

the sort in this great Encyclical. It is a bugle-blast of hope, a bugle-call to energetic action. It is in sympathy with the demand for social reform everywhere heard, and the generous efforts in that direction everywhere noticeable. It will put new courage into all men who believe that religion ought to be the chief factor in the great movement, and it supplies them with many wise principles for their guidance. Future generations will look back to it and bless it, and bless the great Pope whose teachings it so worthily crowns.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν.—Eph. v., 32.

“**M**ARRIAGE a mystery!” exclaimed the flippant Erasmus. “What is there mysterious in so ordinary a thing as the union of a male to a female?”¹ “As matrimony has existed since the beginning of the world,” says Martin Luther, “and still continues in use amongst the heathen, there is no foundation for the belief that it is a sacrament of the New Law and the exclusive property of the Church. For the marriages of the patriarchs were as holy as ours, and the marriages of unbelievers are no less valid than are those of the faithful; yet they are not supposed to be sacraments.”²

John Calvin, too, added his surly growl to swell the chorus by proclaiming that marriage was no more sacramental than “house-building, farming, shoe-making or barbering.”³

Thus did the great and holy Reformers tear the mask off one more of Rome's mummeries. For ages had the Pope of Rome deluded an ignorant world into believing that the conjugal union of a Christian man and woman was an awful mystery surrounded and instinct with supernatural grace and dignity. But no popish

¹ Apud Bellarm. De Sac. Mat., c. ii.

² “Cum matrimonium fuerit ab initio mundi, et apud infideles adhuc permaneat, nullæ subsunt rationes ut sacramentum novæ legis et solius ecclesiæ possit dici. Non minus enim erant matrimonia patrum sancta quam nostra, nec minus vera infidelium quam fidelium; nec tamen in eis ponunt sacramentum.”—De Captiv. Babl. Eccles.

³ “Et agricultura, architectura, sutrina, tonstrina ordinationes sunt Dei legitimæ, nec tamen Sacramenta sunt.”

trick could beguile an Erasmus or a Luther or a Calvin, men who claimed the right of examining mysteries in the bright light of their own reason.

Many years ago, when the present writer was a very small boy, he received a kaleidoscope as a Christmas gift from the good St. Nicholas. Hour after hour passed by as he gazed in ecstasy at the endless panorama of gorgeous colors and symmetrical forms revolving before his eyes; but finally the novelty of the thing having worn away, his Yankee instinct of irreverent curiosity gained the upper hand and he broke the magic toy "to see what it was all made of." Alas! he found only a few pieces of broken glass. That little instrument which the genius of Sir David Brewster had sublimated into a thing of surpassing beauty lay before him irreparably ruined, fit only to be swept away with the other rubbish of the nursery. We lost our kaleidoscope, but we gained a valuable lesson in practical philosophy which has often since stood us in great stead.

For what had Sir David done but put into the hands of children a philosophic toy which exhibited in miniature the workings of our Almighty Creator, of Him who with a handful of unsightly elements produces the endless phenomena of the universe? And whenever in our attempts to penetrate the veil and reach to the essence of things we disfigure this beautiful creation, when we destroy the color of the rose and the lustre of the diamond is it proper that we should conclude that color is a deception and light nothing but a fraud? Is God then to be adored simply as the Creator of oxygen and carbon, and not equally as the framer of those mysterious laws which out of a few simple elements have built up a glorious world? In opposition to the impious iconoclasm of the reformers, the Catholic continues to cry out with St. Paul: "*Great is this mystery*" of Christian matrimony! Great "*in Christ and in His Church!*"

Nor are we alone in proclaiming that marriage underwent a mysterious, sacramental change under the transforming hand of Christ. The whole world confesses and every child can see that there is an immense difference between marriage *in Christ and in His Church* and the polygamous alliances of the patriarchs of old or the unstable unions of the heathen. To deny that our Lord Jesus thoroughly reformed and transformed, sealed and sanctified the conjugal bond is to rob Him of the glory of one of the divinest miracles He wrought. At Cana of Galilee He worked a stupendous miracle which revolutionized human society; He changed water into wine! We do not refer to that transubstantiation of the material element which He effected at His mother's request. We regard this with St. Epiphanius¹ as a mere symbol

¹ Haeresis, 51, c. 30.

of the far more important change which He had in contemplation with respect to that institution which forms the corner-stone of the social fabric of mankind.

