomes evident that, when it came to Matthew 19:9, translations progressively moved away from pre-nuptial unchastity as the only grounds for divorce to an ever widening ground of reasons.

American Standard Version (1901) In 1901 the ASV, the last major English translation before WWII, still retained pre-nuptial unchastity as the only exception to Jesus' strict divorce teachings.	And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for <i>fornication</i> , and shall marry another, committeth adultery...
Revised Standard Version (1946) In 1946, the year after WWII ended, the RSV moved away from the term	And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for <i>unchastity</i> , and marries another, commits adultery.

fornication (a term without any ambiguity) and replaced it with “unchastity”, a term that still reflected the pre-WWII meaning ¹³ but was open to question as to whether the passage referred to <i>pre-marital</i> or <i>post-marital</i> unchastity.	
Good News Translation (1966) Twenty years later the Good News Translation attempted to answer that question by translating the passage in such a way that it unmistakably referred to <i>post-marital unchastity</i> .	I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife, and she has not been <u>unfaithful</u> , commits adultery if he marries some other woman.
New King James Version (1982) Sixteen years later the New King James Version widened the term even further choosing to translate Jesus’ exception clause to refer to all kinds of “sexual immorality”, which would include pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexuality, necrophilia, bestiality, pedophilia and any other imaginable kind of sexual immorality.	And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for <u>sexual immorality</u> , and marries another, commits adultery...

Thus, a noticeable progression in who can remarry after a divorce can be charted: pre-nuptial unchastity (1380-1945), undefined unchastity (1946-1965), post-marital unfaithfulness (1966-1981), and all forms of sexual immorality (1982-Present).




We will note, however, that not all major modern English translations have totally abandoned the pre-WWII translation of this passage. Though to my knowledge no major modern translation explicitly translates the passage to refer to pre-nuptial unchastity two versions do posit this as a possible translation in footnotes.

¹³ For those who doubt that the word chastity can refer to pre-nuptial chastity compare 2Corinthians 2:11 where Paul describes the church as an engaged (espoused) wife who is being presented to her husband Christ as a pure virgin: “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a **chaste** virgin to Christ.”

The New King James Version includes a footnote indicating that the passage could be translated as “fornication”:

Screen Grab From WWW.BibleGateway.Com

Matthew 19:9 (New King James Version)

New King James Version Page Options   

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Matthew 19:9
New King James Version (NKJV)

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,^[a] and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

Footnotes:

a. **Matthew 19:9** Or *fornication*

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Secondly, the New American Standard Version, considered to be “the most literal translation”¹⁴ and advertised as “the most accurate English Bible translation”¹⁵ translates this passage as “immorality” yet includes a footnote indicating that the word literally means “fornication”:

Screen Grab From WWW.BibleGateway.Com

¹⁴ NASB Endorsements. Available online at <http://www.lockman.org/nasb/endorsements.php>, accessed July 16, 2012.

¹⁵ New American Standard Bible (NASB) Version Information. Available online at <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-American-Standard-Bible-NASB/>, accessed July 16, 2012.

The screenshot shows a web page for Matthew 19:9 from the New American Standard Bible. The page includes a search bar, navigation buttons, and a list of footnotes. Footnote b, "Matthew 19:9 Lit fornication", is circled in red. The page also features a sidebar with a book cover and pricing information.

Matthew 19:9 (New American Standard Bible)

New American Standard Bible

Page Options

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Matthew 19:9
New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁹ And I say to you, whoever ^[a]divorces his wife, except for ^[b]immorality, and marries another woman ^[c]commits adultery^[d].”

Footnotes:

- a. Matthew 19:9 Or *sends away*
- b. Matthew 19:9 Lit fornication**
- c. Matthew 19:9 Some early mss read *makes her commit adultery*
- d. Matthew 19:9 Some early mss add *and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery*

Bible G Recom

Classic Side-by-Side (NIV, K Amplified)

