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Castration for the Kingdom and Avoiding the αἰτία of Adultery (Matthew 19:10–12)

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The difficulties raised by the form and content of Matthew's eunuch pericope (19:10–12) have provoked unfavorable evaluations. In this article, I offer a new reading of this passage that makes sense of some of its problems. My approach is rooted in the broader narrative and rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel in particular. In section I, I focus on the disciples' response (19:10) to Jesus's teaching on divorce and remarriage (19:3–9), arguing that ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός in 19:10a should be translated as "the charge against the man with his wife," referring to the charge of adultery in 19:9. In section II, I demonstrate that multiple elements in 19:3–12 inextricably link the eunuch passage to Jesus's call to self-dismemberment (5:29–30 and context). Matthew's eunuch metaphor is a rhetorical device exhorting would-be disciples who have illegitimately divorced their wives to "cut off" (figuratively) what causes them to stumble (i.e., their male organ), lest they commit adultery in remarriage (cf. 5:29–30). Thus, Matthew's "eunuchs" function literarily as exemplars of those who make extraordinary sacrifices in this age (i.e., a spouse and children) so that they might obtain immeasurably more in the kingdom of heaven. Section III provides corroborative support for this reading from the broader Second Temple Jewish and early Christian contexts. I conclude by showing how the Latin translation of this passage likely led to what I argue is the pervasive misreading of 19:10(–12) that we have today.

The difficulties raised by the form and content of Matthew's eunuch pericope (19:10–12) have provoked unfavorable evaluations. For example, Craig A. Evans

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Jonathan Pennington for nurturing this project in its initial stages and to David Moffitt for his insightful critiques and suggestions up to its completion. I also want to thank Elizabeth Shively for her thoughtful engagement, along with Kai Akagi and Ernest Clark for their special support.

relegates the passage to an “appendix.”¹ Douglas R. A. Hare concedes, “Verses 10–12, found only in Matthew, are among the most difficult to understand in the Gospel.”² The perceived problems stem predominantly from the disciples’ “rather misogynist”³ response to Jesus’s teaching on divorce and remarriage (19:3–9), rendered to the effect of, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (19:10). Ulrich Luz reflects the dissonance felt by many interpreters:

After [Jesus] has just spoken so highly of marriage in vv. 3–9, [the disciples’] comment that it would be better to remain single seems rather inappropriate. It is not clear why they prefer not to marry. Is it because one must remain single if the first marriage fails? Or is it because Jesus’s command is too severe for them? It is clear that the wife’s perspective again is no more a factor here than it is in the entire pericope.⁴

To get around these issues, some commentators look behind the text to a proposed *Sitz im Leben*, suggesting that the disciples’ response reflects not their own view but that of Matthew’s community.⁵ Others postulate source-critical solutions, suggesting that 19:10–12 is a secondary addition only loosely tied to the original pericope of 19:3–9.⁶ However its content and function are explained, scholars agree that the passage is redirected rather awkwardly by Jesus’s reply in verse 11 toward its instructional telos in verse 12: those who are able to become eunuchs for the kingdom should do so. Whether eunuchs, here, are those who embrace celibacy for increased ministry such as Jesus and Paul (the majority position)⁷ or divorced

¹Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, NCBiC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 341.

²Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, IBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 222. According to Francis Beare (summarizing the stance of many commentators), the passage as it stands is “embarrassing,” “suffers from inconsistency,” and is “confusing” in relation to 19:3–9 (Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew: A Commentary* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1981], 389–90).

³John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 775.

⁴Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 2:499–500.

⁵Hare, for example, postulates that verse 10 was written to engage with Matthew’s largely gentile church “for whom Jesus’s rule on divorce seemed hopelessly out of touch with reality” (Hare, *Matthew*, 222). Cf. Beare, *Gospel according to Matthew*, 389–90; F. Thiele, “*airía*,” *TBLNT* 3:1093.

⁶W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison observe, “Vv. 10–12 have to do with celibacy. But what is the connexion between celibacy and the teaching in vv. 4–9? Many commentators have not found one. Clearly we have here two separate traditions” (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997], 3:5). See also David R. Catchpole, “The Synoptic Divorce Material as a Traditio-Historical Problem,” *BJRL* 57 (1974): 92–127; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 470–71.

⁷The following are representative: Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*,

persons who refuse to remarry (the minority),⁸ depends on the referent of “this word” (τὸν λόγον [τοῦτον]) in verse 11, which only the enabled can accept (19:3–9 suggests that the referent is remarriage; 19:10 suggests that it is celibacy). Recent studies of 19:10–12 assume much of this basic framework while exploring the social context of eunuchs in the ancient world and the implications that this context might have for Jesus’s call to make oneself a eunuch (19:12).⁹

In this article, I argue that a fundamental error undergirds traditional exegesis: the mistranslation of ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός in 19:10a as “the *case/situation/relationship* of a man with his wife.” I propose an alternative based on the inherently legal sense of αἰτία, “the *charge* against the man with his wife,” referring to the charge of adultery in 19:9. In this way, the disciples’ response as a whole is recast in light of adulterous remarriage and is shown to be a logical inference from Jesus’s declaration in verse 9. My approach throughout is rooted within the broader narrative and rhetoric of Matthew’s Gospel in particular.¹⁰

In section I, I focus on the disciples’ response (19:10) to Jesus’s teaching on divorce and remarriage (19:3–9). I then demonstrate in section II that multiple elements in 19:3–12 inextricably link the eunuch passage to Jesus’s call to self-dismemberment (5:29–30 and context). Matthew’s eunuch metaphor is shown to be a rhetorical device exhorting would-be disciples who have illegitimately divorced

3:22–27; Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 721–26; and Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), 549.

⁸Few argue for a reading of 19:10–12 in terms of remarriage, e.g., Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew*, SNTSMS 80 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 201; Raymond F. Collins, *Divorce in the New Testament*, GNS 38 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992); Jacques Dupont, *Mariage et divorce dans l'évangile: Matthieu 19:3–12 et parallèles* (Bruges: Abbaye de Saint André, 1959).

⁹See, e.g., Jennifer Sylvan Alexander, “Self-Made Eunuchs as Model Disciples: Matthew 19:12 in Narrative and Historical Context,” in *The Theologically Formed Heart: Essays in Honor of David J. Gouwens*, ed. Warner M. Bailey, Lee C. Barrett III, and James O. Duke (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 89–114, here 95–96 n. 14; Walter Stevenson, “Eunuchs and Early Christianity,” in *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. Shaun Tougher (Oakville, CT: Duckworth, 2002), 123–42; and Gary Robert Brower, “Ambivalent Bodies: Making Christian Eunuchs” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1996). Although I am not aware of anyone in recent scholarship arguing for a literal reading of Jesus’s call to self-castration, this interpretation was apparently a problem in the early church. According to Eusebius, Origen castrated himself early on in his ministry (*Eccl. hist.* 6.8.1–3). The practice was apparently such a problem that both the Apostolic Constitutions (8.47.21–24) and the Nicæan Canons (can. 1) included statutes against self-made eunuchs among the laity and clergy. See the full discussion in Daniel F. Caner, “The Practice and Prohibition of Self-Castration in Early Christianity,” *VC* 51 (1997): 396–415.

