

IDENTITY OF THE VIRGIN IN
I CORINTHIANS 7:36

BY ROBERT J. COVER

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1960

GRACE
W

PREFACE

The purpose of the critical monograph is to determine the identity of the "virgin" mentioned in 1 Cor. 7:36. Though the word itself is plain, the interpretation and resultant meaning hinges greatly upon the exact reference of this one word. Thus, the writer finds himself dealing only with the major problem; for the interpretation of the passage rests upon the identity of this "virgin." Though the context is used considerably as evidence there seems to be no minor problem which must be settled before the major problem can be considered.

Much appreciation goes to Dr. Homer Kent, Sr., for his help and encouragement in the preparation of this monograph. To Dr. Benjamin Hamilton is due a great amount of gratitude for his assistance in presenting the mechanics of writing such a paper. The entire faculty of Grace Theological Seminary is to be commended for their firm stand concerning the plain teaching of Holy Scripture. It is this attitude in the classroom that has meant so very much to the writer.

The writer is deeply grateful to God who has proven faithful in every test of life. The writing of this paper was a great spiritual blessing as well as a precious time of instruction. May it be used only and always for the praise of Him "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	1
INTRODUCTION	2
GREEK TEXT	6
ENGLISH VERSIONS	8
ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND	11
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM	14
VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS	16
<u>Major Problem: Who Is the Virgin?</u>	
WRITER'S INTERPRETATION	21
<u>Major Problem: Who Is the Virgin?</u>	
ENGLISH PARAPHRASE	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

INTRODUCTION

There were three basic reasons for choosing this text. It goes without saying that this is a very difficult verse and few have made a detailed study of it. Though it is difficult it deals with a matter which is of interest to everyone--that is, "to marry or not to marry." Young people facing Christian service find this quite often a problem and sometimes have not seen the principles involved in this verse and therefore have made decisions which bring regrets in later years.

The second reason for this choice is that the writer is now, and intends to be, a pastor. The problems of marriage and celibacy are continually facing the man who would counsel according to the Word of God. Therefore it seems that such a study would be entirely profitable. Too many pastors today who would minister the counsel of God leave the direct and clear standards of the teaching of the Word and attempt to handle these involved and complicated problems with mere logic and scientific research or lean entirely on church dogma. This study endeavors to make practical a verse that deals specifically with the problem of the unmarried.

A third reason is that the writer intends to spend the rest of his life among those who are predominantly of the Roman Catholic persuasion. The virtues of the celibacy of the priesthood are extolled by the Roman Catholics using a verse contained in this very chapter, "But I would have you without carefulness. 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" (1 Cor. 7:32-33).

Therefore this study is an attempt to find the correct contextual meaning and give it a practical application.

The gathering of material for this study proved to the writer that this was not to be a simply-interpreted verse. Aside from the usual interpretations and their general arguments there is not too much that can be found. Most commentaries mention an interpretation with a few logical or illogical ideas and go on. Few have endeavored to reason why this verse says what it does.

In talking with Christians today one gets the same results. Though there is a definite interest, few have given it much thought, and some who should have known better were frankly startled that this verse was in the Bible.

It should be stated that the writer at first did not want to believe the position held in this study. It did not seem natural nor did it seem necessary. In looking for the most convenient interpretation he precluded that for the most part it held no great importance for Christians today. But no one can study any portion of sacred Scripture and maintain this idea for long so this study has proven to be vital and practical.

The balance contained in Scripture is always fascinating as well as instructive. Because of a lack of balance or standards the world has taken these sacred truths and principles and has turned them into lasciviousness. Only in the Word of God do we find well-balanced standards which are good for every society.

Thus this verse does have practical as well as doctrinal value to us today.

GREEK TEXT

According to The New Testament in the Original Greek,
edited by Westcott and Hort

Εἰ δέ τις ἀσχημονεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν παρθένον
αὐτοῦ νομίζει ἢ ὑπέρακμος, καὶ
οὕτως ὀφείλει γίνεσθαι, ὃ θέλει ποιεῖτω·
οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει χαμείτωσαν.

VARIANT READING: Nestle lists only χαμείτω for
χαμείτωσαν.^o This is merely the
shortened form of the very same word and
does not concern the problem.

Wiclif, 1380

And if any man gessith hymself to be seen foule on his virgyn, that sche be ful woxun, and so it bihoueth to be doon, do sche that that sche wole, sche synneth not: if sche be weddid.

Tyndale, 1534

If eny man thinke that it is uncomly for his virgin if she passe the tyme of mariage, and if so nede requyre, let him do what he listeth, he synneth not: let them be coupled in mariage.

King James Version, 1611

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

American Standard Version, 1901

Reads same as KJV except reads: "unseemly" for "uncomely"; inserts "daughter" after "virgin."

American Bible, revised edition, 1935

But if any man thinks he is not acting properly toward the girl to whom he is engaged, if his passions are too strong, and that is what ought to be done, let him do as he pleases; it is no sin; let them be married.

