THE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH CHAPTERS OF 1 CORINTHIANS.

THE sequence of events during St. Paul's stay at Ephesus, and the exact circumstances under which he wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, are not altogether easy to determine, and the variety of the conclusions which have been reached by competent scholars may be taken to shew that the evidence is insufficient for demonstration. A question upon which a good deal turns is raised by the language of 2 Corinthians vii. 12. Who are ὁ ἀδικήσας and ὁ ἀδικηθείς? Are they to be identified with the offending son and the injured father of 1 Corinthians v., as most of the older commentators supposed? Or is the allusion in 2 Corinthians vii. to some incident, now only matter for conjecture, and quite distinct from that which is the subject of 1 Corinthians v., as most recent editors hold? I do not think that we can give a quite confident answer to these questions, but I shall set down in this paper a few of the considerations which incline me towards the older (and now unfashionable) interpretation. Even if they do not convince others, it may be worth while to call attention to some of the linguistic correspondences between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, and especially between 1 Corinthians v. and vi.

I have pointed out elsewhere [1] that to understand 1 Corinthians it is necessary to remember its structure. This letter was written in answer to one which had reached St. Paul from Corinth, asking for guidance on certain points, and it contains, besides, references to painful news which had been reported to him as to the state of the Corinthian Church. He had been told of the factions which had

[1] *Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. iii. p. 7 ff.

arisen, and also of a scandalous case of impurity which had occurred. He devotes chapters i.–iv. to the matter of schism and faction, and chapters v., vi. to the discussion of sins of the flesh and the proper way to deal with them. Then he passes on to answer in detail the questions which the Corinthians had put to him in their letter, each separate topic on which they had asked for advice being introduced by *περὶ δέ . . . περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι* (1 Cor. vii. 1); *περὶ δὲ τῶν παρθένων* (1 Cor. vii. 25); *περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων* (1 Cor. viii. 1); *περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν* (1 Cor. xii. 1); *περὶ δὲ τῆς λογίας* (1 Cor. xvi. 1). We are only concerned now with chapters v., vi.; and from the systematic arrangement of the letter and the circumstances which drew it forth, we should expect to find that these were concerned with the same topic. He has said what he has to say about schism, and before he goes on to answer special questions, he must deal with the only other topic which (so far as we know) came directly before him, in relation to the Corinthian Church, at this moment. Hence chapters v., vi., *primâ facie*, ought to be connected with each other and distinct from the rest of the Epistle.

It is, then, unsatisfactory to find that the commentators treat chapters v. and vi. as unconnected by any definite bond. "Verbindungslos" is Schmiedel's phrase. "The close of the last paragraph suggests a wholly different subject," says Lightfoot on chapter vi. 1. Stanley describes the beginning of chapter vi. as a "digression on the law-suits." And I do not find that any commentator treats chapter vi. as but the continuation of the argument of chapter v. Yet this I think we shall see is the simple fact, if we paraphrase chapters v.–vii. shortly :—

"I hear with sorrow that a thing which even the heathen do not tolerate has appeared among you. A man has been

guilty of sin with his stepmother. You do not feel the iniquity of this as you ought, and are puffed up with your spiritual condition (*πεφυσιωμένοι*, v. 2; *οὐ καλὸν τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν*, v. 5). I, then, pass judgement on the man and 'deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' Put him out of your fellowship.

"I told you in a former letter not to associate with men of unclean life. Of course, you have to live in heathen society, and you will necessarily meet such people (*τοῖς πόρνοις τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*); I did not mean that you could avoid all dealings with them. But my point is that you must not keep company with *Christians* (cp. *ἀδελφός*, v. 11) who are habitual evil livers in regard to sins of the flesh. To judge the heathen (*τοὺς ἔξω*) is for God, not for you. But you must judge members of the Christian society, and yourselves take cognizance of all such scandalous offenders as I am speaking of.

"It is intolerable that you should allow a case (*πρᾶγμα*) of this kind to be tried before the heathen courts[1] (*κρίνεσθαι ἐπὶ τῶν ἀδίκων*, vi. 1; cp. vi. 6, *ἀδελφὸς μετὰ ἀδελφοῦ κρίνεται, καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ ἀπίστων*). The proper tribunal is a tribunal of the Church (*vv.* 2–5). Rather than drag such a case into the law courts it would be better for the injured party to endure the wrong that has been done him.