¹⁰Wittingly or not, Matthew’s eunuch passage has often been read through the lens of Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians on celibacy (1 Corinthians 7), even though Paul himself acknowledged that, as far as he knew, Jesus did not mention the issue (7:12, 25). See Quesnell, “‘Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven’ (Mt 19,12),” *CBQ* 30 (1968) 335–58, here 341.

their wives to “cut off” (figuratively) what causes them to stumble (i.e., their male organ), lest they commit adultery in remarriage (see 5:29–30). Matthew’s “eunuchs”—that is, illegitimately divorced disciples who choose to remain spouseless so as not to incur the charge of adultery—function literarily as exemplars of those who make extraordinary sacrifices in this age (i.e., a spouse and children) so that they might obtain immeasurably more in the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ Section III provides corroborative support for this reading from the broader Second Temple Jewish and early Christian contexts. I conclude by showing how the Latin translation of this passage likely led to the prevalent misreading of 19:10(–12) that we have today.

I. THE DISCIPLES’ RESPONSE (19:10) TO JESUS’S TEACHING ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE (19:3–9)

Λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ [αὐτοῦ]. εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου¹² μετὰ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ συμφέρει [τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐτέραν]¹³ γαμῆσαι. (Matt 19:10)

His disciples said to him, “If such, as you say, is the charge against the man with respect to his wife, then it is not better for that man to marry another.” (my translation)

Aἰτία in Matthew 19:10a

Against “Case” or “Situation/Relationship”

The significance of the disciples’ response in 19:10 hangs on the word *αἰτία* in verse 10a. Modern commentaries and translations overwhelmingly render this term as “case” (in a noncausal sense), or “situation” (i.e., condition)/“relationship” (i.e., relation between friends/people).¹⁴ Several lexicons cite the former as if it were included in the semantic domain of the lexeme but provide no additional examples outside of Matt 19:10.¹⁵ BDAG suggests the latter, taking *αἰτία* to be a Latinism from

¹¹ Cf. the parables of hidden treasure (13:44) and the costly pearl (13:45).

¹² D (05) replaces with τοῦ ἀνδρός, probably assimilating to Mark 10:2, 12.

¹³ My explanatory insertion, to be discussed below.

¹⁴ In fact, I know of no modern translation or commentary that deviates from this decision. The following translations are representative: NASB, “relationship”; NKJV, ESV, (N)RSV, “case”; NIV, “situation”; CEB, “the way things are”; Schlachter 2000, “Pflichten”; NEG (Nouvelle Edition de Genève), “la condition.” The commentaries follow suit. See, e.g., Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:19; Luz, *Matthew*, 2:500 (“the way it is”); Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 776; and Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 706.

¹⁵ Cf. LSJ and *TBLNT*. *TDNT* does not have an entry on *αἰτία* or its cognates. G. W. H. Lampe

causa, which can signify a “situation” or a “relationship.”¹⁶ While they provide one additional example in support, it is doubtful.¹⁷ More likely, BDAG’s example is an instance of the philosophical usage of *αἰτία*.¹⁸ There is, therefore, very little support

(PGL, s.v. “*αἰτία*”) and Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie do not include “case” or the Latinism (LEH, s.v. “*αἰτία*”). The absence of causality in this gloss is key. “Case” is a fairly generic word in English and may be used to translate *αἰτία* in some instances if a causal notion is understood. No commentator, translation, or lexicon, however, intends “case” to imply causality in any sense in 19:10a; it simply does not make sense. The gloss is cited as a *semantically distinct category*, although without additional support. (See below for the notion of causality in the lexeme.) Robert H. Gundry opts for this usage with the rather hollow explanation, “‘cause’ [*αἰτία*] (vs. 3) easily shades into ‘case’ [*αἰτία*; vs. 10]” (*Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 382).

¹⁶See Charlton Thomas Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrews’ Edition of Freund’s Latin Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 303–4, s.v., “*causa*.” There is no causal notion present in this usage. W. Radl also lists “die Sache/das Verhältnis” for Matt 19:10 although without explanation or support (*EWNT* 1:104, s.v. “*αἰτία*”).

¹⁷The text cited by BDAG reads: “Plato:—‘What is [ἡ *αἰτία* of] these phenomena?’ Petesis:—‘Listen: the Sun is the right eye, the Moon the left, the tongue, smell, and hearing belong to Mercury, the viscera to Jupiter, the chest to Mars, the spleen to Venus’” (P.Ryl. 63, “Astrological Dialogue”; third century; translation slightly modified from J. de M. Johnson, V. Martin, and A. S. Hunt, eds., *Documents of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods*, vol. 2 of *Catalogue of the Greek Papyri in the John Rylands Library* [Manchester: University Press, 1911–1952], 2–3, here 3).

The meaning of *αἰτία* is difficult to determine since the text is fragmented with only the title and the conclusion remaining. Assuming for the sake of argument that the Latinism/case rendition is a legitimate option, there are three interpretative possibilities: (1) “situation/condition/case,” (2) “cause,” or (3) “explanation/[causal] connection.” (“Relationship” as a Latinism from *causa*—as often proposed for Matt 19:10—is not a possibility because the Latin term indicates a relation of *friendship*, which is clearly not what Plato had in mind.) The second option is a common usage of *αἰτία*, and the third is a *philosophical* usage of the term (J. O. Urmson, *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary* [London: Duckworth, 1990], 15; this usage is not listed in BDAG).

In the passage Plato questions an Egyptian prophet named Petesis about ἡ *αἰτία* between parts of the body and astrological entities. Johnson, Martin, and Hunt comment that “the reply *connects* the various parts of the body with the sun, moon, [etc.]” (“Astrological Dialogue,” 2; emphasis mine). Unfortunately, we do not have the broader context necessary to determine *how* exactly they are connected. Nevertheless, of the available options, the philosophical usage appears to provide the best fit. The astrological entities are somehow linked with the parts of the body, with one *generating* the other, not literally (it would seem), but the way a signifier generates a signified in a metaphorical or symbolic relationship. In this sense, the usage still retains its inherent notion of causality, *explaining* or *connecting* the phenomena with each other. The Latinism does not retain this notion of causality, nor is it entirely clear what Plato’s question would mean if “situation/condition” (or “case”) were the sense of *αἰτία*. Plato wants an *explanation* of how the phenomena are *connected*. Furthermore, the philosophical context certainly lends itself to a philosophical usage of *αἰτία*.

¹⁸Another example of the philosophical usage of *αἰτία* is found in Philo. In his argument for the imperishable nature of the world, Philo quotes Plato’s *Timaeus*: “for [the framer] reflected that when hot things and cold and all such as have strong powers gather round a composite body from without and fall unseasonably upon it they annoy it and bringing upon it sickness and age

provided for any proposed rendition of αἴτια. Moreover, αἴτια is never used as a Latinism, or to signify a noncausal “case” anywhere else in the New Testament (20 times), the LXX (21 times), Philo (238 times), Josephus (336 times), or in the documentary papyri (approximately 172 [legible] times between 300 BCE and 300 CE)¹⁹—to name just a few significant corpora. The only scholar to acknowledge the problem is Luz, who states, “there is no real evidence for this Latinism.”²⁰

The Charge against the Man with His Wife

By contrast, αἴτια communicates a variety of meanings associated with moral culpability in legal contexts, such as “charge,” “accusation,” “guilt,” “crime,” “blame,” or “pretext/ground.”²¹ Indeed, its wide range of legal nuances can be disconcerting

cause it to decay. With this motive and on such reasons God fashioned it as a whole, with each of its parts whole in itself so as to be perfect, and free from age and sickness.”

On the basis of Plato’s reasoning, Philo draws the following conclusion: “We may take this as Plato’s testimony to the indestructibility of the world; that it is uncreated follows the natural law of consequences. Dissolution is consequential to the created, indestructibility to the uncreated. The author of the verse ‘All that is born is due to death’ seems to have hit the truth and to have understood the *causal connexion* between birth and destruction [τῶν αἰτιῶν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς]” (Philo, *Aet.* 1.26–27 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]; emphasis added).

