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Reverend Josiah B. Trenham

*Marriage and Virginit*  
*according to St. John Chrysostom*



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Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
(Ph.D.)

Department of Theology  
University of Durham, England  
Reverend Professor Andrew Louth, Supervisor  
Submitted December 2003



23 JUN 2004

Declaration.

I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University.

Signed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'P' followed by a long horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

Date:

29/04/04

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## Introduction.

St. John Chrysostom (A. D. 347?- 407), the great and holy hierarch, received of God many and diverse gifts, and as a good and faithful servant increased the talents given him. In the prayer at the conclusion of the Akathist Hymn composed in his honor we pray, "Thou wast truly a teacher of the whole world, for people of every age and every calling were taught by thee." He has inspired generations of Christians from every walk of life for more than sixteen hundred years. His writings have been treasured and pored over by the faithful, both clergy and laity, both monastic and married, in search of edification of soul, and they have found in him an inspiring guide to the authentic Christian life. In his homilies we find the instruction of a man of God whose passion was to sanctify the city. His intimate knowledge of city life in the world, combined with a profound spiritual vision of the potential of the Christian life to be lived in the midst thereof, has made him only more relevant in this age of urbanization, when the desert has become exceedingly more remote.

What theology was it that undergirded the practical counsels of Chrysostom? It is the aim of this dissertation to answer that question with regard to St. John's teaching on marriage and virginity. We will see that a single grand and consistent conception of the Christian calling inspired Chrysostom throughout his ministry, and provided his rudder in delivering his priestly teaching and pastoral counsel to married and monastic alike. In propounding this calling Chrysostom relied upon the labors of the Fathers who had gone before him, and in Chapter One we explore a substantial portion of his theological inheritance. All of the Fathers sought to root their anthropology in protology, and the same is true for Chrysostom. His anthropological vision is rooted in the original creation



of Man as a terrestrial angel in the Garden of delights, and it is this paradisaical vision, in all its grandeur as conceived by St. John, that serves as a touchstone for both the monastic life and truly Christian marriage. Throughout his ministry he will never cease appealing to his flock to strive for a return to the angelic life of Paradise. This is the subject of Chapter Two: Terrestrial Angels. In Chapter Three, From Earthly Ambitions to Heavenly Acquisitions, we examine carefully Chrysostom's teaching on the progress of redemption, as it applies to marriage and virginity and their transformation, in covenantal history. Chapter Four, Spiritual Marriage, Monastic Family and the Domestic Church, explores St. John's teaching on the nature and practice of authentic Christian marriage. This chapter is designed to demonstrate the exceedingly high calling of marriage in Christ as Chrysostom conceives it. It is also designed to arrange a large amount of homiletical material, scattered in small pieces throughout various portions of St. John's corpus, in such a way as to reveal the coherence of his teaching and the monastic paradigm that underlies his marital counsels. Chapter Five, Barren Intercourse: Contraception in the Teaching of St. John Chrysostom, examines this one aspect of marital ethics. We have offered this chapter for several reasons. First, Chrysostom is often invoked by contemporary ethicists as virtually the only Church Father whose teaching accords with the use of artificial contraception. I hope to show, on the contrary, that Chrysostom, as an educated man with a particular interest in medicine, was well aware of artificial contraception, and clearly forbade it in his teaching. Second, Chrysostom does establish a marital paradigm and ethical grid that diverges to a noticeable degree from what many later Western and Eastern Fathers would promote. In the ethical quagmire that contemporary Christians find themselves, particularly in the

area of marriage and human sexuality, Chrysostom provides, I believe, an understandable and acceptable Christian marital ethic. Chapter Six, Celestial Bodies and Spiritual Consortship, explores St. John's teaching on the Resurrection and the coming transfiguration of marriage and virginity in the Kingdom. Here we will find his sublime teachings on both the eradication of the marriage bond, and the continuance, indeed solidification, of spousal soul union in Christ.

The *φρόνημα* of the Church, expressed over the centuries, has borne witness to the fact that Chrysostom's vision was from the Holy Spirit. This is not surprising since St. John was such a humble and devoted student of Holy Scripture, having virtually memorized the entirety of the Scripture as a young man, and equally of the writings of the Holy Fathers before him.

If this dissertation assists faithful Christians, who perhaps know Chrysostom from various of his teachings and sayings, to understand the larger theological worldview of the saint, which unifies and gives context to his particular counsels, it will have been a worthy labor. Yet, should I die today and this dissertation never see the light of day, I will have no regret for I, at least, have had the immense pleasure and benefit of standing before the icon of St. Chrysostom and searching his texts as his disciple during these years of study, and could say with my last breath, as Chrysostom did with his, "Glory to God for all things."

# Chapter 1

## Early Church Teaching on Marriage and Virginty

### **Introduction.**

This chapter is designed to serve as a general introduction to the theme of a Patristic approach to marriage and virginty prior to the time of St. John Chrysostom. Toward that end I have attempted to provide a basic overview of the major heretical currents touching our subject, since so much of the writings of the Fathers on our theme is in response to teaching out of harmony with the Church's rule of faith. Following this I have provided an overview of the works of six very influential pre-Chrysostomian Church teachers on the subject of marriage and virginty. These six are: Tertullian, St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Methodios of Olympus, St. Athanasios the Great, and St. Ephrem the Syrian.<sup>1</sup> With the knowledge of both the heretical teachings and those of six of the great Christian lights that preceded Chrysostom we can better appreciate Chrysostom's own unique and monumental contributions to the defining of Christian positions on marriage and virginty.

### **Heretical Attacks on Marriage and False Notions of Virginty.**

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<sup>1</sup> Besides this introductory chapter, throughout the dissertation references to these authors will be made to document positions relevant to Chrysostom's. These six theologians represent a wide selection of Greek, Latin, and Syriac Christianity of the early centuries of the Church, and demonstrate the essential harmony of opinion throughout the Church in the early centuries on the subject of marriage and virginty. The reader will notice the conspicuous absence of the Cappadocian Fathers: Ss. Gregory the Theologian, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa. Each of these Fathers had much to say about marriage and virginty, and profoundly influenced Chrysostom. A paper dedicated to Chrysostom's Cappadocian inheritance would be a worthy endeavor. Apart from the Cappadocians, neither do we examine the influence of St. Irenaeus, upon whom Ss. Clement of Alexandria and Methodios of Olympus so depend. For a helpful examination of the contribution of St. Irenaeus to the subject of marriage and virginty see Behr (2000).

Much Patristic ink on the subject of marriage and virginity was elicited by the erroneous teachings of heretics and schismatics, who were defaming marriage and advocating ascetical paradigms rooted in heretical teaching and motivated by false aspirations. St. Paul the Apostle had warned St. Timothy that, even in the Apostolic age, false teachers would arise, who would attack marriage,<sup>2</sup> and so it was. In the coming centuries there was a continual stream of false teachers, who undermined marriage both from the right and from the left. Chief among these opponents of Christian marriage were the so-called “Gnostics.”

“Gnosticism”<sup>3</sup> is an umbrella word, something of an ideological topos, possessing a broad semantic range and used as a rhetorical tool. Attempting a definition of Gnosticism is not a simple work. This is the case not only because Gnosticism itself is a relatively novel scholarly construct and not a Patristic category of definition,<sup>4</sup> and because not one of these so-called Gnostic groups actually self-designated in this fashion, but also because it is virtually impossible to produce a Gnostic theological grid, adherence to which would classify someone as a Gnostic. Commonly, Gnosticism is used to describe any religious-philosophical system that posits a secret or special gnosis, possessed only by the elect few, i.e.- those who are spiritual. This special knowledge, which itself saves, reveals that the created world is the work of angelic powers or aeons arising from the divinity. On this common theme many particular brands of Gnosticism

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<sup>2</sup> 1 St. Timothy 4:3.

<sup>3</sup> Jonas (1958), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> The Fathers did not actually call these groups by the collective term “Gnosticism,” but rather addressed each sect individually, sometimes applying the term “Gnostic,” and usually designating the group by the name of its founder. The Fathers dealt with these “Gnostic” groups primarily as Christian heresies. Only a few sects expressly called themselves “Gnostics,” but St. Irenaeus collectively used the name “gnosis: falsely so-called” to describe groups that shared certain cosmological and epistemological presuppositions.

arose, but, though propounding many different and extravagant systems, these sects have often been thought to possess a common ideological commitment to the idea that the physical universe was not the creation of the Supreme God, but of lesser deities, and, as such, the cosmos and matter are evil and are not capable of redemption.<sup>5</sup> The body is thought of as a prison, and as ‘the filthy and unclean garb of the soul.’<sup>6</sup> This effort to define Gnosticism and to group together a large number of religious movements of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries under this category has been decisively critiqued by recent scholarship.<sup>7</sup> The origin of Gnosticism is shrouded in darkness. There are four basic sources commonly suggested as contributing to the rise of Gnostic teachings: Zoroastrianism, apocalyptic Judaism, heterodox Christianity, and Hellenistic philosophy.<sup>8</sup> It does not appear that anything definitive can be affirmed at this point.

Much of our contemporary knowledge of sects commonly referred to as Gnostic is derived from the many Patristic refutations penned over the early centuries of the Church. Chief amongst these works is St. Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies: On the Detection and Refutation of Gnosis Falsely So-Called*.<sup>9</sup> This work of St. Irenaeus depended on a

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<sup>5</sup> Grant (1961), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Hymn of the Pearl* in the *Gnostic Acts of Thomas* from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and probably reflecting a late Valentinian doctrine. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>7</sup> Williams (1995), *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, seems to me to provide a devastating critique of the traditional way that scholarship in the last several centuries has tried to deal with a large number of religious movements in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, which often share many commonalities, but resist, Williams shows, any consistent categorization.

<sup>8</sup> Grant (1961), p. 18. Little can be said for any substantive contribution for Greek philosophy, beyond terminology. The Christian influence can be markedly detected in the Gnostic redeemer imagery. Cf. Jonas (1958), p. 33. Mandaeanism is an acknowledged, but very complex, source, and is the only ancient form of Gnostic religion still in practice today. Sects remain today in Iraq, particularly in Baghdad and Basra, where they are said to dominate the precious metals market. The name “Mandaean” comes from the Aramaic “manda” which means knowledge. The Mandaeans are literally “Gnostics.” Rudolph (1977), pp. 343ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Sources Chrétiennes* has published the critical text, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies*, in nine volumes: SC 100, 151, 152, 210, 211, 263, 264, 293, and 294.

work of St. Justin Martyr now lost. St. Hippolytus of Rome wrote extensively against Gnosticism, as did Tertullian, St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. Epiphanius of Cyprus. The Fathers were particularly concerned to refute the many sectarian movements of their time since the majority of them claimed to be the purest of Christian communities, possessing authentic apostolic succession.<sup>10</sup> It is primarily from these sources<sup>11</sup> that we are able to reconstruct the main theological lines of various *biblical-demiurgical movements*,<sup>12</sup> and particularly understand their attacks on marriage, and consequent ascetical deviations.

Patristic sources identify the following main Gnostic leaders and sects:<sup>13</sup> Simon Magus, Menander, Saturninus, Basilides and Isidore, Carpocrates and Epiphanius, Cerinthus, the Ebionites, the Nicolaitans, Cerdo, Marcion, the Encratites, Tatian, Valentinus and his successor Ptolemaeus, and other less well known sects.<sup>14</sup>

These teachers are thought to have attacked marriage from both sides of the ethical spectrum. Gnostic teachers have often been conveniently divided into two camps concerning marriage and virginity: the *excessively ascetic* and the *openly licentious*.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Ptolemaeus' *Letter to Flora*, Grant (1961), p. 190. "Later you will learn more if you are judged worthy of the apostolic tradition which we too have received by succession. We too are able to prove all our points by the teaching of the Savior."

<sup>11</sup> This Patristic resource was greatly aided by the discovery of a number of primary Gnostic texts in the 1945 Nag-Hammadi archaeological find in Egypt. 44 distinct works on papyrus, bound in 13 leather volumes, were found, and this discovery filled a large gap in primary source material. Among this find were such Gnostic works as the *Gospel of Truth*, which is probably a Valentinian work of the second century.

<sup>12</sup> Here we follow Williams' suggested terms of description.

<sup>13</sup> Grant (1961), pp. 23-61.

<sup>14</sup> Such as the Barbelo-Gnostics, the Sethian Ophites, and the Cainites.

<sup>15</sup> Williams (1995) devotes a chapter of his work arguing that there are serious weaknesses in suggesting that a significant number of these groups promoted licentious living. The traditional division between overly ascetic and licentious Gnostics, as found in St. Clement of Alexandria (*Str. III*, V.10-14; GCS, p. 214) and re-iterated by Chadwick (1954, p. 22), appears to me to be highly questionable, without having to follow Williams in discrediting the Patristic records concerning such licentiousness. What I think we

Marcion and Tatian represented the excessively ascetic side. No Marcionite was permitted to marry, for to marry and procreate was to participate in the evil work of the demiurgos. According to St. Irenaeus, Tatian joined Marcion and Saturninus in calling marriage *fornication*.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand were those who were licentious. The Carpocratians and Borborites represented the openly licentious end of the spectrum. This latter tendency was rooted in the cosmology of many of the Gnostic sects, which posited that the creation of the world was the generative fruit of the spiritual copulation between heavenly beings.<sup>17</sup> Between these two extremes are the two prominent Gnostics Basilides and Valentinian. Basilides and his son Isidore held marriage was not sinful but should be avoided by the mature.<sup>18</sup> Valentinians approved of monogamous marriage with little appreciation of ascetic life,<sup>19</sup> viewing marriage and copulation as patterned after the divine cosmological patterns. We can see that there was a wide spectrum of views concerning marriage and virginity being promulgated by these diverse biblical-demiurgical religious movements. What they shared in common was *not* upholding the Church's emphases on maintaining the tension properly between affirming the goodness of marriage, and praising, in that context, the greater good of virginity.

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can say is that there were licentious groups, but they were not generally the dominant movements. Gero (1986) documents the probable significant presence of licentious Borborites in Antioch at the time of St. John Chrysostom from the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and the harsh imperial legislation of Emperor Theodosios II, pp. 277-279.

<sup>16</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.28.1.8-26; SC 264, pp. 354, 356. Cf. Chadwick (1954), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, the copulative cosmologies described in the *Secret Book of John*, and *Baruch by Justin* in Grant (1961), pp. 85, 94-100. In these Gnostic heavenly dramas we see something of a combination of the licentious behavior of Greek pagan deities, combined with a perverted notion of Christian spiritual marriage, patterned after the relationship between Christ and His Church.

<sup>18</sup> Chadwick (1954), pp. 30ff.

<sup>19</sup> Tertullian, *Adv. Val.*, 30.3.13-22; SC 280, p. 142.



Besides the groups typically described as “Gnostic” there was a large presence of Manichaeism<sup>20</sup> in and around Antioch at the time of Chrysostom. He refers to the Manichees by name in many places. Antioch appears to have been an early center of the sect’s activities, and served as a missionary base.<sup>21</sup> While this group is sometimes classified under the questionable category “Gnostic,” it was in fact a largely independent religious movement. Mani (AD 216-274, 276?), the religion’s founder, was from Babylonia. He wrote numerous works articulating his theology, and seven came to be accepted by his followers as canonical<sup>22</sup> and were translated into numerous languages as Manichaeism, with its vigorous missionary impulse, grew to become a world religion.<sup>23</sup> Its growth as a world religion was halted not by a lack of interest in its tenets by world populations, but by harsh political suppression. Though the religion prospered in the Roman Empire it was virtually wiped out by the 5-6<sup>th</sup> century as the result of a consistent line of Imperial edicts designed to punish its adherents. Emperor Diocletian was concerned with the spread of Manichaeism in the Empire because its Persian roots made it suspect, and so he issued an anti-Manichean edict in A. D. 302 banning its practice, and ordering its priests and books to be burned. It appears that the Edict of Toleration of A. D. 312 offered relief to the Manichees as well as the Christians. In A. D. 381 Emperor

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<sup>20</sup> Lieu’s (1992, 1994) two tomes on Manichaeism are fundamental, and very impressive in their erudition.