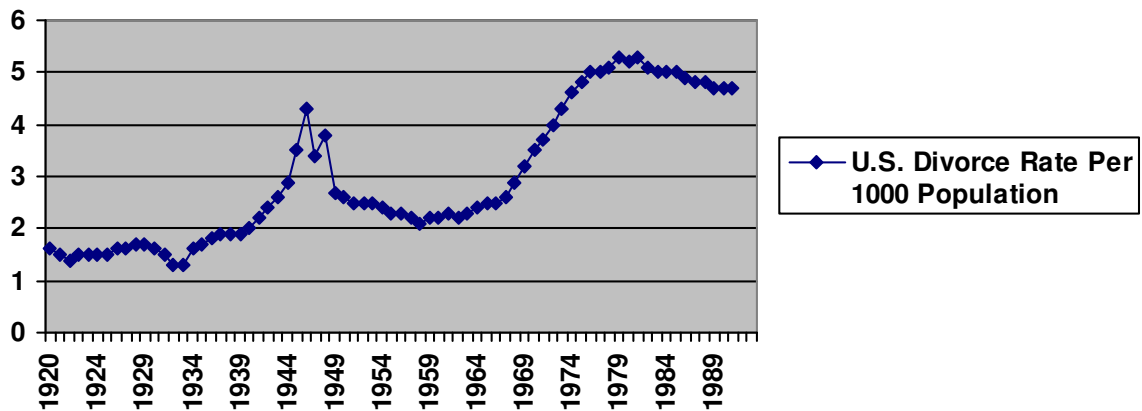
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Why the world’s “most literal translation” opted to *not* translate this passage literally, instead relegating the literal translation to a footnote at the bottom of the page, is a mystery and it raises further questions as to why even major translations that claim to be literal after WWII will not translate this verse literally.

Did The Increasing Divorce And Remarriage Rate After WWII Prompt Translations To Alter What The Bible Says?

As the following chart demonstrates there was a noticeable increase in divorce during and after World War II. It spiked during the war, decreased after its end only to surge in the 1960’s through the 1980’s.



Sources: *Vital Statistics And Health And Medical Care*, *Vital Statistics: Series B 1-220* (U.S. Census Bureau), p.64.¹⁶
Statistical Abstract Of The United States, Vol. 122 (U.S. Dept. Of Commerce, 2002), p.59.¹⁷

Mysteriously, the transition in translating Matthew 19:9 away from events which occurred *before* the marriage to reflect events that occurred *after* the marriage almost seemed to go hand in hand with American society's decision to embrace divorce and remarriage. One is left to wonder whether the change in Bible translations caused the increase or came as a result of it.

Thus, the post World War II transition brought about a changed way of looking at divorce for the American church. After WWII:

- God no longer hates divorce
- Events after the marriage justify a couple in divorcing and remarrying
- There is one less verse indicating that women who are abandoned by their spouses are required to wait patiently, fasting and praying for their return¹⁸
- Those who have divorced and remarried can now both lead and serve in church

One is left to wonder, at the rate translations have changed in the past fifty years, what will our Bibles say regarding divorce in 2060?

¹⁶ Available online at <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/statcomp/documents/CT1970p1-03.pdf>, accessed July 16, 2012.

¹⁷ Available online at http://books.google.com/books?id=vd862rmilmAC&lpg=PA55&ots=3L6LOWL_mQ&dq=%22Live%20Births%2C%20Deaths%2C%20Marriages%2C%20and%20Divorces%3A%201950%20to%202001%22&pg=PA55#v=onepage&q=%22Live%20Births,%20Deaths,%20Marriages,%20and%20Divorces:%201950%20to%202001%22&f=false, accessed July 16, 2012.

¹⁸ The prohibition is thankfully still found in Mt 5:32, Lk 16:18, and 1Co 7:39.

Appendix 1: 1Timothy 3:2's Prohibition Of Divorced And Remarried Men Serving As Leaders In Church

When considering the issue of translating 1Timothy's marital qualification for church leadership a noticeable progression can be charted.

<p>Pre-WWII Translations To begin with, we note that <i>all</i> of the major English translations before WWII translated this passage in such a way that the most natural interpretation would be that it prohibited divorced and remarried men from serving as leaders in church.</p>	<p>Wycliffe Bible (c.1380) "...the housbonde of o wiif..." Tyndale New Testament (1525) "...the husband of one wife..." Coverdale's Bible (1535) "...the hussbade of one wife..." Matthew's Bible (1537) "...the husbad of one wife..." The Great Bible (1539) "...the husbade of one wife..." Bishop's Bible (1568) "...the husband of one wife..." Geneva Bible (1587) "...the husband of one wife..." Douay-Rheims Version (1610) "...the hufband of one vvife..." King James Version (1611) "...the husband of one wife..." Revised Version (1885) "...the husband of one wife..." American Standard Version (1901) "...the husband of one wife..."</p>
<p>Revised Standard Version (1946) Even after WWII the RSV translated this passage to unmistakably prohibit divorced and remarried men from serving as church leaders. Clearly, its rendering is a paraphrase of the underlying Greek but this goes to show how that in the 1940's it was so commonly understood that this passage was referring to divorced men that the RSV committee had no</p>	<p>"...married only once..."</p>