Moffatt's Bible, revised edition, 1935

At the same time if any man considers that he is not behaving properly to the maid who is his spiritual bride, if his passions are

strong and if it must be so, then let him do what he wants -- let them be married; it is no sin for him.

Berkeley Version, 1945, 1959

If someone thinks he is not acting properly toward his virgin (either one's daughter, or one's fiancée; probably the latter) in case she is passing the bloom of youth, and circumstances render it suitable, let him do as he pleases, it is no sin for them to marry.

Revised Standard Version, 1952

If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry -- it is no sin.

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

The church at Corinth needed help! Carved out of an entirely pagan background they needed much training and teaching in Christian doctrine. The matter of marriage must have been a real problem to them for it is not hard to imagine existing then all the entanglements of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and widowhood, as well as problems facing those contemplating marriage for the first time.

Our problem focuses on verse thirty-six where apparently the father has full control over the marriageability of his daughter. This is certainly not in accordance with our present day thinking nor the practices of today's society in much of the modern civilized world.

In dealing with the matter of unmarried men and women most churches recognize a very sensitive and personal problem and let it go at that. Therefore many people have very little to do with this chapter and verse thirty-six is virtually ignored. The most some people ever get out of this verse is the thought of Spurgeon as quoted by Gray and Adams:

I have known brethren who had a great deal more care before than after marriage, and who served God better in the married estate. That is the rule to judge by. Many men and women rush into marriage when they know that it must involve them in all sorts of care and hinder them in the Master's service. For Christians, the best place is where they can

do the most for Jesus.¹

We certainly would not disagree with Spurgeon. But we would carefully examine this text and endeavor to find the real meaning and the practical application.

Paul was aware of the problem at Corinth. In all the Bible there is not a more awful description of human sin and degradation than the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans -- and it was written from Corinth.

The immediate problem is the identity of the "Virgin" (Παρθενος). There is no doubt as to its basic meaning, that it means a person who is a virgin. However, the application and teaching of verses 36-38 depends on the interpretation of this word.

¹James Comper Gray & George M. Adams, Gray and Adams Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, n. d.) V, 128.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Major Problem: Who Is the Virgin?

Major Problem: Who Is the Virgin?

Spiritual Bride View

In the history of the early church one finds that there were those who considered virginity as symbolical of a higher spiritual life. Therefore, they would become married "spiritually," living apart though possibly under the same roof.

Moffatt's Translation merely reads without explanation:

At the same time if any man considers that he is not behaving properly to the maid who is his spiritual bride, if his passions are strong, and if it must be so, then let him do what he wants--let them be married; it is no sin for him.

Robertson and Plummer, in the International Critical Commentary, though they do not hold this view, explain:

It is supposed that Christian spinsters with ascetic tendencies, in order to avoid ordinary marriage, each placed themselves formally under the protection of a man, who was in some sense responsible for the woman. She might or might not share the same house, but she was pledged to share his spiritual life. And the meaning of verse thirty-six would then be that the man who has formed a connexion of this kind may, without sin, turn it into an ordinary marriage.¹

It is interesting to note that to keep the grammatical use of γὰρ ἡμῶν (meaning "give in marriage") some have accepted

¹Archibald Robertson & Alfred Plummer, First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, eds. Charles A. Briggs, Samuel R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 159.

the absurdity that the man who has formed a special union with a woman may give her to another man.

Betrothed View

This interpretation takes the word "virgin" in verse 36 to refer to a maiden engaged to be married to the man (the main subject of the verse). The RSV reads: "If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed . . ."

The Berkeley Version and the ASV also give this implication. Easton, writing in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, claims that "this is not quite impossible."²

Celibate View

Some have generalized the word "virgin" in this verse to mean "one's own virginity." Thus the problem facing the man referred to in this verse is whether he should marry or not. According to Kelly the verse is to be translated: "But if anyone thinketh that he is behaving unseemly to his virginity, if he be past his prime, and so it ought to be, let him do what he will: he is not sinning: let them marry."³

Ironsides paraphrases it: "But if after thinking it all over, after living up to the present time of life unmarried, you think it might be better for you to marry, very well, do what you

²Burton S. Easton, "Virgin, Virginity," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, 1943 ed.

³Kelly, quoted by Herman A. Hoyt in Notes on First Epistle to the Corinthians, (Unpublished class notes at Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Ind., n.d.), p. 74. (Mimeographed.)

will; you do not sin in being married.⁴

Virgin Daughter View

This view, which is held by the writer, supplies the word "daughter" immediately following the word "virgin," giving the picture of the father who has the prerogative of the marriage of his daughter. Thus, if the need is present to marry it is no sin for him to give her in marriage.

Hodge clearly comments:

This is addressed to fathers, for with them, according to the usage both of Jews and Greeks, rested the disposal of the daughters of the family. The daughter must be of full age; and secondly, there must be some reason why in her case marriage is necessary: if need so require. The daughter's happiness may be involved.⁵

The ASV translated this verse:

But if anyman thinketh that he behaveth himself unseemly toward his virgin daughter, if she be past the flower of her age, and if the need so requireth, let him do what he will; he sinneth not; let them marry.