We are in the habit of speaking of *the* Epiphany of our Lord, as though there were but one. But Holy Church reminds us in her sublime anthem on the 6th of January that there were *three* Epiphanies, that is, our Saviour was on three several occasions manifested to the world, and each time in a new character. His first Epiphany was in His office of Enlightener of the intellect. After thirty years of seclusion He reappeared in the waters of the Jordan as the Giver of sanctity. His third Epiphany was at the wedding feast where He appeared as the Reformer of society. And badly did society need a reformation. Our surprise at beholding our Lord opening His public career amidst the rout and tumult of a wedding is increased by noticing how mysteriously He speaks and acts. He seems to be absorbed by anxious thoughts; and those thoughts and anxieties are evidently quite different from the motherly solitudes of Mary, to whom He makes the strange answer (speaking as if roused from a deep reverie); *Quid mihi et tibi est mulier? Nondum venit hora mea.*" Certainly at that moment the minds of Jesus and of Mary were engrossed by very different concerns,—Mary's full of compassion at the embarrassment of her hosts, our Lord's filled with grief as He contemplated the utter degradation into which the lusts of men had dragged a sacred institution. Upon His mother's insistence, He granted her the favor which she sought. It was a slight miracle to the Almighty One, and was accomplished in the twinkling of an eye. The time for achieving the greater transformation had not yet come; it was to be the toilsome work of many a century. Hence not idly is it stated in Holy Writ that not only Mary and Her Divine Son were present at this wedding, but *His disciples also*; for, no heavier task was about to be imposed on St. Peter and his venerable colleagues than the conversion of Jewish and Pagan into Christian marriages and the preservation of the state, when sanctified, against the brutal lusts of barbarians and the blasphemous sneers of the Luthers and Calvins. For nineteen centuries this has been the mighty work of every Christian priest, from the Vicar of Christ to the humblest missionary among wild nomads; and difficult it is to determine which has the harder task, whether the Pope who has to deal with a Henry VIII. or the missionary who has to teach the savage that men must not live like the lower animals. The doctrine which, incomparably more than any other, has christianized and civilized human society has been this of the inviolable and mysterious sanctity of matrimony. The wildest Indian who roves the plains is metamorphosed into a civilized man

directly he has mastered this vital doctrine, or rather directly the doctrine has mastered him. That society, on the other hand, be it ever so goodly to the eye, is rotten at the core and is relapsing into barbarism which is no longer founded upon Christian matrimony, one and inseparable.

It is not our intention to follow up the wild vagaries of modern theorists on marriage, or to undertake a needless defence of the Catholic doctrine. This article of the teachings of Holy Church is, beyond all others, *justified in itself*. It has been deemed, however, that a plain exposition of the Catholic position on the subject may be of interest and benefit to many who have not made a systematic study of Catholic theology.

I. Marriage, in the creed and general practice of the Roman Catholic Church, differs from all other marriages in a three-fold respect. First, it is absolutely indissoluble save by death. Secondly, it is essentially religious and sacramental. Thirdly, and as a logical consequence of its sacred character, it is subject to the supervision and legislative authority of the Church. These three characteristics of Catholic matrimony are so intimately bound up together that they may justly be said to be *one*; for, reason and long experience demonstrate that they stand or fall together. Without entering into the scholastic question as to the *matter* and *form* of this sacrament, it is advisable to keep before our eyes the close connection (which St. Augustine seems to have been the first to bring out into strong relief) between the *indissolubility* and the *sacramentality* of Christian matrimony.¹ This connection may be defined to be one of cause and effect, or of the end and the means. The end which our Lord set before Him in the reformation of marriage was to make it conform to the original conception in the mind of the Creator, the inseparable union of one man and one woman. The means which His wisdom devised to the attainment of this end was the fortifying of the unsteady human will with supernatural grace. Having thus sanctified and fortified the marriage state, He committed it to the custody of His Church, together with the other sacred ordinances of His religion. This is the sense in which we understand St. Augustine's often repeated dictum, that the *bonum sacramenti* of Christian matrimony is its indissoluble bond.

II. It is surely unnecessary to waste many words in demonstrating that it was the fixed resolve of Christ to sweep away polygamy and divorce from the face of the earth. With the single exception of

¹ The circumstance that this word *sacramentality* has not yet made its appearance on the page of any English dictionary simply indicates that our lexicographers have not been Catholics, and consequently have felt no need of the term. We ought to have no scruple in employing a word which has the sanction of good Catholic usage.