<p>problem in rendering the passage to unmistakably reflect that.</p>	
<p>Good News Translation (1966) Twenty years later, however, the GNT made the decision to add the adverb “only” to their translation which had the effect of inclining readers to believe that it was prohibiting <i>polygamous</i> men from serving, rather than divorced and remarried men. Notice that “have” is rendered in the present tense which makes the passage to imply polygamy in an even stronger way because such wording implies that in the <i>present</i> he “<i>currently</i> must have only one wife” as opposed to two or three. This reasoning was also adopted by the NIV1984.</p>	<p>GNT “...he must have <i>only one</i> wife...” NIV1984 “...the husband of <i>but one</i> wife...”</p>
<p>This trend was followed by rendering the passage to reflect “faithfulness” to one’s spouse as the qualifying factor for church leadership. The logical conclusion was that irregardless of whether it was the leader’s first, second or third marriage as long as he was faithful to his current spouse then he would be qualified to lead.</p>	<p>New International Readers Version (1996) “He must be faithful to his wife...” The Message (2002) “...committed to his wife...” New Living Translation (2007) “He must be faithful to his wife...” New International Version (2011) “...faithful to his wife...”</p>

Thus, a noticeable progression can be demonstrated in who can and cannot serve as a leader in a church: men who can be described in any way as having had more than one wife (divorcees who have remarried, polygamists, etc.) are disqualified (1380-1965), only men who *currently* have more than one wife (polygamists) are disqualified (1966-1995), and then only men who are not committed to their present wife, regardless of which one she is (1996-Present).

It is clear from examining pre and post 1960’s translations that in some cases there has been a decision made to translate 1Timothy 3:2 in such a way that it can no longer be interpreted to prohibit divorced and remarried men from serving as church leaders. However, numerous modern English translations

seem to have retained the translation of 1Timothy 3:2 in such a way as to imply that those who had remarried after a divorce were disqualified from serving and leading in church.

NEB (1961) “...faithful to his one wife...”	AMP (1965) “...the husband of one wife...”	NKJV (1982) “...the husband of one wife...”
NJB (1985) “Husband of one wife...”	NRSV (1989) “...married only once...”	NASB (1995) “...the husband of one wife...”
ESV (2001) “...the husband of one wife...”	HCSB (2004) “...the husband of one wife...”	ISV (2011) “...the husband of one wife...”
NABRE (2011) “...married only once...”	LEB (2012) “...the husband of one wife...”	

Appendix 2: Evidence In Favor Of The Last Half Of Matthew 19:9 Being Included In Our Modern Translations

As noted above, the 1995 update of the New American Standard Version opted to leave out the last half of Matthew 19:9 (referred to as 19:9b) which *prohibited women whose husbands had initiated a divorce from remarrying.*

Matthew 19:9 in the American Standard Versions, 1901 and 1995	
And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: <u>and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.</u> Mt 19:9, American Standard Version, 1901	And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Mt 19:9, New American Standard Bible, 1995

The reasoning behind this is what is referred to as *textual criticism*. For those who are unfamiliar with “textual criticism”, I will attempt to explain it in simple terms. The original copies of the New Testament books are lost to time but the message of the Apostles has reached us via copies of their books made by

copyists. There are thousands of these copies in existence with the oldest copy (a fragment) being dated to about 125AD (roughly thirty years after the death of the Apostle John). Often, these copies will not be exact copies and will differ from each other (although no major Christian doctrine has ever been brought into question by any of these differences). The majority of the differences can be accounted for in various ways (copyist errors such as missed or repeated lines, misspelled and rearranged words, and situations where copyists updated the older Greek of the New Testament into their more contemporary Greek). *Textual Criticism* seeks to study these differences in an attempt to figure out which of the differences is the correct one. After comparing the different manuscripts and forming a conclusion as to which manuscripts have the correct wording of the verse they put together what is called a *critical text*. The critical text is basically a Greek text of the New Testament which is then used to make the actual translation. The two most popular ones used by modern translations are the Nestle-Aland 27th ed. (NA27) and the United Bible Society 4th ed. (UBS4). These two critical texts are virtually identical and because they omit the last half of Mt 19:9 all of the translations that are based upon them omit it as well. As the following chart shows *all* of the major English translations before World War II included Mt 19:9b, and while a few after WWII included it most newer translations have omitted it.