Regardless of how one takes BDAG’s example, the question remains whether there is a gloss for Matt 19:10 that better accords with its natural usage and with the context of 19:3–12 in particular. (BDAG also cites BDF §5,3b, which lists αἴτια among other Latinisms in Matthew’s Gospel although without support.)

¹⁹In addition to BDAG’s (dubious) example of the Latinism, MM cross-references P.Par. 49 l. 27 (= UPZ 1.62) presumably by virtue of its similarities in form to 19:10a: εἴπερ οὖν ἐστὶν αὐτῆ ἢ αἴτια. But this is clearly an example of the *reason/cause* (with culpability implied) usage, not a Latinism/case. It is part of a letter from Dionysius to Ptolemaeus in which Dionysius is urging Ptolemaeus to help him meet with a disgruntled mutual acquaintance. In this particular section, Dionysius writes, “But he appeared on that day to be occupied or else he was ashamed to meet with me. If, therefore, this is the reason [εἴπερ οὖν ἐστὶν αὐτῆ ἢ αἴτια], and because of this will not come to me, being ashamed, call and send him to me for he is to be turned about/have his mind changed” (my translation).

²⁰Luz, *Matthew*, 2:500 n. 112. Ivars Avotins published a supplement to LSJ’s lexicon that suggests four possible examples of αἴτια being used as a Latinism. Each of these examples is taken from the “Novellae” part of Justinian’s *Corpus iuris civilis* (N. 101.4.pr; N. 103.2; and N. 131.12.pr [two examples]; see Ivars Avotins, *On the Greek of the Novels of Justinian: A Supplement to Liddell-Scott-Jones together with Observations on the Influence of Latin on Legal Greek*, AWTS 21 [New York: Olms-Weidmann, 1992], 9). Even these examples, however, are questionable and, in any case, are far removed from the time of Matthew’s Gospel (545, 536, 539, and 539 CE). I know of no other examples where αἴτια means “case” in the noncausal manner as is assumed in 19:10.

²¹Radl places this usage under the category of Rechtssprache with the glosses: “Schuld,” “Verbrechen,” “Beschuldigung,” and “Anklagepunkt” (*EWNT* 1:104). Thiele states, “Meist hat die Vokabel den Sinn von *Beschuldigung*, *Anklage*, oder *Vorwurf*... indem der Hergang eines Geschehens samt der es auslösenden *Schuld* dargestellt wird” (*TBNT* 3:1093). According to Lionel Pearson, “[Αἴτια] has the active meaning of ‘accusation’ ‘complaint’ ‘grievance’ and the corresponding

for English translators: whereas we prefer to differentiate them, Greek may simply use αἴτια. Outside of 19:10, Matthew uses the αἴτι* lexeme four times, always to denote guilt.²² With respect to 19:10a, the law-oriented context is apparent. The debate with the Pharisees concerning divorce has just culminated in Jesus's powerful declaration, "But I say to you: Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery" (v. 9).

The legal import of Jesus's statement is striking. First, Jesus has just declared himself and his words to be more authoritative than the great lawgiver himself, Moses ("Moses may have permitted you to divorce your wives, but I declare to you ..."). Second, Jesus has asserted that remarriage after divorce (except for sexual immorality [πορνεία])²³ constitutes adultery: it breaks the Decalogue. I propose,

passive meaning 'guilt' 'blame' 'responsibility'; and by logical development it also means 'that which is responsible'—the 'cause'" (Lionel Pearson, "Prophesis and Aitia," *TAPA* 83 [1952]: 205–23, here 206). Thus, outside of legal contexts, αἴτια often means "cause," "reason," or "occasion" (in the causal sense). In Greek philosophical vocabulary, αἴτια (n.) and αἴτιος (adj.) can mean "connection" or "explanation" (Urmson, *Greek Philosophical Vocabulary*, 15). It seems questionable whether "occasion" or "motive" should be considered separate categories from "cause/reason" as in LSJ, at least based on the two examples cited (Pindar, *Nem.* 7.11; Lucian, *Tyr.* 13). Respectively, these can simply be translated as "cause" and "caused."

²² Αἴτια, the noun form, is used in Matt 19:3, 10 and 27:37 (discussed below). The adjectival form, ἀναίτιος, is used twice (12:5, 7) referring to those who break the Sabbath and yet remain "guiltless." Cf. Josephus, *A.J.* 17.174–177 (ἀναίτιος and αἴτια are antonyms), 17.295; 1 Sam 22:22; 2 Macc 13:4; Sus 1:53; Luke 23:4, 14, 22.

The majority of NT uses of αἴτια outside Matthew also denote legal culpability. Still the evidence is somewhat limited with nine of twelve of these instances coming from the legal proceedings surrounding Jesus and Paul. Of the nineteen additional occurrences (19:10 aside) in the New Testament, twelve denote *charge/accusation/guilt/ground* (Matt 19:3, 27:37; Mark 15:26; John 18:38; 19:4, 6; Acts 13:28; 23:28; 25:18, 27; 28:18, 20) and seven denote *reason/cause* (Luke 8:47; Acts 10:21; 22:24; 2 Tim 1:6, 12; Titus 1:13; Heb 2:11).

The evidence from the LXX is sparse. Of the twenty-one occurrences, seventeen denote *cause/reason*, though often with overtones of blame or guilt (1 Esd 2:17; 1 Macc 9:10; 2 Macc 4:28, 35, 42, 49; 8:26; 12:40; 3 Macc 1:13, 15; 3:4; 5:18; 4 Macc 1:16; Wis 14:27; 17:12; 18:18; Sus 1:14); the remaining four denote (real or perceived) *guilt/culpability* (Gen 3:14; Prov 28:17; 3 Macc 7:7; Job 18:14).

There are multiple instances of αἴτια indicating culpability/guilt in the documentary papyri, which is not surprising considering the legal nature of many of the documents. See, e.g., BGU 4.1061; P.Köln 7.313; P.Mich. 1.107, 5.312 (with a personal genitive); P.NYU 2.45; P.Polit.Jud. 1; P.Ryl. 2.114; P.Tebt. 1.5 (2x), 1.14; 1.72, 1.124; SB 4.7285, 8.9899a, 20.15036 (3x), et al. For usage in the context of marital disputes/divorce, see P.Oxy. 49.3500 and, although late, PSI 141 (301–400 CE) and P.Flor. 1.93dupl (569 CE).

²³ In light of the obvious practical concerns, the meaning of the exception clause has been the subject of impassioned debate. I have intentionally chosen to remain silent on the issue, as it seems to have become a sort of exegetical red herring. While much ink has been spilled deciphering the meaning of πορνεία, it is only parenthetical; all the while, the critical relationship of 19:10–12 to 19:3–9 has been missed entirely. Furthermore, even those scholars who have argued for a remarriage reading of 19:12 (critical mistranslations in 19:10 notwithstanding) have tended to let

therefore, that ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου be rendered, “the charge against the man,” referring to the charge of adultery from verse 9.²⁴ The disciples’ statement in verse 10, then, should be understood as a thoughtful response to Jesus’s law on divorce and remarriage. To paraphrase: “If the man who has (illegitimately) divorced his wife is charged with adultery by marrying another,” they reason, “it would be better for such a one not to marry another.”