the Holy Eucharist, there is no point of doctrine so forcibly or so frequently inculcated in the New Testament as the unity and indissolubility of matrimony. In addition to the texts of St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, we have the vigorous utterances of St. Paul, and these passages are so well-known that we need not repeat them here. Those, however, whose first impulse it is, in discussing a question, to raise objections, may inquire how we reconcile the received doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church with the famous passage, Matt. xix., 9, which, it may be claimed, permits a dissolution of the marital bond in case of adultery. We shall limit ourselves to remarking: 1st. That there is no intimation in the alleged text that adultery dissolves the bond. It is merely stated that fornication is a sufficient ground for *putting away* the wife, which the Roman Catholic Church has always maintained. The unfaithful spouse forfeits every *right* which he had acquired by marriage, but his sin does not release him from any of his *obligations*. He is now thrown completely upon the mercy of the offended consort, who may either condone the infidelity or separate from the culprit eternally, nor is it in the power of Church or State to force a renewal of the conjugal relations against the will of the outraged party. Nay, it has at times been held that a condoning of adultery is a virtual participation in the crime. Hence, the immense difference between separation on account of adultery and separation for any other reason. Adultery is the only cause which can justify a final and permanent *putting away*. All other reasons may give rise to temporary suspensions of the conjugal relation, but the suspension ceases upon the cessation of the cause. If the wife become deranged in mind, the husband will commit her to an asylum; but this is not *putting her away*, for his heart goes with her, and his sympathy with her in her affliction but increases his affection. If on account of "incompatible tempers" they break up house and go back to their respective mothers, their childishness does not dissolve the vinculum. Sober reflection, the exhortations of friends and the ghostly admonitions of their pastor will sooner or later induce them to come together again and have sense. The Church, therefore, is in perfect accord with our Saviour in teaching that fornication is the only cause which can justify the *putting away* of a spouse, and that the wife who is thus put away is still a wife, so that she must "*remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband*" (1 Cor. vii., 11). "*Whilst her husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress, if she be with another man*" (Rom. vii. 3); "*and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery*" (Matt. xix., 9). The clause in St. Matthew, therefore, does not in the

least mitigate the precise and absolute utterances of the other passages of the New Law.¹

2d. We are not, of course, pretending after the fashion of Protestants that we have arrived at certitude in the interpretation of this obscure passage by any superior critical acumen or by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The law of Christ is not our private property, but the inheritance of the Church; nor has Holy Church been compelled to wait for our judgment before determining with exactness the meaning of our Lord's decree. From the earliest ages the voice of the Church has been clear and unflinching in pronouncing that adultery does not dissolve the marital bond. Without burdening our pages with unnecessary texts from Fathers and Councils, we shall content ourselves with quoting the celebrated passage of the Apostolic Father, Hermas, found in Book second, Commandment fourth, of the "Shepherd." "Permit me," says the writer, to his guardian "angel of repentance," "to ask you a few questions." "Say on," said he. And I said to him, "Sir, if any one has a wife who trusts in the Lord, and if he detect her in adultery, does the man sin if he continue to live with her?" And he said to me, "As long as he remains ignorant of her sin, the husband commits no transgression in living with her. But if the husband know that his wife has gone astray, and if the woman does not repent, but persists in her fornication, and yet the husband continues to live with her, he also is guilty of her crime, and a sharer in her adultery." And I said to him, "What then, sir, is the husband to do if his wife continues in her vicious practices?" And he said, "The husband should put her away *and remain by himself*. *But if he put away his wife and marry another, he also commits adultery.*" And I said to him, "What if the woman put away should repent and wish to return to her husband, shall she not be taken back by her husband?" And he said to me, "Assuredly. If the husband do not take her back he sins, and brings a great sin upon himself, for he ought to take back the sinner who has repented. But not frequently. For there is but one repentance to the servants of God. In case, therefore, that the divorced wife may repent, the husband ought not to marry another, when his wife has been put away. In this

¹ If, with Tischendorf, we drop the *ei* before the *μη̄ ἐπι πορνείᾳ* the last vestige of a difficulty will vanish, as the allusion will then be evidently to a concubine. This interpretation of the clause will grow in favor with the gradual acceptance of this emendation of the Greek text. See the *Synopsis Evangelica*, p. 110. It has been objected to this interpretation that the clause would not be germane to the subject-matter, for the question under discussion did not regard concubinage, but marriage. But in any sense the clause was merely parenthetical, and so little affected the general proposition that the other Evangelists omitted it altogether.

matter man and woman are to be treated exactly in the same way."¹

It is worthy of notice that Hermas does not inquire whether the separated parties be free to marry again. He is evidently convinced that they are not. He has doubts as to the propriety of living with an unrepenting adulteress and as to the duty of taking back the sinner if repentant, but no doubt whatsoever as to the continuance of the vinculum. A doctrine introduced thus incidentally comes upon us with much greater force than if it had been made the subject of a formal discussion. The questions which the author put directly to the "Shepherd" were the *quaeriturs* of a theologian; the tacit assumption of the indissolubility of marriage, even in case of adultery, was the unconscious witnessing of a disciple of the Apostles to the primitive faith of the Church. Certainly neither St. Augustine nor St. Thomas nor the Council of Trent has laid down the orthodox tenet with greater precision than this Father who was taught the Law of Christ from the mouth of the Apostles.

