

Apocalyptic Jewish Literature, by John E. H. Thomson, B.D. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 8vo, 1891, 10s. 6d.), is startling and not altogether free from reproach. But the book is a fair, honest introduction to a subject which is as much neglected to-day in England as it was when Bishop Westcott wondered at it. Mr. Thomson does not review the whole Apocrypha, he centres himself

upon the Apocalyptic in it. But he goes through that important department so as to give one who follows him a good working knowledge of its character and influence. May his work be the harbinger of better days for the Apocalypses of the Old Covenant; in them we may yet find the "key" which will unlock the wholesome treasures of instruction that lie in the Apocalypse of the New.

1 Corinthians vii. 14.

A REPLY TO A REQUEST.

BY THE REV. D. W. SIMON, M.A., D.D., PRINCIPAL AND PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY,
CONGREGATIONAL THEOLOGICAL HALL, EDINBURGH.

WHAT does Paul mean by the words *ἐρεὶ ἅπα τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν ἀκάθαρτά ἐστι, νῦν δὲ ἅγια ἐστί*? *Else verily your children are unclean; as it is, however, they are holy* [clean]? Before trying to interpret them let me quote the context, from ver. 12 to ver. 17. *If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And [if there is] a woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not put him away. For the husband that believeth not is sanctified in [with and through] the wife; and the wife that believeth not is sanctified in [with and through] the husband: else verily your children are unclean; as it is, however, they are holy. But if the one that believeth not departeth, let him [or her] depart. The brother or sister is under no constraint in such cases; but God hath called us to [be at] peace. For dost thou know, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or dost thou know, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife? Yet, as God hath distributed to each one, as God hath called each one, so let each one walk.*

1. As to the *ὑμῶν*,—the argument seems to require that it be referred to parents such as are here in question. The point is this. Your children are counted *holy*, not *unclean*, because either the father or mother is a *believer*. Why should not a husband be counted *holy*, not *unclean*, because his wife is a *believer*; or a wife because of the faith of her husband? If, however, *ὑμῶν* referred to parents, both of whom were believers, as many commentators suppose, the retort might fairly have been made: "The cases are not parallel,—not even as much so as otherwise: we can understand how children should be *holy*, not *unclean*, whose father and mother are both believers; but it is a different thing as between a husband and wife, one of whom is not a believer—nay more, a heathen."

2. The next question is as to the force of *ἅγια* and the negative *ἀκάθαρτα*—*holy*, *unclean*. The word *ἡγίασται*, *is sanctified*, used of the non-believing husband or wife, must clearly have essentially the same force as *ἅγιον*, and may be rendered *is in the position or stands in the relation of a ἅγιος*—one who is not *unclean*, but *holy*. If we put either a different kind or more of meaning into *ἡγίασται* than we put into *ἅγια*, or *vice versa*, clearly the parallelism will be destroyed. It might be urged, indeed, that the relation between children and parents is so different from that between wife and husband, that a different meaning may well be put on the two words; but then the argument itself would fall to the ground, for its force lies in the assumption of some sort of affinity between the two forms of relationship.

We have then *ἅγια*, *holy* (and *ἡγίασται* = strictly, *has been sanctified, is in the position of a sanctified being or thing*), on the one side, and *ἀκάθαρτα* = *unclean*, on the other side. Each indicates, and to some extent determines, the force of the other. When Paul implicitly characterises children whose parents are not believers as *ἀκάθαρτα*, which, of course, he does, in describing the others as *ἅγια*, he cannot intend to attribute to them positive moral impurity, uncleanness of the kind ascribed to the *δαίμονια* or *πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα* in the Gospels (Matt. x. 1; Mark iii. 11; Luke vi. 18, etc.). Nor can he use *ἅγια* in the sense of positive moral purity, uprightness, as it is used in ver. 34 of this chapter.