Αἰτία with a Personal Genitive

But what of the personal genitive construction as a whole in 19:10a (ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου)? The personal modifier can communicate the *source* or *agent* of the accusation or blame (a subjective genitive). Applied to the case in point, it would denote, “the charge/blame *from* the man,” that is, the charge made by the man. The usage seems rare—I have found only three examples²⁵—and it does not fit the context.

More frequently the personal modifier will function as the *object* or *recipient* of the guilt/blame/fault or charge/accusation notion in αἰτία—“the charge *against* the man” (an objective genitive).²⁶ Matthew himself employs the construction in this way with reference to the sign on the cross: “Over his [Jesus’s] head they put the charge against him [τὴν αἰτίαν αὐτοῦ], which read, ‘This is Jesus the King of the Jews’” (27:37 NRSV; cf. Mark 15:26).²⁷ Genesis 4:13b, the only other example of this construction in the LXX or the New Testament, indicates the same. In response to his punishment for murdering Abel, Cain cries out to God: “... *my crime/guilt* [or, *the charge against me*] is too great to be forgiven [μείζων ἡ αἰτία μου τοῦ ἀφεθῆναι

their interpretation of the exception clause dominate subsequent exegesis. For example, Quesnell, in support of Dupont, writes, “the saying on eunuchs is not a call to celibacy, but a challenging formulation of the state of a man whose wife has been put away (set loose) on account of *porneia*” (Quesnell, “Made Themselves Eunuchs,” 346; cf. William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, updated ed. [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002]).

²⁴Indeed, αἰτία refers to a charge in the context of adultery in Athanasius, *Ep. Cast.* 28.877.17; Dorotheus, *Doctr. diver. i–xviii* 1.6.5; Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 67.12.2; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Sanct. pasch.* [or. 45] 36.468.13–18; John Chrysostom, *Exp. Ps.* 55.437.46; and Philo, *Spec.* 3.58. For other examples of the term with reference to violations of the Decalogue, see Josephus, *A.J.* 11.141, 346–347; and 14.173. More specifically in the case of Matt 19:10, οὕτως links ἡ αἰτία with the charge of adultery *as expounded by Jesus* in verses 4–9. Hence the translation, “If such, *as you say*, is the charge...” Cf. the same construction (οὕτω + εἰμί + nominative noun with a genitive modifier) in 1:18.

²⁵Sophocles, *Phil.* 1404; Plutarch, *Per.* 30.3; Thucydides, *Hist.* 1.23.6. There are no examples of this type of personal genitive construction with αἰτία in the New Testament, the LXX, Philo, or Josephus.

²⁶There may be other options for this construction, such as in philosophical contexts where the meaning of αἰτία is unique (“connection, explanation”), or in medical contexts indicating the *source* of the personal genitive. These need not be considered for 19:10a.

²⁷Mark 15:26a: καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη.

με]!”²⁸ Josephus also provides one example of αἰτία with a personal genitive: the Sidonians appeal to King Antiochus to command their governor “not to molest us in any way by attaching to us the charges of which the Jews are guilty [τὰς τῶν Ἰουδαίων αἰτίας], since we are distinct from them both in race and in customs” (Josephus, *A.J.* 12.261 [Thackeray, LCL]). Finally, amid the litany of injustices committed by Maxentius, Eusebius reports that, by means of “fabricated charges against multitudes [πεπλασμέναις αἰτίαις μυρίων] (of Senators)” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 8.14.4), he had them executed and stole their wealth. These examples are representative of what appears to be the primary sense of this construction: the culpability (actual or contrived) of the personal modifier.²⁹ Quotations of 19:10 in the church fathers,³⁰ and the Syriac translations³¹ support this sense as well. Reading ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου as “the charge against the man,” therefore, is eminently suitable.

Reframing 19:10: Remarriage and the Charge of Adultery

Usage of αἰτία in 19:10 versus 19:3: Jesus Turns the Tables

I prefer to translate ἡ αἰτία as “the charge” in 19:10a over “the guilt” or “the crime” of the man because “charge” elucidates the rhetorical connection with the

²⁸ ἡ αἰτία μου translates the Hebrew, נַוּי (“my guilt/sin/punishment”). In discussing this verse, Philo uses the same construction but substitutes ἔγκλημα (“charge/accusation”) for αἰτία: ἔγκλημα τοῦ Κάιν (Philo, *Sacr.* 1.72). Examples like this suggest that the semantic domain of lexemes denoting “charge/accusation” can naturally lend themselves to the notion of “against” when taking a personal genitive.

²⁹ Cf. P.Mich. 5.312 (34 CE; διὰ τὴν τῶν μεμισθωμένων ἐτίαν [= αἰτίαν as in P.Lond. 6.1914; P.Oxy. 38.2859; SB 18.13948; Stud.Pal. 22.40]); Justin, *Dial.* 140.4.8, 9; John Chrysostom, *Comm. Job* 102.3; John of Damascus, *Sacr. parall.* 95.1353.10; Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 13.26; and Pseudo-Lucian, *Cyn.* 1.5.

³⁰ John Chrysostom, for example, explicitly equates αἰτία with guilt in 19:10: “But what is, Εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός (19:10a)? That is, if to this end he is joined with her, that they should be one, or, on the other hand, if the man shall get to himself *blame* for these things [Εἰ αἰτίαν λήψεται ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁ ἀνὴρ], and always transgresses by putting away ...” (*Hom. Matt.* 62 [PG 58.599; P.NPF¹ 10:365; emphasis mine]). I have kept the Greek original of 19:10a since, remarkably, Schaff translates the first instance of αἰτία as “case” and the second (i.e., Chrysostom’s interpretation of the term) as “blame”! Cf. Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 14.25.12.

³¹ In Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, and Peshitta *ḏly* (“blame,” “fault,” or “guilt”) translates αἰτία. The Harklean version (an “extremely literal translation of the Greek text” [George Anton Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshittâ and Harklean Versions*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, 4 vols., NTTTS 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), xxxiii]) has *ḥt* (ibid., 1:280). This word, like *causa*, seems to have a broad range of meaning, including (1) opportunity, means; (2) cause, reason, motive; (3) pretense, pretext; (4) evidence, proof; (5) occasion; (6) *sin, crime, accusation*; (7) thing, object (Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s “Lexicon Syriacum”* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009], 1106–7). As was (initially) the case in the Latin translations, the “crime/accusation” gloss was understood.

term in 19:3. Indeed, the latter is critical for understanding the relationship between the eunuch (19:10–12) and divorce passages (19:3–9). It reads: “Pharisees came to him [Jesus] in order to test him, and said, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any charge whatsoever [κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν]?’” (19:3).³² Typically, αἰτίαν is translated here simply as “reason” or “cause.” The context, however, clearly requires the legal sense of “ground” or “accusation/charge.” Thiele includes it as an example where “erscheint αἰτία in Verbindung mit gerichtlichen Beschuldigungen und mit Klagen, die gegen jemanden vorgebracht werden.”³³ Similarly, Radl states, “Mt 19,3 geht es um den—mitunter lächerlichen—Anlaß zur Ehescheidung.”³⁴ In Jesus’s day marriage and divorce were legal matters involving a marriage contract, divorce documents, and a financial settlement.³⁵ Divorce was often finalized in a rabbinic court to protect the rights of each party and to enforce their respective obligations, although this was not required.³⁶ Thus, a legal gloss, such as “charge,” is fitting for 19:3.

