

of consciousness no less than the existence of self and the existence of the world, can hesitate in his choice.

With a full recognition of the inherent limitations and imperfections of historical evidence, with a frank admission of the power of credulity and enthusiasm, I do not hesitate to accept the issue which has been proposed, and to affirm that it is more difficult, immeasurably more difficult, to believe that the Resurrection—standing as it does supremely solitary, and unapproached in its conception and in its effects—was a delusion—no one, I imagine, would now suggest that it was an imposture—than to believe that it was a divine fact. The difficulties in the one case are such as to make all life an unsubstantial dream, or a terrible enigma; the difficulties in the other case are those which are inseparable from the coexistence of finite and infinite Being.

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ST. PAUL ON MARRIAGE.

I CORINTHIANS vii.

THERE are two preliminary considerations which throw some light on this much-contested passage. First, Paul had to speak about marriage as he found it, as it existed among those to whom he wished to be of service. Hence he makes no allusion to that which among ourselves is the main argument for, or at least the common motive to, marriage, viz., love. Marriage is treated here from a lower point of view than it would have been had this letter been

originally written for Englishmen. The Church to which it was addressed was composite. Jews, Greeks, and Romans, in what proportions it is not easy to say,<sup>1</sup> brought their peculiar and national usages into it. In the marriages of the Jews and Greeks, love had, as a rule, little or nothing to do. The marriage was arranged by the parents of the contracting parties.

“ Faces strange and tongues unknown  
Make us by a bid their own,”<sup>2</sup>

is the remonstrance of the Greek maiden against the unnatural custom which prevailed of allowing no intimacy, and scarcely any real acquaintance, prior to marriage.<sup>3</sup> The lack of warmth and personal interest which characterizes the Greek plays arises mainly from the circumstance that, among the Greeks, there was absolutely no such thing as that love prior to marriage on which even our best works of fiction uniformly depend for their interest. Among the Romans there was none of this Eastern seclusion of women; and, but for other causes,

<sup>1</sup> Pausanias and Strabo both speak of Corinth as having been quite deserted by its original Greek inhabitants. But when Cæsar re-peopled it with a Roman colony, Greeks would in all probability be again attracted to it. But see Stanley, *Corinth*, i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Sophocles, *Fragm. Terens*.

<sup>3</sup> It might be supposed that marriages contracted irrespective of the love of the parties would only produce misery; but this is far from being the case. It, no doubt, fostered licentiousness on the part of the men; but before Aristotle could draw the beautiful picture of a well-ordered family which he has given us in his *Œconomics*, or even speak as he has done in the *Ethics* (viii. 12) of the virtuous friendship of man and wife, he must have seen some happy marriages. What can be said in favour of the system may be seen in the interesting volume, *French Home Life*. The whole subject of the Greek women is well discussed by Becker in his *Charicles*, with his usual copious references; and by Mr. Mahaffy in his *Social Life of the Greeks*.

marriage among this section of the Corinthian population might have served as an example to the rest.

Secondly, it is to be considered that, not only had Paul to speak of marriage as he found it, but also that he was here only giving answers to some special questions, and not discussing the whole subject in all its bearings. There might be other points which to his mind seemed equally important; but his advice not having been asked about these, he passes them by. He introduces the subject in a manner fitted to remind us that he has no intention of propounding his views on marriage in a complete and systematic form,—“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me.” There had arisen in the Corinthian Church certain scruples about marriage; and as the Church was composed of persons who would naturally take very different views on the subject, these scruples might not be easily removed. Among the Jews it was believed that marriage was a duty;<sup>1</sup> “so much so that he who, at the age of twenty, had not married was considered to have sinned.”<sup>2</sup> Among the Gentiles the tendency to celibacy was so strong that it was considered necessary to counteract it by legal enactment.<sup>3</sup> In a community previously dis-

<sup>1</sup> Even the Essenes, though themselves “neglecting wedlock” (according to Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* ii. 8. 2), yet did not absolutely forbid marriage. How far their opinions had spread at this time we cannot say. The declared Essenes seem never to have exceeded a few thousands.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley *in loc.*

<sup>3</sup> Among the Romans in early times voluntary celibacy was considered censurable and even guilty (Becker's *Gallus*, E. Tr. p. 176). But the state of matters under the Empire, and the consequent distaste for marriage, which even Augustus had endeavoured to correct both by stringent decrees against celibacy and by offering rewards to the married, are well known.

posed to take such opposite views of marriage difficulties were sure to arise. Those who were pre-disposed to disparage the married state would throw contempt upon it as a mere concession to the flesh ; they apparently even urged that Christians being new creatures, their whole previous relationships were dissolved. To St. Paul, therefore, appeal is made.

The questions referred to Paul resolve themselves into two : Whether the unmarried are to marry ; and whether the married are to continue to live together.

In reply to the former question, whether the unmarried are to marry, he first states the duty of unmarried persons themselves (in verses 2, 7, 8, 9) ; and afterwards (in verses 25-39) he explains the duty of parents to their unmarried daughters.