This view is held by almost every commentator consulted except those mentioned in the previous views. Among those championing this view are Lenski⁶ and Morgan⁷.

⁴H. A. Ironsides, Addresses on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Oakland: Western Book and Tract Co., 1938), p. 227.

⁵Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1950), p. 132.

⁶R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 331.

⁷G. Campbell Morgan, The Corinthian Letters of Paul, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1946), p. 101.

Also holding this view are Alford,⁸ Meyer,⁹ Barnes,¹⁰ Robertson,¹¹ Conybeare,¹² and Godet.¹³

⁸Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1894), II, p. 179.

⁹Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians, ed., trans., and rev., William P. Dickson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1890), VI, 176.

¹⁰Albert Barnes, First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), p. 132.

¹¹Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), IV, 135.

¹²W. J. Conybeare & J. S. Howson, The Life and Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians, (Hartford, Conn.: S. S. Scranton and Co., 1896), p. 28.

¹³F. Godet, Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, trans. A. Cusin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. Houses, reprinted 1957), p. 388.

Major Problem: Who Is the Virgin?

Spiritual Bride View

This view is incorrect because:

It is unscriptural.--Nowhere in Scripture does the Holy Spirit sanction such a union. Verse three of First Corinthians seven admonishes each partner to give to the other every debt that is due in the marriage union. This includes the physical union. Also verse five of this same chapter warns the partners not to defraud each other unless it was for a predetermined time agreed by both partners. This verse also states that there should be a termination of this time "that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

It does not fit into history.--The first instance of such a union cannot be found until toward the end of the second century.¹ If the Corinthians were writing about their problems it is quite unlikely that this would be one of them.

The grammar of verse 38 will not allow it.--The word δοῦναι can only mean to give in marriage. It would certainly be forcing the meaning of this word to interpret this to mean that the spiritual husband may give his spiritual wife in marriage to someone else.

¹Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1958), p. 121.

Arndt and Gingrich in their comparatively new Greek lexicon state definitely that the general meaning of this word γαμίζω basically means "to give in marriage" even though they recognize that the use of the "ίζω-ending" was increasing during this time as giving a more general meaning.²

Betrothed View

Though this view could be accepted according to the immediate text, that, ἡν ἡπαρθένον αὐτοῦ could be interpreted "his betrothed virgin," this view must be rejected for the following reasons:

It is illogical.--It does not stand to reason that Paul would countenance a situation of being engaged to be married without actually planning for the culmination of such an engagement. It would be unnecessary for Paul to give consent to marriage under these conditions. Morris gives this comment: "There is nothing uncomely in his not marrying a girl he agreed not to marry. Again 'his virgin' is a very strange designation for a man's fiancée. Why should people be engaged if not to marry?"³

It is grammatically impossible.--As stated under the objections to the Spiritual Bride view the use of the word γαμίζω means definitely "to give in marriage." It is quite improbable that the suitor would give his fiancée in marriage.

²William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 150.

³Morris, loc. cit.

The context will not allow it.--Verse 37 refers to the "keeping of his own virgin." This does not seem to fit the interpretation as meaning the suitor's fiancée for the suitor does not have the prerogative of his betrothed's virginity. Paul takes great pains here to give specific instructions to a man that appears to have a great deal of spiritual responsibility. Verses 36 through 38 is a discussion of one particular situation and the possible decision to be made.

Celibate View

This view is, in a sense, more credible than the preceding two. However, this one also is insufficient for the following reasons:

Biblical use of παρθένης will not allow it.--Morgan explains:

The word "virgin" here occurs, which is the Greek word παρθένης, which simply means a maiden, and always an unmarried maiden. The translation here in the Revised Version is "virgin daughter," the word daughter being supplied to make sense.⁴

This word is used fourteen times in the New Testament and always refers to a person who is a virgin. In Greek literature the same word is used to refer to one's marriageable daughters. There is no instance that the writer can find where it could refer to one's virginity outside the case in point. It would seem quite precarious to force this meaning in this case where there is doubt.

It does not fit the context.--The word χαρίζω used in verse 38 is used only in the sense of "giving in marriage." In

⁴Morgan, loc. cit.

Luke 20:35 there is definite distinction made between "marrying" and "giving in marriage." The usage of this word as found in its five other uses in the New Testament demands it to mean "give in marriage," as one would give a daughter or ward in marriage.

This translation would be irregular.--There is another word which definitely means "virginity." This word is παρθενία. All lexicons agree on this meaning. It is so used in Luke 2:36 where Anna is said to have "lived with an husband seven years from her virginity." It seems unlikely that Paul would have used a word, which does not have this meaning elsewhere, when there is a word which meant exactly what he wanted to say.

Virgin Daughter View

Having removed erroneous interpretations from the scene we wish to examine the arguments favoring the Virgin Daughter View. On the basis of historical, contextual, linguistic, and doctrinal arguments, this view is accepted as the only interpretation for this verse.