3d. The fact that the Eastern churches permit the husband of an adulteress to marry again during the life-time of the divorced woman, instead of weakening, only confirms the Roman position. For the practice is of comparatively late introduction and called forth earnest protests from the Greek Fathers. It is a well established fact that the enforcement of the matrimonial laws of Christ is the office and prerogative of the See of St. Peter. No inferior authority has availed to assert them with any success. The imperial legislation, being the outgrowth of paganism, never adopted the Christian doctrine of matrimony, and as the Greek Church gradually broke away from the Holy See it came more and more under the influence of the civil law, until it finally surrendered the cause of Christ to the State. Nevertheless, the superiority of the Roman doctrine has always remained before the eyes of the Greeks, as it does amongst our Protestant neighbors, as a sublime but unattainable ideal. In the course of the numerous and protracted negotiations for a reunion between the Eastern and Western churches this difference of custom never proved a stumbling-block. The Greeks more than once admitted the Western dogma in theory; but they have always lacked the vigor necessary to enforce it. The solitary objection on dogmatic grounds which we have been able to discover as advanced by any Greek against the Latin interpretation of Matt. xix. is found in the list of accusations drawn up against the Western church by Michael

¹ We give this important passage as translated by the Edinburgh editors. — *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 352.

Caerularius in the eleventh century.¹ But the very fact that this objection was first raised two centuries after the beginning of the Schism, merely evidences the degradation and degeneracy of the separated Greeks. Had the able and learned Photius dared join issue with Rome on the subject, he would have been only too glad to take advantage of so important a weapon ; but he was too well versed in the writings of the ancients and also too sensible of the glaring inconsistency between the faith and the practice of his countrymen to breathe a syllable on so delicate a matter. In later times the Greeks have shown the greatest anxiety to evade any controversy upon the question ; and they do so all the more earnestly because marriage amongst them having passed altogether out of the control of the church into the jurisdiction of the civil power, has become as unstable as it is in Protestant countries. We seek, therefore, no stronger confirmation of the truth of the Roman Catholic doctrine than is afforded by the present condition of marriage in countries which have separated themselves from its communion.²

III. We assume it as placed beyond doubt and controversy that our Lord allowed no dissolution of a marriage *ratum et consummatum*. It is to be observed, also, that He speaks, not as if introducing a new ordinance, but as enforcing a law never abrogated. In this connection we notice a remarkable difference of phraseology between St. Matthew's and St. Mark's narrative of our Saviour's conversation with the Pharisees. According to St. Matthew the Pharisees asked : " Why did Moses *command* to give a bill of divorce and to put away ? " Christ answered : " Because Moses by reason of the hardness of your heart *permitted* you to put away your wives ; but from the beginning it was not so." According to St. Mark (c. x.) our Lord asked : " What did Moses *command* you ? " The Pharisees answered : " Moses *permitted* to write a bill of divorce and to put away." The Mosaic legislation in Deuteronomy xxiv., was, therefore, at once a *command* and a *permission* ; but the command was absolute, whilst the permission was merely passive, extorted by " hardness of heart." The subject-matter of the command, as St. Augustine has observed, was not to put away the wife, but that the wife should *not* be put away without receiving from the husband a formal bill of divorce. It was, says the saint, " In order that the

¹ Hergenroether's Photius, v. iii., p. 823. We mention this because it is sometimes said that the Greeks *never* have objected to the Latin understanding of this passage. It is a case, however, of the exception confirming the rule, for the objection was never insisted upon.

² Read Perrone's remarks on the Greek Church in ch. 4 of the third volume *De Mat. Christ.*

thought of such a writing might moderate the rash anger of him who was getting rid of his wife; and, therefore, he who sought to interpose a delay in putting away, indicated, as far as he could to hard-hearted men, that he did not wish separation."¹ That is to say, we ought not to look upon the legislation of Moses as a relaxation of the original law of the unity and indissolubility of matrimony; much less, as a formal sanction of the custom of divorce. Quite the contrary; it was the aim of the great law-giver to make divorce difficult and odious. Hence he put a two-fold restriction upon it. He interposed the delay of a legal procedure; and he decreed (v. 4.) that the divorcing husband should be forever debarred from again taking the divorced woman to wife. All then that the Mosaic Law *commanded* was of a restrictive character; and the apparent toleration of divorce was merely the sufferance of an evil too inveterate to be at one sweep eradicated. But divorce was no more sanctioned than any of the other enormous evils at which God is said to have winked in times of ignorance (Acts xvii., 30). The marriage in Eden ever remained as the sole type recognized by Heaven and by healthy natural sentiment as the legitimate union of man and woman; and every deviation whether in the direction of divorce or of polygamy was essentially an evil to be attributed to "hardness of heart" and to be excused only on the plea of ignorance.