"I am sorry, indeed, to hear that various scandals of this kind have arisen in your midst, that husband and wife wrong (*ἀδικεῖτε*) each other and defraud (*ἀποστερεῖτε*) each other of what is due. Remember that evildoers of this kind shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

[1] The Roman law under which a prosecution for adultery would be made was the *Lex Julia de adulteriis*. It is probable, however, that native Greek law would be enforced at Corinth, and this also recognized adultery as an indictable offence, the damages being assessed by the judges.

"Marriage is lawful, but it is not always expedient; some may choose to keep complete control over their own body (*οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπὸ τινος*, vi. 12). In any case the body is not for unlawful lust; you should glorify God in your body as well as in your spirit.

"Here comes in, then, the answer to your question about marriage and celibacy. Celibacy is ideally best, but monogamous marriage is lawful. Only let married persons remember that they have surrendered that complete control of their own bodies, of which I spoke (*ἡ γυνὴ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει, κτλ.*, vii. 4). They must not defraud each other of what is due (*μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους*, vii. 5), lest Satan tempt them to what is unlawful."

The rest of St. Paul's answer as to the relative merits of celibacy and marriage need not detain us. But I submit that we obtain a quite clear view of the entire argument in chapters v., vi., and of the connexion between them, if we recognize that in vi. 1–11 the Apostle is speaking, not of the impropriety of Christians ever appearing before heathen tribunals (although much of what he says would apply generally), but of the impropriety of sins of infidelity and adultery among Christians being left to such tribunals; *these* sins should be dealt with by Christian courts and judged by the Christian standards of purity, which are quite different from heathen standards. The principles upon which unchastity and the like are condemned by a Christian are the principles expounded in vi. 12–20, which would not be intelligible to a heathen. *Τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν μέλη Χριστοῦ ἐστιν.* That could not be urged in a heathen court; but it goes to the root of the matter for a Christian. And accordingly St. Paul is indignant when he hears that a Christian man at Corinth has sought redress at the hands of the civil law for an offence which ought to be dealt with by the Christian law. Not only the son, but the father, is blameworthy—the son

for his abominable sin, the father for seeking the aid of heathen courts in his desire to punish him. Both father and son, it is clear, were Christians, for St. Paul's rebuke of both presupposes this; but the woman seems to have been a heathen, for nothing is said of the duty of the Christian community in regard to her future.

I have called attention above to the double occurrence of the word *ἐξουσίαζειν*, its significance in vi. 12 being made clear by its use in vii. 4, where the reference is not doubtful. So too *ἀποστερεῖσθαι* is a word of quite general application, but its meaning in vi. 8 seems to be fixed by its meaning in vii. 5. It means in both places "to be deprived of conjugal rights." Again *ἄδικος*, *ἀδικεῖν*, *ἀδικεῖσθαι* are, of course, common words for any kind of wrong-doers or unjust dealing; but the lists which are given in v. 10, 11, and vi. 9, 10 sufficiently shew the kind of sin which the Apostle has specially in his mind. *Πλεονεξία* may stand for any kind of self-aggrandisement or over-reaching of one's neighbour; but its use here is the same as in 1 Thessalonians iv. 6, *τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ*, where the *πλεονεξία* that is condemned is the violation of the honour of a home. My first point, then, is that the *πράγματα* (vi. 1) which St. Paul urges should be brought before a Christian tribunal and not left to heathen adjudicators are cases of adultery or the like; and that the *ἀδίκια* of which he speaks throughout chapter vi. is the wrong which is done when domestic honour is hurt, the whole discussion being strictly relevant to the scandal that had recently occurred in the Christian community at Corinth (v. 1).

This view of the argument requires us to believe that the father who was injured so grossly by his son's sin was alive at the time of that sin, and at the time of writing; for the burden of St. Paul's exhortation is that the father

ought not to have dragged such a case before the heathen courts. By so doing he might win his cause, no doubt; but a Christian community ought to judge of the wrong done on quite different principles from those of civil rights, and ought to punish the offender by the severest of spiritual discipline and not by the mere assessment of damages. That the father was alive at the time of his son's sin made the sin even more shocking than it would have been had the woman been a widow. And the sentence which was to be passed was correspondingly severe. St. Paul directs the Corinthians *παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός*, a phrase which at any rate connotes excommunication from Christian privileges and Christian fellowship.