Historical argument.--The church at Corinth needed some definite teaching concerning marriage. Baxter describes the moral situation at Corinth:

Amongst the great provincial cities of the Empire Corinth was the most central, and was affected by all the various currents of the age. Standing on Grecian soil, it was a Roman colony, refounded by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C., the seat of Roman government and of Greek commerce. For profligacy the city had an infamous notoriety. Here vice was raised into a religion; and the 'idolators' of Corinth are fitly set between 'fornicators' and 'adulterers' (v. 9). From the filthiest slough of sin Paul's converts at Corinth were extracted (v. 9-11). Not even at Antioch had he seen the condition of the Gentile world--its pride and power, its fancied wisdom,

its utter depravity--displayed so vividly. We can well imagine how staggered and sickened Paul must have been by this huge quagmire of refined voluptuousness and gross sensualism; the filthy rituals of idolatry, and the soul-debasing "religions" which made animal indulgence meritorious; the swaggering pride of (supposed) Greek "wisdom," and the utter corruption of it all.⁵

Conybeare adds:

The plural in the Greek of "fornications" in verse two perhaps means (as Prof. Stanley takes it) "because of the general prevalence of fornication" with special reference to the profligacy of Corinth, where every unmarried person would be liable to special temptation.⁶

One can readily see that the problem of marriage would be a real one in such a morally depraved city. Paul quite evidently is thinking of the two elements in the church at Corinth. According to Fisher-Hunter:

It seems that there was an element in the Church which disapproved of the unmarried state (celibacy). This part was probably Jewish, for the Jews believed that every man and every woman should be married. Paul defends the unmarried state against those who thought it was wrong and unchristian and points out its advantages chiefly in relation to serving the Lord (vv.25-38). But those (the Greek element) who extolled the unmarried state to the extent of disapproving of marriage altogether needed to be corrected and this the apostle does (in verse 2) by plainly stating that the mating of one man to one woman is the normal state in marital relations and that such an association aids in preserving purity of life.⁷

In such a situation as this many problems would naturally arise in the minds of parents as to their attitude toward marriage for their children. Calvin explains:

⁵J. Sidlow Baxter, Explore the Book, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1957), VI, 109.

⁶W. F. Conybeare, Translation of the Epistles of Paul the Apostle, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia School of the Bible, n.d.), p. 25

⁷W. Fisher-Hunter, The Divorce Problem, (Waynesboro, Pa.: MacNeish Publishers, 1952), p. 14.

He now directs his discourse to parents, who had children under their authority. For having heard the praises of celibacy, and having heard also of the inconveniences of matrimony, they might be in doubt, whether it were at all a kind of thing to involve their children in so many miseries, lest it should seem as if they were to blame for the troubles that might befall them.⁸

That Paul should write to the fathers surprises the twentieth-century mind. Most of the differing interpretations are an attempt to get away from the "parental-control" idea. However, the overwhelming voice is that the father or guardian had absolute control over the marriage of his daughter or ward. Gulick, writing on Grecian life, declares: "Love-matches, therefore, were very rare, and marriage in general was the result of a pre-arranged contract between the parents of the bride and the groom, whose wishes were seldom consulted as a matter of right."⁹

Hodge finds no problem with this interpretation as he says: "This is addressed to fathers, for with them, according to the usage both of Jews and Greeks, rested the disposal of the daughters of the family."¹⁰ This interpretation is not nearly so strange as first appears when one considers that even today many of these ideas are inherent in our own society. Lenski observes:

When considering this answer we must remember the control which a father had over the marriage of his daughter in ancient times, remnants of which exist today in the custom that the aspiring son-in-law asks the father for the hand of

⁸John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. John Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1948), p. 264.

⁹Charles Burton Gulick, The Life of the Ancient Greeks, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1907), p. 119.

¹⁰Hodge, loc. cit.

his daughter, and that at the wedding the father gives the daughter away.¹¹

However, lest we think the Apostle as being somewhat harsh and irrespective of the wishes of the young lady involved we should see that he is very careful as to how he answers this question. Christian marriage is holy and sacred; quite unlike that known to the Corinthian society; and therefore, Paul gives his answer in the attitude which should accompany all contemplation of marriage.

Going back into Jewish history particularly we find that this attitude toward parental authority is in no wise a new thing. In the book of Numbers we note a most interesting aspect of laws regulating home authority and responsibility:

If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth; and her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand. But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her (Num. 30:3-5).