Translating αἰτία as “charge” in 19:3 and in 19:10 clarifies the rhetorical polemic in play in the passage as a whole. In Matthew, Jesus makes a habit of taking

³²From a historical standpoint, the Pharisees’ question appears to refer to the rabbinic debate between Hillel and Shammai over what constitutes legitimate grounds for divorce. The Mishnah summarizes the competing views, centered on the interpretation of ערות דבר (“matter of indecency”) in Deut 24:1: “The School of Shammai say: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, *Because he hath found in her indecency in anything*. And the School of Hillel say: [He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, *Because he hath found in her indecency in anything*. R. Akiba says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, *And it shall be if she find no favour in his eyes* (m. Git. 9:10 [cf. Sifre Deut. 269; y. Sota 1.2, 16b; m. Ketub. 7:6; b. Git. 90b]”; trans. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933; repr., 1983], 321). The degree to which first-century practices can be derived from classical rabbinic traditions is, of course, fraught with difficulties. Philo (*Spec.* 3.30) and Josephus (*A.J.* 4.253) mention the grounds of divorce in Hillelite terms as if there were no debate at all. For a discussion of divorce texts from Qumran, see David Instone-Brewer, “Nomological Exegesis in Qumran ‘Divorce’ Texts,” *RevQ* 18 (1998): 561–79.

³³Thiele, *TBLNT* 3:1093 (emphasis original).

³⁴Radl, *EWNT* 1:104 (emphasis original).

³⁵For a divorce to be valid, the husband (or a representative) had to write out and present the wife with the *get* (divorce certificate). Upon receipt of the required *ketubah* (inheritance monies) from the husband, the wife would present him with the *quittance* (receipt) to confirm that he had fulfilled his financial obligations. See citations and discussion in David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 117.

³⁶Instone-Brewer explains, “A divorce did not require a court unless there was a dispute about the *ketubah* inheritance or the grounds for the divorce. It was usually safer, however, to conduct a divorce through a court because of the large amount of money involved. Any misunderstanding could result in later legal action that could bankrupt the former husband. Also, a mistake in the divorce procedure could mean that the divorce was invalid and thus any subsequent marriage by the woman would be adulterous” (*ibid.*, 116–17).

a question or comment from the religious leaders and turning it against them, exposing their hypocrisy and disqualification to lead God's people.³⁷ Matthew 19:3–12 is a poignant example. The Pharisees approach Jesus to tempt/test (πειράζω) him by asking him how heinous or insignificant the charges must be for a man to dismiss his wife and marry another. Although the question is posed theoretically ("Is it lawful for a man to divorce...," v. 3), Jesus quickly makes it personal: "He said to them, 'On account of *your* hardness of heart Moses permitted *you* to divorce *your* wives, but it has not been this way from the beginning'" (v. 8). Moreover, their question is not innocuous: each of the five other occurrences of πειράζω in Matthew indicates opposition to Jesus's messianic status and mission.³⁸ Regardless of how exactly their inquiry cloaks an attack, the Pharisees clearly do not get the answer for which they hope. On the contrary, Jesus again turns the tables, transferring the focus from *every* (possible) charge against *their wives*,³⁹ to *the charge of adultery against the husband* who divorces his wife (μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ) and marries another.⁴⁰

The polemical movement of 19:3–12 becomes clearer when we compare the two verses.

Καὶ προσήλθον αὐτῷ Φαρισαῖοι πειράζοντες αὐτὸν καὶ λέγοντες· εἰ ἔξεστιν ἀνθρώπῳ ἀπολύσαι τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν; (19:3)

Λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί· εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ συμφέρει γαμήσαι. (19:10)

The structure and content of the two verses mirror each other, with both quotations concerning the man (ἀνθρώπῳ//τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) who divorces his wife (τὴν γυναῖκα//τῆς γυναικός) being introduced by a form of λέγω (λέγοντες//λέγουσιν). The equivalent aspects of the parallelism draw attention to and heighten the rhetorical effect of the dissimilarity: the object of the charge (αἰτίαν//ἡ αἰτία) has been transferred from the wife to the man/husband and, by implication, to the multitudes of guilty Jewish men, Pharisees included.

Thus, in 19:9 Matthew's Jesus reiterates—although in a new way—his response to their previous attempt to test/tempt (πειράζω) him when they demanded a sign from heaven (16:1–4): they are an "adulterous generation" (16:4). Moreover, by rooting his view in the pre-fall narrative of Gen 1:27 and 2:24 (Matt 19:4–5), over and against the Pharisees appeal to Deut 24:1–4 (Matt 19:7), Jesus again makes clear that the Pharisees do not understand that the prophesied times of renewal are now at hand; that is, they still "are not able to interpret the signs of the times" (16:3).

³⁷ Cf. Matt 12:1–8, 9–14; 15:1–20, et al.

³⁸ Matt 4:1, 3; 16:1; 22:18, 35. The first two instances refer to Satan's work, creating a literary resonance that carries across the other four usages: the Pharisees' tests/temptations are in accord with the purposes of Satan.

³⁹ So, πᾶσαν αἰτίαν (19:3).

⁴⁰ ἡ αἰτία in 19:10 refers to Jesus's declaration in verse 9, which is against the Pharisees ("But I say to you ...").

The protasis in 19:10, therefore, summarizes Jesus's answer (19:4–9) to the Pharisees' initial question from 19:3. To paraphrase the disciples' response: "If it is not lawful to divorce one's wife for any and every charge (see 19:3), and the man who does so and then remarries is himself charged with adultery (see 19:9), then..." The majority of scholars have interpreted the apodosis, 19:10b, with reference to marriage in general, with the sense, "it is better for people not to marry at all." The nature of the disciples' logic in this reading is confusing and misogynistic.⁴¹ My proposal for ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, however, suggests that 19:10b be read with reference to *remarriage*. In this reading the disciples statement is logically sound and entirely appropriate to the context; it really is "better" for such a man who has illicitly divorced his wife "not to marry [another]" if, in so doing, he incurs the charge/guilt of adultery. That is to say, the context drives the reader to fill in the gap of 19:10b in light of 19:9 and 19:10a: εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ συμφέρει [τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐτέραν] γαμήσαι.⁴²

Remarriage and the Grammar of 19:10

While the overarching rationale compels a remarriage reading of 19:10, it is also suggested by the grammar of 19:10 in relation to 19:3 and 9:

λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι ὅς ἂν [ref. ἀνθρώπῳ of 19:3] ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην⁴³ μοιχᾶται.⁴⁴ (19:9)

Λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί· εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ συμφέρει γαμήσαι. (19:10)

Modern commentaries overlook the function of the οὕτως in 19:10: not only does it predicate the disciples' response on Jesus's teaching in 19:3–9, but it also binds the lexemes of 19:10 semantically to their equivalents in 19:3 and 9.⁴⁵ That is to say, from a grammatical standpoint, οὕτως directs the reader to interpret the terms of

⁴¹ See the introduction above.

⁴² Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.6.50.1–3.

⁴³ The transmission of this verse has been complicated due to assimilation with Matt 5:32. Here the exception clause has been changed to παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας in D f¹³ 33 pc it (sy^c) sa mae; and, along with the predicate, to παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι in B f¹ ff¹ bo. The text is supported by ⋈ C³ L (W) Z Θ 078 991 I vg sy^{s-p-h}. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 38.

⁴⁴ Several witnesses also add καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν (or γαμήσας [B Z 991]) μοιχᾶται (B C* W Z Θ 078 f^{1.13} 33 991 lat sy^{p-h} bo). The longer reading results from assimilation with 5:32. The text is supported by: ⋈ C3 D L 1241 pc it sy^{p-c} sa bo^{ms}. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 38–39.