Do the two words then denote merely "ceremonial" purity or sanctity and the reverse? This is the view taken by some. There is no doubt that they are used in some such way, as, for example, *ἀκάθαρτος* in Acts xi. 8, where Peter says, *Nothing common or unclean (ἀκάθαρτον) hath at any time entered into my mouth*; and *ἅγιος* in the Epistle

to the Hebrews. I say, in some such way ; because I am not sure that the term *ceremonial* properly expresses the point. Ἅγιος certainly has a deeper meaning than the one now commonly conveyed by the word ceremonial, even when used of the temple, sacrifices, and so forth. It signifies also *belonging to God*, and as such sharing in the sacredness—the moral or rather *personal* sacredness—which characterises God, either as the result of an act of consecration, or on some other ground.

It must not be forgotten, however, that belonging to God means one thing when affirmed of personal beings, another thing when affirmed of non-personal beings—e.g. temples, sacrifices, and the like. The distinction is on the same plane as the one between human property in children or relatives, and property in books or houses or lands. This is, of course, obvious ; but it has a significance which we are prone to underestimate. A personal being can belong to God, in the full sense of being recognised and treated as such by Him, only after a free conscious surrender of himself to God. God cannot hold a personal being in property save as it itself constitutes Him owner.

Yet it is also and equally true that the possibility of this relationship of man to God is rooted in a prior relationship, which must also be described as a *belonging to God*—a belonging, too, which is not predicable of non-personal beings. He belongs to God by the very essence, constitution, idea of his being, even though he has also to give himself to God. In fact, he is able freely to make himself the possession of God, because of this prior relation to God. As a man he inheres in God, and that which constitutes him man proceeds from God, and separated from God perishes.

In both respects, therefore, he is ἅγιος. He is ἅγιος as to very essence, and as such, in a sense far fuller than is conveyed by the word ceremonial, a holy, sacred thing. He is ἅγιος, further, in the fuller sense of realising the idea of his essence, when he believes. Then he becomes actually what he is potentially. The actual ἀγιότης (Heb. xii. 10 ; also 2 Cor. i. 12 as some MSS. read) stands in a relation to the potential ἀγιότης, much the same as that between the seed and the plant, remembering, of course, man's freedom to pervert himself and his life. "Holiness" in the full sense is the actualisation of potential "holiness."

3. But in what sense can this "holiness" or "uncleanness" be said to depend on a human relationship like that between husband and wife, or parent and child? If man as man is rooted in God, and as such potentially belongs to God, that is, is ἅγιος ; and, being free, has also to consecrate himself to God, and thus become actually God's property, that is, in the full ethical sense ἅγιος, how can ἀγιότης be conditioned by the faith of a husband or wife, or of parents? In the case of a husband

or wife the dependence might be conceived as of the kind we ordinarily call moral, that is, the one may have to be led to believe by the other ; by word and conduct the husband may be the appointed, the necessary means of leading the wife to Christ or the wife the husband. This might also be the case with older children. But besides that the word τέκνα (children) refers solely to the *relation*, not to the *age* of the related persons, and may be used of old and young alike. Suppose the τέκνα were all adults, they must have been either believers or unbelievers. If the former, the clause *else verily your children are unclean* would be worse than irrelevant ; and if the latter, how could Paul say, *as it is, however, they are holy*? To speak even hypothetically of men as *unclean children* after becoming believers, because one of the parents was an unbeliever, would not be like Paul ; still less to speak of unbelievers as holy because one of their parents was a believer. It seems to me, therefore, that Paul must have had young children in his mind—children too young to have been able to become believers for themselves. That consequently the dependence in question is not primarily or exclusively of the kind usually termed moral. The moral relation must not, however, be left out of consideration, as I shall try to show.

The question recurs, therefore, if men as men, consequently as τέκνα or *babes*, inhere in God ; and if, owing to this relation, they are potentially ἅγια, *holy*, how can they be regarded as ἀκάθαρα, *unclean*. if one or both of their parents happen to be non-believers, as is here implied? and what can the faith of one or both parents have to do with their being ἅγια, *holy*? In both cases, surely, the effect of the relationship to God is by implication nullified ; in the one, by ascribing the holiness to *parental* faith, in the other, by denying holiness because of *parental* unbelief. Here is the crux.