I. First, then, we have St. Paul's counsel to the unmarried. This is summed up in the words : "I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I," that is to say, if they remain unmarried, Paul being probably the only unmarried Apostle.<sup>1</sup> But if any man's temperament be such that he cannot settle undistractedly to his work without marrying ; if he is restless and ill at ease, and full of natural cravings which make him think much of marriage, and make him sure he would be less distracted in married life,—then, says Paul, let such an one by all means marry. But do not misunderstand me, he says ; this is permission I am giving you,—not commandment. I do not say you *must* or ought to marry ; I say you *may*, and, in certain circumstances, *ought*. Those among you who

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. ix. 5.

say a man sins if he do not marry, talk nonsense. Those among you who feel a quiet superiority because you are married, and think of unmarried people as undergraduates who have not attained a degree equal to yours, are much mistaken if you suppose that I am of your mind. When I say, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband," I do not mean that every man who wishes to come as near perfection as possible must go and marry, but what I speak, I speak by way of permission; I permit every man to marry who deliberately believes he will be the better for marrying. So far from thinking that every man ought to marry, or that married men have somehow the advantage over single men, I think the very opposite, and would that *all* men were even as I myself; only I know that to many men it is not so easy as it is to me to live unmarried, and therefore I do not advise them to a single life.

But this advice of St. Paul's proceeds not from any ascetic tendency, but from the practical bias of his mind. He had no idea that marriage was a morally inferior condition; on the contrary, he saw in it the most perfect symbol of the union of Christ and the Church. But he thought that unmarried men were likely to be most available for the work of Christ, and therefore he could not but wish it were possible, though he knew it was not possible, that all unmarried men should remain unmarried.

His reason for thinking that unmarried men would be more efficient in the service of Christ is given in the 32nd and 33rd verses: "He that is unmarried

careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife;" an opinion quite similar to that which Lord Bacon pronounced when he said: "Certainly the best works and of greatest merit for the public have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men, who both in affection and means have married and endowed the public." Given two men with equal desire to serve Christ, but the one married and the other unmarried, it is obvious that the unmarried man has more means and opportunities of service than he who has a large family to support. No doubt a good wife may stimulate a man to liberality, and may greatly increase his tenderness towards deserving objects of charity; but the fact remains that he who has seven or ten mouths to fill cannot have so much to give away as if he had but himself to support. Then, again, however alike in sentiment husband and wife may be, there are sacrifices which a married man may not make. With the unmarried man there need be no other consideration than this: How can I best serve Christ? With the married man there must always be other considerations. He cannot ignore or forswear the ties with which he has bound himself; he cannot act as if he had only himself to consider. The unmarried man has life and the world before him, and may choose the most ideal and perfect style of living he pleases. He may seek to realize, as many in recent times have realized, the exact apostolic idea of how it is best to spend a human life. He may choose to devote himself to the elevation of some one class of

the community, or he is free to go to the ends of the earth and preach the gospel. He has no one thing to consider but how he may please the Lord. But the married man has limited his range of choice, and has cut himself off from some at least of the most influential ways of doing good in the world. It is, therefore, to the unmarried that the State looks for the manning of the army and navy; it is to the unmarried that Society looks for the nursing of the sick and for the filling of posts of danger; and it is on the unmarried that the Church depends for a large part of her work, from teaching in Sunday-Schools to occupying unhealthy and precarious out-posts in the Mission field.

But while St. Paul makes no scruple of saying that for many purposes the unmarried man is the more available, he says also: Beware how *you*, individually, think yourself a hero, and able to forego marriage. Beware lest, by choosing a part which you are not fit for, you give Satan an advantage over you, and expose yourself to constant temptation, and pass through life distracted by needless deprivation. Far be it from me, says Paul, "to cast a snare upon you," to invite or encourage you into a position against which your nature would unceasingly rebel, to prompt you to attempt that for which you are constitutionally unfit, and thereby to make your life a chronic temptation. "Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that." And if any man fancies that, because there are advantages in being unmarried, therefore that is the best state for him; or if, on the other hand, any man fancies that, because most men seem to find

great happiness in marriage, he also needs marriage to complete his happiness, both of these men leave out of account that which is chiefly to be taken into account, viz., the special temperament, calling, and opportunities of each.