⁴⁵ Indeed, I know of no modern commentary to make this point. Davies and Allison make only the general observation, "οὕτως* and συμφέρει* are characteristic" (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:19 n. 88). Usually οὕτως is not mentioned at all.

19:10, where possible,⁴⁶ in light of their antecedent(s).⁴⁷ “The man” (τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) in 19:10, therefore, should not be read as a general referent to any man,⁴⁸ since verses 3 and 9 have specifically defined this ἄνθρωπος as the one who divorces his wife according to any and every charge.⁴⁹ The presence of the article, although often untranslated, makes this connection even stronger.⁵⁰ Likewise, τῆς γυναικός in 19:10 does not refer to just any wife but rather to the recipient of the divorce by “the man,” as is the case with its antecedents in 19:3 and 9—also confirmed by the article.⁵¹ Thus, the (not-so-hypothetical) ἄνθρωπος and γυνή of all three verses (19:3, 9, and 10) are the same characters in each verse. These observations converge in a critical interpretative point: *γαμῆσαι* (19:10) should also be read in accordance with its earlier usage, *γαμήσει* (19:9), as referring to the marriage of *another* (i.e., remarriage), because the same (implied) subject of the action is the man who has already (illicitly) divorced his wife.

Both the logic and the grammar of 19:10, therefore, compel the reader to fill in the gap of 19:10b with the same ἄνθρωπος of 19:10a (cf. 19:3) in the context of 19:9:

[19:9] ὃς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσει ἄλλην μοιχᾶται.

[19:10] εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ συμφέρει [τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἑτέραν] γαμῆσαι.⁵²

The traditional reading has interpreted the terms and filled in the gaps of the verse in a manner that is contextually untenable—a problem this proposal seeks to rectify. As a final summary, these two readings can be compared as follows.

Traditional Reading:

If such is the *relationship/case of a man* [generally speaking] with his wife, then it is better [for men] not to marry [anyone at all].

⁴⁶The exception of ἡ αἰτία actually assumes the point as Jesus turns the tables against the Pharisees (see above).

⁴⁷Although οὕτως does not necessitate that 19:10 be read with reference to remarriage, I think the grammar recommends it. In concert with the proposed inner logic of verses 3–10 thus far, I think the context requires it.

⁴⁸That is, “a man/husband”; see CEB, ESV, NIV, NRSV.

⁴⁹The phrase ὃς ἂν (19:9) refers to ἀνθρώπῳ of verse 3. Cf. ἄνθρωπος in vv. 5 and 6, which also contributes to this sense.

⁵⁰The article functions as an article of referent.

⁵¹Cf. uses in verses 5 and 8.

⁵²Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.6.50.1–3 In its terseness, the discussion among the three parties of 19:3–12—the Pharisees, Jesus, and the disciples—resembles the extant records of rabbinic debates.

Proposed Reading:

εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου	“If such, as you say, is the charge [i.e., adultery] against the man (ref. to the man who illegitimately divorces and then marries another in 19:9 [cf. 19:3])
μετὰ τῆς γυναικός	with respect to his wife (ref. to the γυνή illegitimately divorced by the man in 19:9 [cf. 19:3]; μετὰ with the genitive signifying <i>in his dealings with</i> [LSJ]) ⁶⁰
οὐ συμφέρει [τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἑτέραν] ⁶¹ γαμήσαι.	then it is not better for that man to marry another.” (carrying the subject of 19:10a over and reading γαμέω with ref. to remarriage as in 19:9)

For translation purposes, the more implied details from verse 9 that are woven into verse 10, the clearer its meaning will become.

II. INTERPRETING 19:10–12: SELF-DISMEMBERMENT (5:20, 27–32) TO AVOID THE αἰτία OF ADULTERY

Matthew creates structural, verbal, and thematic links between texts and sub-texts across the gospel thereby indicating that the connected passages are to be read in light of each other.⁵⁵ In this manner, the conclusions reached in section I

⁵³ The phrase μετὰ τῆς γυναικός emphasizes the injustice committed against the man's first wife if he illicitly divorces her and marries another, as in Mark 10:11b: he “commits adultery *against her*” (μοιχᾶται ἐπ’ αὐτήν). For other uses of μετὰ signifying *in one's dealings with* (LSJ), see Judg 1:24, 15:3, Luke 1:72, Acts 14:27, 15:4.

⁵⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.6.50.1–3.

⁵⁵ Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane (26:36–46) is a notable example, interweaving elements from the Lord's Prayer and the parable of the ten bridesmaids. By virtue of these links, Jesus is presented as the faithful disciple par excellence who maintains readiness for the parousia and final judgment through prayer. See the full discussion in R. Jarrett Van Tine, “Does Peter's Faith Peter Out?” (review discussion of *Peter: False Disciple and Apostate according to Saint Matthew*, by Robert H. Gundry), *Histos* 11, 22 February 2017, 14–28, here 22–24.

The nature and mutually interpreting effect of such intertextuality within a single work are explained by Michael Riffaterre: “Any subtext, or, more broadly still, any unit of significance that can be identified as the narrative unfolds, any segment of that narrative that can be isolated without cognitive loss, may serve as an intertext to some further such unit, if the latter has features in common with the former. Such features make it possible or necessary for the reader to see the two units as different versions of the same episode or of the same description, or two variants of the same structure. Components of the second will thus acquire a meaning other than what they convey in context because they will be perceived as referring also or primarily to their homologues in the first. (“The Intertextual Unconscious,” *Critical Inquiry* 13 [1987]: 371–85, here 380–81; cf.

reactivate dormant elements within 19:3–12, revealing Matthew’s eunuch pericope to be a shocking yet masterful recasting of Jesus’s exhortation to self-dismemberment from 5:29–30.⁵⁶ Both passages are structured, in part, by the religious leaders’ understanding of the law of Moses versus Jesus’s messianic readministration of it.⁵⁷ As such, the pericopes share the same adversary, the Pharisees (see 5:20 and 19:3). Verbally, the most significant correlations are the following:

OUTLINE 1

Verbal Links Uniting 19:3–12 and 5:27–32

1. Phrases
 - a. Verbatim
 - i. $\delta\varsigma \grave{\alpha}\nu \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\sigma\eta \tau\eta\nu \gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\alpha \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ (5:31//19:9)
 - ii. $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega \delta\grave{\epsilon} \acute{\upsilon}\mu\grave{\iota}\nu$ (5:28, 32//19:8)
 - b. Semantically equivalent
 - i. $\pi\alpha\rho\epsilon\kappa\tau\omicron\varsigma \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\upsilon \pi\omicron\rho\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\varsigma$ (5:32)// $\mu\grave{\eta} \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota \pi\omicron\rho\nu\epsilon\iota\acute{\alpha}$ (19:9)
 - ii. $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ (5:31)// $\beta\iota\beta\lambda\iota\omicron\nu \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\omicron\upsilon$ (19:7)
2. Noun forms
 - a. $\gamma\upsilon\nu\eta$ ($\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\alpha$; 5:28, 31, 32// $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\alpha$ [19:3, 9]; $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\acute{\iota}$ [19:5], $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\alpha\varsigma$ [19:8], $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$ [19:10])
3. Verb forms
 - a. $\gamma\alpha\mu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ ($\gamma\alpha\mu\eta\sigma\eta$ [5:32, 19:9])
 - b. $\mu\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omega$ ($\mu\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ [5:27]; $\acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\nu$ [5:28]; $\mu\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\upsilon\theta\eta\nu\alpha\iota$, $\mu\omicron\iota\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\iota$ [5:32]// $\mu\omicron\iota\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\iota$ [19:9])
 - c. $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\omega$ ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\sigma\eta$ [5:31]; $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\omega\nu$, $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\nu$ [5:32]// $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$ [19:3, 7, 8]; $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\sigma\eta$ [19:9])
 - d. $\sigma\upsilon\mu\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega$ ($\sigma\upsilon\mu\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon\iota$ [5:29, 30]// $\sigma\upsilon\mu\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon\iota$ [19:10])

The thematic parallels of adultery and divorce–remarriage are apparent.

Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 [1976]: 105–28, here 114 n. 9.)

The proposed reading could also be classified as an example of intra-Matthean *metalepsis*—a classical term that goes back at least to Quintilian. For a brief overview of this type of allusion and how it has been reworked and applied to biblical studies, see G. Brooke Lester, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation,” *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Stephen L. McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 448–49.

⁵⁶Matthew 5:27–32 encompasses two of the six antitheses in verses 21–48 (murder [vv. 21–26], adultery [vv. 27–28], divorce [vv. 31–32], vows [vv. 33–37], vengeance/retribution [vv. 38–42], hatred of enemies [vv. 43–47]), introduced by 5:17–20. The setting of the Sermon on the Mount is one of messianic and eschatological fulfillment (see D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al., 12 vols. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 8:3–599, here 128). But to enter the kingdom, Jesus says, his followers must have a righteousness exceeding that of Israel’s religious leaders (5:20). Obedience to the Christ’s laws concerning adultery and divorce–remarriage, then, are two examples of this type of required kingdom righteousness.

⁵⁷Ἐρρέθη ... ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν [5:27–28, 31–32]//λέγει αὐτοῖς ὅτι Μωϋσῆς ... λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν [19:(7), 8, 9]. For the expectation of the law being readministered in the last days, see Deut 18:18, Isa 2:3, 42:4, 51:4; Mic 4:2 et al.

What is less apparent, at least initially, is the final shared theme of self-dismemberment to enter the kingdom as it is recast in the form of a metaphor. Yet therein lies the rhetorical punch. The allusion⁵⁸ begins to unfold with the initial links to 5:20, 27–32 woven throughout Jesus’s response to the Pharisees (vv. 3–9). Together, they draw the former text and its context into the attentive reader’s mental periphery. In verse 10, however, the subtext takes control as the disciples conclude that “it is not better [οὐ συμφέρει]” for the man who divorces his wife to marry another, lest he incur the charge of adultery (ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). The verb *συμφέρει* occurs three additional times in the gospel: two in the initial call to dismemberment (noted above), both with reference to adultery (as in 19:9), and the third in 18:6, which is itself a recapitulation of the principle. The narrative stage has thus been set to reach its full rhetorical force in the eunuch metaphor (19:12), whereby Jesus calls these men to “cut off” (cf. 5:29–30) that which would cause them to stumble (that is, their male organ), by remaining spouseless (i.e., “eunuchs”) so as not to commit adultery.⁵⁹ They do so, διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, which, in light of 5:20, 27–32, must mean, “to enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁶⁰ The eunuch

⁵⁸I use the term as defined by Ben-Porat, “Poetics of Literary Allusion,” 107–8: “The literary allusion is a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts. The activation is achieved through the manipulation of a special signal: a sign (simple or complex) in a given text characterized by an additional larger ‘referent.’ This referent is always an independent text. The simultaneous activation of the two texts thus connected results in the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined.” This mechanism can function the same way across a single literary work (see Riffaterre, quoted above in n. 56).

⁵⁹Indeed, if the “hand” of 5:30 refers to one’s male organ (cf. Isa 56:5; 57:8, 10; Cant 5:4; 1QS VII, 13; T. Sol. 1:2, 4), then the image of self-castration is employed in *both* passages.

Ben-Porat refers to the culmination of identified linkages between texts as *intertextual patterning*. Although she discusses references in a text to one or more subtexts outside the work, her comments are equally pertinent for explaining the intertextual patterning observed between 19:3–12 (esp. 10–12) and 5:20, 27–32. I relate her description to the case in point: “In terms of the end product, the formation of intertextual patterns, the marker [*συμφέρει* and others in outline 1]—regardless of the form it takes—is used for the activation of independent elements from the evoked text [the call to self-dismemberment to avoid eternal punishment]. Those are never referred to directly. The signal used might be a most transparent marker, explicitly denoting the text alluded to; but immediate identification of the source-text does not substitute for the activation of elements which remain to be identified [again, the self-dismemberment principle]. These elements may be secondary (weaker) with regard to the element which can best represent a given text, *but they are primary in terms of the actualized allusion*. Thus, the alluding text and its specific requirements *cause a shift in the hierarchy of representational elements in the original system*” (“Poetics of Literary Allusion,” 108–9; emphasis added).

⁶⁰As stated in the subtext, the purpose of Jesus’s call to dismemberment is to prevent one’s whole body from being destroyed in “Gehenna” (5:29, 30). Moreover, as mentioned, the call itself is set in the broader context of obtaining a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, without which nobody will enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20). Cf. the parallel to 5:29–30 in 18:8–9, which includes εἰς τὴν ζωὴν and εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν. Traditionally, διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν is understood in a more benign sense, referring to the undistracted

metaphor, therefore, is another of Matthew's extreme illustrations by which he summons his readers toward wholehearted devotion to Jesus so that they might enter his kingdom.⁶¹ In this case he emphasizes the willingness to sacrifice essential present-age concerns (i.e., a spouse and children; cf. 13:22) rather than break the law (i.e., commit adultery) as administered by Christ—all in the hope of a greater reward in the age to come.⁶²

III. SECOND TEMPLE JEWISH AND EARLY CHURCH SUPPORT

Corroboration for this reading of 19:10–12 can be found in its Second Temple Jewish and early Christian contexts. In regard to the former, the proposed link to Jesus's call to self-dismemberment finds a strong parallel in Philo's *That the Worse Attacks the Better*. In discussing Cain's banishment, Philo emphasizes the need to resist temptations, particularly those sexual in nature:

And so, to my thinking, those who are not utterly ignorant would *choose to be blinded* rather than see unfitting things, and *to be deprived of hearing* rather than listen to harmful words, and *to have their tongues cut out* to save them from uttering anything that should not be divulged.... *It is better to be made a eunuch than to be mad after illicit unions* [ἐξευνουχισθῆναι γε μὴν ἀμεινον ἢ πρὸς συνουσίας ἐκνόμους λυττᾶν]. All these things [i.e., sins], seeing that they plunge the soul in disasters for which there is no remedy, would properly *incur the most extreme vengeance and punishment*. (Philo, *Det.* 173–178 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL; emphasis added])

devotion to kingdom affairs that celibacy affords (cf. 1 Cor 7:32–34). This is one example of how Matt 19:10–12 has been taken over and muted by Paul's discussion on celibacy in 1 Cor 7. Space precludes any attempt to address the apparent tension between διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν and 12:31 ("every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people").

⁶¹ Matthew's extreme examples of discipleship—positive and negative—exhort the reader to Pharisee-surpassing righteousness on the basis of their implicit greater-to-lesser paraenesis. See, e.g., the pericopes of the Syrophenician woman (15:21–28) and the rich young man (19:16–26). Cf. 8:5–13, 19–20, 21–22, et al.