The key to the problem is supplied by Paul's conception of mankind as constituting an organic whole, the nature of which he illustrates in more than one way—as, for example, by reference to the human body (see chap. xii. 12-27), or to a tree (see Rom. xi. 16-24). If humanity really be an organic whole like a body or like a tree, clearly it must be as members of the whole that individual men are rooted in God, after the manner to which reference was made above. As a member of the body of mankind, or as a branch of the great tree of humanity, each one of us is related to God—belongs to God—and is, as such, *holy* ; not as separate individuals. In fact, there are no separate individuals in the vulgar sense of these words. They do not, they cannot, exist. Each of us subsists in and through the whole ; the whole subsists in and through God.

Individual men, then, are related to God in and through the relation of the whole, just as the

branches of a tree are related to the soil, from which they draw their chief nourishment in and through the stem. They, as a whole, constitute the tree, but, as individuals, they are constituted by the tree.

The smaller branches in turn depend on the larger ones for the relation in which they stand to the soil; the twigs, again, on the smaller branches; till we come to the individual leaf. Its life is determined in one respect by the life of the whole tree; in another respect by the life of the twig from which it immediately springs. So is it also with the human body.

This conception is one of those which, in my judgment, dominates Paul's whole thinking, and it is often present as a co-determining factor when no distinct allusion to it is either made or is even apparent. He was what one may call an organic thinker, as distinguished from a fragmentary thinker, like, perhaps, Peter. His whole mental life, conscious and unconscious, worked, so to speak, as the living energy in a seed works, along certain lines or channels, whose course was defined beforehand by such ideas as that of organic unity.

But if this is the correct view to take of the Apostle's general presupposition, light is thrown on the particular point now under consideration. The child, as a mere child, inheres in its parent or parents much as a leaf inheres in the twig. Their life, their character, largely colours that of their child. If they belong to God, both in the potential and actual sense of being ἅγιοι, *holy*, then the child's life, too, belongs to God, is ἅγιος, *holy*—that is, in the potential sense. The limitation must, of course, not be forgotten, that no parents are as to both root and fruit, nature and character, entirely *holy*. They may be *believers*, and, as such, have consecrated themselves to God, and thus be on the road to actual ἀγιότης; but they have not attained. Nor, indeed, is such attainment, in the complete sense, possible as long as the life which circulates in them passes through from a parent stem of humanity, whose life is still to an immense extent *unclean*; the divine life in them cannot but be affected by the *uncleanness* which characterises the organism of humanity as a whole. Relatively speaking, however, the children of a believing parent are ἅγια, *holy*. Analogously, the children of non-believers, especially of such non-believers as Paul had in view—namely, heathen—are ἀκάθαρα, *unclean*. Not absolutely so, but relatively. The

divine life which flows into humanity, and without which humanity would not be what it is, flows in its measure also into them. But it is affected by the character of the branch or twig—in other words, parental source—from which it is immediately derived, and as that is *unclean*, not only in the potential, but also in the actual sense, the children's life has to be designated *unclean*.

So far as children are designated ἅγια, *holy*, because of the faith of their parent or parents, this view of the matter may seem to lend a sanction to the unbiblical idea of inherited holiness; but I must recall again the distinction drawn between the potential and actual, a distinction which involves another principle which also dominated the thinking of Paul, namely, that of the freedom of the individual. As soon as the members of the great organism of humanity arrive at moral maturity—that is, become capable of controlling themselves according to moral law—they either enter upon, take up, what they inherit, or repudiate it, and by faith either foster it into healthy growth so far as it is good, or suppress and kill it so far as it is evil. The leaf of a tree or the member of a natural body is acted on by the life of the whole without being able to act freely on itself. It cannot seek and secure medicine and nourishment on its own individual account. The whole tree or body must, as a whole, do whatever affects every one of the members or branches.

At this point there is a difference between humanity and the organisms with which it is compared—that is, as soon as members thereof arrive at maturity. *Every individual man can become a sort of root or rootlet through which life shall flow directly from God into the whole organism as well as into himself*, in addition to being a leaf or twig. He does not, therefore, cease to be a part of the organism; he only exercises a function which belongs essentially to him as a personal being, and which remains undeveloped as long as he is in his babyhood. Such a root or rootlet, drawing curative and nutritive energy from the great divine reservoir, every man becomes when he fulfils the condition on which the initiation of this special process depends. In the case of those who know not Christ the condition is loyal recognition of the highest known; in the case of those who know Christ it is the relation to Christ which Christ Himself designated “believing.”