<sup>21</sup> Lieu (1994), pp. 47-48. Brown (1969) writes, “In the fourth century, Manichaeism was rife as a crypto-Christianity in Antioch and Palestine,” p. 99. Syria served as the “bridgehead” of Manichaeism in the Roman world. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> These seven are: 1. Treasure of Life; 2. Pragmateia; 3. Book of Mysteries; 4. Book of the Giants; 5. Letters; 6. Psalms; and 7. Prayers. Lieu (1992), p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Manichaeism spread to the West with Pauline descriptions of Mani as the “Apostle of Jesus Christ”, and the “Paraclete,” and to Central Asia and the East in India where Mani was presented as Buddha, and to China where he was presented as a reincarnation of Lao Tzu. Its presence in the West is familiar to most through the embrace of its philosophy by St. Augustine for a number of years prior to his baptism.

Theodosios issued a comprehensive edict branding Manichaeism as ‘infamia,’ and denying to Manichees the right of testation. In March A. D. 382 special courts were established for the trial of Manichees.<sup>24</sup> Such was the political milieu in which the Church Fathers took up an ecclesiastical attack upon Manichaeism.<sup>25</sup> One of St. Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Catechetical Lectures* was devoted to a refutation of Manichaeism, and the public renunciation of Mani for converts was already in use at this time.<sup>26</sup> Amongst other Fathers, St. Ephrem the Syrian, whose life was spent in geographical regions where Manichaeism was particularly strong, wrote extensively against the Manichees. Diodoros of Tarsus, Chrysostom’s teacher, wrote against what he thought was the ‘Living Gospel’ of Mani, but it was, in fact, a work of the Manichaean missionary to the Roman Empire, Adda, called ‘Modius.’<sup>27</sup> Severus, Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch (A. D. 512-518) composed a homily against the Manichaean faith.<sup>28</sup>

Although Mani did not acknowledge the influence of Marcion upon his theology, it is clear that Marcion had a tremendous influence upon him.<sup>29</sup> The Manichaean

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Manichaean texts are extant in Aramaic (the language in which Mani wrote his fundamental works), Middle Persian, Syriac, Greek, Arabic, and Chinese. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-32.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-147. Emperor Justinian would later issue even more severe civil legislation against the Manichees in A. D. 527, making the *adherence* to Manichaeism a capital offense. Malalas in his *Chronicle* wrote that many Manichees had been executed under this law. *Ibid.*, pp. 210, 214.

<sup>25</sup> For a comprehensive list of the main anti-Manichaean works in Greek and Latin from the 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 6<sup>th</sup> century see Lieu (1994), pp. 197-202. The bishops of the Church became the real agents of the execution of the imperial bans since so many Manichees attempted to camouflage themselves under the umbrella of the Church, and only bishops could identify them. Patriarch Timothy of Alexandria gave his monks a food test to weed out Manichees, *Ibid.*, p. 98. Brown (1969) argues that the rise of legal rigidity toward the Manichees was a “fusion of Roman prejudice with Christian doctrinal intolerance,” p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 133; Cf. Lieu (1994), pp. 203-305, for early Byzantine ecclesiastical formulae for the public renunciation of Manichaeism and the anathematization of Mani. The heretical label “Manichee” came to be used as a pejorative theological term attached to many later groups, such as the Messalians, Paulicians, and Bogomils, who had no organic connection to Manichaeism. Lieu (1992), pp. 6ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91; Cf. Lieu (1994), p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> Though originally composed in Greek, it survives only in two Syriac translations. Lieu (1994), p. 199.

<sup>29</sup> Lieu (1992), p.52. St. Ephrem the Syrian wrote that many Manichees had first been Marcionites. Marcion was the robber of Christ’s sheep, and Mani had “robbed the robber.” Brown (1969), p. 102. This

teaching concerning marriage was very similar to that of the Marcionites, and it is this Marcionite-Manichaean teaching which would have been so strong a heretical presence in Chrysostom's milieu. Mani taught that there were two types of Manichaean adherents: the elect and the hearers. The elect were forbidden both marriage and sexual intercourse, since the body and procreation were evil. The hearers could be married or have mistresses, and could have intercourse, but must avoid procreation.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout St. John Chrysostom's corpus the images of the false teachings of heretics lurk in the background, as he constantly breaks off from his positive instruction to note how the Orthodox teaching completely confounds the false teaching on the subject by the various heretics. This *heretical presence* is particularly dense in St. John's *On Virginity*, where he devotes a large amount of material to specific refutation. Though most of these heresies were at least two hundred years old, and had already been refuted by many of the ablest minds of the Church, the emphasis Chrysostom gives to enunciating their teaching and refuting it leads one to conclude that the ideas of these heretical sects, if not the actual sects themselves, continued to be prominent. The most probable references for Chrysostom's criticisms of heretical teaching on marriage and virginity lie in the Marcionite and Manichaean communities in and around Antioch, and in the Gnostic Syrian Encratite movement.<sup>31</sup>

Just how ethically diverse the Gnostic groups were is apparent by the practices of the Borborite Gnostic sect. Despite the suggestions of some contemporary scholars that

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theological dependence of Mani upon Marcion does not mean that their respective sects were practically dependent or intermixed.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Brock (1985), p. 8ff.

the Syrian Gnostic movements did *not* contain licentious sects,<sup>32</sup> it is safe to affirm that, in fact, not only did these licentious sects exist, but that they were well-known. The Borborite sect was dedicated to the *sperma cult*, teaching that salvation from the evil powers which ruled this world was to be sought through a “deliberate and full exercise of human sexual potentialities, specifically in a ritual form wherein the various sexual emissions, male and female, played a central, sacramental role, and in a manner which was aimed at the prevention of conception and birth.”<sup>33</sup> St. Epiphanius wrote that the sect was both well-organized and large, and that he learned of them in his youth (perhaps the 340s). The ecclesiastical chronicle of the Arian Philostorgius, written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, relates that the Arian Aetius, founder of the Anomoeans, was defeated in a debate by a Borborite.<sup>34</sup> It was this Aetius and his followers against whom St. John Chrysostom preached so decisively in his homilies known as *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*. St. Chrysostom’s contemporary and friend, Theodore of Mopsuestia, in his commentary on the *Gospel of John*,<sup>35</sup> refers to the Borborite sect and indicates his acquaintance with the sect from his earlier years in Antioch.<sup>36</sup> The later, perhaps 9<sup>th</sup> century, writer Moses Khorenaci reproduced the text of a letter from Patriarch Atticus

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<sup>32</sup> For example see Filoramo (1990), p. 186. “Are the criticisms [ethical] of these external observers [critical Patristic sources] about Gnosticism justified by the original texts? However surprising and paradoxical it may be, the answer is ‘No.’ Not a single Nag Hammadi text contains any hint of immoral behaviour or, even worse, of any incitement to immoral behaviour. There could not be a more radical contrast between external sources and direct documentation.” Bauer (1934) defends a similar position regarding Syrian Gnosticism, and is decisively refuted by Gero (1986), pp. 287-307.

<sup>33</sup> Gero (1986), p. 288. These heretics not only used semen and menses ritually, but sacramentally consumed them.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>35</sup> Available in complete form only in Syriac translation.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

and Emperor Theodosios II,<sup>37</sup> authorizing leaders of the Armenian Church<sup>38</sup> to either convert or expel the Borborite sect.<sup>39</sup> This is a portion of the tumultuous theological background against which the early Fathers of the Church composed their treatises on marriage and virginity.

## **Church Teaching Pre-Chrysostom.**

### **Tertullian.**

*Brief Profile.* Despite Tertullian's late lapse into Montanism he retains a place of great prominence in the Latin Patristic tradition due to his personality and his immense literary corpus. Much of what we know concerning Tertullian comes from various statements he makes about his life in his writings together with the comments of St. Jerome.<sup>40</sup> Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus was born to a pagan family in Carthage some time between A. D. 150 and 160. He may have been the son of a Roman centurion, but Barnes argues that there is no evidence of this. He was educated philosophically and rhetorically in both Latin and Greek. Most of his writings are in Latin, but he did compose a number of treatises in Greek.<sup>41</sup> He converted to Christianity around A. D. 190, and, according to St. Jerome, and many later historians dependent upon Jerome,

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<sup>37</sup> Emperor Theodosios II translated St Chrysostom's relics from exile, and prostrated himself before them on their return to the City at the harborside, begging remission of his parents' sins: the Emperor Arcadius and the Empress Eudoxia, who had unjustly banished Chrysostom.

<sup>38</sup> A certain Mastoc, and his superior, Catholicos Sahak.

<sup>39</sup> Moses further notes that Mastoc or his agents had recourse to capital punishment. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>40</sup> See Barnes (1971) for the best introduction to Tertullian.

<sup>41</sup> Sadly his Greek works are not extant.

became a priest.<sup>42</sup> This is doubtful.<sup>43</sup> That he was the jurist of that name noted in Emperor Justinian's sixth century *Digest* is also doubtful, although as an educated man he possessed basic legal knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Around 207 he seems to have embraced some form of *Montanism*.<sup>45</sup> He died about A. D. 220.

He wrote some 31 texts. His writings are often divided into the following three categories: *Apologetics*, *Polemics*, and *Ethics*. Particularly relevant to our theme are his works *To His Wife* (written while still Orthodox around A. D. 200-206), *An Exhortation to Chastity* (written in the early stages of his Montanism 208-211), and *On Monogamy* (written 213-219 while fully committed to Montanism), though teachings concerning marriage and virginity may be found permeating his large literary corpus. His writings

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<sup>42</sup> *De Vir. Ill. LIII*; PL 23.697. Jerome depends heavily upon Eusebius for his information, however, and Eusebius knew very little about Tertullian.

<sup>43</sup> Barnes (1971) argues convincingly that Tertullian was a layman, pp. 10ff.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35ff where Barnes devotes an entire chapter to arguing that the chronologies of the two Tertullians do not coincide, and therefore, they are different persons.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42ff. It should be noted that the Montanist prophecies were on the verge of receiving the formal stamp of the Pope of Rome in the A. D. 180s. Montanus began prophesying around A. D. 170. Such formal approval was never given and the Bishop of Rome condemned Montanism in A. D. 190. However, in A. D. 203 Montanism was still acceptable to the Church in Carthage, according to Barnes, pp. 78ff. Barnes enumerates eight ideas or expressions distinctive to Montanist beliefs: naming of Montanus, Priscilla, or Maximilla or appealing to their prophecies, reference to new prophecy, commendation of the ecstatic state, mention of spiritual gifts only possessed by Montanists, calling the Holy Spirit 'Paracletus', using *nos* or *noster* describing things uniquely Montanist, while using *vos* or *vester* to describe Catholic Christians who were not Montanist, the abuse of Catholics as "psychici," p. 44. Using this system of evaluation Barnes appraises four treatises as blatantly Montanist: *Adversus Praxean*, *De Jejuniis*, *De Monogamia*, and *De Pudicitia*. On other end of the spectrum are Tertullian's Catholic works *Adversus Valentinianos*, *De Anima*, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, and *Adversus Marcionem*. *De Corona Militis* is one of his earliest Montanist works. Between these two extremes come many treatises trying to persuade others of Montanist opinions, p. 46. Barnes argues that greater certainty in evaluating Tertullian's Montanism may be established if the lost *De Ecstasi* is found, and can be used to date matters more specifically. Barnes utilizes four criteria to provide a literary chronology: historical allusions, references to other works, doctrinal progression, and style: Here is his order *De Spectaculis*, *De Idololatria*, *De Cultu Feminarum II*, *Ad Nationes*, *Adversus Judaeos*, *Ad Martyras*, *Apologeticum*, *De Testimonio Animae*, *De Baptismo*, *De Oratione*, *De Paenitentia*, *De Patientia*, *Ad Uxorem*, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, *Scorpiace*, *Adversus Hermogenem*, *De Pallio*, *De Cultu Feminarum I*, *De Carne Christi*, *Adversus Valentinianos*, *De Anima*, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*; Next come works from a Montanist Tertullian: *Adversus Marcionem*, *De Corona Militis*, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, *De Fuga in Persecutione*, *De*

had a profound influence on subsequent teachers of the Church, not only in Africa where he so deeply molded St. Cyprian,<sup>46</sup> but upon such a prominent figure as St. Jerome. He was literarily hostile to pagan culture while he himself was deeply and inextricably permeated by Graeco-Roman philosophy and culture, and formed a synthesis between Scriptural teaching and current Roman norms.

Tertullian emphasized the divine origin of both Christian marriage and virginity, establishing a tone which would be followed in later Patristic authors, who taught clearly that these two callings were the two paths of salvation. In his work *On Monogamy* Tertullian wrote that marriage and virginity were the “two priestesses of Christian sanctity” (*duo antistites Christianae sanctitatis...monogamia et continentia*).<sup>47</sup> Marriage is modest (*pudica*) and appeases God (*placans Deum*), as modeled by the Priest Zechariah. Contenance is absolute (*integra*) and preaches Christ (*praedicans Christum*), as modeled by St. John the Baptist, Zechariah’s son.<sup>48</sup>

Many of the stock theological themes concerning marriage and virginity found in later Church Fathers in the East and West are found in the writings of Tertullian. He taught, for instance, that sexual intercourse commenced after the Fall of Adam and Eve, and as a result of it.<sup>49</sup> Paradisal man was virginal man. He explained the institution of earthly marriage as we know it as the divine response to the presence of death,<sup>50</sup> and used

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*Virginibus Velandis, Adversus Praxean, De Monogamia, De Jejunio, De Pudicitia, and Ad Scapulam*, p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> St. Cyprian read Tertullian every day, and is said to greet his servant with the request for the Tertullian texts with the words, “Bring me my master.” Barnes (1971), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, 8.4-5; SC 433, p. 164; ANF, p. 65.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.5-10, p. 164.

<sup>49</sup> *Contre Marcion, Livre IV*, 17.5.30-33; SC 456, p. 218; ANF, p. 373.

<sup>50</sup> “Where there is death, there is also marriage.” *Contre Marcion, Livre IV*, 38.5.43-45; SC 456, p. 468; ANF, p. 413.

this rationale to explain the absence of marriage in the eternal Kingdom where death is absent.<sup>51</sup> Polygamy in the Old Covenant began with Lamech, the “first to cause three to be joined ‘into one flesh.’”<sup>52</sup> The ancestral sin left mankind with a nature bent toward concupiscence and permeated with the “virus of lust” (*libidinis uirus*).<sup>53</sup> Though Old Covenant believers often lived according to sub-Christian sexual standards, many of the faithful lived in honorable monogamy, which life was portrayed in the fact that Noah brought the animals into the ark in monogamous pairs, for fear that even beasts might be born from adultery.<sup>54</sup> Joseph, Moses, Aaron and Joshua all lived monogamously.<sup>55</sup> Some of the Old Covenant righteous lived as ascetics and foreshadowed in their way of life the life of consecrated virginity to be found later among Christian people.<sup>56</sup>

Much of Tertullian’s literary energy was expended against the Marcionite heresy. He composed a five-volume refutation of Marcion in which he attacked Marcionite opposition to marriage and advocacy of excessive asceticism. In that work he would present a traditional evaluation of the place of marriage in the New Covenant age writing,

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<sup>51</sup> Men will be without marriage like angels in the Kingdom because they do not die. *Res. Mort.*, XXXVI.5.24-25; CCSL II, p. 969.

<sup>52</sup> *Numerus matrimonii a maledicto uiro coepit. Primus Lamech duabus maritatus tres in unam carnem effecit. Exhortation a la Chasteté (De exhortatione castitatis)*, 54.25-26; SC 319, p 88. “He would have said ‘helpers’ if He had destined him [Adam] to have more wives than one...the unity of marriage lasted to the very end in the case of the authors of our race; not because there were no other women, but because the reason why there were none was that the first-fruits of the race might not be contaminated by a double marriage...he might have taken from the abundance of his own daughters- having no less an Eve taken out of his own bones and flesh- if piety had allowed it.” *Tertullien, Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, IV.2.13-14, 3.17-20, 21-23; SC 343, pp. 144, 146; ANF, pp. 60-61.

<sup>53</sup> *La Pudicité*, VI.15.62; SC 394, p. 172; ANF, p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, 4.5.38-39; SC 343. p. 146. *Etiam in ipsis animalibus monogamia recognoscitur, ne uel bestiae de moechia nascerentur.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, VI.1-50, pp. 152ff.

<sup>56</sup> Tertullian writes of these Old Testament ascetics like Moses and Elijah in his treatise *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* stating that they offered “faint outlines of our future strength” (*Ecce uirtutis futurae liniamenta*). *Res. Mort.*, LXI, 2.25; CCSL II, p. 1010; ANF, p. 593.