⁶² My proposal exposes a tighter relationship between 19:3–12, 13–15, and 16–26 than has previously been explored. Within the confines of this article, it is worth noting that the reading put forth here explains the enigmatic reference to leaving "children" in 19:29: it refers, that is, to illegitimately divorced disciples who relinquish the hope of additional children, since they could only be born through an *adulterous* remarriage. Likewise, the reference to leaving "houses" and/or "fields" looks back to the pericope of the rich young man. Moreover, the proposed relationship between making oneself a eunuch and refusing illicit remarriage also clarifies the parallels between Matt 19:3–12 and Mark 10:2–12. Rather than shifting to celibacy in Matthew, the insiders' discussion of both accounts maintains the focus on the guilt of adultery incurred through remarriage (Matt 19:10–12//Mark 10:10–12).

The same logic is applied in both passages: “it is better” (ἀμεινον//συμφέρει [19:10]) to cut off your body parts, even make yourself a eunuch (the same verb, εὐνουχίζω, used twice in Matt 19:12), than to sin through those members, thereby incurring punishment.⁶³ The proposed reading, therefore, fits comfortably into the rhetorical and ethical milieu of at least some forms of Judaism during the Second Temple period.

In addition, Matt 19:10–12 was read in concert with 5:27–32 in the early church. The variant textual interpolations from 5:32 into 19:9⁶⁴ are indicative of this fact. Further confirmation is provided by the earliest discussion we have of 19:10–12, which connects these two passages in a manner notably close to the one I propose here. In his *First Apology*, Justin Martyr writes:

Concerning chastity [Jesus] said this: “Whosoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart before God.” [5:28] And: “If your right eye offends you, cut it out; for it is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven with one eye, than with two eyes to be cast into eternal fire.” [5:29] And: “Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced from another husband, commits adultery.” [5:32b/19:9b] And: “There are some who have been made eunuchs by men, and some who were born eunuchs, and some who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven’s sake; but not all can receive this saying.” [19:12, 11] So that all who according to human law make second marriages are sinners in the sight of our Master, as are those who look on a woman to lust after her. For not only the man who in act commits adultery is condemned by Him, but also the man who desires to commit adultery; since not only our deeds but also our thoughts are open before God. (Justin, *1 Apol.* 1.15)⁶⁵

Not only does Justin connect 5:28, 29, 5:32b/19:9b,⁶⁶ and 19:12, but, in so doing, he seems to interpret the eunuch metaphor in light of adulterous remarriage after divorce.⁶⁷ My proposal, therefore, is not without precedent.⁶⁸

⁶³ Commentators who note Philo’s text do so only in passing, as the parallels are obscured by the celibacy reading of 19:10–12. See, e.g., Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:23; and David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 463.

⁶⁴ Cf. discussion of variants in nn. 43 and 44 above.

⁶⁵ Leslie William Barnard, *St. Justin Martyr: The First and Second Apologies*, ACW 56 (New York: Paulist, 1997), 32.

⁶⁶ The variant textual tradition makes it unclear whether Justin, in quoting “Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced from another husband, committeth adultery,” refers to 5:32b, 19:9b, or both.

⁶⁷ “Twice married” almost certainly refers to those who remarry after divorce; see Barnard, *St. Justin Martyr*, 32 n. 95.

⁶⁸ Justin does not quote 19:10 directly, so it is not clear how exactly he is reading ἡ αἰτία. The Syriac translations and the quotations of 19:10 in the Greek fathers, however, indicate that the term was read in accordance with its traditional sense of moral culpability (see nn. 30 and 31

IV. CONCLUSION EXPLAINING THE MISINTERPRETATION OF 19:10(-12): THE LATINIZING OF THE TRADITION

How then shall we account for the now-pervasive mistranslation of 19:10, which has led to the proposed misinterpretation of 19:10–12? I suggest the convergence of three key factors: the appropriation of Matt 19:10–12 (1) apart from the context of 19:3–9 (2) to celibacy in support of Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 7 (3) in Latin using the semantically broad terms *causa* and *homo* (particularly in the Vulgate), with the definiteness or indefiniteness of the latter in question.⁶⁹

In support, it is notable that of the three figures who cite 19:10 in Latin—Ambrose, Ambrosiaster, and Jerome—none actually provides an informative exegetical discussion of the verse in the context of 19:3–12 as a whole.⁷⁰ Rather, in each case the disciples' statement is removed, by and large, from its Matthean context and referred to in support of a broader notion of celibacy within an explicitly Pauline framework. Initially, it is likely that *causa* in 19:10a was still understood to signify moral culpability. Over time and interpreted apart from 19:3–9, however, the significance of both *causa* and *homo* and the indefiniteness (in Latin) of the latter were naturally assimilated to support Pauline concepts regarding the benefits of celibacy (see 1 Cor 7): "If such is the *case/situation/relationship* of a man with his wife," so it was read, "it is better for men not to marry at all."⁷¹ One need only

above). The passage is also unclear regarding how Justin is reading the exception clause and its relationship to 19:10–12.

⁶⁹The Vulgate translates 19:10: *Dicunt ei discipuli eius si ista est causa homini cum uxore non expedit nubere*. As a noun, *causa*, like *αἴτια*, can communicate a *reason* or a *pretext/ground*. Although both can carry legal denotations, in judicial proceedings *causa* can also indicate the actual judicial *process/lawsuit* rather than just the culpability of those involved (as communicated by *αἴτια*). Outside the sphere of judicial proceedings, *causa* can signify *an employment, a relation of friendship, or a condition/state/situation/position* (Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, 303–4, s.v. "*causa*"). The latter two possibilities provide the basis for the traditional renderings of *αἴτια* in Matt 19:10 as *situation* or *relationship*. Indeed, it is reasonable at this point to postulate that the other popular gloss, "case," also originates from the Latin translation of *αἴτια* in 19:10 as *causa*, although I have kept the translational terms separate throughout this study (see Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 706; and LSJ, s.v. "*αἴτια*").

Homo can signify a *man* or *humanity/the human race* (Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, 859–61, s.v. "*homo*"). Sometimes the variant *vir* is substituted for *homo*, which is only slightly less ambiguous out of context, signifying a *man, husband, or humanity* in general (see *ibid.*, 1994–95, s.v. "*vir*"). In Latin there are no articles; the definiteness or indefiniteness of a term must be determined by other factors, such as context.

⁷⁰Ambrose (*Virg.* 1.6.29; *Exh. virginitt.* 1.3.18), Ambrosiaster (*Ep. B. Paul. Cor. Prim.* 10.22), and Jerome (*Jov.* 1.12 [2x]; *Epist. Amand.* 55.3).

⁷¹Although early discussions (second century) of Matt 19:10–12 support a remarriage interpretation (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.6.50; Justin, *1 Apol.* 1.15), the passage was used predominantly to support the ideals of asceticism. For an overview of the controversies

reflect on the widespread historical influence of Latin to see how such a reading of 19:10(–12) could have embedded itself immovably in the subsequent tradition. Through the initial Old Latin version(s) and then through Jerome’s Vulgate, Latin became the basis of early Bible translations, study, and debate in the Western church.⁷² Thus, the influence of Latin on exegesis and later English translations was substantial. As Benjamin Kedar states, “[The influence of Latin in the Western church was] not merely a matter of quantitative diffusion: Europe had risen to predominance in human history, a rank it would hold for centuries to come. Consequently, it was the world which the Scriptures in their Latin dress set out to conquer.”⁷³

surrounding marriage and celibacy in the first three centuries, see David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy*, OECIS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 87–129.

⁷² Benjamin Kedar, “The Latin Translations,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling, CRINT 2.1 (Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 335.

⁷³ *Ibid.*