

SANCTIFIED IN THE WIFE.

I CORINTHIANS VII. 14.

IN this article I shall attempt to explain a confessedly difficult Verse in the writings of St. Paul: and, the better to do so, I shall begin by a short exposition of the four preceding Verses.

The words *τοῖς δὲ γεγαμηκόσιν*, placed for emphasis at the beginning of Verse 10, mark out the persons to whom St. Paul now speaks, in broad contrast to those addressed in Verses 8 and 9. We may render them, *But to those who are married*; or, in colloquial English, *But to those who have got married*. Only thus, by a double translation, can we reproduce the full force of the Greek perfect, which always connects a past event with a present state. To these married persons, whether married before or since their conversion, the advice contained in Verses 8 and 9 does not apply. But for them St. Paul has a *charge* much more solemn than his words to the unmarried. And his charge is not from the pen of an Apostle, but from the lips of Christ, *the Lord* of the Church. It is to the effect that *a married woman do not separate herself from her husband*. Thus I translate the concluding words of the Verse. It is better, here and in the next Verse, to render the aorist subjunctive by our English reflexive, thus adding to the sense of the passive, but adding to it only an idea clearly contained in the con-

text, viz., that the separation is the woman's own act, rather than to lose the force of the aorist, which directs our attention to the event of separation.

The charge here attributed to Christ corresponds exactly with his words as recorded in Matthew xix. 6. And, that St. Paul quotes it as his, taking for granted that it will be at once recognized as having come from his lips, proves that, in this point at least, the traditional teaching embodied in the Gospels was known, and admitted to be genuine, in St. Paul's day and in a far-off foreign city. This Verse is thus one of the many testimonies in this Epistle to the correctness of the Gospels as records of the teaching of Jesus.

The beginning of Verse 11 may be rendered, *But if she do separate herself*. The aorist subjunctive points to a future possible event, which the particle *καί* raises into conspicuous prominence. The rendering, *if she be already separated*, is, therefore, inadmissible: it would represent *εἰ* with the indicative, as in Verse 12, noting something which already is or is not a matter of fact. But St. Paul merely contemplates the possibility that for some reason, sufficient or insufficient, the general injunction of Christ will not be obeyed; and, by way of parenthesis, says that in this case the only alternative is to remain single or to be reconciled to the husband. His words are but a restatement of an injunction of Christ¹ even more strict than the one quoted above.

That the case of the woman is mentioned first, and that only to her is this parenthetical injunction given, suggests that a special case of this sort had been mentioned in the Corinthian letter to St. Paul (see Verse 1);

¹ Mark x. 12.

or that women were more likely than men to seek such separation. The latter supposition is not improbable. We can well conceive that some wives thought that the complete change consequent on their conversion was sufficient reason for seeking freedom from what they felt to be an unsuitable alliance, even though it were an alliance with a husband who, like his wife, had accepted Christianity. To such women St. Paul recalls the Saviour's words against the separation of married people and his strong words against the re-marriage of those who separate.

While professing to speak to married people generally, St. Paul has really spoken words applicable only to Christian couples. For the case of those married to heathens was so different from the cases referred to by Christ, in which both partners were professed servants of the true God, that, as St. Paul feels, the injunctions of Christ do not cover it. In other words, there is a remnant embraced neither by St. Paul's advice in Verses 8 and 9 to the unmarried and the widows, nor by the just mentioned commands of Christ. To this remnant, *to the rest*, St. Paul now speaks; but speaks only on his own authority. For them, as for the virgins (Verse 25), he has *no command of the Lord*. No words of Christ exactly meet their case.

To Christians, men or women, married to unbelievers, St. Paul speaks with great caution. Idolatry was so closely bound up with social life that he cannot press a Christian to remain with a heathen husband or wife. Yet he inclines to this as generally desirable. If each is disposed to live with the other (*συνευδοκεῖ*: "joins with him in being disposed to continue the union"), St. Paul recommends this course as best.

The complete parallel of Verses 12 and 13 marks the complete equality of the sexes in conjugal rights: an equality unknown apart from Christianity. Even the word of authority—ἀφιέτω (*dismiss*), is used of the woman as well as of the man. It was perhaps suggested in Verse 13 by a sense both of the dignity of the Christian wife and of the loss she could inflict on the heathen husband by refusing to live with him.

The preposition γάρ, which introduces Verse 14, indicates that in some way this Verse supports the foregoing injunctions. That these injunctions are practically but a permission to do what the parties are supposed already to wish (συνευδοκέει) suggests that the Verse which supports them will remove a possible objection to this wish. And the word ἡγιασται, placed twice in the most prominent position, suggests the kind of objection which St. Paul has in view.