The meaning, however, of this sentence must be more closely examined. The purpose of the punishment to be inflicted was clearly remedial; not only the purification of the community, but the amendment of the sinner, is in view, for the man was to be "delivered over to Satan," in order that his fleshly passions might be eradicated (*εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός*) and thus that "his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The phrase *παραδοῦναι τῷ Σατανᾷ* occurs again in 1 Timothy i. 20, where St. Paul says that he has himself inflicted this punishment, i.e. of excommunication, upon the faithless and heretical Hymenaeus and Alexander, "in order that they may be taught not to blaspheme"; in this passage, as in the one before us, the purpose of the sentence is not vindictive or punitive only, but remedial, for the ultimate benefit of the person punished. Certainly *παραδοῦναι τῷ Σατανᾷ* is a very strong phrase, but then St. Paul regarded the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of Satan as exclusive. *Τίς συμφώνησις Χριστῷ πρὸς Βελίαρ*; "What concord has Christ with Belial?" is a question (2 Cor. vi. 15) to which his answer is not doubt-

ful. The force of the paragraph (2 Cor. vi. 14–vii. 1) depends entirely on this incompatibility of Christendom and heathendom. To "come out" from among the heathen was the only right course for a Christian man, and thus, conversely, to expel a man from the Christian society was to deliver him over to darkness and Belial.

We now proceed to inquire if the offender of 1 Corinthians v. 1, whose case suggested the discussion in 1 Corinthians v.–vi., is the same as the offender of 2 Corinthians ii. 5 f. and vii. 12 f. *Primâ facie* the two should be identified. *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*, and an exegesis which has to presuppose incidents and disputes of which we know nothing can never be quite convincing, nor ought it to be preferred to an exegesis which limits itself to the data of the text. But to suppose—as some writers do—that in 2 Corinthians vii. 12 St. Paul is alluding to an insult or injury inflicted on himself by a member of the Corinthian Church, or to a quarrel between two Corinthians other than that arising out of 1 Corinthians vi. 1, is to introduce an hypothesis which cannot be justified *unless there is something in the language of the later passage inconsistent with the language of the former*. This is what we have to consider.

The first argument that is brought against the identification is that the injured person (ὁ ἀδικηθείς) of 2 Corinthians vii. 12 seems to have been alive at the time of writing, while it is urged that this presupposes a degree of wickedness on the part of the offender (ὁ ἀδικήσας) that is not contemplated in 1 Corinthians v. In the adultery case of 1 Corinthians v. it is assumed by many commentators, e.g. by Schmiedel (whose examination of these passages is very elaborate) that the father was dead. But of this there is no hint in St. Paul's language. On the contrary, as I have pointed out above, the situation which had arisen pre-

supposes that the father was alive, for otherwise he could not have brought the case before the law courts. Once the connexion between 1 Corinthians v. and 1 Corinthians vi. is realized, we see that the father must have been alive at the time of writing; and thus there is no reason, so far as that goes, to prevent us from identifying him with *ὁ ἀδικήθεις* of 2 Corinthians vii. 12. The sin that is in question is as the sin of Reuben (Gen. xxxv. 22).

Further, it is noteworthy that the words *ἀδικήσας*, *ἀδικήθεις* of 2 Corinthians vii. 1, bring out exactly that aspect of the sin which is dwelt upon in 1 Corinthians vi. 7–9. It was that aspect of it which had caused the public scandal that is the object of St. Paul's solicitude. The father had, in the rôle of an "injured" party, gone before the heathen courts; whereas it was the duty of the Christian community to pass judgment in accordance with the distinctive principles of Christian purity. It was for this reason that the Apostle was so much relieved by the tidings which Titus brought him, viz., that the Corinthian Christians had acted on his direction and had taken the case into their own hands. They had proved themselves "pure" (2 Cor. vii. 11). The object of his intervention was not that he espoused the side of either party in this miserable litigation (*οὐχ ἕνεκεν τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος οὐδὲ ἕνεκεν τοῦ ἀδικηθέντος*, 2 Cor. vii. 12), but that he might awaken the Corinthian Church to a sense of what was due to itself and to him as its founder (*ἕνεκεν τοῦ φανερωθῆναι τὴν σπουδὴν ὑμῶν τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ*, 2 Cor. vii. 12; cp. 2 Cor. ii. 9, *εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἔγραψα ἵνα γνῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν, εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοι ἐστε*). He had written his rebuke not only that the offender might be reformed, but to test the acceptance by the Corinthians of his apostolic authority (cp. 1 Cor. v. 3, 4). Both from 1 Corinthians v. and from 2 Corinthians ii. and vii., it