“We must now encounter the subject of marriage, which Marcion, more continent than the Apostle (*constantior apostolo*), prohibits. For the Apostle, although preferring the grace of continence (*etsi bonum continentiae praefert*), yet permits the contraction of marriage and the enjoyment of it (*tamen coniugium et contrahi permittit et usui esse*), and advises the continuance therein rather than the dissolution thereof.”<sup>57</sup>

To forbid marriage and procreation is shameful.<sup>58</sup>

Despite his unfortunate lapse into sectarianism at the end of his life, at which time he became somewhat fanatically opposed to second marriages,<sup>59</sup> he maintained throughout the vast majority of his ministry a teaching on marriage and virginity that would find itself in the mainstream of later Patristic teaching. Notable in his corpus is the very positive outlook he maintained on the *spiritual potential* in marriage. In contrast to many later Fathers he waxed eloquent on the dignity of pre-Christian Roman marriage, arguing in one place that Roman marriage was an example and standard of Christian marital norms, especially in the rarity of divorce.<sup>60</sup> Tertullian goes so far in this regard as to suggest that the Roman pagans were great lovers of monogamy, and even at times practiced perpetual virginity, a claim that many later Fathers would sharply contradict.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Adv. Marcionem V*, VII,6.6-7; CCSL I, p. 683; ANF, p. 443.

<sup>58</sup> “What can be more shameless, than for him to be making us his children, who has not permitted us to make children for ourselves by forbidding marriage?” *Contre Marcion, Livre IV*, 17.5.24-26; SC 456, p. 218; ANF, p. 373. *Quis enim tam castrator carnis castor quam qui nuptias abstulit? Contre Marcion, Livre I*, 1.5.38-39; SC 365, p.104.

<sup>59</sup> Athenagoras the apologist, a Greek Christian contemporary of Tertullian, taught that second marriages were adultery. *Leg.*, XXXIII.4.13-15; SC 379, p. 198. Tertullian’s fanaticism concerning second marriages, while in a modern context in which divorces are sadly commonplace appears quite extreme, was not *so far* from the ecclesiastical consensus of his time.

<sup>60</sup> “Where is the happiness of married life, ever so desirable, which distinguished our earlier manners, and as the result of which for about 600 years there was not among us a single divorce?” *Apologeticum*, VI.6.29-34; CCSL I, p. 97; ANF, pp. 22-23. Grubbs (1994), argues that there existed in the Roman Empire a far greater continuity between Christian and pre-Christian marital norms than is often suggested by “ascetically minded Christian theologians”, pp. 361ff.

<sup>61</sup> “Monogamy among the heathen is so held in highest honor, that even virgins, when legitimately marrying, have a woman never married but once appointed them as brideswoman... Sometimes the devil’s

Marriage in the New Covenant has immense spiritual potential. His *Letter to His Wife* opens up vistas on the depth of spiritual union possible in Christian marriage. In a tender and poetic portrayal of marriage,<sup>62</sup> Tertullian lauds the type of Christian marriage over which Jesus Christ rejoices writing,

“Where the flesh is one, one is the spirit too. Together they pray, together prostrate themselves, together perform their fasts; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally are they both found in the Church of God; equally at the banquet of God; equally in straightness; in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other; the sick is visited, the indigent relieved, with freedom. Alms are given without danger of torment; sacrifices without scruple; daily diligence without impediment; there is no stealthy singing, no trembling greeting, no mute benediction. Between the two echo psalms and hymns; and they mutually challenge each other which shall better chant to their Lord. Such things when Christ sees and hears, He joys. To these He sends His own peace. Where two are, there withal is He Himself. Where He is, there the evil one is not.”<sup>63</sup>

From the age of fourteen marriage becomes necessary for most.<sup>64</sup> Marital intercourse is not sinful but natural in man’s fallen condition, and is blessed by God for

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servants practice perpetual virginity and widowhood” (*uirginitate... uiduitate perpetua*). *Exhortation a la Chasteté / De exhortatione castitatis*, 13.2.14-15; SC 319, p 114; ANF, p. 57. This is, according to Tertullian, a case of Satan working God’s sacraments (*cum atuem dei sacramenta satanas affectat*) to the shame of the Christian people. And speaking of the pagan priests and temple virgins he says, “The devil challenges God’s servants with the continence of his own, as if on equal terms. Continent are even the priests of hell!” (*continent etiam gehennae sacerdotes*). *A Son Épouse*, VI.5.32; SC 273, p.112; ANF, p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> Patristic scholar, C. Munier writes, *Cette magnifique description du mariage chrétien, la plus belle, incontestablement, que nous ait léguée l’Église antique*. *A Son Épouse*; SC 273, p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> *A Son Epouse*, VIII, 7.51-8.66; SC 273, pp. 148, 150. *Ubi caro una, unus et spiritus: simul orant, simul uoluntantur, simul ieiunia transigunt, alterutro docentes, alterutro exhortantes, alterutro sustententes. In ecclesia Dei pariter utriusque, pariter in conuiuio Dei, pariter in angustiis, in persecutionibus, in refrigeriis. Neuter alterum celat, neuter alterum uitat, neuter alteri grauis est. Libere aeger uisitat, indigens sustentatur. Elemosinae sine tormento, sacrificia sine scrupulo, quotidiana diligentia sine impedimento; non furtiua signatio, non trepida gratulatio, non muta benedictio. Sonant inter duos psalmi et hymni, et mutuo prouocant, quis melius Domino suo cantet. Talia Christus uidens et audiens gaudet. His pacem suam mittit. Ubi duo, ibi et ipse; ubi et ipse, ibi et malus non est.* ANF, Vol. 4, p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> “From fourteen sex is suffused and clothed with an especial sensibility, and concupiscence employs the ministry of the eye (*suffusior et uestitior sexus est, et concupiscentia oculis arbitris utitur*), and communicates its pleasure to another, and understands the natural relations between male and female, and

the procreation of our race.<sup>65</sup> Married Christians also could express their piety by engaging in conjugal relations “as beneath the eyes of God” (*sub oculis Dei*) with honor (*cum honore*), modesty (*modeste*) and temperance (*moderate*). Couples should offer “modest restraint in secret on the marriage bed.”<sup>66</sup> Such decorous marital relations enable married believers to make offerings to God from the good renderings of the flesh (*de bonis carnis*) along with virgins and widows who make their own special offerings.<sup>67</sup> He taught strongly against both abortion and abortifacient contraception.<sup>68</sup> Married couples that are capable could by mutual consent go so far as to cancel the debt of matrimony becoming *voluntary eunuchs* for the sake of their desire after the celestial Kingdom. This very thing many Christian couples had done.<sup>69</sup> This form of marital consecration is the most apropos eschatologically. The command to “be fruitful and multiply” has been supervened by St. Paul’s command that “those who have wives be as

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wears the fig-tree apron to cover the shame which it still excites, and drives man from out of the paradise of innocence and chastity.” *De Anima*, XXXVIII.2.15-16; CCSL II, p. 841; ANF, p. 219.

<sup>65</sup> “Nature should be to us an object of reverence, not of blushes (*Natura ueneranda est, non erubescenda*). It is lust, not natural usage, which has brought shame on the intercourse of the sexes. It is the excess (*excessus*), not the normal state, which is immodest and unchaste: the normal condition has received a blessing from God, and is blest by Him. ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’” *De Anima*, XXVII.4.22-25; CCSL II, p. 823; ANF, p. 208. Athenagoras the apologist writes that Christians engaged in marital intercourse only for the purpose of procreation, and that purpose was the Christian measure of indulgence in appetite. *Leg.*, XXXIII.1.1-2.7; SC 379, p. 196.

<sup>66</sup> *A Son Épouse*, III, 4.30-33; SC 273, p. 134.

<sup>67</sup> *Res. Mort.*, VIII.4.16-18; CCSL II, p. 931; ANF, p. 551.

<sup>68</sup> *Dissoluas medicaminibus conceptum? Puto nobis magis non licere nascentem nocere quam et natam. Exhortation a la Chasteté / De exhortatione castitatis*, 12.5.34-36; SC 319, p. 110. “Are you to dissolve the conception by aid of drugs? I think to us it is no more lawful to hurt a child in process of birth, than one already born.” ANF, p. 57.

<sup>69</sup> *Quot enim sunt, qui statim a lauacro carnem suam obsignant? Quot item, qui consensu pari inter se matrimonii debitum tollunt, uoluntarii spadones pro cupiditate regni caelestis? A Son Épouse*, VI.2.8-10; SC 273, p. 140. “How many are there who from the moment of their baptism set the seal of virginity upon their flesh? How many who by equal mutual consent cancel the debt of matrimony- voluntary eunuchs for the sake of their desire after the celestial kingdom.” ANF, p. 42.

though they did not.”<sup>70</sup> Besides, the command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ has already caused the world to be overpopulated so that the earth’s natural resources are barely sufficient to sustain man,<sup>71</sup> and Christ taught that children would be an encumbrance in the last days.<sup>72</sup> Should one’s spouse die it is the will of God that one remain unmarried.<sup>73</sup> Digamy is not Christian.<sup>74</sup> All Christians are “candidates for angelhood” (*angelorum candidati*)<sup>75</sup> and thus even married Christians should eventually cease from conjugal relations. “It is presumable that such as shall wish to be received within Paradise (*paradisum*), ought at last to begin to cease from that thing from which Paradise is intact (*intactus*).”<sup>76</sup>

On the subject of the eternity of marriage Tertullian is clear that “no restoration of marriage is promised in the day of resurrection, translated as they will be into the condition and sanctity of angels (*nulla restitutio nuptiarum in diem resurrectionis repromittitur, translatis scilicet in angelicam qualitatem et sanctitatem*)”<sup>77</sup> One must, however, read carefully what Tertullian and later Fathers mean by this denial of the

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<sup>70</sup> “‘Grow and multiply’; that is, if no other command has yet supervened; The time is already wound up; it remains that both they who have wives act as if they had not’ for of course, by enjoining continence (*continentiam indicens*), and restraining concubinance (*compenscens concubitum*), the seminary of our race, this latter command has abolished that ‘grow and multiply (*abolefecit ‘crescite’ illud ‘et multiplicamini’*).” *Exhortation a la Chasteté*, 6.2.9-11; SC 319, p. 90; ANF, p. 53. *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, 7.3.21-25; SC 343, p. 158.

<sup>71</sup> *De Anima*, XXX.4; CCSL II, p. 827; ANF, p. 210.

<sup>72</sup> *A Son Epouse*, V.2.14-16; SC 273, p. 108.

<sup>73</sup> Calling men to chastity Tertullian writes, “Return at least to the former Adam [a monogamist], if to the last [a virgin] thou canst not! ... Exhibit to us a third Adam, and him a digamist; and then you will be able to be what, between the two, you cannot.” *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia.)*, 17.5.27, 32-33; SC 343, pp 206, 208; ANF, p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> So opposed to digamy is Tertullian that he even comments on the Patriarch Abraham’s second marriage after Sarah’s death describing two different Abrahams: monogamist Abraham and digamist Abraham, and calling attention to the fact that Abraham was justified by God while he was a monogamist. *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, 6.2.13-27; SC 343, p. 154.

<sup>75</sup> *De Oratione*, III, 3.15; CCSL I, p. 259; ANF, p. 682.

<sup>76</sup> *Exhortation a la Chasteté (De exhortatione castitatis)*, 13.3.39-41; SC 319, p 114; ANF, p. 58.

<sup>77</sup> *A Son Epouse*, I.4.19-21; SC 273, p. 94; ANF, p. 39.

continuance of marriage in the next life. They consistently mean to deny the continuance of *earthly marriage as fallen man knows it* and not the marital bond of love established in Christ. This distinction is clear in Tertullian's work *On Monogamy* where he counsels the Christian widow to pray regularly for her departed loved one's soul, and for fellowship with him in the resurrection. Marriage partners will be bound together at the resurrection to render an account before God of one another. Because there will be no resumption of the conjugal union in the next life does not mean that Christian spouses will not be bound together in the next life. Indeed, their union is destined in Paradise for a more intimate spiritual consortship. Tertullian sums up this teaching by saying, "In eternal life God will still less separate them whom He has conjoined, than in this lesser life He forbids them to be separated" (*in qua magis non separabit quos coniunxit Deus, qui in ista minore uita separari uetat*).<sup>78</sup>

While he vigorously defended the legitimacy and divine institution of Christian marriage against its detractors, and promoted unique Christian marriage in which ascetic life had expression, Tertullian at the same time exalted virginity as the unique way of life of the New Covenant. In the Gospel, God is calling post-Incarnation man to "tarry among higher delights, being translated into Paradise, out of the world into the Church" (*in amoenioribus moraretur, translatus in paradysum- iam tunc de mundo in ecclesiam*). Chief among these *higher delights* is virginity.<sup>79</sup> To prefer virginity above marriage is to

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<sup>78</sup> *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, 10.6.47-48; SC 343, p. 178; ANF, p.67

<sup>79</sup> *Contre Marcion Livre II*, 4.4.36-37; SC 368, p. 38; ANF, p. 300.

prefer a better above a good.<sup>80</sup> Tertullian argued vociferously against those who criticized marriage by stating that any criticism of marriage is a criticism of virginity. Without marriage, there is no sanctity, for continence is only manifest if there exists *at the same time* the permission to marry.<sup>81</sup>

In his *Exhortation to Chastity* Tertullian defines three degrees or orders of virginity,

“The first species is virginity from one’s birth: the second, virginity from one’s second birth, that is from the font; which second virginity either in the marriage state keeps its subject pure by mutual compact, or else preserves in widowhood from choice; a third grade remains, monogamy, when, after the interception of a marriage once contracted, there is thereafter a renunciation of sexual connection. The first virginity is of happiness and consists of total ignorance of that from which you will afterwards wish to be freed: the second, of virtue, contemning a power you know full well; the last of not marrying after the death of a spouse is that of moderation.”<sup>82</sup>

### St. Clement of Alexandria.

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<sup>80</sup> Brown (1988) writes, “With Tertullian, we have the first consequential statement, written for educated Christians and destined to enjoy a long future in the Latin world, of the belief that abstinence from sex was the most effective technique with which to achieve clarity of soul,” p. 78.

<sup>81</sup> “We prefer a better thing over a good...nor do we prescribe sanctity as the rule, but only recommend it, observing it as the better state, if each man uses it carefully according to his ability...He bestowed His blessing on matrimony also, as on an honorable estate, for the increase of the human race...there is a great difference between a cause and a fault, between a state and its excess. Consequently it is not an institution of this nature that is to be blamed, but the extravagant use of it...for this leads me to remark of Marcion’s god, that in reproaching marriage as an evil and unchaste thing, he is really prejudicing the cause of that very sanctity which he seems to serve. For he destroys the material of which it subsists; if there is no marriage there is no sanctity...continence is made manifest by the permission to marry...What room for temperance in appetite does famine give? What bridling of lust does the eunuch merit?” *Contre Marcion, Livre I, 29.6*; SC 365, pp. 242, 244; ANF, p. 294. Cf. *Adv. Marcionem V, XV.3*; CCSL I, p. 709.

<sup>82</sup> *Prima species est uirginitas a natiuitate: secunda, uirginitas a secunda natiuitate, id est a lauacro, quae aut in matrimonio purificat ex compacto, aut in uiduitate perseuerat ex arbitrio: tertius gradus superest monogamia, cum post matrimonium unum interceptum exinde sexui renuntiat. Prima uirginitas felicitatis est, non nosse in totum a quo postea optabis liberari: secunda uirtutis est, contemnere cuius uim optime noris: reliqua species, hactenus nubendi post matrimonium morte disiunctum, praeter uirtutis etiam modestiae laus est. Exhortation a la Chasteté (De exhortatione castitatis), 1.4-5.15-24; SC 319, p 70; ANF, p. 50.*

*Brief Profile.* Titus Flavius Clemens was born to pagan parents in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A. D. He is a contemporary of Tertullian. He was born either in Athens or in Alexandria. Certainty concerning much of his early life is not possible. We know from his own written testimony that he traveled around the world studying under various famous philosophers. His last and best teacher was Pantaenus. Pantaenus was a former Stoic philosopher who had converted to Christianity, had served as a missionary in India (Ethiopia?), and had become the head of the Christian catechetical school in Alexandria. He met Clement around A.D. 180. St. Clement owed his conversion and the roots of his Christian education to Pantaenus. St. Clement succeeded Pantaenus as the master of the Alexandrian school,<sup>83</sup> and it was in that position that he wrote his great trilogy: *The Exhortation to the Heathen*, *The Instructor* or *Paedagogus*, and his *Miscellanies* or *Stromata*. Besides this trilogy his tract *On the Rich Young Ruler* is extant. Much of St. Clement's academic ministry was devoted to fighting against two erroneous ideological extremes pressing the Church of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. These two extremes were: On the one hand, a pervasive *anti-intellectualism* found in the Church, and, on the other hand, a *heretical synthesis of Christianity with popular Greek philosophies*. Besides these famous works he wrote a number of very relevant works for our topic, including texts *On Marriage*,<sup>84</sup> *On Continence*, and *On the Resurrection*.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> St. Clement was a brilliant man. Though he utilized in his writings common anthologies of Greek philosophy and poetry, he evidences a remarkable first-hand acquaintance not only with Holy Scripture, but with the best of Greek *paideia*. St. Jerome considered him to be the most educated of the Fathers. *Ep. LXX*; PG 22.667.