The common sense and wise counsel of this Chapter are sometimes half-jestingly put aside by the idle remark that St. Paul, being himself unmarried, takes a biassed view of the subject. But the chief merit of the whole passage is that St. Paul positively and expressly declines to judge others by himself, or himself by others. What is good for one man in this respect is not good, he says, for another : every man must ascertain for himself what is best for him. And this is precisely what is lacking in the popular feeling and talk about marriage. People start in life, and are encouraged to start in life, on the understanding that their happiness cannot be complete till they are married ; that they are in some sense incomplete and unsatisfactory members of Society until they marry. Now, on the contrary, people should be taught not to follow one another like sheep, nor to suppose that they will infallibly find happiness where others have found it. They should be taught to consider their own make and bent, and not to take for granted that the cravings they feel for an indefinite addition to their happiness will be satisfied by marriage. They should be taught that marriage is but one out of many paths to happiness ; that it is possible celibacy may be the straightest path to happiness for them ; and that many persons are so constituted that they are likely to be much more useful unmarried than married. They should, above



all, be taught that human life is very wide and multifarious ; and that, to effect his ends, God needs persons of all kinds and conditions ; so that to pre-judge the direction in which our usefulness and happiness are to run is to shut God out of our life. There can be no doubt that the opposite way of speaking of marriage as the great settlement in life has introduced much misery and uselessness into the lives of thousands.

It is this, then, which not only signally illustrates the judicial balance of the Apostle's mind, but at the same time gives us the key to the whole Chapter. The capacity for celibacy is a gift of God to him who possesses it ; a gift which may be of eminent service, but to which no moral value can be attached. There are many such diversities of gifts among men, gifts of immense value, but which may belong to bad as well as to good men. For example, two men travel together ; the one can go without food for twelve hours, the other cannot, but if you repair his strength every five hours, he can go through as much fatigue as the other. This power of abstinence is a valuable gift, and has frequently enabled men in certain circumstances to save life or perform other important service. But no one would dream of arguing that because a man possessed this gift, he was therefore a *better* man than his less-enduring friend. Unfortunately, so simple a distinction has not been kept in view. In the most powerful Church in the world celibacy is regarded as a virtue in itself, so that men with no natural gift for it have been encouraged to aim at it ; with what results we need not say.

But while there is no virtue in remaining unmarried, there is virtue in remaining unmarried for the sake of serving Christ better. Some persons are kept single by mere selfishness; having been accustomed to orderly and quiet ways, they shrink from having their personal peace broken in upon by the claims of children. Some shrink from being tied down to any definite settlement in life; they like to feel unencumbered, and free to shift their tent at short notice. Some dread responsibility and the little and great anxieties of family life. A few have the feeling of the miser, and prefer the possibility of many conceivable marriages to the actuality of one. For such persons to make a virtue of their celibacy is absurd. But all honour to those who recognize that they are called to some duty they could not discharge if married; all honour to that eldest son of an orphaned family who sees that it is not for him to please himself, but to work for those who have none to look to but him. There are, here and there, persons who, from the highest motives, decline marriage; persons conscious of some hereditary weakness, physical or mental; persons who, on a deliberate survey of human life, have seemed to themselves to recognize that they are called to a kind of service with which marriage is incompatible. We may be thankful that in our own country and time there are men and women of sufficiently heroic mould to exemplify the wisdom of the Apostle's counsel. Such devotion is not for every one. There are persons of a soft and domestic temperament who need the supports and comforts of home life, and

nothing can be more cruel and ill-advised than to encourage such persons to turn their life into a channel in which it was never intended to run. But it is equally to be lamented that, where there are women quite capable of a life of self-devotion to some noble work, they should be discouraged from such a life by the false and foolish and petty notions of Society, and should be taught to believe that the only way in which they can serve their Lord is by caring for the affairs of a single household. No calling is nobler or more worthy of a Christian woman than marriage; but it is not the only calling. There are other callings as noble, and there are callings in which many women will find a much wider field for doing good.

II. St. Paul's counsel to the married. Some of the Corinthians seem to have thought that, because they were new creatures in Christ, their old relations should be abandoned; and they put to Paul the question, whether a believing man who had an unbelieving wife ought not to forsake her? Paul had shrewdness enough to see that if a Christian might separate from an unbelieving wife on the sole ground that he was a Christian, this easy mode of divorce might lead to a large and most unwelcome influx of pretended Christians into the Church. He therefore lays down the law that the power of separation is to rest with the unbelieving, and not with the believing, partner. If the unbelieving wife wishes to separate from her Christian husband, let her do so; but the change from heathenism to Christianity was no reason for sundering the marriage union. It frequently happened in the early ages of the Church

that when a man was converted to the Christian faith in middle life, and judged he could serve God better without the encumbrance of a family, he forsook his wife and children and betook himself to a monastery. This directly contravened the law here laid down, to abide in the vocation wherein God's call had found him.

The principle, "let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," is of wide application. The slave who heard God's call to him to become his child, was not to think he must resent being a slave and assert his Christian liberty by requiring emancipation from earthly servitude. On the contrary he must be content with the inward possession of the freedom Christ had given him, and must shew his liberty by the willingness and spontaneity of his submission to all his outward conditions. It is not externals that make a Christian; and if God's grace has found a man in unlikely circumstances, *that* is the best evidence he can have that he will find opportunity of serving God in those circumstances, if there be no sin in them. It throws great light on the relation which we as Christians hold to the institutions of our country, and generally to outward things, when we understand that Christianity does not begin by making external changes, but begins within and gradually finds its way outwards, modifying and rectifying all it meets.

MARCUS DODS.

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