is clear that the object of his indignation was rather the scandal to the Church caused by the sin and by the way in which it had been dealt with than the wrong done to the father by his wicked son. He is anxious that the Christian community should take cognizance of such offences, and judge them according to the principles of the Christian revelation. When he hears from Titus that this has been done he is rejoiced, and the measure of the punishment inflicted on the offender is a secondary matter.

This enables us, I submit, to meet the second objection which is urged against the identification of ὁ ἀδικήσας of 2 Corinthians vii. 12 with the sinful person of 1 Corinthians v. 1. It is said that the gentleness of St. Paul's language in 2 Corinthians ii. 5–11 is quite inconsistent with the heinousness of the offence described in the earlier Epistle. This argument was first put forward by Tertullian in his treatise, *De Pudicitia*. Tertullian is arguing, it must be remembered, in support of his severe view that sins of the flesh are unpardonable for Christians, and that repentance is more competent in such cases for heathens than for the baptized. It is essential to his position that he should refuse to identify the man whom St. Paul forgives in 2 Corinthians ii. and vii. with the man whose condemnation he directs in 1 Corinthians v. "Alius ergo erat, cui voluit sufficere increpationem; siquidem fornicator non increpationem de sententia eius retulerat, sed damnationem" (*De Pud.* 14).

No one is likely now to be convinced by Tertullian's reasoning, for it is no principle of Christian discipline—nor, despite Tertullian's vehemence, was the principle ever adopted by the Church—that severity must be unrelenting when the offender is penitent. The purpose of the excommunication ordered in 1 Corinthians v. 5 was remedial, so far as the offender was concerned; he was "to be de-

livered over to Satan . . . that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord." But if this punishment be not tempered with mercy, Satan may "get the better" both of offender and his judges (*ἵνα μὴ πλεονεκτηθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ*, 2 Cor. ii. 11). The latter passage plainly points back to the former one, as the introduction of the thought of "Satan's devices" shews.

Apart, however, from this verbal correspondence, it seems to be impossible, unless we accept Tertullian's view, to refuse to identify the offender of 2 Corinthians ii. and vii. with the offender of 1 Corinthians v., on the score that the language of St. Paul in the later passage is the language of forgiveness and charity. The only difficulty is in the words of 2 Corinthians vii. 12: "Although I wrote to you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong, but that your earnest care for us might be made manifest unto you in the sight of God." This, it may be said, is inconsistent with 1 Corinthians v., where certainly one of the causes of his writing was that the offender should be recovered. But it is a not infrequent idiom (it occurs in all literature) to speak of the less important or (for the moment) less prominent aspect of a transaction as if it were non-existent. The important object which St. Paul had in view when writing 1 Corinthians v., vi. was the stimulation of the Corinthian Church to take cognizance as a society of moral offences among its members. To assert its authority in such cases was, in a sense, to assert *his* authority, and he describes this here by a gentle periphrasis, "that your earnest care for us might be made manifest." This was the real motive of his letter, not at all that the offender should be punished (which was only a side issue) or that the aggrieved party should be satisfied.

The reason why this very unpleasant episode is worthy of careful examination is that upon the view which we take

of it depends the view which we take of the relation between the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians; and this again affects the question as to the integrity of the Second Epistle, which has been raised afresh in England of late years. I do not know that the connexion between chapters v. and vi. of the First Epistle has been suggested before, and it may be that even those who accept it will not accept the rest of the argument, which seems to me to favour the identification of the offender of 2 Corinthians ii., vii. with him of 1 Corinthians v. But such as it is, I offer it for examination.

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