Here parental control is sanctioned by the Lord even to the annulling of a vow made by one under his authority. Young, writing in The Pulpit Commentary, has this to say:

God had laid a solemn injunction on children to honour father and mother, and we see here how careful he was to honour the parental relation himself. He puts everything in the shape of a vow, everything which the daughter was otherwise free to choose, under the father's control. He requires no reason to be given; simple veto is enough, if only it be uttered at the appointed time. The father had the responsibility which the daughter had not, and it was fitting that God should give the father all possible help in meeting that responsibility. To act rightly here demanded the whole compass of paternal duty. The father was not allowed to say that his daughter's vow was not business of his. He himself might not be a vowing sort of

¹¹Lenski, loc. cit.

person, and therefore under no temptation to neglect a vow he was not likely to make. But even if indifferent to vows himself, he was bound to be interested in his daughter's welfare, and do his best to keep her from future difficulties. Her limited life hid many difficulties from her eyes. It was not for a father to expose himself in later days to reproach from the lips of his own daughter. It was not for him to run the risk of hearing her say, "Why did not your larger knowledge and experience shelter me from difficulties which my inexperience could not possibly anticipate?" He must let the vow pass without notice, and when he noticed it must be with proper consideration. While it was within his right to stop the vow, he might in stopping it be doing a very unfatherly thing, and thing very hurtful to the religious life of his daughter. As God had honoured him and undertaken to help him in his fatherly relation, he must honour that relation himself. That relation from which God expects so much must be prepared to yield much in the way of care and consideration. The father may think too much of his own wishes, too little of his daughter's needs, and too little of the will of God.¹²

Throughout Scripture parental responsibility and authority is taught and upheld. This goes back to the basic concept and purpose of the home and God never intended this concept to change. As seen today, the home without such parental authority and responsibility cannot "train up a child in the way he should go." Thus, Paul is on Biblical and well as historical grounds as he speaks to the parent or guardian and gives them advice in carrying out their responsibilities.

Christopher Wordsworth attempts to give the attitude of Paul in answering this problem as he writes:

St. Paul, in that spirit of holy restraint and reverent reserve which mark his treatment of the subject, does not bring forth the virgin herself from her maiden retirement, and converse with her on the subject; but he addresses his discourse to her parent, not as if he supposed that the maiden herself was not to have a principal part in determining the matter, but in order to spare her modesty and delicacy, and because he supposes that her wishes and feelings will be confidentially and unreservedly communicated to her parent, whom

¹²D. Young, (homily) "Numbers" The Pulpit Commentary, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., n.d.), p. 398.

she will consider as, under God, her natural guardian and adviser, and whom, therefore, the Apostle identifies with her. He thus teaches parents and children their duties to each other and themselves in this solemn matter, the entrance into the holy estate of matrimony.¹³

Therefore, from the historical standpoint, the interpretation that the Virgin here referred to is the Daughter, or ward, is the most correct and desirable.

Contextual argument.--The entire seventh chapter of First Corinthians is somewhat unique in its clarity and dogmatic teaching of doctrine. Evidently, the Corinthians had written to Paul asking questions about the virtues and Christian doctrine of marriage (verse 1). Since Paul was at the time unmarried (verse 7) the problem would arise about the advisability of marriage since the founder of the Corinthian church was unmarried and was such a mighty man of God. Thus Paul would be the natural one to give the Christian views to this church. After giving the principles and doctrine of Christian marriage in the first part of the chapter (verses 1-24) he turns matter of the unmarried. He first appeals to the unmarried to remain as they are because of the "present distress" (verse 26) and that "the time is short" (verse 29).

This seems to have been Paul's personal reason for remaining unmarried. In 1 Cor. 9:2 he declares, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles?" In chapter 7 his argument for remaining unmarried (verse 7) seems to be because of the present opposition and persecution and the imminent return of the Lord. Paul was convinced that the Lord was to come very soon

¹³Christopher Wordsworth, The Holy Bible, (London: Rivington's, 1870), II, 108.

and in the meantime there would be much tribulation. Therefore, he wished that all would remain unmarried if they were so at the time. However, Paul recognizes some of the basic principles of life. He admits in verse 7 that "every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." Again in verse 9, "But if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn." Verse 36 continues this thought, "If she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, . . . he sinneth not: let them marry." Clearly, then, Paul sees an ideal state for serving the Lord, and that is to be unmarried (verses 28-35) but he never declares that this is true for all; only those who have the gift of continency.

Thus, the picture in verse 36 is one of a daughter who has reached the marriageable age and wonders about her future. The criterion for her marriage is whether or not there is a need for marriage.

Verse 38 uses an interesting word which demands the translation of "virgin daughter." It is the word παρθένη. This word is used five other times in the New Testament and is always used in contrast with ordinary marrying. It definitely means "to give in marriage." Here, then, there must be someone responsible for "giving" the virgin in marriage and the most logical one is the father or guardian. This explains verse 37 -- "and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin." This prerogative can only belong to the father or guardian.

A careful examination of the context also shows something of interest which may go beyond general interpretation. In verses 25-38 Paul is dealing with attitudes. He uses himself as an example of one unmarried for the purpose of serving the Lord. He elucidates

very clearly on this attitude in verse 34:

There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

Paul is not discussing the ordinary situation of a woman in the unmarried state. This he does in 1 Tim. 5:13-14 in speaking especially of young widows:

And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

But in 1 Corinthians chapter seven we have a different setting. The unmarried woman is shown as one who "careth for the things of the Lord." Her interest is that "she may be holy (set apart) both in body and in spirit." The purpose for all this is that the virgin "may attend upon the Lord without distraction" (verse 35). Therefore, we might further assume that this virgin daughter is not only in the unmarried state but is that way because of her desire to serve the Lord. This adds much to this interpretation and gives the parent the grave responsibility of carefully considering his daughter's situation in this matter.