<sup>84</sup> St. Clement references this book *On Marriage* in Bk. III, Ch. 8 of his *Instructor*, and says that in this book he describes how a husband and wife should live together. It is a pity that the text is lost, there being so few Patristic texts on marriage.

<sup>85</sup> Wilson (1867), p. 16. Unfortunately, these works are not extant.

St. Clement provides us with an immense amount of material concerning the Gnostic sects and their teaching contemporaneous to himself. He criticized their erroneous metaphysics of heavenly marriage and sex amongst the aeons. He was scandalized by their practice of glorifying earthly sex and giving to it a false value and spiritualism.<sup>86</sup> These heretics deified sexual relations, taught that carnal union was a “mystical communion” (*κοινωνίαν μυστικήν*) and were so bold as to suggest that such sex would actually bring one into the Kingdom of God.<sup>87</sup> Communion in money, food and clothing is one thing. But to use the word to imply sexual intercourse should be a similar communion is irreligious. In fact, those who glorify carnal relations and attempt to make them what they are not are creating a new religion (*ἱεροφαντοῦσι*)<sup>88</sup> in which sex is a priestly action. Christians are to be children of will, not of desire (*οὐ γὰρ ἐσμὲν ἐπιθυμίας τέκνα, ἀλλὰ θελήματος*).<sup>89</sup> The Christian man ought not to look upon his wife with sexual desire as though she were a sexual object, because he has the duty of showing Christian love toward her.<sup>90</sup> Clement, here as elsewhere, clearly juxtaposed sexual desire, which is

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<sup>86</sup> Henry Chadwick’s (1954) introduction to his translation of St. Clement’s *Stromata III and VII* is a simplistic but helpful summary of the heretical opponents St. Clement was dealing with: pp. 15-39.

<sup>87</sup> *Str. III*, IV, 27; GCS 2, p. 208; Ferguson (1991), p. 272.

<sup>88</sup> *Str. III*, IV, 27.5; GCS 2, p. 208.

<sup>89</sup> *Str. IV*, 58.1; GCS 2, p. 222.

<sup>90</sup> *Str. IV*, 58.2; GCS 2, p.222. The Christian man ought not *ἐπιθυμεῖν* but *ἀγαπᾶν* his wife. This teaching on moderation in marital intercourse has its source in Stoic ideals. Consider the teaching of Seneca, made famous by St. Jerome in his *Against Jovinian*. There he quotes from a lost work of Seneca entitled *Marriage*. Here is the record of Seneca’s teaching,

“All love of another’s wife is shameful; so too, too much love of your own. A wise man ought to love his wife with judgment, not affection. Let him control his impulses and not be borne headlong into copulation. Nothing is fouler than to love a wife like an adulteress. Certainly those who say that they unite themselves to wives to produce children for the sake of the state and the human race ought, at any rate, to imitate the beasts, and when their wife’s belly swells not destroy the offspring. Let them show themselves to their wives not as lovers, but as husbands.”

*Adv. Jov.*, I; PL 23.293-294; Noonan (1965), p. 47.



fueled by self-interest and the quest for self-gratification, with love, which is self-denying.

Much of St. Clement's teaching on marriage and virginity can be found in Books III and VII of his *Stromata*.<sup>91</sup> St. Clement defended both celibacy and marriage. "Both are holy in the Lord, one as a wife, the other as a virgin (*ἄμφω γὰρ ἅγιοι ἐν κυρίῳ, ἡ μὲν ὡς γυνή, ἡ δὲ ὡς παρθένος*)."<sup>92</sup> Christian celibacy is truly the life of the Kingdom lived now, and the higher way of life, but it is a gift from God to be embraced by those to whom it has been given. It is not for everyone.

While highly exalting virginity, St. Clement, nevertheless gave his greatest literary effort to both defending and expounding Christian marriage.<sup>93</sup> Against the Gnostics, who disparaged marriage, St. Clement made a stunning defense of the goodness of marriage. Just how focused on refuting erroneous and heretical teaching concerning marriage St. Clement was is discerned by the fact that in the *very first sentence* of his *Stromata Book 3*, completely dedicated to the subject of marriage, he addresses *by name* the two most influential heretics disturbing the Church by their marriage teachings: Basilides and Valentinian.<sup>94</sup> Those who accuse marriage and sexual intercourse of being

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<sup>91</sup> So much of Book III deals with intimate matters of Christian marriage and sexuality that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century translation of Rev. William Wilson the entire chapter is given in Latin! The same approach is taken to ch. 10 of *The Instructor* dealing with procreation. Victorian sentiments did not co-exist well with Patristic forthrightness.

<sup>92</sup> *Str. III*, XII, 88.3; GCS 2, p. 237; Ferguson (1991), p. 312.

<sup>93</sup> In this St. Clement has little company amongst the Holy Fathers. Many Fathers defended marriage against heretical attack, but few devoted much effort to detailing the practical outworking of a Christian marriage. St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his *On Virginity*, comments that marriage does not have literary promoters amongst the Fathers because it *does not need* promoters, since, being of the world, it is always naturally promoted. *Virg.* VII.1.1-18; SC 119, pp. 348, 350. St. Clement is extremely valuable *precisely* because he attempts to set forth in detail the unique practice of marriage between true Christians. Cf. Brown (1988), pp. 136ff.

<sup>94</sup> *Str. III*, I, 1.1; GCS 2, p. 195.

polluted (*μιαρὰν*) do so hypocritically since they owe their existence to it. Not only is marital intercourse not polluted, but the very sperm is holy.<sup>95</sup> He accused the Gnostics of warring directly with God the Creator and of despising His gifts.<sup>96</sup> He took up the Stoic position with vigor that marriage is the duty of the wise man toward his city and country in order to provide for the needs of the city and to ensure the continuance of the human race.<sup>97</sup> Good husbands and fathers are made of men who are devoted to wisdom.<sup>98</sup> Beautifully St. Clement writes that marriage is the crown of a husband, the husband is the crown of the wife, and the children of marriage are the flowers which the Divine Husbandman gathers from the sensual meadows (*στέφανον μὲν γυναικὸς τὸν ἄνδρα ὑποληπτέον, ἀνδρὸς δὲ τὸν γάμον, ἄνδρῃ δὲ τοῦ γάμου τὰ τέκνα ἀμφοῖν, ἃ δὴ τῶν σαρκικῶν λειμώνων ὁ θεὸς δρέπεται γεωργός*).<sup>99</sup> A woman's winning her husband's chaste love (*φιλανδρία σώφρονι*) is a "powerful and legitimate charm" (*βιαστικῶ καὶ δικαίῳ φαρμάκῳ*).<sup>100</sup> Marriage is a "consecrated glory (*ἱερὸν ἄγαλμα*)."<sup>101</sup> The "two or three gathered together in Christ's Name" are husband, wife and child.<sup>102</sup>

He defines marriage thus: Marriage is the first joining of man and woman according to law for the procreation of legitimate children (*Γάμος μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ σύνοδος ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς ἢ πρώτη κατὰ νόμον ἐπὶ γνησίων τέκνων σπορᾶ*).<sup>103</sup> Following this definition St. Clement summarizes opinions of marriage from various philosophical

<sup>95</sup> *Str. III*, VI, 46.5; GCS 2, p. 217; Ferguson (1991), p. 285.

<sup>96</sup> *Str. III*, III, 12.3; GCS 2, p. 201; Ferguson (1991), p. 263. St. Clement notes that the heretical Gnostics should be consistent and stop eating as well if they want to despise creation!

<sup>97</sup> Here he follows very closely the Stoic philosopher, Musonius Rufus. Lutz (1947), pp. 85-101.

<sup>98</sup> *Prot.* X, 107; SC 2, p. 175. Wilson (1887), *Exhortation to the Heathen*, p. 97.

<sup>99</sup> *Paed.* II, VIII, 71; SC 108, p. 140. Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 236.

<sup>100</sup> *Paed.*, III, XI, 57; SC 108, p. 120, Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 316.

<sup>101</sup> *Les Stromates: Str.* 2, XXIII, 145; SC 38, p. 142. Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Bk. 2, p. 82.

<sup>102</sup> *Str. III*, IX, 68.1-2; GCS 2, p. 226; Ferguson (1991), p. 298.

schools, quoting approvingly both Menander and Plato.<sup>104</sup> Though at times St. Clement appears to promote a *reductionistic* concept of marriage rooted solely in the need for procreation,<sup>105</sup> at other times he pontificates on its value, stating that marriage provides “help in the whole of life...and the best self-restraint (εἰς βοήθειαν παντὸς τοῦ βίου καὶ τὴν ἀρίστην σωφροσύνην).”<sup>106</sup> Marriage greatly assists those in old age by providing both a companion and children to care for oneself. Marriage promotes self-restraint. Christian marriage, that is a common yoke under God (ἡ συζυγία ὑποπίπτει τῷ θεῷ), provides true happiness in the common virtue of the partners.<sup>107</sup> Though marriage has many functions, its procreative function cannot be voluntarily avoided. Those who wish to *avoid children* because they are cumbersome and steal one’s leisure time, ought to *avoid marriage itself*.<sup>108</sup> God is with those who bear children in marriage.<sup>109</sup>

Appealing to Christ’s celibacy as a means to disparage marriage is illegitimate since Christ was unique. First, He had a bride: the Church. Second, He was not a

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<sup>103</sup> *Str.* 2, XXIII, 137; SC 38, p. 138. Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Bk. 2, p. 78.

<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, St. Clement attempts to explain away Plato’s outrageous teaching in his *Republic* about having wives in common by saying that this has been misunderstood by disciples and readers, and that Plato *really* meant that women should be common before they wed in the sense that they should be open to all for courtship, but that *after being wed* they were to belong to only one man! *Str.* III, II.16-20; GCS 2, p. 200; Ferguson (1991), p. 263. St. Clement goes farther in attempting to harmonize Plato with the Christian teaching, than later Fathers will often go in attempting to harmonize Father with Father.

<sup>105</sup> While St. Clement does refer to *spiritual reproduction* and the *fecundity* of the desert since the coming of Christ to the earth, he does not dwell long on these topics nor highlight them as the particular marks of New Testament procreation, as do many of the Fathers that follow him. *Prot.*, I, 9; SC 2, p. 64; Wilson (1887), *Exhortation to the Heathen*, p. 24.

<sup>106</sup> *Str.* 2, XXIII, 143; SC 38, p. 141; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Bk. 2, p.81.

<sup>107</sup> *Str.* II, XX, 126; SC 463, pp. 264, 266; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 4, p. 197.

<sup>108</sup> *Str.* III, IX, 68.2; GCS 2, pp. 226-7.

<sup>109</sup> *Str.* III, IX, 68.4; GCS 2, p. 227.

common man to need a helpmate. Third, He did not have the obligation to reproduce since He was God's Son and survives eternally.<sup>110</sup>

At the same time as St. Clement exalts marriage he promotes Christian asceticism, and for him the two are very much *not* dichotomous. Many Fathers designate the consecrated celibates as living the *angelic life* on earth, but for St. Clement it is not the celibates who are equal to the angels but the *Christian Gnostic*: whether celibate or married. "The gnostic here is equal to the angels. Luminous already, and like the sun shining in the exercise of beneficence, he speeds by righteous knowledge through the love of God to the sacred abode, like the Apostles."<sup>111</sup> St. Clement even describes the consecrated virgins (*ταῖς ἡγιασμέναις παρθένοις*) not as physical virgins, but once again as all Gnostic souls (*αἱ γνωστικαὶ ψυχαί*), who are virgins by virtue of waiting for the Lord and abstaining from evil.<sup>112</sup> In the resurrection there will be degrees of glory for individuals as is evident from the parable in which thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and one hundred-fold are reaped. These categories, however, in St. Clement do not apply to the married and to the celibates as in so many other Fathers.<sup>113</sup> Due to the ferocious heretics assailing marriage, who were calling all to a mandatory and extreme sexual asceticism, St. Clement did not focus on defending and promoting the celibate life. He cautioned that celibacy (*ἡ εὐνουχία*) is not virtuous (*ἐνάρετον*) if it does not arise from the love of

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<sup>110</sup> *Str. III*, VI, 49.3; GCS 2, p. 218; Ferguson (1991), p. 286. St. Clement is here refuting those who disdain marriage by appealing to Christ's example of celibacy. He is not refuting those Church Fathers who appeal to Christ as a positive example for monastics, though he seems to undermine, to some extent, the power of Christ's typical example for celibacy amongst His disciples.

<sup>111</sup> *Str. VI*, XIII, 105; SC 446, p. 270; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 6, p. 365.

<sup>112</sup> *Str. VII*, XII, 72; SC 428, p. 226; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 7, p. 459.

<sup>113</sup> *Str. VI*, XIV, 114; SC 446, p. 288; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 6, p. 371.

God.<sup>114</sup> Graeco-Roman tradition is filled with stories of athletes who were celibate for athletic training purposes. Hence, celibacy by itself is not of value. Pagan virginity is not true virginity, just as pagan martyrdom is not true martyrdom.<sup>115</sup> St. Clement goes so far as to suggest that the married man has the advantage over the celibate in matters of personal salvation. He writes,

“One is not really shown to be a man in the choice of the single life; but he surpasses men, who, disciplined by marriage, procreation of children, and care for the house, without pleasure or pain, in his solicitude for the house has been inseparable from God’s love, and withstood all temptation arising through children and wife, and domestics and possessions. But he that has no family is in a great degree free of temptation. Caring, then, for himself alone, he is surpassed by him who is inferior, as far as his own personal salvation is concerned.”<sup>116</sup>

In saying this St. Clement is apparently imagining a celibate life *without* consecration to service. What is necessary for the Christian is self-mastery. The Christian should seek freedom from desire for all desire presupposes pain and some lack.<sup>117</sup> The Christian can find this life of restraint in marriage just as the Holy Apostles did.

In his argument for the good of marriage St. Clement not only argues that the Apostles were married, but says that St. Paul’s “yoke-fellow”<sup>118</sup> was his wife, whom he did not take on missionary journeys for convenience sake. The other Apostles took their wives with them in order to take care of their homes and in order to penetrate women’s

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<sup>114</sup> *Str. III*, VI, 51.1; GCS 2, p. 219; Ferguson (1991), p. 288.

<sup>115</sup> *Str. IV*, IV, 13; SC 463, pp. 76ff; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 4, p. 146. St. Clement says the same of heretical virginity since it does not have its root in the love of God, but in contempt for the creation.

<sup>116</sup> *Str. VII*, XII, 70; SC 428, p. 222; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 7, p. 457.

<sup>117</sup> *Str. III*, V, 42.1; GCS 2, p. 215.

<sup>118</sup> Philippians 4:3.

quarters with the Gospel.<sup>119</sup> St. Clement gives a touching description of the martyrdom of St. Peter the Apostle's wife as a picture of true Christian marriage.

