

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE TEXT OF
TERTULLIAN'S *DE MONOGAMIA*

I

5. Si vero non sufficis, monogamus occurrit in spiritu, unam habens ecclesiam sponsam, secundum *Adam et Evae* figuram, quam apostolus in illud magnum sacramentum interpretatur, in Christum et ecclesiam, *competisse* carnali monogamiae per spiritalem.¹

Tertullian had stated that Christ, the second Adam, who remained unmarried as had the first Adam before he was exiled from Paradise, had set an example of perfect virginity: "tibi spado occurrit in carne." The author continues: if his addressee is not equal to such perfection,² Christ must still be his model—at least he must be a monogamist; for Christ has but one spiritual spouse, the Church, as was prefigured in the union of the protoparents applied by St. Paul (Eph. 5:31–32) to the mystical union of Christ and the Church. Here we can certainly excise from the text "Adam et Evae" before "figuram": the words are neither in the MSS used by Oehler or in the *editio princeps* of Rhenanus, nor are they necessary for the understanding of the text, considering Tertullian's very obvious allusion to, and partial quotation of, the celebrated passage in Ephesians (5:32: "Sacramentum hoc magnum est. . ."), where Gen. 2:24 ("Propter hoc relinquet homo patrem et matrem suam, et adhaerebit uxori suae; et erunt duo in carne una") is cited.

Further, Esser in his notes to Kellner's translation³ rightly objected to Oehler's continuance, after the edition of Rigault, of "competisse" for "competentes" of the MSS and the *editio princeps*; he finds nothing to which to refer the infinitive. Thelwall in his translation⁴ seems to have sensed the same difficulty, for he anchors down the floating infinitive by inserting in parentheses "teaching that" (modifying "apostolus"). But Esser, endeavoring to restore "competentes," quite evidently strains the range of possible sentence structure by referring⁵ the word back to the conjunctural

¹ F. Oehler, *Tertulliani quae supersunt omnia* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1853–54), I, 768.

² My interpretations sometimes draw upon the translation adopted by William P. Le Saint, S.J., *Tertullian: The Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage* (Ancient Christian Writers, XIV; Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1951).

³ Karl A. H. Kellner, *Tertullians ausgewählte Schriften*, revised and edited by G. Esser (2nd ed.; Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, XXIV; Kempten-Munich: J. Kösel, 1916), II, 486, n. 4.

⁴ S. Thelwall, *Tertullian* (Ante-Nicene Fathers, IV; New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), Part 4, p. 62.

⁵ Esser, *loc. cit.*

genitive, "Adam et Evae," and translating: "so dass sie [Adam und Eva] zu der leiblichen Monogamie geeignet waren durch eine geistige." The construction, however, and the sense are far easier and really obvious: "competentes" is an accusative modifier of the accusatives immediately preceding it ("in Christum et ecclesiam"); literally, therefore, "matching (agreeing upon, favoring, speaking for, deciding for, recognizing) carnal monogamy through their spiritual one"; in other words, the spiritual monogamy of Christ and the Church established an analogy for monogamy of the flesh.⁶

II

8. Ecce statim quasi in limine *duae* nobis antistites christianae sanctitatis occurrunt, monogamia et continentia.⁷

Following Rigault and earlier editors, Oehler corrected "duo" of the MSS to "duae." But *duo* occurs so frequently as an indeclinable in various cases with both masculine and feminine nouns, that certainly not all such examples appear reducible to faulty resolution by copyists of numerals used in the archetypi. For examples of similar usage of *duo* with feminine nouns in the nominative, see the pre-Vulgate (*Codex Cantabrigiensis*) rendering, "duo machaerae," for Luke 22:38; Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 8, 14, "urbes duo," and XXIII, 4, 2, "cochleae duo ligneae"; and further examples cited in the *Thesaurus linguae latinae*.⁸ As Clark⁹ has done for the passages in Ammianus, so the reading of the MSS should be retained here.

III

14. Discessit et ille dives, qui non ceperat substantiae dividendae egenis praeceptum, et dimissus est sententiae suae a domino. Nec ideo duritia imputabitur Christo de arbitrii cuiuscunque liberi vitio.¹⁰

Esser has already observed¹¹ that the reading of the MSS and the *editio princeps* ("servitio" for "vitio") should be retained; and we read: "Nor should Christ be charged with being hardhearted because a man's free will is given to servitude" (Thelwall,¹² following Oehler's reading: "on the

⁶ For *competere* (intransitive, used personally and with the dative), cf. *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, III, 2065 f. Cf. also Gerardus F. Diercks, *Q. Septimius Florens Tertullianus: De oratione* (Bussum: Brand, 1947), p. 274; Willem Kok, *Tertullianus: De cultu feminarum* (Dokkum: J. Kamminga, 1934), p. 189 f.

⁷ Oehler, *op. cit.*, I, 772.

⁸ *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, V, 2243, lines 61 ff.

⁹ C. U. Clark, *Ammiani Marcellini rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt* (Berlin, 1910), I, 25 and 301.

¹⁰ Oehler, *op. cit.*, I, 785.

¹¹ Esser, *op. cit.*, p. 514, n. 4.

¹² Thelwall, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

ground of the vicious action of each individual's free will"). The young man of the Gospel made himself a slave of his riches by his own choice. Similarly, here and in the context immediately following, it is not the wickedness or viciousness of an action that is under discussion, but the choice freely made of the *malum* (digamy) rather than of the *bonum* (monogamy). Both of these Christ sets before man; and a choice made for the former means that man's free will involves itself in servitude, and to this Christ abandons him. In an earlier work dedicated to the same subject, single marriage, Tertullian similarly concerns himself with freedom and servitude regarding marriage and remarriage: "Quid *libertatem* oblatam tibi iterata matrimonii *servitute* fastidis?"¹³

Incidentally, in a note on the terms used for free will by Tertullian (*arbitrii libertas*, *libera arbitrii potestas*, *libera hominis potestas arbitrii sui*, *libertas et potestas arbitrii*) and by later writers (e.g., Ambrosiaster: *voluntatis suae liberum arbitrium*; St. Jerome: *arbitrii libera potestas*; etc.), Waszink states: "As far as I know, the use of the simple denotation *liberum arbitrium* was established by Augustine."¹⁴ But do we not have a clear case of the use of that simple term in the present passage in Tertullian?

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¹³ *Ad uxorem*, I, 7 (ed. E. Kroymann, *CSEL*, LXX, 107).

¹⁴ Jan H. Waszink, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De anima* (Amsterdam: J. H. Meulenhoff, 1947), p. 288 f.