Linguistic argument.---Here we will discuss the important Greek words of this verse; first, to see what they mean, and then to see how they fit in with the interpretation.

ἀσχημονεῖν This is an infinitive which may have an active or passive use. It means "to behave in a way open to censure toward anyone." Since we have ἐπὶ we see the object of this action as being toward the virgin.

According to our view the parent here is acting toward his daughter in a way that could be open to censure. This is naturally what the Christian wants to avoid. Three ways of misconduct are suggested.

1. Possibly, because of a selfish determination of the father he has not given his consent for his daughter's marriage. Thus, she becomes a spinster bringing somewhat of a disgrace, especially in the Orient, upon both the daughter and the father.¹⁴

2. Another view is that to withhold marriage from a girl of marriageable age, and anxious to marry, would have been to court disaster, especially in first century Corinth.¹⁵

3. This view deals with the suggested interpretation that the virgin would bring reproach upon herself and her family if after taking the "vow" of celibacy in order to serve the Lord, she find she does not have the necessary gift. Paul is careful to state that should some find themselves in this situation it is not a sin for them to marry.

Παρθένος. This word is used 14 times in the New Testament and always of one who is chaste, either masculine or feminine. The only logical "person" that this could refer to is the virgin daughter or ward. Since it refers to a "person" it does not allow for one to speak of his own state of celibacy. The word for this would be παρθενία.

The only view allowed by the general use of this word is the Virgin Daughter view.

¹⁴Godet, op. cit., p. 323.

¹⁵Meyer, loc. cit.

ὑπέρρακμος means "if she be of full age."¹⁶ This is an old word and appears only here in the New Testament. It comes from υπερ meaning "over" and ρακμος meaning "prime or bloom (acme) of life."¹⁷ For the Greeks, the man was at his "acme" at thirty, the woman, twenty.¹⁸ Hence, the virgin spoken of here has reached the age when a definite, mature decision of her marriageability can be made.

καὶ ὀφείλει γίνεσθαι is rendered "and it ought to happen." Morris feels that this means there is the absence of the gift of continence.¹⁹ St. John Parry declares that "οφείλει properly describes the Father's duty"²⁰ in that the Father decides what ought to be done since all the other verbs use the man (father or guardian) as the main subject of discussion.

So the responsibility of the father is to seek the welfare of the daughter. All things are to be considered, never deciding to the detriment of the future of the daughter.

γαμείτωσαν is the present active plural imperative of γαμέω, which means simply "to marry." Hence our word means "let them marry." This is the long form as it appears in Westcott and Hort, and Nestle's texts. The plural here has confused

¹⁶Alford, loc. cit.

¹⁷Robertson, loc. cit.

¹⁸Grosheide, loc. cit.

¹⁹Morris, loc. cit.

²⁰R. St. John Parry, The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, ed. R. St. John Parry, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1916), p. 121.

some and has been used sometimes as a basis for the "Betrothed" view, but this is not necessary. Findlay suggests the paraphrase "let the marriage take its course."²¹ Alford declares, "let them (his daughter and his love) marry."²² Lenski, in a practical approach, sums it up: "Let them marry" namely, the young people concerned, the subject of the plural verb is derived from the context. Even if Paul had written the singular: 'let her marry,' a second person would be involved."²³

So the daughter and her suitor "ought" to marry. This is an imperative almost demanding that this be done for the good of all concerned.

Thus, in examining the Greek text, we find that our interpretation does not have to force the meanings of any words but rather keep the basic meanings without resorting to a general paraphrasing. The writer can find no instance of any authoritative Greek scholar, who gives a thorough exegesis of this verse, using any other interpretation than the Virgin Daughter View.

Doctrinal argument.---The reader may think it strange that there should be a doctrinal argument. In this argument the writer hopes to give some comments on the doctrine of celibacy and the bearing that his verse has on this subject.

The writer wishes to state that he feels the verse used as the subject of this monograph was given secondarily, if not primarily,

²¹G. G. Findlay, St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Pub. Co., n.d.), II, 837.

²²Alford, loc. cit.

²³Lenski, loc. cit.

as a safeguard against the unnatural doctrine of celibacy. Since our view is that the daughter may have the desire to give her life in the celibate state for the service of the Lord, the doctrine of celibacy should be scrutinized.

We first might hear from the pen of John A. O'Brien, famed Catholic writer:

The celibacy of the clergy is not a precept of the divine or natural law, nor a dogma of the Catholic church. It is simply a disciplinary regulation of the Western Church, imposed with a view to the more effective discharge of the priestly duties and a close approximation to the ideal of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. "He that is without a wife," says St. Paul, "is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided."