IV. It now remains to examine what provision was made by the Incarnate Wisdom to raise marriage from the degradation into which human passions had plunged it and to secure a permanent reform. The law alone had proved lamentably powerless; and had our Saviour contented Himself with a bare promulgation of the primeval law, He would have accomplished nothing. Nay, He would have left marriage in a worse condition than ever; for the old evils would have continued and the plea of ignorance could no longer be advanced. Here, if ever, was it necessary that where sin had abounded, grace should more abound. In this degraded institution human weakness clamored for divine aid. Nothing but the infusion of the Blood of Christ could purify the tainted fountain-head of humanity. And that Christ did pour into it the life-giving stream of His grace and bind it closely and mysteriously to His own Divine Person, that He "blessed" and "sanctified" it, and made it His, will not, we presume, be questioned by any one who confesses that He was something more than a mere preacher or law-giver. St. Paul was not making a rhetorical flourish, when he commanded the Christian to be married "*in the Lord.*" He intimated that the contract of matrimony was become

¹ St. Augustine on the Sermon on the Mount, chap. xiv.

an essentially religious matter, intimately bound up with the Christian worship. It belongs no longer to the category of natural things, to be compared with Calvin, to "house-building, farming, barbering or cobbling." "It becomes both men and women who marry," said the martyr Ignatius, "to form their union with the approval of the bishop, that their marriage may be according to God and not after their own lusts."¹ "Where shall we find words enough," cries Tertullian,² "fully to tell the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the Oblation confirms, and the benediction signs and seals?" From the primitive ages of Christianity the marriage ceremony has been regarded as a religious rite: and the marriage state as one of consecration and benediction. The religious feature thoroughly permeates the contract, making it sacred and supernatural. We do not intend to entangle ourselves in polemics, but we wish to draw attention to the peculiar method adopted by a recent Protestant writer in treating this subject.³ His dogmatic prepossessions prevent him from finding in antiquity any foundation for the Catholic teaching that matrimony is a sacrament. Naturally it is not difficult for one who is determined beforehand not to admit the continuity of pure tradition to explain away the clearest evidences. This is, in fact, the main reason of the different results arrived at by Catholic and Protestant scholars. The former come to the study of Scriptures and the Fathers expecting to find them in full accord with the present teaching of the church; the latter just as anxious to discover a discrepancy. When this writer, in his very learned and interesting narrative of the ancient marriage ceremony, comes to speak of the formula of benediction employed, he notices that it is "a form on which it will be seen that the final benediction in the solemnization of matrimony in the English church is framed." We, however, notice that in this as in many other matters, the Anglican Church has left out the very kernel of the benediction, no doubt because too redolent of Romanism. When did any Protestant minister pronounce over the happy couple the following passage of the ancient prayer? "O God, who hast consecrated the state of matrimony to such an excellent mystery that in it Thou didst typify the Sacrament of Christ and the Church," etc. This formula does not, it is true, state in so many words that matrimony is one of the seven sacraments; but it comes too dangerously close to it to be allowed to stand in a Protestant prayer-book. Indeed the entire patristic phraseology regarding matrimony and its "mystery" and its "consecrations" and its "benedictions" and

¹ To Polycarp, c. 5.

² Ad uxorem b. ii., c. 8.

³ Article "Marriage" in Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*.

“Oblations” and “cementings” and “signings and sealings” survives only in its proper seat, the liturgy of the Catholic Church.

V. We propose to devote the remainder of our space to the consideration of the text Eph., v. 32, which stands at the head of our article. Christ fortified marriage with supernatural grace, but does Scripture teach that He raised it to the dignity of a Sacrament? The Catholic will answer that St. Paul teaches it to be a Sacrament and a great one. “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church. . . . They shall be two in one flesh (*ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν*). This is a great Sacrament. But I speak in Christ and in the Church (*ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*).”

It is the peculiarity of this famous passage that it was considered to be as limpid as water until polemical writers fastened upon it. But during the last few hundred years it has received almost as many different interpretations as the words, “*This is My Body*.” There is probably no text in Holy Writ which better illustrates the difference between the Catholic and the Protestant exegesis of Scripture. The Catholic interpretation of the sacred writings grew steadily and quietly. It was not the outgrowth of controversy or excogitated for the purpose of warfare against existing opinions; on the contrary, Scripture was understood in the light of actual belief and practice. In the hands of Protestants, Holy Writ is essentially a weapon of offence against Catholicism. Texts of Scripture have been used as so many engines with which to batter down the traditional doctrine. The Catholic looks upon the Bible as the inheritance of the Church. When he reads it, his first impulse is not to seek therein passages wherewith to confound paganism or heresy, but such as serve to his own edification. This was certainly the method in which St. Paul himself employed the inspired word, for he has found meanings in it which are startling to modern criticism. We cannot, therefore, pretend to have much sympathy with the manner in which a distinguished Catholic expounder of this passage (whom we refrain through reverence from naming) treats the usual orthodox exposition of it. “This passage,” he says, “by no means furnishes a *proof* that matrimony is one of the seven sacraments of the New Law. . . . Why adduce a *dubious* passage, at best, like the present, in *proof*,” etc. Here is a writer who is evidently demoralized and panic-stricken. He speaks as if Scripture was to be used only as a quarry for polemical texts. Any passage which cannot be employed as a weapon against heresy he seems to regard as useless. Hence his insisting on *proofs*. What does he mean by pronouncing the passage *dubious*? Dubious to whom? Was it dubious to St. Augustine, or to St. Thomas, or to the Fathers of Trent?