Under the Mosaic covenant, marriage with a heathen was strictly forbidden.¹ The reason given is: "For a holy people thou art to Jehovah thy God. In thee Jehovah thy God hath set his choice, that thou mayest be to him a people of special possession."² Therefore, "the seed of holiness" must not "mingle themselves with the people of the lands."³ Consequently, although the evil was widely spread, Ezra (x. 11, 19) not only forbade it for the future, but compelled the Jewish husbands to put away their heathen wives, even those who had borne them children. It might, therefore, be thought that Christian husbands and wives ought not to live with partners who refused Christianity, and that, consequently, the injunction of Christ referred to in Verse 11 would not apply to them.

¹ See Deut. vii. 3; Neh. xiii. 25-27.

² Deut. vii. 6.

³ Ezra ix. 2.

To this objection, one likely to occur to all students of the Jewish Scriptures, St. Paul now replies; and thus supports the advice against which the objection might be brought. He declares that the unbelieving husband, heathen though he be, is not unholy, but holy. For he *has been sanctified in the wife*; i.e., he has been made holy in virtue of the holiness of his wife. In what sense are these words true? That they are true in a sense which proves that a Christian wife need not separate from her heathen husband, St. Paul's argument requires. And for such a sense we will now seek.

The latter part of Verse 14, which gives, and professes to give, a proof of the startling assertions contained in the former part of the same Verse, will also explain their meaning. And the word *holy* will be specially valuable as an indication of the meaning of the cognate and very conspicuous word *sanctified*.

The particle *ἀρα*, essentially a logical particle, implies that the assertion which follows it is an inference from those preceding. And *ἐπεὶ* indicates that this inference justifies the assertions from which it is drawn. The particles *ὅτι δέ*, which may be paraphrased, *But as things actually are*,¹ introduce a statement which, by its evident contradiction of *Your children are unclean*, shews that these words are not actually true, but are only a necessary inference from an assumption which is now proved to be incorrect by the absurdity of the inference which it logically involves. In other words, we have here a very forceful *reductio ad absurdum*. St. Paul declares that if the unbelieving husband be not sanctified in his Christian wife, then we must infer

¹ Comp. Chap. xii. 18, xv. 20.

that the children of believers generally are unclean, whereas, on the principle just laid down, viz., *sanctified in the wife, the children are holy*. And this last proposition, which negatives the one just before it, St. Paul takes for granted.

This use of *ἐπεί*, viz., to support an assertion by shewing the absurdity consequent upon a denial of it, is very common.¹ We may conveniently render it "else;" or, preserving its relation to the ordinary use of the same conjunction, by the words "since otherwise."

The collocation of *ἐπεί* and *ἄρα* is found again in 1 Corinthians v. 10. But in this case there is no contrasted statement which by its evident truth marks out the inference as false. Therefore, to shew this, St. Paul puts the inference in the imperfect indicative, (according to the well-attested reading *ὀφείλετε*,) thus bringing it under the fourth case of the hypothetical proposition. But in 1 Corinthians vii. 14, the contrasted and evidently correct statement, *But now are they holy*, makes this unnecessary. And the indicative present is more graphic, shewing what would be the actual state of things if the foregoing assertions were not true. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians xv. 18, a sentence introduced by *ἄρα* disproves the assertion "That there is no resurrection," by shewing that it involves the assertion that "they who have been laid to sleep in Christ have perished." This latter assertion is, in St. Paul's view, so evidently false that it needs neither express contradiction as in 1 Corinthians vii. 14, nor the imperfect tense as in Chapter v. Verse 10. He is, therefore, at liberty to make use of the much more forceful aorist indicative.

¹ Compare Rom. iii. 6; xi. 6, 22; Heb. v. 11; ix. 26; x. 2.

So much for the grammatical form of the verse. St. Paul argues that the heathen husband is sanctified in the wife, on the ground that otherwise we should be compelled to infer that the children of unbelievers are unclean ; whereas, as he assumes, they are holy.

To understand the real force of this argument, we must determine the exact sense in it of the word "holy." To speak generally, this word denotes, both in the Old and New Testaments, that which God has claimed to be his own, and which, therefore, stands in a special relation to Him as his property, as existing for Him, and designed to work out his purposes.¹ And, in Old Testament language, various objects were pronounced "unclean," to indicate that contact with them would unfit the otherwise holy person for the presence and service of God. In other words, the holy must not touch the unholy. It might, therefore, be thought that the Christian wife, whom in a far deeper sense than under the Mosaic covenant God had claimed to be his own and to live for Him, must needs separate herself from an unholy heathen husband, lest intercourse with him should mar her service of God. St. Paul says, No ; and supports his denial by shewing that if she leave her husband she must for the same reason leave her children. And he makes this a personal and forceful appeal to the whole Church by passing from the third to the second person—*your children* ; thus including the children not only of Christians married to unbelievers, but of Christians generally. The word *children* includes sons and daughters of all ages. Many of these had not yet exercised faith in Christ;

¹ So Lange in vol. v., just published, of the second edition of Herzog's Real-Encyclopädie: "To sanctify is to take from the world and give to the Lord."

and doubtless some were adult idolaters. Yet it is quite evident that, whatever the children were, the parents not only were not bound by their new relation to God to leave them, but were bound, even in spite of their rejection of Christianity, to render them the full measure of parental love and care. In other words, intercourse with unconverted children does not defile a Christian parent. In this sense, then, the children are not unclean, but are holy. But on what principle can this be? Only on this, that the mother's holiness extends in some sense to the children; and that, whatever they may be in themselves, from her point of view and in the subjective world of her inner life they are holy. She lays them on the altar of God, and henceforth looks upon them as belonging to Him, and cares for them as part of her service of Christ. In this sense they are *sanctified in* the mother.