During the first three centuries there was no law of the Church enforcing celibacy. Clement of Alexandria speaks of married priests and deacons, and the historical Socrates refers to a married episcopate in the Eastern Churches. To this day the secular clergy in the Greek Catholic Church, that is the Church in communion with Rome, are married though the bishops are celibates. In short, it is not a question of dogma, but solely of ecclesiastical discipline. On this particular point of discipline there exists a difference between the Church of the West and that of the East, though both are united in the acceptance of the dogma proclaiming the divine origin of the priesthood.²⁴

We want to take special note of his implication that only the unmarried can really be "solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord." Also we should note that even by their own admission there was no law of the church enforcing celibacy. However, Paul must have noted a tendency in this direction.²⁵ Paul gave this warning to Timothy saying:

²⁴John A. O'Brien, The Faith of Millions (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1939), p. 265.

²⁵W. M. Foley, "Christian Marriage," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1928 ed.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry. . . (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

This is exactly what happened. The trend was somewhat slow but as Lea shows:

In fact, even as early as the time of Cyprian, that saint, in allusion to the parable of the sower, had rated the comparative merits of martyrdom to virginity as one hundred to sixty; while after martyrdom had gone out of fashion, St. Patrick, in the fifth century, undertook a more elaborate classification in which bishops and doctors of the Church, monks and virgins, were rated at one hundred, ecclesiastics in general and widows professed at sixty, while the faithful laity stand at only thirty.²⁶

Possibly a seeming necessity for it encouraged the movement. As sacerdotalism and formalism developed the ceaseless round of daily liturgy would practically separate husband and wife. The teaching of the virtue of celibacy added to this practical situation produced a fertile hot-bed for this doctrine of celibacy. This finally became extreme asceticism as we see it today in the pretended celibacy of the Roman Priesthood..

Having taken such an attitude toward celibacy and its merits without reckoning with the demands of nature--as did Paul in 1 Cor. 7:36--we should expect to find the ultimate of such an attitude in the Manichaeism of Epiphanius, who declares that the church is based upon virginity as its cornerstone.²⁷ Nor should we be surprised when the adherents to such a view try to rationalize their licentious actions. Again we quote Lea:

²⁶Henry Charles Lea, The History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church (New York: Russell & Russell, 1957). p. 26.

²⁷Ibid., loc. cit.

In a tract in favour of celibacy, published at Warsaw in 1801, with the extravagant laudation of the authorities, argument is gravely made that as priestly marriage is incestuous, such adultery is vastly worse than simple licentiousness, the latter being only a lapse of the flesh, while marriage would be schism and arrogant disobedience, involving sin of a far deeper dye.²⁸

Blanshard observes:

Freud's wisdom was not available to the popes and theologians who first imposed celibacy upon a reluctant clergy, and they could scarcely be held responsible for failing to appreciate the gravity of the effects upon human nature of suppressing the basic human instincts.²⁹

It seems strange to note that both the adherents of the celibate life and the Apostle Paul were striving for the same goal in life--purity. It is with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit that Paul sees purity in both celibacy and marriage. They are not opposed to one another but go hand in hand as "every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7). Paul urges the father of the virgin--and certainly the feelings of the daughter would be considered--to seriously consider the advisability of both celibacy and marriage for his daughter.

Though there are definite pitfalls in marriage, there may be even greater danger in remaining unmarried. This is the great concern of the Apostle for the church at Corinth.

²⁸Ibid, p. 296.

²⁹Paul Blanshard, American Freedom and Catholic Power (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949), p. 132.

Conclusion

Historical argument.--The Virgin Daughter view is the only one which history will support. It was the responsibility of the father to see that his daughter was married if there was that need. Thus Paul was careful not to place responsibility where it did not belong. Though "parental-control" seems to us a thing of the past, our customs still include this idea. The book of Numbers definitely upholds such parental authority and responsibility even in the making of religious vows.

Contextual argument.--The virgin here seems to be one who has given herself to the service of the Lord in the unmarried state. Thus she would naturally still be "under her father's roof" and therefore under his control. Verse 38 demands that the man referred to in verse 36 be one who has the prerogative of the virgin's marriage. The parent or guardian only has this prerogative.

Linguistic argument.--In examining the specific words of the text one finds that to take the virgin daughter view does in no way any injustice to the Greek but rather any other view would demand a forcing of meaning for one or more words. The normal reading of verses 36-38 gives one the impression that it must be talking about a father and his daughter. "Let them marry" gives some people a problem at the first reading but though it is plural it does not demand that it refer to the man of verse 36. Rather, this command is to the man, "let them marry."

Doctrinal argument.--The doctrine of celibacy as practiced by the Roman Catholic Church was foreseen by Paul through the Holy

Spirit and therefore this verse. Paul does not encourage anything that would be unnatural to basic instincts therefore putting the servant of God in a precarious situation. The parent's responsibility to his daughter then increases as they become Christians. All these things are to be taken into consideration.