Why should we pronounce a passage dubious which the Church, according to the Roman Catechism,¹ "confirmed by the authority of the Apostle," thinks that "nemini dubium esse debet?" When did ever pope, bishop or priest discourse upon Christian marriage without making prominent mention of this "dubious" passage? If it be the writer's meaning that the text is too involved and obscure to convict a heretic of error, this is another and a secondary consideration. One thing is perfectly certain, that the Catholic Church, founding herself upon "the authority of the Apostle," has always understood St. Paul to be referring to the sacramentality of marriage; nor is she likely at this late day to suit her interpretation of the passage to the convenience of polemical writers.

Having taken the pains to examine quite a number of Protestant commentaries on the subject, we are pleased to notice that the longer and deeper the question is investigated, the closer does the general interpretation approximate to that of the Catholic Church. We have noticed also that the commentators approach to the Catholic interpretation in direct proportion to the degree in which they have freed themselves from the baneful influence of the sixteenth century Reformers. This is, of course, to be expected; for it is only by studying the text with the calmness of the ancient Catholic writers that one can arrive at the understanding which prevailed before there were sectarian prejudices to sway the mind. Both Luther and Calvin exhausted the vials of their coarse language upon the "ignorant" and "blundering" Papists for "fabricating a new Sacrament" out of this text, which, they maintained, does not refer to marriage at all.² We will give Calvin's commentary *in extenso*.

"Arcanum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia."

"We cannot avoid admiring the acuteness of the Papists, who conclude from the word mystery (*μυστήριον*) that marriage is one of the seven sacraments, as if they had the power of changing water into wine. They enumerate *seven* sacraments, while Christ has instituted no more than *two*; and to prove that matrimony is one of the seven, they produce this passage. On what grounds? Because the Vulgate has adopted the word *sacramentum* as a translation of the word mystery, which the Apostle uses. As if *sacramentum* did not frequently, among Latin writers, denote *mystery*, or as if *mystery* had not been the word employed by Paul in the same Epistle, when speaking of the calling of the Gentiles. But

¹ Pars. ii., chap. viii., 16.

² See Luther's *Capt. Babyl.*, and Calvin in his *Institutes* and in his *Commentary on Ephesians*. The above text of Calvin is from the latter work.

the present question is : Has marriage been appointed as a sacred symbol of the grace of God to declare and represent to us something spiritual, such as Baptism or the Lord's Supper? They have no ground for such an assertion, unless it be that they have been deceived by the double signification of a Latin word, or rather by their ignorance of the Greek language. If the simple fact had been observed that the word used by Paul is *mystery*, no mistake would ever have occurred. We see, then, the hammer and anvil with which they fabricated this sacrament. But they have given another proof of their indolence in not attending to the correction which is immediately added: *But I speak concerning Christ and the Church.*¹ He intended to give express warning that no man should understand him as speaking of marriage; so that his meaning is more fully expressed than if he had uttered the former sentiment without any exception. The *great mystery* is, that Christ breathes into the Church His own life and power. But who would discover here anything like a sacrament? The blunder arose from the grossest ignorance."

What the Apostle meant to say, then, according to this infallible Pope of Geneva, was to this effect, "They two shall be in one flesh. This is a great mystery. But I speak (not of marriage but) of Christ and the Church."

We shall limit ourselves to making a few remarks on this admirable piece of biblical exegesis. 1. It was neither Pope nor "papist" that translated *μυστήριον* by *sacramentum*. That translation was made in the very "purest" age of the Church, before the time of Tertullian. Hence it is difficult to read with equanimity the tirade of Bloomfield against "the shameful blunder of the Vulgate translator."² One would fancy that this man imagined it was Leo X. who made the translation for the sake of "fabricating" a new papish sacrament.

2. It is ridiculous to deny that St. Paul was pronouncing marriage to be a *μυστήριον*. What else was he speaking of but marriage and *Christian* marriage? Being ourselves Americans, we blush for our brethren in Princeton when we find the great Dr. Hodge servilely following in the footsteps of Calvin, and deciding that "it is not marriage, but the union between Christ and His Church, that Paul declares to be a *μυστήριον* and the Vulgate a *sacramentum*." Such a pronouncement from a learned man confirms us in our opinion, that there is a great deal of truth in Dr. Briggs'

¹ In order to extort this meaning, Calvin (imitating Luther) deliberately changes the *in* of the Apostle into *de*. He forgot to do so in his head line, which stands there to condemn him.