Now this principle applies equally to the heathen husband of a Christian wife. In her inner life he also is laid upon the altar. To her, therefore, he is a holy object; and her intercourse with him is a service of God. And if so, his presence, heathen though he be, will not defile her. On the contrary, by giving occasion for Christian patience and watchfulness, it will develop her Christian character. Therefore the heathenism of the husband is no reason why she may not follow the advice given in Verse 13. And the same argument applies to the Christian husband of a heathen wife.

Notice the indicative mood, *is sanctified*. Yet these words describe, not that which actually and always takes place, but that which ought always to be. It may be that the wife fails in some degree to lay her husband upon the altar of God, and to look upon her intercourse

with him as a service of God, that she looks upon him simply as her human lord, and seeks his favour rather than the favour of God. If so, the heathen husband defiles the wife; and the holiness of the one is lost in the unholiness of the other. But this need not be. It is the wife's privilege, in spite of anything the husband can do, to serve God in all her dealings with him; and, if so, the wickedness of the husband will but develop her spiritual life. And that this is her privilege is sufficient proof that she is not obliged to leave her heathen husband. This is all St. Paul wishes to prove. If she is not disposed to remain, he tacitly (*συνευδοκεῖ*) permits her to leave her husband. What it is her privilege to do, St. Paul, as his wont is, represents as her actual conduct, thus giving her the strongest encouragement to make it such.

Under the special case which in this paper I have attempted to elucidate lies a broad and important principle, bearing upon all men in all ages. There are many circumstances and connections which seem to hinder the Christian life, or to make it impossible. They seem to be unholy, and therefore defiling. From some of these we may free ourselves, and are bound to do so. To remain, of our own choice and without a good reason, in circumstances unfavourable to religion is most dangerous. But there may be circumstances from which it is impossible or inexpedient to free ourselves, and which, nevertheless, seem to be incompatible with full-hearted service of God. And, because of these drawbacks, many have thought themselves debarred from being servants of God. But there is another view of this case. That we cannot free ourselves from these unfavourable circumstances,

proves that God, in whose hands are all things, does not think fit that we should be free from them. Yet He loves us, and designs us to be his servants. From all this we are compelled to infer that the service of God is not really incompatible with these apparently adverse circumstances. In order to serve God, all that we need is to lay all our surroundings upon his altar, and to look upon them as ordained or permitted by Him to give occasion to Christian virtues, and thus to develop our spiritual life. And if we do this, even our adverse circumstances will be to us holy, *i.e.*, they will, in our inner life, stand in special relation to God as ordained by Him, and as working out his purposes of mercy for us and for others. "All things" will "work together for our good." Just as of old the altar sanctified the gift, claiming it for God, so the believer, by his own devotion to God, claims for his service his entire surroundings.

The Verse we have been studying has been claimed both as proof and as disproof that Infant Baptism was practised in the Apostolic Church. But that the words *Your children are holy* do not in any way imply that the children of Christian parents are fit objects for baptism, is evident from the fact that the holiness of the children is mentioned only to prove the holiness of the heathen husband or wife. And a holiness shared by adult heathens cannot be valid ground for a Christian rite.

Much more difficult is it to decide whether this Verse may be accepted as evidence that the children of believers were not then baptized. This is held by Neander, Meyer, Stanley, and others, on the ground that, if the children had been baptized, the difference

between them and the unbaptized husband would bar all argument from one to the other. That St. Paul did not find it necessary to say, "Your unbaptized children," suggests, perhaps, that baptism in infancy was not then very usual. But on this argument no great stress can fairly be laid. Whether or not the children were baptized, and whether they were infants or adults, they had an indisputable claim to the care of their Christian parents. Therefore, to render them such care could in no case defile the parent. Consequently, the matter of baptism had no bearing whatever upon the case. And this is a sufficient reason for the absence of all mention of the rite, even though it had been administered to some of the children. Similarly, as not affecting the argument, no mention is made of those "children" who had accepted Christianity. Yet it would be unfair to infer from this that none of the children of the believers at Corinth were themselves believers. It is, therefore, unsafe to draw from this Verse any inference about Infant Baptism.

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IMMANUEL.

ISAIAH VII. 14.

GOD was with Isaiah in an even deeper sense than with any other of the Hebrew prophets. Isaiah was, indeed, the St. John of that "goodly fellowship"—the prophet whom Jehovah loved. As we read his scriptures, we cannot but feel that he was admitted to a closer, a more inward and spiritual, fellowship with God than any of his brethren, knew more of his mind,