END OF PARAGRAPH

ENGLISH PARAPHRASE

If any father or guardian feels he is not giving due consideration to his daughter or ward in the matter of marriage, if she has fully attained the bloom of life, and such it ought to be that she should marry, let him do as he wills what is right, it is not sinning, let the daughter and her suitor be married.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The Analytical Greek Lexicon. New York: Harper & Bros., n.d.
- Alford, Henry. Vol. II. The Greek New Testament. London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1894.
- Arndt, William F. and Gingrich, F. William. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Barnes, Albert. Notes on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856.
- Baxter, J. Sidlow. Vol. VI. Explore the Book. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1957.
- Blanshard, Paul. American Freedom and Catholic Power. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949.
- Brand, Norton F. and Ingram, Verner M. The Pastor's Legal Advisor. New York: Abingdon Press, 1942.
- Calvin, John. Vol. I. Commentary of the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians. Trans. John Pringle. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1948.
- Conybeare, W. F. Translation of the Epistles of Paul the Apostle. Philadelphia: Philadelphia School of the Bible, n.d.
- _____. and Howson, J. S. The Life and Epistles of St. Paul. Hartford, Conn.: S. S. Scranton and Co., 1896.
- Crowley, Jeremiah J. The Pope, Chief of White Slavers, High Priest of Intrigue, Aurora, Mo.: Author, 1913.
- Dana, H. E. and Mantey, Julius R. A Manual of Grammar of the Greek New Testament. New York: Macmillan Co., 1948.
- Easton, Burton Scott. "Virgin." The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia. Vol. V. 1939 ed.
- Edwards, Thomas Charles. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897.

- Erdman, Charles R. The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1929.
- Findlay, G. G. St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Vol. II. ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., n.d.
- Fisher-Hunter, W. The Divorce Problem. Waynesboro, Pa.: MacNeish Publishers, 1952.
- Fitzwater, P. B. The Church and Modern Problems. Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Assn, 1944.
- Giles, A. D. The Roman Civilization. London: T. D. & E. C. Jack, Ltd., 1918.
- Godet, F. Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. Trans. A. Cusin. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. Co., reprinted 1953.
- Gray, James Comper and Adams, George M. Vol. V. Gray and Adams Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House.
- Grosheide, F. W. Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians ed. N. B. Stonehouse. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1953.
- Gulick, Charles Burton. The Life of the Ancient Greeks. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1907.
- Halley, Henry H. Pocket Bible Handbook. Chicago: Author, 1944.
- Hastings, James (ed.). Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. Vols. III & IV, 1928.
- Hodge, Charles. An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1950.
- The Holy Bible. American Standard Version. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1929.
- The Holy Bible. Challoner-Douay Version. Baltimore: John Murphy Co., 1899.
- The Holy Bible. King James Version. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press. n.d.
- The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952.
- Ironside, Harry A. Addresses on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Oakland: Western Book and Tract Co., 1938.

- Jacobs, Henry Eyester; Spieker, George F.; and Swenson, Carl A. Annotations of the Epistles of Paul to I Corinthians VII - XVI, II Corinthians and Galatians. Vol. VIII. The Lutheran Commentary. Henry E. Jacobs, ed. New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1897.
- Jamieson, Robert, Fausset, A. R., and Brown, David. Commentary on the Whole Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, n.d.
- Lea, Henry Charles. The History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church. New York: Russell and Russell, 1957.
- Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians. Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935.
- Marshall, Charles C. The Roman Catholic Church in the Modern State. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931.
- Meyer, Heinrich August Wilhelm. Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians. Trans, rev. ed. William P. Dickson. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884.
- Moffatt, James. A New Translation of the Bible. Rev. ed. New York: Harper and Bros., 1935.
- Morgan, G. Campbell. The Corinthian Letters of Paul. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1946.
- Morris, Leon. The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1958.
- Nestle, Erwin. Novum Testamentum Graece. Twentieth edition. Stuttgart, Ger.: Privileg. Wurt. Bibelanstalt, 1952.
- Newman, Albert Henry. Vol. I. A Manual of Church History. Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1931.
- O'Brien, John A. The Faith of Millions. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1939.
- Parry, R. St. John, ed. The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1916.
- Patai, Raphael. Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East. New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1959.
- Robertson, Archibald and Plummer, Alfred. First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. eds. Charles A. Briggs, Samuel R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer. The International Critical Commentary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.

- Robertson, Archibald Thomas. Vol. IV. Word Pictures in the New Testament. New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.
- Smith, J. M. Powis, Goodspeed, Edgar J. The Bible, An American Translation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944.
- Strong, Augustus Hopkins. Systematic Theology. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1956.
- Tucker, T. G. Life in Ancient Athens. New York: The Chatauqua Press, 1917.
- Twentieth Century New Testament. rev. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1904.
- Tyndale Version of the New Testament. In The English Hexapla. London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1841.
- Verkuyl, Gerrit. The Holy Bible, Berkeley Version in Modern English. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1959.
- Werts, Hilary R. "Celibacy" The Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. V. 1957. ed.
- Westcott, Brooke Foss and Hort, Fenton John Anthony. The New Testament in the Original Greek. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891.
- Weymouth, Richard Francis. The New Testament in Modern Speech. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, n.d.
- Wiclif Version of the New Testament. In The English Hexapla. London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1841.
- Wordsworth, Christopher. Vol. III. The Holy Bible. London: Rivington's, 1870.
- Young, D. Numbers, The Pulpit Commentary. eds. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1950.