“They say that the blessed Peter, on seeing his wife led to death, rejoiced on account of her call and conveyance home, and called very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, ‘Remember thou the Lord.’ Such was the marriage of the blessed, and their perfect disposition towards those dearest to them...the Apostle says the married should deem his marriage free of inordinate affection, and inseparable from love to the Lord.”<sup>120</sup>

Such was the connection between Christian marriage and the preparation for martyrdom in St. Clement's mind. Christian marriage is to be holy and inseparable from the love for Christ. Such a marriage fulfills the Apostolic injunction that “he who marries should be as unmarried” (ὁ γάμῶν ὡς μὴ γαμῶν).<sup>121</sup> He is offended at the licentiousness both of the pagans and of the Christian heretics. Against the pagans he criticizes their licentious rites such as those employing the use of the phallus in the mysteries of Aphrodite, and in the general debauchery of the gods, who delighted in all manner of sexual excess, and even in public exposure. Hercules, for instance, is said to have deflowered fifty virgins in one night. Many of the gods were pedophiles. In a moment of mockery and sarcasm he exclaims to his pagan readers, “Let your wives worship these gods! And let them pray that their husbands be such as these – so temperate!”<sup>122</sup> He argues that it is impossible for Greek society not to be licentious when the models are such. It is noteworthy that St. Clement points out to his readers that he actually

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<sup>119</sup> *Str.* III, VI, 53.1-5; GCS 2, p. 220.

<sup>120</sup> *Str.* VII, XI, 64; SC 428, p. 202; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 7, p. 452

<sup>121</sup> *Str.* VII, XI, 64; SC 428, p. 202.

<sup>122</sup> *Prot.*, II, 6; SC 2, p. 89; Wilson (1887), *Exhortation to the Heathen*, p. 40.

*participated* in many different rites first-hand when he was a pagan.<sup>123</sup> He knew what he was talking about.

St. Clement criticizes the pagan architectural and interior-decorative practices of his time, in which sexual immorality was graphically depicted and displayed in pornographic artwork on the walls of their homes and in public places.<sup>124</sup> Utilizing painted tablets of the gods in sexual acts the pagans found religious justification for their intemperance. St. Clement laments that the pagans virtually identified debauchery with religion (*τὴν ἀκολασίαν εὐσέβειαν νομίζοντες*).<sup>125</sup> St. Clement did not just attack the sexual mores of Greek society. He writes of the Persians that as soon as their young men reach puberty they have sexual intercourse (*ἐπιμίσγονται*) with their sisters, mothers, the wives of other men, and countless concubines being “practiced in intercourse like wild boars” (*καθάπερ οἱ κάπροι εἰς συνουσίαν ἡσκημένοι*).<sup>126</sup> The Celts are said to “bear aloft on their shoulders women’s litters.”<sup>127</sup> In response St. Clement says Christians not only do not use these pornographic sexual symbols and tools so incendiary to the passions, but refuse

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<sup>123</sup> *Prot.*, II, 14; SC 2, p.70; Wilson (1887), *Exhortation to the Heathen*, p. 28ff.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 60; SC 2, pp. 123-124; Wilson (1887), *Exhortation to the Heathen*, p. 63. To survey just *how common* this practice was see Clarke (2003), pp. 24ff. Clarke’s *Roman Sex: 100 B. C. to A. D. 250* is an attempt by this Art Historian from the University of Texas to document and explain what is described as a plethora of popular erotic art in Roman society, that has for centuries, due to prudish scholarship and societal norms, been locked away in backrooms and secret museums. Clarke would like his readers to conclude that Roman society was exceedingly comfortable with what contemporary society would consider pornography. While some of the archaeological evidence presented here is new, and much of it presented in a dense style which is helpful, this reader is left rather convinced that Clarke is reading his own modern sexual assumptions back into Roman society. Some effort at cross-discipline work would have contributed to his argument (or would it?), but there is no such effort.

<sup>125</sup> *Prot.*, IV, 60; SC 2, p. 124.

<sup>126</sup> *Paed.* I, VII, 55; SC 70, p. 210; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 150.

<sup>127</sup> *Paed.* III, IV, 27; SC 158, p. 63; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 293.

even to look at them or to speak about them, condemning them as deserving “the doom of oblivion” (ἀμνηστίαν καταγγέλλομεν).<sup>128</sup>

Christian marriage is to be characterized by a sexuality both reasonable and disciplined. One need not separate those whom God has joined together in order for self-discipline to exist.<sup>129</sup> Marriage is “disciplined pleasure” (τὸ εὐάρεστον μετὰ σωφροσύνης), and as such is harmless (ἀβλαβές).<sup>130</sup> Chastity, which ought to exist in marriage, is the body’s holy robe (τοῦ σώματος ἀγνήν στολήν).<sup>131</sup> St. Clement’s pedagogical goal was not to *eradicate* the things which came naturally to men, but to *regulate* them for holiness. “Whatever things are natural to men we must not eradicate from them, but rather impose on them limits and suitable times” (Ἀτλῶς γὰρ ὅποσα φυσικὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐστίν, ταῦτα οὐκ ἀναιρεῖν ἐξ αὐτῶν δεῖ, μᾶλλον δὲ μέτρον αὐτοῖς καὶ καιρὸν ἐπιτιθέναι πρέποντα).<sup>132</sup> This statement was made in the context of an exposition on laughter, but it equally applies to his teaching on sex, eating, and other human appetites. It illustrates well St. Clement’s *modus operandi* in giving spiritual counsel concerning these matters.

The sexual organs (μέλη τὰ αἰδοῖα), since they are natural, are to be regarded with modesty (αἰδώς), but not with shame (αἰσχύνη) for the only thing truly shameful is evil (κακία).<sup>133</sup> The same is to be said of marriage itself, since it provides for certain *natural needs* (χρεῖαις φυσικαῖς).<sup>134</sup> Some things are natural and necessary and others are only

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<sup>128</sup> *Prot.*, IV, 61; SC 2, pp. 124-5; Wilson (1887), *Exhortation to the Heathen*, p. 64.

<sup>129</sup> *Str.* III, VI, 46.4; GCS 2, p. 217.

<sup>130</sup> *Str.* III, IX, 67.1; GCS 2, p. 226; Ferguson (1991), p. 297.

<sup>131</sup> *Paed.* III, I, 1; SC 158, p. 13; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 273.

<sup>132</sup> *Paed.* II, V, 46; SC 108, p. 100; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 220.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 52; SC 108, p. 108; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 224. “It is their unlawful activity that is shameful, and deserving ignominy, and reproach, and punishment.”

<sup>134</sup> *Str.* II, XX, 118; SC 38, p. 123; Ferguson (1991), p. 68.



natural but not necessary. Marriage and sex are of the latter variety. Nature leads us to them, and we ought not listen to the heretics who say that we have learned them from animals, and that the serpent taught Adam and Eve to have sexual intercourse.<sup>135</sup>

Young people ought not drink much wine for it will arouse their sexual organs. He writes, “It is not right to pour into the burning season of life (ζεούση ηλικία) the hottest of all liquids (τὸ θερμότατον)- wine.”<sup>136</sup> Young people drinking is like adding fire to fire, for wine stirs up lusts, causing the breasts and genitalia (μαστοί καὶ μόρια) to swell up for intercourse, and causing physical pulsation in the male which impel him to sexual activity. Men and women should generally stay away from each other socially. If a married woman must be in the presence of men she should be well covered inside and out.<sup>137</sup> He has this to say about general female dress, “It is not seemly for clothes to be above the knee... nor is it becoming for any part of a woman to be exposed...’ Your arm is beautiful; yes, but it is not for the public gaze. Your thighs are beautiful; but, was the reply, for my husband alone. And your face is comely. Yes; but only for him who has married me.”<sup>138</sup> For an unmarried woman to be at a banquet with men, especially if wine is present, is a great scandal.

Marital intercourse should be modest.<sup>139</sup> St. Clement writes, “Do not, I pray, put off modesty at the same time that you put off your clothes; because it is never right for

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<sup>135</sup> *Str. III*, XVII, 102.4; GCS 2, p. 243; Ferguson (1991), p. 321.

<sup>136</sup> *Paed.*, II, II, 20; SC 108, p. 48; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 202. St. Clement notes, however, that, contrary to the assertion of the heretical Encratites, Jesus most certainly drank real wine, and wine in moderation around supper-time can be of benefit.

<sup>137</sup> *Paed.*, II, VII, 53; SC 108, p. 112; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 226. St. Clement has much to say about women’s dress, cosmetics, hairstyles, etc. He forbids a woman to show the ankle, pierce the ear, go in public or to Church unveiled, add fake hair additions to her head, or go barefoot.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 114; SC 108, p. 214; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 262.

<sup>139</sup> *Str. IV*, XXII, 146; SC 463, p. 300; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 4, p. 207.

the just man to divest himself of continence (μη δὴ ἅμα χιτῶνι ἀποδυμένῳ ἀποδυσώμεθα καὶ τὴν αἰδῶ ποτε, ἐτεῖ οὐδέποτε τῷ διακίῳ σωφροσύνην ἀποδύσασθαι θέμις).<sup>140</sup> A husband should never kiss (μήποτε φιλεῖν) his wife in the presence of household servants.<sup>141</sup>

As well as being modest, sexual intercourse should never be engaged in for pleasure, but only for the procreation of children. This is *love with self-control* (φιλανθρωπίαν μετ' ἐγκρατείας).<sup>142</sup> Since sexual intercourse is designed solely for procreation, all conjugal union must be foregone during pregnancy.<sup>143</sup> Children ought to be produced by a “reverent, disciplined act of will” (σεμνῶ καὶ σώφρονι παιδοποιούμενος θελήματι) for Christians have learned to ignore physical desires.<sup>144</sup> If it were possible to beget children without marriage, no other need of it could be found.<sup>145</sup> So myopic was St. Clement’s focus on procreation as the justification for marriage that he makes virtually no comment upon marriage given as the means to calm passion and eradicate fornication as St. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 7. In fact, St. Clement writes that the man for whom it is

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<sup>140</sup> *Paed.*, II, X, 100; SC 108, p. 190; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 253. It is important to note here that St. Clement does *not* therefore believe that marital intercourse necessarily means one is not continent. There is for him then *both* a celibate continence *and* a married continence. He calls Christian marriage “chaste wedlock” (τὸ γάμος τὸ σώφρονος). *Paed.* II, X, 109; SC 108, p. 208; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 260.

<sup>141</sup> *Paed.*, III, XII, 84; SC 158, p. 162; Wilson (1887), *The Instructor*, p. 332.

<sup>142</sup> *Str.* II, XVIII, 89; SC 38, p. 103; Ferguson (1991), *Stromata*, Bk. 2, p. 53.

<sup>143</sup> *Str.* III, X, 72.4; GCS 2, p. 228-9; Ferguson (1991), p. 301. And again, “The gnostic circumscribes his desires...to such a one, his wife, after conception, is as a sister, and is judged as if of the same father; then only recollecting her husband, when she looks on the children; as being destined to become a sister in reality after putting off the flesh, which separates and limits the knowledge of those who are spiritual by the peculiar characteristics of the sexes.” *Str.* VI, XII, 100; SC 446, p. 260; Wilson (1887), *Stromata*, Book 6, p. 362.

<sup>144</sup> *Str.* III, VI, 58.2; GCS 2, pp. 222-3; Ferguson (1991), p. 292.

<sup>145</sup> In another place he writes that it is the “diseases of the body that principally show marriage to be necessary.” *Str.* II, XXIII, 140.2; SC 38, p. 140; Ferguson (1991), p. 79.

“better to marry than to burn” is not the single man who must take refuge in marriage, but the once married man who is here permitted a second marriage.<sup>146</sup>

St. Clement teaches that pleasure is attached to marital intercourse as salt is placed on food. It is what incites and ensures the procreating.<sup>147</sup> As such, sexual pleasure need not be despised, but kept in check by self-restraint<sup>148</sup> lest it break out and end up “ruling the house.” Such restraint is imposed upon marital intercourse through sexual fasting. Moses was moving the Jews progressively toward sexual self-restraint by requiring them to sexually fast for three days before hearing God’s word.<sup>149</sup>

Although the Old Testament provides broad paradigms for godly sexual conduct the Old Testament regulation to wash following sexual intercourse is invalid in the Church since Christians have been definitively washed in baptism for every such sexual encounter.<sup>150</sup> Christian children are born holy to God, and not under a curse as the heretics say. True Christians will leave that distinction to the children of the heretical sects, says St. Clement.<sup>151</sup>

As a holy thing<sup>152</sup> marriage must be kept pure at all costs. It is for this purpose that God gave the laws that adulteresses should be put to death, and if the adulteress is of a priestly family she should be cast into the flames. The adulterer involved is to be stoned to death, “but not in the same place, that not even their death may be in

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<sup>146</sup> *Str. III*, XII, 82.4; GCS 2, p. 233; Ferguson (1991), p. 308.

<sup>147</sup> *Str. II*, XX, 119; SC 38, p. 124; Ferguson (1991), p. 68.

<sup>148</sup> St. Clement says that temperance is God’s greatest gift to man (δῶρον γὰρ τοῦ θεοῦ σωφροσύνη τὸ μέγιστον). *Str. II*, XX, 126; SC 38, p. 127.

<sup>149</sup> *Str. III*, XI, 73.1; GCS 2, p. 229.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 82.6; GCS 2, p. 234.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, XV, 98.5; GCS 2, p. 241.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 84.2; GCS 2, p. 234.

common.”<sup>153</sup> St. Clement defends this surprising affirmation of the Mosaic civil law by adding, “And the law is not at variance with the Gospel, but agrees with it. How should it be otherwise, one Lord being author of both? (Οὐ δὴ μάχεται τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ὁ νόμος, συνάδει δὲ αὐτῷ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐχί, ἑνὸς ὄντος ἀμφοῖν χορηγοῦ τοῦ κυρίου)”<sup>154</sup> Besides avoiding adultery married Christians must avoid divorce and remarriage. St. Clement respects one marriage, and one marriage *only*.<sup>155</sup> A plurality of marriages is fornication (πορνεία ἢ ἐκ τοῦ ἑνὸς εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐστὶν ἔκπτωσις).<sup>156</sup> God no longer approves of polygamy.<sup>157</sup>

St. Clement argues that in the next life sexual desire, which divides male and female, will be removed (ἀπόκειται ἐπιθημίας διχαζούσης αὐτον). With this removal will also come the removal of the division of humanity between male and female. How will this division be overcome? Women will become men! (μή τι οὕτως μετατίθεται εἰς τὸν ἄνδρα ἢ γυνή).<sup>158</sup> Death will eradicate the genders since souls are neither male nor female.<sup>159</sup> Husbands and wives will find themselves transformed into brothers and sisters in the next life, just as they ought be transformed in this life after the conception of a child (μετὰ τὴν παιδοποιΐαν).<sup>160</sup> His paltry attention to the future of marriage in the Kingdom of God is perhaps the weakest and most unfortunate aspect of his apologetic for Christian marriage.

<sup>153</sup> *Str. II*, XXIII, 147; SC 38, p. 143; Ferguson (1991), p. 83.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>155</sup> *Str. III*, II, 8.2, p. 199; XI, 74.2; GCS 2, p. 229. For more on how a high valuation of single marriage was exemplified even in pagan culture in late antiquity see Lightman and Zeisel (1976) where they show how Tertullian, Jerome and the Latin Fathers adopted the “pagan *univira* epithet as an honored part of emerging Christian morality,” p. 32.

<sup>156</sup> *Str. III*, XII, 89.1; GCS 2, p. 237.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 82.3; GCS 2, p. 233.

<sup>158</sup> *Str. VI*, XII, 100; SC 446, p. 260. Cf. *Paed.: I*, IV; SC 70, p. 128.

<sup>159</sup> *Str. VI*, XII, 100; SC 446, p. 260.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 100; SC 446, p. 260.

St. Clement's extensive defense of the goodness and *ascetically valuable* nature of Christian marriage is of great value. He, of all the Fathers, most enthusiastically endorses marriage as *eschatologically relevant* for Christians. At the same time he does not endorse an Old Testament marital ethic, but seeks to expound the Christian household as the context in which true Christian spiritual life is fleshed out.

### **Origen.**

*Brief Profile.* Origen was born in A. D. 185 in Alexandria.<sup>161</sup> He reposed in A.D. 254. He may have been born into the Christian faith for his parents were Christians by the time Origen was a teenager.<sup>162</sup> His father, Leonides, was martyred while Origen was seventeen about the year A. D. 201. He became the leading lay theologian of the Church in the third century, composing some 2,000 works mostly on the subject of Scriptural exegesis.<sup>163</sup> He succeeded St. Clement as the leading teacher of the Alexandrian school. Most of his works are not extant, since, due to the condemnation of certain aspects of his theology at the Fifth Ecumenical Council,<sup>164</sup> they were subsequently destroyed.<sup>165</sup> Much of what we possess today of his corpus is fragmentary in nature, and often in Latin

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<sup>161</sup> Greer (1979), p. 191. The life of Origen is recorded in Bk. 6 of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. It is Eusebius who relates that at some time in his youth Origen castrated himself. The reality of this self-castration may be called into question by Origen's own comments later in his life of repulsion at the concept of someone emasculating themselves. To do so would be, according to Origen, to commit a "great crime" and be a tragic hermeneutical mistake since our Savior did not intend His words concerning "cutting off" and "plucking out" to be taken literally. *Aut quis extra maximum crimen habebitur, ipse sibi inferens manus? Princ., IV.3; SC 268; 395-97.*

<sup>162</sup> But would Christian parents have named their child "son of Horus"?