² *Recensio Synoptica*, vol. vii. p. 654.

famous thesis that it is advisable to call in the Church occasionally to help us out in understanding the Scriptures.

3. It is an entirely gratuitous assertion that the doctrine of the sacramentality of marriage was built upon any word or text of Scripture. Is it not more rational to believe that the doctrine, already taught and practiced, influenced the early translator in using the word *sacramentum* instead of *mysterium*? It has, moreover, been remarked time and again by hostile writers that the word *sacramentum* is used in Scripture and antiquity, sometimes in a large sense of things sacred or hidden, and at other times in its technical sense of a channel of divine grace. In fact, until the schoolmen invented the term *sacramentalia* there was no word to distinguish the Sacraments instituted by Christ from such other sacred signs and symbols as the Washing of Feet, the Taking of Solemn Vows or the Blessing of a Church. This, however, created no inconvenience to those who learned the Christian doctrine from the living Church. To the present day, the Greeks use the word *μυστήριον* in the larger sense of a *mystery*, and in the technical sense of the seven sacraments of the New Law; and if we took time to think, we could easily adduce many instances in which we do likewise. We can give a novel illustration of this in a work just published for the first time by Dr. Schulte. We refer to the Summa of Stephen of Tournay, one of the very earliest commentators on Gratian. On page 131 he tells us there are *seven* sacraments, and he names them correctly. On page 134 he startles us by observing that "some sacraments may be repeated, such as the anointing of the sick and the *dedication of churches*; others may not be repeated, as, for instance, Baptism, the *Consecration of Virgins* and the Ordination of Priests." A little attention to this peculiarity of phraseology among the ancients would have preserved some Catholic writers from pronouncing rash judgments on the orthodoxy of the earliest canonists. They used the words *sacrament* and *mystery*, of all the sacred rites and symbols existing in the Church, and left it to their reader to learn elsewhere whether those rites were of divine institution with an annexed promise of grace or introduced by the Church as subsidiary means to the salvation of souls. So when St. Paul pronounces marriage to be a great *mystery* or *sacrament* of the Christian religion, we might have remained in doubt as to the manner in which it conveys grace, had not Holy Church taught us that it is a true sacrament of the New Law. It is, therefore, the doctrine which has determined the text, not the text which has "fabricated" the doctrine.

4. If the Catholic "mistake" arose from ignorance that St. Paul wrote *mystery* instead of *sacramentum*, how are we to explain the fact that the Greeks who knew nothing of the word *sacramentum*

nevertheless hold with the Latins, that marriage is a sacrament, and a great one? The "ignorance" and the "blunder" and the "folly" and all the other complimentary expressions rebound upon the head of the rash man, who imagined that he alone possessed knowledge and wisdom. Calvin has had his day, and is dead; Catholic truth remains on its old foundation.

Let us now see how the passage is handled by Protestant writers who have approached the subject, not with the design of overturning Romanism, but in the honest endeavor of enlightening *themselves* as to its meaning. Dr. Barry, in Ellicott's New Testament, expounds as follows: "*This mystery is a great one.* The words apply to the type as well as to the anti-type. 1. The indissoluble and permanent sacredness of marriage, as all history shows, is a "mystery," that is, a secret of God's law, fully revealed in Christ alone. For in heathen, and, to some extent, even in Jewish thought, marriage was a contract, far less sacred than the indissoluble tie of blood; and wherever Christian principle is renounced or obscured, that ancient idea recurs in modern times." Rev. F. Meyrick (the same who wrote the article *Marriage* in Smith's "Dictionary") has the following exposition in Cook's "Commentary": "*This mystery is great.* The mystery is the analogy between the marriage-state and the spiritual union betwixt Christ and the Church. . . . But though no support can be derived from the passage for the theory that marriage is one of the sacraments of His^c Church, yet the holiness of the estate is evidenced by it. Marriage is no mere contract, but a religious rite."

Rückert, in Meyer's "Commentary" makes a very sensible observation. He "despairs of more precise explanation, as the passage stands forth in an abrupt form *merely as a hint thrown out for the more initiated.*" We believe he is entirely correct, and had we no other source of information than this bare text we should likewise pronounce it a mystic text "thrown out to the more initiated." But how different is this from the shallow dogmatism of Calvin!