All Major Pre-WWII Translations Included 19:9b	WYC (c.1380), TYN (1525), COV (1535), MAT (1537), GB (1539), BB (1568), GEN (1557), D-R (1610), KJV (1611), RV (1885), ASV (1901)
Post WWII Translations Which Include 19:9b	AMP (1965), NLV (1969), NKJV (1982), WE (1998), LEB (2012)
Post WWII Translations Which Omit 19:9b	RSV (1946), PHI (1962), GNT (1966), NIV (1984), NJB (1985), NCV (1987), NRSV (1989), CEV (1995), GWT (1995), NASB (1995), NIRV (1998), ESV (2001), MESS (2002), HCSB (2003), TNIV (2005), ERV (2006), NLT (2007), CEB (2011), ISV (2011), NIV (2011), NABRE (2011)

There is nothing mysterious about most of the newer translations missing Matthew 19:9b because *it is missing from their underlying critical texts*. What is so mysterious is the reason *why* it is missing from those critical texts.

When it comes to critical texts, most Bible translators have adopted the philosophy that the older the New Testament manuscript is the more reliable that it is. In other words, when scholars are putting together their critical texts for translators to use they place more emphasis upon an older manuscript than they would a newer one. They reason that the further away they get from the originals, the more likely a copy will have errors in it.¹⁹

Since this is the case, we would assume that modern critical texts would include verses where they are present in the majority of the older Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. One would also assume that since the last half of Matthew 19:9 is not in the modern critical texts that it is not in the majority of existing ancient Greek manuscripts of Matthew 19:9. This would seem to be the logical conclusion of the modern translation philosophy. Strangely, though, it is not the case.

When all of the Greek New Testament manuscripts that were written before the 7th century are examined scholars find that there are only *eight* existing manuscripts of Matthew 19:9. Of course there are more than eight ancient Greek manuscripts of Matthew but in many of these when one turns to the 19th chapter the page is missing or that section has been damaged due to time and exposure to the elements. So, as far as manuscripts go we only possess eight pre-7th century Greek copies of the portion of Matthew 19 in question. And of these eight, *six of them* contain the last half of this verse.²⁰

Ancient Greek Manuscripts In Which Matthew 19:9b Is Present	Ancient Greek Manuscripts In Which Matthew 19:9b Is Omitted
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Codex Vaticanus (4th Cent.)2. Papyrus 25 (4th Cent.)3. Codex Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus (as corrected by original scribe, 5th Cent.)4. Codex Freerianus (5th Cent.)5. Codex Dublinensis (6th Cent.)6. Uncial 078 (6th Cent.)²¹	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Codex Sinaiticus (4th Cent)2. Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (5th Cent.)

¹⁹ Please note that I am not advocating this view. I include it only to show that it is the majority view held by Protestant Bible translators today.

²⁰ Robert Waltz. *Highly Uncertain Variants, Matthew*. Available online at <http://www.skypoint.com/members/waltzmn/MostUncertain.html#Matt>

²¹ To this list we might also add the Latin Vulgate, a late fourth/early fifth century translation of the Bible into Latin which also contains the last part of Mt. 19:9.

This means that out of ALL of the existing Greek manuscripts of Matthew 19:9 written before the 7th century $\frac{3}{4}$ of them have the last half of the verse.

Even more mysterious is that, of the above eight ancient manuscripts, one of the six that contains Matthew 19:9b is the *Codex Vaticanus*. As the following quotes will attest, it is considered by most Bible translators to be the most accurate of the ancient copies of the New Testament.