<sup>163</sup> This is the number given by St. Jerome. Origen was said to have kept seven stenographers busily employed from about the year A. D. 230 onward. Of Origen's 574 known homilies, we possess only 21 in Greek.

<sup>164</sup> Whether the condemnation pronounced was upon the person of Origen, or simply upon certain aspects of his teaching and certain of his later devotees, is a matter for debate to this day.

<sup>165</sup> Most of what we have of Origen's corpus comes to us via Rufinus' Latin translation.

translation. Origen was ordained priest in A. D. 230, and most of his corpus was written between this time and his death. He was tortured for his faith during the Decian persecution in A. D. 250, and died shortly after this from his wounds.<sup>166</sup>

Origen labored, as did St. Clement before him, against heretical attacks on marriage made by Encratites, especially the Marcionites and Montanists.<sup>167</sup> While affirming the lawfulness of marriage against these deviant teachings he nevertheless affirms some sense of *inescapable impurity* in lawful marital relations that is translated to the child born of the sexual union. Origen writes,

“Everything which is in generation has need of purification from fire (πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἐν γενέσει χρήζει τοῦ καθαρσίου τοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ πυρός); everything which is in generation has need of punishment (τῆς κολάσεως). But what is above the hips (τὰ ἀνωτέρω τῆς ὀσφύος) and has transcended generation (ὑπερβεβηκότα τὴν γένεσιν), this is like the purest (καθαριωτάτη) and most precious (τιμιωτάτη) element in the world (ἕλη ἐν κόσμῳ).”<sup>168</sup>

Jesus was preserved from such tainted generational inheritance by virtue of the Virgin Birth. Despite the inherent stain involved in procreation, the physical creation and the human body are the good creations of a good God.<sup>169</sup>

Origen’s great contribution to the Church in the area of her understanding of marriage and virginity is his explication of the nature of *spiritual* or *mystical marriage*,<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Greer (1979), p. 3.

<sup>167</sup> Crouzel (1963), pp. 132ff.

<sup>168</sup> *Hom. xi in Jer.*, 5.29-31; SC 232, p. 426; Smith (1998), p. 107. Cf. Crouzel (1963), pp. 49-53. Crouzel, a very positive interpreter of Origen, calls Origen’s doctrine of impurity *complexe, difficile à comprendre, and contradictoire*. *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 62. Origen is driven to his position by his understanding of infant baptism in which, to his mind, the only sin possible to be washed away is that in conception. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>169</sup> *Cels.*, III et IV, 4.26.40-49; SC 136, p. 246; Crombie (1869), p. 187

<sup>170</sup> Crouzel (1963), pp. 30ff. Adolph von Harnack (1894) argued in his *History of Dogma* (Vol. 2, p. 295) that Origen imported this idea of the individual soul as the Bride from Gnosticism. This has been refuted by Chavasse (1940), p. 172ff.

a theme he treats in detail in his *Commentary* and *Homilies on the Song of Songs*.<sup>171</sup> Many later Fathers would speak to the subject of the soul's union with God, but it was Origen from whom they most often drew. The mystical marriage between God and man was prophesied by Adam in the Garden of delights when he said, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh."<sup>172</sup> It is chiefly his understanding of union with God in spiritual marriage that defines his teaching concerning marriage and virginity.<sup>173</sup> In the *Song*, kissing is the pouring of Christ's words into our mouths; the fragrant ointment that delights is Jesus' Name, the spiritual odor of which is filling the world; the bridal-chamber into which the king brings the bride is the secret and mysterious mind of Christ; the bed is the soul's body united to Christ.<sup>174</sup> Representative of his understanding is the following from the opening of his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, "God is loved with the whole soul by those who through their great longing for fellowship with God draw their soul away and separate it not only from their earthly body but also from every corporeal thing."<sup>175</sup>

Consecrated virginity enables the Christian to live more fully in the mystical union of marriage between the soul and Jesus Christ. As such virginity is rooted in and reflects the union man had with God before sin, and also foreshadows that union which is

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<sup>171</sup> The *Commentary* is preserved for us, apart from a few Greek fragments, in the Latin version of Rufinus, and the *Homilies*, of which no Greek fragments exist, in the translation of St. Jerome. For more on this commentary of Origen see Clarke (1986).

<sup>172</sup> *Cant., Liber II*; GCS 33, pp. 157-8; Lawson (1956), p. 149.

<sup>173</sup> Crouzel (1985), pp. 183-4, 189. It is also in this context that Origen often deals with sin as spiritual adultery (the antitype of mystical marriage), and describes the work of the demons as trying to corrupt Christ's Virgin Bride. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 43.

<sup>174</sup> *Cant., Liber III*; GCS 33, pp. 174-175, and *Ibid., Hom. 2 in Cant.*, 4.25-26; GCS 33, pp. 48-49. "*Quaero lectum, in quo sponsus cum sponsa requiescat; et, nisi fallor, corpus humanum est.*" Lawson (1956), p. 172. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>175</sup> *Mart., III*, 19-22; GCS 3, p. 4; Greer (1979), p. 42.

to come in the next age.<sup>176</sup> The entire Church is called a virgin, and this ecclesiastical virginity is maintained not only through the practice of consecrated virginity, but also through the embrace of chastity in the married state. Virginity surpasses marriage in value, for it is not as ambiguous and dangerous as is marriage, the latter being so closely associated with things of this life. Marriage only makes sense in *this* world. Virginity, on the other hand, only makes sense when viewed from the perspective of the next world. The virgin lives in this world as a stranger and a witness bearer, proclaiming the coming Kingdom. At the same time Origen affirms that if Christian marriage is lived chastely, it too “*imbibe en quelque sorte le temps d’éternité.*”<sup>177</sup> In his commentary on 1 Cor. 7, which we have in fragment form,<sup>178</sup> Origen distinguishes between the two ways of life: marriage and virginity. The former is according to the commandments. The latter goes *beyond* what is commanded. Marriage involves in some sense *becoming the slave* of your partner, but the celibate has freedom, the freedom to serve God without restraint.

Origen teaches explicitly the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary. Origen soundly denounces heretical sects that practice virginity, judging the presuppositions of the heretical practice to be blasphemous. Origen makes the distinction between a *virginity of faith* and a *virginity of morals*, noting that the latter without the former is useless. The virginity of value is that stemming from the free choice of the virgin.<sup>179</sup> For Origen the two preeminently Christian ways of life are martyrdom<sup>180</sup> and virginity. Just

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<sup>176</sup> Crouzel (1963), pp. 27ff.

<sup>177</sup> Crouzel (1985), p. 184.

<sup>178</sup> *Fragment on 1 Cor. XXXIII*, JTS IX, p. 500.

<sup>179</sup> Crouzel (1963), pp. 98-100. Chastity is a matter of body and soul, and true virginity is an acquisition of all the virtues.

<sup>180</sup> So exalted did Origen consider martyrs that in one place he suggests in his *Exhortation to Martyrdom* that as Christians have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, so *some* might be redeemed by the precious



as there are two types of virginity (outward and inward), so there are two types of martyrdom (μη̄ τὸ ἐν φανερω̄ δε̄ μόνον μαρτύριον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐν κρυπτῶ).<sup>181</sup>

Origen affirms clearly in his writings the *fundamental equality* between husband and wife in marriage, especially with regard to fidelity. He strongly opposed the mixed marriage of a believer with an unbeliever.<sup>182</sup> Remarriage for widows and widowers was defended by Origen, who criticized rigorists who excluded the remarried from the Church, but only as a concession to great weakness and spiritual infirmity.<sup>183</sup> Origen nowhere teaches the obligatory celibacy of the clergy, but does maintain that, most importantly of all, the priest who serves at the altar (*qui divinis assistit altaribus*) must be pure from lust and sexual defilement (*castitate debet accingi*).<sup>184</sup>

The *inescapable impurity* in marital intercourse is the basis behind St. Paul's teaching concerning temporary sexual abstinence in 1 Cor. 7:5, according to Origen. St. Paul's guidance becomes in Origen a universal obligation upon all married Christians to abstain from sexual relations on fast days and in preparation for receiving the Holy Eucharist. In this teaching Origen is followed almost universally by all subsequent Church Fathers.<sup>185</sup> For Origen this practice of sexual fasting was to be a temporary

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blood of martyrs. *Mart.*, L, 25-28; GCS 3, p. 46. How much Origen himself personally longed for martyrdom is apparent in his *Dialogue with Heraclides* where he breaks forth with the following exclamation, "Οὕτω πείδομαι ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας, οὕτως ἐτοίμου τοῦ λεγομένου θανάτου καταφρονῶ, οὕτως φέρε θηρία, φέρε σταυρός, φέρε πῦρ, φέρε βασάνους. Οἶδα ὅτι ἅμα τῷ ἀπαλλαγῆναι ἐξέρξομαι τοῦ σώματος, μετὰ Χριστοῦ ἀναπαύομαι." *Dial.*, 24.7-11; SC 67, p. 102.

<sup>181</sup> *Mart.*, XXI.9-10; GCS 3, p. 19.

<sup>182</sup> As did Tertullian so forcefully before him.

<sup>183</sup> Origen describes the remarriages of the Old Testament righteous as "mystical economies." *Princ.* II.X.3; GCS 5, p. 176; Crombie (1869), p. 295.

<sup>184</sup> *Hom. I in Lev.*, 4.6.31-34; SC 286, p. 182; Barkley (1990), p. 78.

<sup>185</sup> "L'impureté des relations sexuelles même légitimes ressort aussi de l'interprétation origénienne de 1 Co. 7, 5: ce qui chez Paul n'est qu'un conseil ou une permission visant le recueillement des époux pour s'adonner à la prière devient pour Origène une obligation, temporaire, certes, et assumée d'un commun

measure. Anything more permanent was very dangerous, and always conditioned on the mutual agreement of the spouses. For one spouse to embrace chastity without the consent of the other was a violation of love. “It is better that both be saved by the works of marriage than to see one fall, on account of the other, from the hope he has in Christ. How could the husband be saved if he were responsible for the death of his wife?”<sup>186</sup> Sexual fasting, however, has the power to “kill incontinence” (τὴν ἀκρασίαν ἀναλισκούσης) and to keep Satan from rejoicing.<sup>187</sup> In his *Treatise on the Passover* Origen argues that the “girding of the loins” required of the Jews in preparation for eating the passover was a requirement to be pure of bodily sexual union. “Thus Scripture teaches us to bind up the bodily source of seed and to repress inclinations to sexual relations when we partake of the flesh of Christ.”<sup>188</sup> This is why St. John the Baptist wore a leather girdle, in order to demonstrate that he had “mortified every genital instinct of the body.”<sup>189</sup> It should be noted, however, that Origen distinguishes the *impurity* inherent in lawful marital relations from *sin*. The impurity involved in conjugal relations does not prohibit married Christians from offering their bodies to God as a holy oblation outside the bed-chamber. *Outside the bed-chamber* is to Origen particularly relevant when a married couple is choosing a place to set aside for prayer in their home.

“With respect to the place where sexual intercourse takes place, not unlawful intercourse (τῆς παρανόμου μίξεως) but that permitted by the Apostle’s word ‘by way of concession, not of command’ (1 Cor. 7:6), we must inquire whether it is holy (ὅσιόν) and pure (καθαρὸν) to God. For if it

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accord, étendue aux jeûnes religieux et a’ la réception de l’eucharistie. Sur ce point Origène sera suivi par une grande partie de la tradition postérieure.” Crouzel (1985), p. 185.

<sup>186</sup> *Fragment on 1 Cor.* XXXIII, JTS IX, p. 500.

<sup>187</sup> *Or.*, II, 2.21-24; GCS 3, p. 300; Greer (1979), p. 83.

<sup>188</sup> Daly (1992), p. 47.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

is impossible to have leisure for prayer as we should unless someone dedicates himself to this 'by agreement for a season' (1 Cor. 7:5), then perhaps the same consideration should apply, if possible, to the place."<sup>190</sup>

In his *Prologue* to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* Origen contrasts two types of love: carnal and spiritual.<sup>191</sup> The *Song of Songs*<sup>192</sup> is a wedding song (*nuptiale carmen*)<sup>193</sup> written in the form of a play, that must only be studied by the mature who know how to clearly distinguish between spiritual and carnal love. The immature may falsely assume that the book has something to do with fleshly love and intercourse and be injured by it.<sup>194</sup> Reading it may actually stimulate sexual desires. Origen forbids the young and those who have not successfully conquered lust from even so much as touching this book. To his mind only spiritual love is good. Carnal love is a twisting of divine love, and a misdirection of it. Marital love has no direct expression in conjugal relations.<sup>195</sup> It is, however, of a particular nature and different from the love one has for anyone aside from a spouse. Even this most intense of loves must be submitted beneath one's love for God. This choice is demonstrated most clearly by the martyrs. Marital love is called by God to progress more and more from a carnal to a spiritual nature.<sup>196</sup> The good of one's partner, not the satisfaction of one's desire, should be the goal of marital love.

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<sup>190</sup> *Or.*, XXXI, 4, 9-13; GCS 3, p. 398; Greer (1979), p. 166.

<sup>191</sup> *Cant.: Prologus*; GCS 33, p. 63; Greer (1979), pp. 23-24.

<sup>192</sup> Origen's commentary and homilies on the *Song of Songs* are among his most famous and appreciated work. St. Jerome said that in other works Origen far surpassed all other authors, and in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* he surpassed himself! Quoted in Lawson (1956), p. 265.

<sup>193</sup> *Cant.: Prologus*; GCS 33, p. 61.

<sup>194</sup> *Cant., Prologus* 14-30; GCS 33, p. 62, and *Liber III*, 5-11; GCS 33, p. 208.

<sup>195</sup> "Mais Origène ne voit guère, pas plus qu' Augustin et que les autres Peres, que les rapports sexuels puissent avoir quelque incidence sur l'amour conjugal lui-même." Crouzel (1985), p. 189.

<sup>196</sup> Crouzel (1963), pp. 78ff.

Conjugal relations, which Origen ranks as among “the mysteries of marriage” (*καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν γάμον μυστηρίων*), are to be “honored with silence” (*σιωπᾶσθαι ἀξίων*), to be engaged in with solemnity and care (*τὸ ἔργον σεμνότερον καὶ βραδύτερον γίνεται*), and to be followed through without passion (*ἀπαθέστερον*).<sup>197</sup> The divine presence is manifested by a profound concord and harmony (*ὁμονοία*) in the marriage, which is manifested even in relations.<sup>198</sup> Sexual intercourse is justified solely by virtue of procreation.<sup>199</sup> It is a remedy also for concupiscence.

On the temporary nature of marriage Origen writes, “Observe the reverence of Scripture in promising manifold and a hundred-fold brother and children and parents...a wife is not numbered among them...For in the resurrection of the dead they neither marry nor are given in marriage (*οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίστουνται*), but are like the angels in heaven.”<sup>200</sup>

### **St. Methodios of Olympus.**

*Brief Profile.* Most of our conclusive information concerning the life of St. Methodios is derived from the writings of Ss. Jerome and Epiphanius. Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* quotes St. Methodios at length, but ascribes the quotation to a certain “Maximus,” never identifying Methodios by name.<sup>201</sup> The dates for St.

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<sup>197</sup> *Or.*, II.2.20-21; GCS 3, p. 300; Greer (1979), p. 83.

<sup>198</sup> Crouzel (1963), p. 32.

<sup>199</sup> *Hom. 3 in Gen.* 6; GCS 29, pp. 46-47. Origen maintains what has come to be termed the “Alexandrian rule,” rooted as it is in Stoic philosophy.

<sup>200</sup> *Mart.*, XVI.26-27; GCS 3, p. 15.

<sup>201</sup> Patterson (1997), p. 16. Perhaps we should not be greatly surprised by this since St. Methodios is best known as the stern critic of Origen, whose praise Eusebius could not sing loud enough.