Lastly we shall quote from a work just published; and we do it all the more willingly because the author is a professor in a Wesleyan College. We have often found a fairer treatment of dogmatic subjects in Evangelical writers than in those extremely High Anglicans whose prime article of faith seems to be hatred of the Pope. Professor Joseph Agar Beet in his "Commentary on Ephesians" (New York 1891) writes as follows:

"*This mystery* (same word in Rom. xi. 25): the marriage relation described in the foregoing quotation. See note under 1 Cor. iii., 4. *With reference to Christ and with reference to the Church:*¹

¹ It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that the Revised Edition has corrected that stupid corruption of the Reformers of the *in* into *de*. Personally we

these represented as distinct objects of thought. It is needless to discuss here whether marriage is a sacrament; for this would involve a definition of the term.¹ Certainly, marriage cannot be put on a level with the two rites ordained by Christ for all His servants. But Paul's teaching here implies clearly its unchangeable sacredness. And this felt sacredness has ever found expression in acts of worship accompanying the marriage ceremony. Callous must they be who can enter the solemn obligations of wedlock without recognizing its divine sanction and sacred duties."

We have very little to animadvert upon these expositions of the text. If these writers have not found in it the Sacrament of Matrimony, this has been owing to more radical errors regarding the method of justification and the nature of sacraments in general. If ever they become "more initiated" they will surely adopt the Catholic interpretation of St. Paul's "abrupt hint."

We have now almost arrived at the end of our task, which has been, as we premised, a task rather of exposition than of proof. As we have never attempted the herculean labor of framing for ourselves a system of religion out of the Bible, we do not consider ourselves to be fit judges of what can and what can not be extracted with certitude from the letter of the sacred writings. The number of texts of Scripture dogmatically expounded by Holy Church is comparatively small, and this passage of St. Paul is not one of them.² Instead of putting an official sanction upon the ancient interpretation of Eph. v. 32, the Council of Trent limited itself to the assertion: *Paulus Apostolus innuit*. As if to say, the Church feels that the Apostle here enunciates the doctrine of the sacramentality of marriage, but it is a feeling which has not arisen from parsing and grammatical analysis. As we said above, those who are not already aware that Christ raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament will scarcely be able to learn it from this "abrupt hint thrown out to the more initiated."

Approaching the subject in an indirect way, let us ask with Erasmus, "Where is the *mystery* in marriage," if it be not a sacra-

think too much stress is placed upon the *etis* where we should have expected *et*. The sacred writers have often interchanged the two propositions, as in the preceding verse *in carnem unam* for *in carne una*. It seems to us that St. Paul meant to speak of marriage *in Christ* in the same sense as he had spoken of marrying *in the Lord*.

¹ A sensible remark! The reformers changed the old-time definition of a sacrament, and then complained that five of the sacraments would not conform to their new-fangled notion!

² As an instance of the extreme caution of the Church in making dogmatic decisions regarding scriptural texts, we draw attention to the guarded manner in which the Council of Trent, in order to spare the sensibilities of the Greeks, declared the sense of Matt. xix. 9. See session xxiv., Canon 7.

ment? Stripped of the supernatural glory with which Christ adorned it, does it not sink down to the level of the most ordinary of things? It becomes again what Christ found it, the plaything of animal lust or a matter of barter and sale. Modern atheism has sought to prevent this reign of animalism and materialism by making an apotheosis of Venus *à la mode* of the French novel. Perverted genius has indeed invested the sexual relation with mystery, but it is the mystery of iniquity. The seat of its worship is no longer the altar of God but the opera house and the theatre. It appeals not to the religious feeling of humanity but to those instincts which we possess in common with the horse and the dog. What wonder that the love thus engendered should have many points of resemblance to the love of animals? It was Cicero, we believe, who pointed out that nature had differentiated human love from that of the lower animals by confining it to the inseparable union of single pairs. This remains the natural human ideal; but without the infusion of grace from the Eternal and Unchangeable, it must remain *merely* an ideal.

Love, in the modern gospel, *ends* when marriage *begins*. The love has all but evaporated during the "mysteries" of the courtship. With the marriage ceremony, in modern life as in modern novels, the fascination ceases and the book closes. Raise the curtain after a very short time, and the adoring pair re-appear as plaintiff and respondent in a divorce court. There was an abundance of love and mystery in the old Christian marriages; but the love and the mystery were *subsequent* to the tying of the nuptial knot.

Can the pure code of Christ be made palatable to a corrupt generation? Possibly, in theory; for where is the drunkard who does not admire temperance, or the libertine who reveres not chastity? But so long as false notions prevail of human life and destiny; so long as Epicureanism and naturalism are the guiding principles of society, there will be very little room for the old gospel of mortification and self-restraint. The Church, however, will hold her course with characteristic firmness, and *qui potest capere capiat*.

On a future occasion we shall show how faithfully St. Peter has fulfilled the obligation laid upon him of carrying into effect the matrimonial reforms of His Divine Master.