Frederick G. Kilgour: "The three most important [manuscripts] for documenting the early biblical texts are the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus of the fourth century and the Codex Alexandrinus of the fifth...Of the three, *the Codex Vaticanus is thought to possess the most trustworthy text.*"²²

V. George Shillington: "B/03, Codex Vaticanus, *considered the most valuable of all Greek MSS* (manuscripts) of the New Testament..."²³

John Davidson: "Codex Vaticanus...is considered to be *the most significant and reliable of all the early Greek manuscripts.*"²⁴

One is left to wonder why $\frac{3}{4}$ of the existing pre-7th century Greek manuscripts, including the "most trustworthy", "most valuable" and "most reliable" of all Greek manuscripts, are disregarded by modern translations when it comes to this passage on divorce and remarriage.²⁵

Appendix 3: Does Malachi 2:16 Say God Hates Divorce?

In all fairness to this issue we want to note that there is some evidence to suggest the more modern rendering of Malachi 2:16 to shift the passage away from saying that God hates divorce to place it upon the man who is initiating the divorce. Older translations were divided over this issue. Since the time of the King James Version, however, many major translations have translated it to indicate that it is God who hates divorce (including Jewish translations of the Old Testament who would have no motivation or bias to conform their version

²² *The Evolution Of The Book* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p.55. I have corrected a printer's error in this quotation. The printer misspelled "Alexandrinus".

²³ *Reading The Sacred Texts* (T&T Clark, 2002), p.152

²⁴ *The Gospel Of Jesus* (Clear Press Limited, 2004), p.60

²⁵ We should also note that there are critical texts in existence which include the last part of Matthew 19:9, they are just not usually chosen by modern translations to base their work upon.

to the King James).²⁶ At this time we will leave it up to each reader as to the best way to translate and interpret this passage. Regardless of the best way to render this verse, all Christians will agree that God hates to see a covenant marriage come to an end.²⁷

Table Showing Numerous Translations That Favor Translating Malachi 2:16 To Reflect That God Hates Divorce		
KJV (1611) For the Lord the God of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away:	LEE (1853)* For he hateth putting away (the wife), so hath said the Lord the God of Israel	RV (1885) For I hate putting away, saith the LORD, the God of Israel,
ASV (1901) For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel,	JPS (1917)* For I hate putting away, saith HaShem, the G-d of Israel,	RSV (1952) For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel,
AMP (1965) For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I hate divorce <i>and</i> marital separation	GNT (1966) I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel.	NKJV (1982) For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce,
NIV (1984) "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel,	NJPS (1985)* For I detest divorce—said the Lord, the God of Israel	NJB (1985) For I hate divorce, says Yahweh, God of Israel,
NRSV (1989) For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel,	NASB (1995) "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel,	CEV (1995) The Lord God All-Powerful of Israel hates anyone who is cruel enough to divorce his wife.
NIRV (1996) "I hate divorce," says the	MESS (2002) "I hate divorce," says the	NCV (2005) The Lord God of Israel

²⁶ Indicated by an *. They include Isaac Leeser's Old Testament and the 1917 and 1985 editions of the Jewish Publication Society. Leeser included a footnote indicating that one Jewish teacher had suggested translating it to reflect the hatred of the man but he obviously favored the traditional translation as that is the one he went with.

²⁷ For a presentation in favor of the new method of interpretation see the English Standard Version's defense of its adoption of the new method at <http://www.esv.org/assets/pdfs/malachi.2.16.collins.pdf>.

Lord God of Israel.	God of Israel.	says, "I hate divorce."
LEB (2011) "For I hate divorce," says Yahweh, the God of Israel,	NABRE (2011) For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel,	

Appendix 4: Some Closing Thoughts

I would like to close this study by asking some fundamental questions.

1. Why are translations straying away from the literal rendering of verses that have to do with divorce and remarriage?
2. Why have major English translations after WWII translated the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 to refer to post-marital adultery when ten out of the eleven major English translations before WWII translated it to refer to pre-nuptial unchastity?
3. Why are the $\frac{3}{4}$ of pre-7th century manuscripts which support the inclusion of the last half of Matthew 19:9 disregarded by modern translations?
4. Why is the manuscript that modern scholars refer to as the "most trustworthy", "most valuable" and "most reliable" of all Greek manuscripts not trusted, considered valuable or thought of as reliable when it supports the last half of Matthew 19:9?
5. In the years since World War II the English speaking world has experienced a large scale changing of its mind on the issue of divorce and remarriage. As the years have gone by (and translations have become softer on this issue) more and more people have felt less convicted to divorce and remarry. Did the change in Bible translations cause the increase or come as a result of it?
6. At the rate new translations are going how long will it be before there is no prohibition whatsoever in the Bible against divorce and remarriage?