of understanding these words. Either they  
may be figurative, merely implying that  
these pure ones lived in all chastity, whether in single or in married life, and incurred no pollution [2 Cor. xi 2]: or they  
may be meant literally, that these purest  
ones had lived in that state of which St.  
Paul says, 1 Cor. vii. 1, *it is good for a  
man*. And as between these two meanings I conceive that the emphatic position of the words **with women** in the  
original goes some way to decide. It is  
not the fact of impurity in allowed intercourse, but the fact of commerce with  
women that is put forward. I would therefore believe that in the description of these  
who are the first-fruits from the earth, the  
feature of virginity is to be taken in its  
literal meaning. Nor need any difficulty be  
found in this. It is on all hands granted  
that he who is married in the Lord enters  
into holy relations of which the single have  
no experience, and goes through blessed and  
elevating degrees of self-sacrifice, and loving  
allowance, and preferring others before himself, And as every step of grace assured  
is a step of glory secured, there is no doubt  
that the holy married servants of God shall  
have a peculiar entrance into the fulness  
of that future Kingdom’s employ, which will  
not be the lot of the single: seeing that in  
this matter also, the childhood of this state  
will be the father of the manhood of that  
one. But neither on the other hand can  
it be denied that the state of holy virginity  
has also its peculiar blessings and exemptions. Of these, the Apostle himself speaks of that  
absence of distraction from the  
Lord's work, which is apt to beset the  
married, busy as they are with the cares of  
a household and with pleasing one another.  
And another and primary blessing is, that  
in them that fountain of carnal desire has  
never been opened, which is so apt to be a  
channel for unholy thoughts and an access  
for the tempter. ‘The virgins may thus  
have missed the victory over the lusts of  
the flesh : but they have also in great part  
escaped the conflict. Theirs is not the  
triumph of the toil-worn and stained soldier,  
but the calm and the unspottedness of  
those who have kept from the strife. We  
are perhaps more like that which the Lord intended us to be: but they are more like  
the Lord Himself. And if He is to have  
round Him a peculiar and closer band,  
standing with Him on Mount Sion, none  
will surely grudge this place to those who  
were not defiled with women. Among  
these will be not only those who have lived  
and served Him in holy virginity, but also  
the dear children whom He has claimed  
from us for Himself, the youths and  
maidens who were gathered to His side  
before the strife began: before their  
tongues had learned the language of social  
falsehood, or their good names been tarnished with the breath of inevitable  
calumny. There is one meaning which  
these words will not bear, and which it is  
surprising that any Commentator should  
ever have attached to them: viz. that **with  
women** refers to the woman mentioned  
below, ch. xvii. So Dr. Wordsworth,  
p. 284: “They have not been defiled with  
women, What women ? It may be asked.  
If we proceed, we read of the woman seated  
on the Beast, and of the harlotry of the  
woman, with whom the Kings of the earth  
commit fornication. And soon we see her  
displayed in all her meretricious splendour.  
There then is the reply.” But the whole  
context here, as well as the language used,  
is against it: the following words, **for they  
are virgins**, carrying its decisive condemnation). **These [are] they that follow the  
Lamb wheresoever he goeth** (the description has very commonly been taken  
as applying to the entire obedience of the  
elect, following their Lord to prison and  
to death, and wherever He may call  
them: but this exposition is surely out  
of place here, where not their life of  
conflict, but their state of glory is described, The words are used of special  
privilege of nearness to the Person of  
the Lamb in glory). **‘These were purchased from men as a first-fruit to God  
and to the Lamb** (all have been thus  
purchased: but these specially, as and  
for the purpose of being a first-fruit.  
James i. 18 treats of a different matter,  
the purchased of all the redeemed as the  
first-fruits of creation. But these are  
a first-fruit among the purchased themselves). {5} **And in their mouth was not**