Methodios may be tentatively suggested as A. D. 260-312.<sup>202</sup> St. Jerome gives a paragraph to St. Methodios in his *Lives of Illustrious Men*, in which St. Methodios is described as the Bishop of Olympus and a martyr.<sup>203</sup> He wrote many works,<sup>204</sup> the most famous being his *Banquet: A Treatise on Chastity*.<sup>205</sup> This is the only complete text written by St. Methodios that is extant. It is something of a compendium of Christianity presented under the central motif of virginity. He refuted Gnostic and Neo-Platonic ideas on the origin of evil in his work *On Free Will*, fragments of which have been preserved. His *Life and Rational Activity* is preserved only in Slavonic.<sup>206</sup> Important portions of his *Treatise on the Resurrection* have been preserved thanks especially to St. Epiphanius, who, in his fervent quest to eradicate Origenism from the Church, extensively quotes from this text in his *Panarion*. Despite the extensive documentation in Epiphanius, the original was in three volumes and the reader is left panting for more from this very beautiful book. Other works of the saint of which we have fragments include *The Jewish Foods and the Red Heifer*, *To Sisteius on Leprosy*, *On Creatures*, and *Against Porphyry*. Some of his lost works include *Commentaries on Genesis*, and *The Song of Songs*, as well as his work *Against Origen*. Besides so many of St. Methodios' works being either

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<sup>202</sup> *ODCC*, p. 1080.

<sup>203</sup> *De Vir. Ill.*, LXXXIII; PL 23.728-729.

<sup>204</sup> Often St. Methodios is simply gleaned for his anti-Origenism, but he is worthy of study as a theologian in his own right. Reading Methodios only as a critic of Origen can also obscure the reality of his immense dependence on Origen for many Scriptural interpretations and much theology. Patterson (1997), pp. 123-128.

<sup>205</sup> This text was written for ascetic women.

<sup>206</sup> A German translation by G. Nathaniel Bonwetsch has been made of the Slavonic. *Die Theologie des Methodius von Olympus* (1903), Leipzig. The work of Bonwetsch in correlating the Greek remains with the Slavic translation recreated Methodios' corpus from its previous centuries long lack of integrity. Patterson (1997), p. 21.

lost or fragmentary, St. Photios in the ninth century confessed that he thought many of the saint's works appeared to be tampered with.<sup>207</sup>

Of all the early Fathers *none* can be said to have more definitively influenced the mind of St. John Chrysostom on the subjects of virginity and marriage than did St. Methodios. It is not coincidental that his *Banquet* is the single text in his corpus preserved to this day, for it is his most influential. In this treatise he is able to fuse into a harmonious and delightful collage *both* the ascetic ethic of the Christian *and* the uniquely Christian motivation, deeply rooted in eschatology, for this ethic. It is this which sets apart St. Methodios' propagation of virginity from the common Stoic and Neo-Platonic emphases on self-control and *ἀπάθεια*. It is the combination of his two works: *The Banquet* and *On the Resurrection* that enables one to see both how chastity is internally motivated by eschatology, and how eschatology necessarily brings forth chastity. Many Fathers before and after St. Methodios have written on the subject of asceticism, but none have so consistently rooted their teaching properly in Christian eschatology until Methodios,<sup>208</sup> and none would do so again until it was so beautifully done by St. John Chrysostom.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Mursuillo (1958), pp. 25-28. There were two separate editions: one Arian and one Orthodox.

<sup>208</sup> St. Methodios was unique in inaugurating the union of the dogmatic and the monastic, of the eschatological and the ascetic, in the Church at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Buonaiuti (1921), p. 259ff. Cf. Musurillo (1958), p. 21. This is not to imply that Ss. Methodios and Chrysostom held the same eschatological views on all points. St. Methodios' eschatology is commonly considered chiliastic, but this is disputed. Patterson (1997), p. 106. Chrysostom himself has no sympathy with millenarianism. Regardless of whether or not Methodios was a chiliast, the common emphasis of Ss. Methodios and Chrysostom on realized eschatology provided the framework in which asceticism could flourish.

<sup>209</sup> I am reminded of an interchange I had with a wise and experienced Orthodox nun. I asked her why she had become a nun, and had undergone almost 40 years of great trial simply to *preserve* her monasticism in an ecclesiastical ethos which had been aggressively anti-monastic at worst and discouragingly indifferent at best. Her answer to me was in one word with a smile: "Eschatology."

*The Banquet* was written<sup>210</sup> not simply as a *panegyric* on virginity, but as a refutation of heretical teachings concerning marriage and asceticism.<sup>211</sup> The story is set in the time of St. Thekla, the disciple of St. Paul the Apostle. Ten virgins have gathered, and compete with each other in the contest of praising the virtues of chastity. The discussion takes place under the shade of a chaste tree.<sup>212</sup>

St. Methodios lodges virginity firmly in the history of redemption. He posits that its appearance is the fruit of the advance of the salvation of mankind.

“In such wise did God in His goodness bring assistance to the human race in due season as do fathers to their children. For they do not at once put their children in charge of pedagogues, but they allow them during their early years to frisk about like little calves. First they send them to teachers who take them through their stammering period. Then, after they shed the juvenile locks of the mind, they are introduced to the study of more serious subjects, and from there to still more important ones. In this way we should imagine that God the Father of all acted toward our forefathers. For the world while still unpopulated was in its infancy (*ὁ κόσμος ἀνθρώπων ἀπλήρωτος ὢν ὡς νήπιος ἦν*), as it were, and had first to be taken from this condition and grow into manhood (*ἀνδρωθεντα πληθυνθῆναι*). But when later it had become populated from end to end overflowing with countless numbers, God did not suffer mankind to continue in its old ways any longer. He took thought how men might make progress and advance farther on the road to heaven, until at last they might become perfect (*φθάσαντες τελειωθῶσιν*) by attaining to the most sublime goal of all (*τὸ μέγιστον μάθημα*), the science of virginity.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> The text was probably penned between the time of Valerian’s edict in A. D. 260 and the outbreak of Diocletian’s persecution in A. D. 303.

<sup>211</sup> St. Methodios targets both the disparaging of marriage by Encratism, and the licentiousness of some Gnostic groups. This work depends heavily on Ss. Irenaeus, and Clement, and upon Origen. Patterson (1997), p. 75.

<sup>212</sup> The agnus/chaste tree has long been a symbol of chastity. Its berries are still gathered and sold, to this day, for use in tea and in capsule form as an aphrodisiac.

<sup>213</sup> *Symp.*, 17; SC 95, p. 58; Musurillo (1958), p. 44.

Virginity appears with Christ,<sup>214</sup> Who is addressed as the “Archvirgin” (ἀρχιπαρθένω προσαγορευθῆναι),<sup>215</sup> after centuries of spiritual preparation of the people of God. Following the Fall there was the marriage of family members and polygamy, then polygamy but not with family members,<sup>216</sup> then the eradication of polygamy and adultery,<sup>217</sup> then the establishment of monogamy as normative which St. Methodios calls “continence” (σωφροσύνη) and then to virginity which is to bring its practitioners to immortality.<sup>218</sup> Virginity is something that has come down to mankind from heaven, and for this reason was not revealed to the earlier generations (τὸ τῆς παρθενίας ἀνθρώποις ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν κατεπέμφθη φυτὸν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ταῖς πρώταις οὐκ ἀπεκαλύφθη γενεαῖς).<sup>219</sup> St. John Chrysostom follows this paradigm very closely.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>214</sup> Christ Himself guarded His flesh from corruption by virginity. *Ibid.*, 25; SC 95, p. 64.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 23; SC 95, p. 62. St. Methodios interprets Rev. 14 as a picture of Jesus Christ, the Archvirgin, leading the choir in heaven of holy virgins. These virgins were those who practiced spiritual *and* physical chastity on earth, contra to St. Clement’s interpretation.

<sup>216</sup> This progress was made from the time of the Patriarch Abraham’s circumcision.

<sup>217</sup> This progress was made from the time of the Prophets and is reflected in King Solomon’s advice given in Proverbs 5 to rejoice in your wife- singular. Apparently St. Methodios does not wish to draw any paradigmatic conclusions from Solomon’s own practice!

<sup>218</sup> *Symp.*, 18; SC 95, p. 58.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 16; SC 95, p. 56.

<sup>220</sup> Chrysostom follows *closely* but not *exactly*. A case in point concerns the presence of virginity in the Old Covenant. St. Methodios denies that there was consecrated celibacy in the Old Covenant, writing, “Καὶ πρῶτον ἐξεταστέον, δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν πολλῶν προφητῶν καὶ δικαίων πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ διδαξάντων καὶ ἐργασαμένων παρθενίαν οὐδεὶς οὔτε ἐνεκωμίασεν οὔτε εἶλετο. Μόνῳ γὰρ ἄρα ἐφυλάσσετο τοῦτο πρεσβεῦσαι τὸ μάθημα τῷ κυρίῳ...τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ καὶ ἀρχιπροφήτῃ καὶ ἀρχαγγέλῳ τούτῳ καὶ ἀρχιπαρθένω προσαγορευθῆναι.” *Symp.* I.IV.23; SC 95, p. 62. “How is it that not one of the prophets and righteous men praised or embraced virginity? It was reserved for the Lord alone who was Archpriest, Archprophet, and Archangel, to be Archvirgin.” Musurillo (1958), p. 46. Chrysostom, however, argues that most of the Old Testament prophets were proto-monks and embraced a prophetic sexuality. It should be noted that at the same time that St. Methodios argues that the Old Testament righteous knew nothing of virginity in theory or in practice, he also exegetes quite a number of Old Testament passages as *explicit praises of virginity*. Examples of this are found in his interpretations of Pss. 44 and 136 which he considers to be psalms written in praise of virginity. *Symp.*, 97; SC 95, pp. 130, 32; Cf. *Symp.*, 168; SC 95, p. 196. He also interprets the *Song of Songs* as a hymn of Christ in praise of virginity. Καὶ τοῦτο καὶ ἐν τῷ τῶν Ἰσραηλίων Ἰσραηλιτὶ πάρεστι διαθεῆσθαι τῷ βουλομένῳ φανερώς, ἔνθα αὐτός ὁ κύριος τὰς ἐν παρθενίᾳ παγίως καταγέννημένας ἐγκωμιάζων. *Ibid.*, 150; SC 95, p. 180. Additionally, he enumerates Abel, Joseph, Jephtha’s daughter, Judith, Susanna, John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary as virginal models in his *Hymn of Thekla* at the end of the *Symposium*. Patterson (1997), p. 120.



The call of the Gospel is for all Christians to embrace chastity, but because of the weakness and passion for intercourse of the incontinent (τὴν ἀσθένειαν καὶ τὴν ὑτέκταυσιν εἰς συνουσίαν), marriage remains a blessed and fruitful Christian path.<sup>221</sup> St. Methodios argues that the *Christian norm* has become chastity. This is the *eschatologically apropos* way of life. We will see this same emphasis in Chrysostom when he argues that marriage is *now* eschatologically a distraction or waste of time.

Ingrained in this theory of the progress of redemption is the idea of different God-defined *standards of perfection*. The definition of perfection changes with the progress of redemptive history, so the perfect man long ago is not considered such today. The righteous in past times “even married their own sisters, then the Law came and forbade them...forbidding and denouncing as sinful what had previously been thought to be virtuous.”<sup>222</sup> In the New Covenant, “whosoever strives to keep his flesh undefiled from childhood by the practice of virginity (παρθενίαν ἀσκῶν) is the one who offers himself perfectly to God.”<sup>223</sup> Again, Chrysostom follows St. Methodios in this matter of the gradations of perfection.

According to St. Methodios virginity walks on earth but “her head touches the heavens.”<sup>224</sup> It is an exceedingly difficult path, but one extraordinarily great. Virginity (ἀγνεία) is the “most brilliant and glorious star of all Christ’s charisms” (τὸ καλλιφεγγές ἄστρον καὶ τιμαλφέστατον τοῦ Χριστοῦ).<sup>225</sup> Nothing is superior to chastity in its power to

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<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 79; SC 95, p. 114; Musurillo (1958), p. 69.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 17; SC 95, p. 58; Musurillo (1958), p. 44.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 116; SC 95, p. 148. Musurillo (1958), p. 84.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 12; SC 95, p. 54. Musurillo (1958), p. 43..

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 94; SC 95, p. 128. Musurillo (1958), p. 75.

return mankind to Paradise.<sup>226</sup> Virginitv is the most precious offering and gift (ἀνάθημα καὶ δῶρον) and the greatest vow that a man may make to God.<sup>227</sup> The embrace of virginitv is *the key way* one moves from being God’s image to being God’s likeness,<sup>228</sup> and quickly causes violent passions to wither away.<sup>229</sup> The virgins are perpetually God’s bloodless altar (δυσιαστήριον ἀναίμακτον Θεοῦ).<sup>230</sup> Virginitv alone makes divine those who possess her and have been initiated into her pure mysteries,<sup>231</sup> and this can be etymologically demonstrated by the fact that παρθενία can become παρθεΐα with the change of one letter!<sup>232</sup> Virginitv dwells above pleasure or pain, and is able to make the flesh buoyant.<sup>233</sup>

True virginitv is not only a virginitv of the body but of the soul. In order to maintain the virginitv of the soul, the virgin must constantly listen to the Word of God, and to pious instruction. As St. Paul says, the unmarried woman *thinks* on the things of the Lord and how she may please the Lord. (Ἡ ἄγαμος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, πῶς ἀρέσει τῷ κυρίῳ).<sup>234</sup> *By reason* (τῷ λόγῳ) the virgin can eradicate sensuality.<sup>235</sup> The love of continence is something that must grow in the virgin in the midst of her heroic efforts.

While we will see that St. Methodios goes to great lengths to affirm the on-going relevance of marriage and procreation in the Christian era, he expounds in Λόγος γ’ of the

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 95; SC 95, p. 130.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 109; SC 95, p. 142.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 25; SC 95, p. 64.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 116; SC 95, p. 148.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 127; SC 95, p. 158.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 171; SC 95, pp. 200, 202. This passage especially highlights the reality of Christianity as a *mystery religion*. Such language would be very familiar and commonly understood by Hellenic audiences.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 171; SC 95, p. 200.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 171; SC 95, p. 202.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; SC 95, p. 56. This emphasis on the power of the Word to sanctify and the importance of being a continual student of the Word is evidence of the influence of the Fathers of Alexandria.

*Symposium* the union of Adam and Eve in Paradise in a spiritual sense, portraying Adam as a type of Christ, the sleep of Adam as a type of Christ's sleep of ecstasy in His passion, and the sexual union and transmission of seed as a union in which Christ plants, by secret inspiration, a spiritual seed in the depths of the human soul so that the commandment to "increase and multiply" is fulfilled in the Church as she grows both in numbers and in beauty each day thanks to the intimate union between her and the Word.<sup>236</sup>

This imagery is applied also to the Apostle Paul. St. Paul first became the Bride and Helpmate of the Word, and then he conceived and was in travail with his spiritual children.<sup>237</sup> He married Christ, and then he procreated. Heretics try to read too much into the commandment to "increase and multiply," and in doing so are compelled by their own unbridled lusts and passions. God is not advocating sexual pleasure, according to St. Methodios, under the pretext of procreation.<sup>238</sup>

In Logos 2 in the *Banquet* St. Methodios strenuously argues that the eschatological arrival of virginity neither de-sacralizes nor eradicates marriage and procreation in Christian life. In fact, the Saint not only affirms the continuing relevance of the procreation mandate,<sup>239</sup> but places it within a context of mystical *co-operation with God*. Procreation is not merely animal reproduction, but is the production of the *image of God*. St. Methodios is not embarrassed to poetically hymn human procreation.

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; SC 95, p. 56.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 71; SC 95, pp. 106, 108.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 75; SC 95, p. 110.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 78; SC 95, p. 114..

<sup>239</sup> On this subject St. Methodios lifts his material directly from St. Clement's *Paedagogus*. Patterson (1997), pp. 75, 95ff.

“Man’s coming into existence begins with the sowing of seed in the furrows of the maternal field: and thus bone from bone and flesh from flesh, taken in an invisible act of power and always by the same divine Craftsman, are fashioned into a human being...that first sleep of Adam was to be a type of man’s enchantment in love, when in his thirst for children he falls into a trance, lulled to sleep by the pleasures of procreation, in order that a new person might be formed...for under the stimulation of intercourse (έν τοῖς κατά τήν συνουσίαν έρεθισμοῖς), the body’s harmony (τῆς άρμονίας τῶν σωμάτων)- so we are told by those who have consummated the rites of marriage<sup>240</sup> (ώς οἱ τετελεσμένοι τήν γαμήλιον ήμᾶς διδάσκουσι τελετήν)- is greatly disturbed, and all the marrow-like generative part of the blood...rushes through the generative organs into the living soil of the woman...for man made one with woman in the embrace of love (φιλοστόργοις ένούμενος τῇ γυναικί συμπλοκαῖς) is overcome by a desire for children (κάτοχος έπιθυμίας γίνεται γεννητικῆς) and completely forgets everything else...he offers his rib to his divine Creator, to be removed that he himself the father may appear once again in a son.”<sup>241</sup>

Quoting a common philosophical adage St. Methodios writes, “There is nothing that is to be considered evil of itself, but rather becomes such by the act of the men who use it.”<sup>242</sup> Thus, it is not reasonable for a Christian to loathe procreation since God accomplished it with His own holy hands. Even children born from illegitimate unions are not cursed, and are given guardian angels.<sup>243</sup> Adulterers who ruin marriages by stealing

<sup>240</sup> St. Methodios uses the same word here (τελετή) for the rites of marriage as he does elsewhere for the rites of virginity. Both marriage and virginity have their religious place in the great Christian mysteries.

<sup>241</sup> *Symp.*, 31, 32; SC 95, pp. 70, 72; Musurillo (1958), pp. 49-50. Note in this quotation that St. Methodios sees Adam having an *active* part in the creation of Eve and even offering his rib for the purpose. Here sexual intercourse is boldly styled by St. Methodios as an *φιλοστόργοις ένούμενος τῇ γυναικί συμπλοκαῖς* which might be better translated ‘in an intertwining and affectionate embrace’ rather than simply ‘an embrace of love’ as Musurillo. It should be noted that here St. Methodios seems to go beyond St. Clement and Origen, avoiding the procreational reductionism of these two, yet without removing the production of a child from the center of the sexual union. He describes Adam as having a “thirst for children” and presupposes that sexual union in marriage is fueled by a “desire for children” which overcomes the participants.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; SC 95, p. 80; Musurillo (1958), p. 54.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 35; SC 95, p. 74.

“the embraces of regeneration” (τὰς παιδογόνους συμπλοκάς) should be corporally punished by the civil authorities.<sup>244</sup>

For the Christian two ways of life are opened before him, and neither is to be despised. The Scriptures arrange a hierarchy in which marriage and procreation are not despised, but chastity is praised and is preferred.<sup>245</sup> Each person must discern his own gift from God for “to some it has never been given to attain virginity, while for others it is His wish that they no longer defile themselves by lustful provocations, but that henceforth they strive to preoccupy their minds with that angelic transformation of the body (τὴν ἰσάγγελον μεταστοιχείωσιν τῶν σωμάτων) wherein they neither marry nor are married.”<sup>246</sup> St. Paul had experienced both lives since he was a widower, according to St. Methodios, but his wish was that all embrace chastity. St. Paul gives permission to marry a wife because he knew that some had great sexual passion.<sup>247</sup> But being married does not provide justification for licentiousness in marriage.<sup>248</sup> To indulge in carnal passion, even in marriage, is to delight the devil.<sup>249</sup> Some Christians (ατελεῖς) will embrace marriage, and others (κρείττονες / τελειότεροι) will embrace virginity.

Though Ss. Methodios and Chrysostom have many differences including different approaches to Scriptural exegesis,<sup>250</sup> emphases on fasting,<sup>251</sup> opinions about the

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<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 44; SC 95, p. 82; Musurillo (1958), p. 55.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 49; SC 95, p. 86.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 50; SC 95, p. 86. Musurillo (1958), p. 57.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 83; SC 95, p. 118.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 88; SC 95, p. 122.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 94; SC 95, p. 128.

<sup>250</sup> St. Methodios was a great allegorizer, and much of his work is simply allegorizing interpretations of Old Testament laws.

<sup>251</sup> St. Methodios barely references fasting, simply noting the fast of Great and Holy Friday. This is unusual for someone who so promotes chastity, and Chrysostom was a great proponent of fasting.

continued relevance of the procreation mandate,<sup>252</sup> and orientations toward Greek philosophy,<sup>253</sup> among others, nevertheless, they share the same fundamental ascetic paradigm, and thus have been able to inspire generations of Christian ascetics and married couples by both rooting the Christian ascetical ethic firmly in the progress of redemption and the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth, and by organically connecting marriage to the Church's ascetic program.

### **St. Athanasios the Great.**

*Brief Profile.* St. Athanasios, Archbishop of Alexandria, was born about A. D. 295 and reposed on 2 May 373 in Alexandria. As a young deacon he accompanied Archbishop Alexander to the First Ecumenical Council in A. D. 325 as his secretary. He was elected archbishop on 8 June 328. Throughout his tenure as archbishop he was deposed and exiled five times due to the Arian conflict. Besides serving the Church as archbishop he was a voluminous author. His large corpus consists primarily of his *Paschal and Personal Letters*, *Polemical works*, especially his three-volume *Defense against the Arians*, his two-part work *Contra Gentes*, containing both his *Against the Heathen* and his *On the Incarnation of the Word*, his *Life of St. Antony*, his *Letters to Virgins*,<sup>254</sup> his tract *On Virginity*<sup>255</sup>, and various *exegetical fragments*. Especially

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<sup>252</sup> St. Methodios argues that the mandate of Genesis 1:28 continues in force physically and literally. "Increase and multiply is the command, and we may not spurn the command." *Ibid.*, 31; SC 95, p. 70; Musurillo (1958), p. 49.

<sup>253</sup> Though St. Methodios was a aggressive critic of both Christian (Origen) and non-Christian (Porphyry) Neo-Platonists, he himself quotes Plato more than any other source outside of Holy Scripture. See Bonwetsch's index guide on what St. Methodios read. St. John Chrysostom shared St. Methodios' educational background, but not his love of referencing the Greek classics.

<sup>254</sup> The First *Letter to Virgins* is extant only in Coptic, and not in the original Greek. It is here that Athanasios most thoroughly refutes the heretic Hieracas, who in praising virginity argued that marriage was

valuable to our interest is his refutation in various places of the teaching of the heretic Hieracas, who, in his exaltation of virginity, condemned Christian marriage as sinful.<sup>256</sup> St. Athanasios refuted Hieracas not only by establishing the *legitimacy* of Christian marriage in the New Covenant, but in describing virginity as *spiritual marriage*.<sup>257</sup>

He was a great promoter of *both* virginity *and* pious Christian marriage, and recent scholarship has given particular attention to both aspects of his thinking.<sup>258</sup> St. Athanasios did not hesitate to engage in teaching on intimate questions of human sexuality, and assumed a special patronage for the holy virgins of the Church whom he both counseled and organized. St. Gregory the Theologian wrote a panegyric to St. Athanasios following the latter's death and there St. Gregory called upon both the virgins and the married to honor their great benefactor: the former to honor him as the "friend of the Bridegroom" and the latter<sup>259</sup> for he was "their restrainer."<sup>260</sup> In one of his *Paschal Letters* St. Athanasios addressed the faithful stating that the Gospel calls the virgin and married alike.

"Another time the call is made to virginity (*ad virginitatem*), and self-denial (*abstinentiam*), and conjugal harmony (*irreprehensibile conjugium*), saying, to virgins, the things of virgins; and to those who

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inherently sinful. St. Epiphanius of Cyprus in his *Panarion* dedicated Chapter 67 to a refutation of Hieracas' teaching. Hieracas argued that since the time of the Incarnation the spiritual evolution of the people of God has advanced such as to make marriage presently illicit. *Haer.* 65-80, 67.1.22-23; GCS. p. 133. The concept of *spiritual advance from marriage and virginity* paralleling the advance from Old to New Covenant, that one finds in the writings of St. Methodios of Olympus and St. John Chrysostom, here in Hieracas is taken *too far*. The *Second Letter to Virgins* is extant only in Syriac, and not in the original Greek.

<sup>255</sup> This text is extant only in Syriac and Armenian, and not in the original Greek.

<sup>256</sup> Hieracas led a group of celibates outside Leontopolis in the Delta to separate from married Christians.

<sup>257</sup> Brakke (1995), p. 51.

<sup>258</sup> Brakke (1995), and Wahba (1996).

<sup>259</sup> "Those under the yoke" is how the Theologian here terms the married.

<sup>260</sup> *Or.* 21, *In Laud. Athan.*, 382; PG 35, 1082ff.; NPNF, p. 272. St. Gregory in his panegyric also described St. Athanasios as the virtual founder of organized ecclesiastical monasticism. To the monks, the teaching of Athanasios was as the "tablets of Moses."

love the way of abstinence, the things of abstinence; and to those who are married, the things of an honorable marriage (*honorabili conjugio*); thus assigning to each its own virtues and an honorable recompense.”<sup>261</sup>

Marriage was divinely instituted in Paradise.<sup>262</sup> However in Paradise man did not think of his body, and had not fallen to lust.<sup>263</sup> The Fall stripped man of the “contemplation of divine things” (τῆς πρὸς τὰ θεῖα θεωρίας) and mankind then imprisoned their souls in the pleasures of the body (ταῖς μὲν τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναῖς συνέκλεισαν ἑαυτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν).<sup>264</sup> In his fallen condition man began to be habituated to his bodily desires, and the soul became a slave of many passions, particularly lust. Having “fallen in love with pleasure” (ἐρασθεῖσα δὲ τῆς ἡδονῆς) man pursued with abandon every evil.<sup>265</sup> The earth was full of adulteries, thefts, murders and plunderings.<sup>266</sup> All of these evils originated in the choice of man’s darkened soul and nowhere else. There was no compulsion in man’s sin, for, in fact, it was most unnatural. The soul of man was made to see God and to be enlightened by Him (γένετο μὲν γὰρ εἰς τὸ ὁρᾶν τὸν Θεὸν καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ φωτίζεσθαι). By man’s choice he sought darkness and corruption instead of God (αὕτη δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ φθαρτὰ καὶ τὸ σκότος ἐζήτησεν).<sup>267</sup> To live as the animals was a great disgrace for man, so great that it would have been better for men to have been created *as animals* than to have been fashioned in the image of God but live like irrational beasts.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> *Ep. Fest. I*, 21.3; PG 26, p. 1362; NPNF, *Festal Letter I*, p. 507.

<sup>262</sup> *Inc.*, II.6.40-51; SC 199, pp. 266, 268.

<sup>263</sup> Wahba (1996), p. 173.

<sup>264</sup> *Gent.*, 3.11; Thomson, p. 8; NPNF, p. 5.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.7; Thomson, p. 10; NPNF, p. 6.

<sup>266</sup> *Inc.* V.4.24-26; SC 199, p. 280.

<sup>267</sup> *Gent.*, 7.27-29; Thomson, p. 18.

<sup>268</sup> *Inc.* XIII, 2.15-18; SC 199, p. 310.



Before the Incarnation consecrated virginity was virtually non-existent. In his *First Letter to Virgins* St. Athanasios describes the *history of virginity* on the earth. He notes that virginity has neither been heard of nor has it ever been possible for such virtue to exist among the Greeks. Pythagoreans may have priestesses who exercise self-control in not speaking, but they cannot overcome the desire for sexual relations. Many Greek priestesses who claimed to practice virginity were later found pregnant. The Egyptians have had many priestly women, but none who were virgins. The Greeks, Egyptians and Romans all have worship rites which involve sexually immoral acts, and the groups of virgins consecrated to Pallas, Athena and Hecate are only virgins with regard to the management of their possessions, but not in their bodies. Often the priestly virginity that is boasted of by the pagans is simply either a temporary or forced virginity, both of which are species of *false virginity*.<sup>269</sup>

Virginity did exist to some degree among the righteous in the Old Covenant, but “the virtue of virginity was not great at that time...good like this was scarcely testified to because it existed in so few people.”<sup>270</sup> The Prophets Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah and John the Baptist all practiced virginity, which rendered them angelic and powerful, but they were the exceptions that proved the rule of the *non-existence of virginity prior to the Incarnation*.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Brakke (1985), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 276.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>271</sup> St. John Cassian offered an evaluation positioned between the optimism of Tertullian and St. Clement and the pessimism of Ss. Athanasios and Chrysostom on the subject of the existence of virginity prior to the coming of Christ in the flesh. “First, it should never be believed that philosophers attained to the kind of chastity of mind that is demanded of us, who are enjoined against mentioning not only fornication but even impurity among ourselves. They had a certain *μερικίην*, or small portion of chastity- that is, abstinence of the flesh- whereby they merely curbed their wanton desire from sexual intercourse. They were unable, however, to attain to an interior purity of mind and an enduring purity of body either in act or- I would say-

With the Incarnation of the Son of God human nature was greatly elevated, and what had before been impossible for man became possible. What was difficult before became easy.<sup>272</sup> No early Father more eloquently and forcefully taught that consecrated virginity is *the distinct fruit and proof of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ* than did St. Athanasios the Great. In St. Athanasios' *Life of Antony* it is written,

“For when has the knowledge of God (*θεογνωσία*) so shone forth? Or when has self-control (*σωφροσύνη*) and the excellence of virginity (*ἀρετή παρθενίας*) appeared as now? Or when has death been so despised (*Ἡ πότε οὕτως ὁ θάνατος κατεφρονήθη*) except when the Cross of Christ has appeared? And this no one doubts when he sees the martyr despising death for the sake of Christ, when he sees for Christ's sake the virgins of the Church keeping themselves pure and undefiled (*καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντα τὰ σώματα φυλαττούσας*). And these signs (*τεκμήρια*) are sufficient to prove that the faith of Christ alone is the true religion (*ἀληθῆ εἶναι εἰς θεοσέβειαν*).”<sup>273</sup>

It should also be said that no Church Father did more to encourage men and women to embrace monastic life than did St. Athanasios by his authoring the *Life of Antony the Great*. This publication was translated quickly, and spread throughout the entire Christian world, serving as a primary impetus for untold numbers of Christians to

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in thought. Socrates, the most famous of them, did not blush to confess this about himself, as they themselves assert. For one time a certain expert in physiognomy saw him and said: ὄμματα παιδεραστοῦ - that is: These are the eyes of a corruptor of boys. When his disciples rushed upon the man, wanting to avenge the insult to their teacher, it is said that he restrained their anger with these words: παύσασθε, ἑταῖροι. εἰμί γάρ, ἐπέχω δέ - that is: Calm yourselves, my friends. For I am such, but I contain myself. It is very clear, then, not only from our assertion but even from their own say-so that they only repressed actual immoral behavior- that is, wicked intercourse- by main force, but that desire for and delight in this passion had not been cut out from their hearts.” *Conlationes XXVIII, XIII.V.2.28-3.13*; CSEL XIII, pp. 365-366; Ramsey (1997), p. 470.

<sup>272</sup> “When the Lord came into the world, having taken flesh from a virgin and become human, at that time what used to be difficult became easy for people, what used to be impossible became possible. What formerly was not abundant is now seen to be abundant and spread out.” Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 280.

<sup>273</sup> *V. Anton.*, 79.5-80.1.1-2; SC 400, pp. 336, 338; NPNF, p. 217. St. Chrysostom treasured this *Life of Antony* and extolled it as full of prophecy. *Hom. 8 in Mt.*; PG 57, 89-175-90-176. Cf. the same teaching in *Inc.* XLVIII.2.3-7; SC 199, p. 440; Cf. LI, 1.1-6; SC 199, p. 448.

embrace virginity. The text was read, quoted, and promoted by Ss. Gregory the Theologian, Ephrem the Syrian, Jerome, Augustine, and Chrysostom, amongst others. St. Athanasios built upon the previous teachings on virginity given by St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen, but made his strong contribution on the *practical side* of virginal life. His *Life of Antony*, together with his *Letters to Virgins* and his treatise *On Virginity*, offered spiritually thirsty Christians a practical life-guide for practising virginity not just the conceptual framework offered by previous Church teachers.

Thus, in the Church, the Saint writes in his *Letter to Amun*, “There are two ways in life, as touching these matters (*δύο γὰρ οὐσῶν ὁδῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ περὶ τούτων*). The one the more moderate and ordinary (*μιᾶς μὲν μετριωτέρας καὶ βιωτικῆς*), I mean marriage; the other angelic and unsurpassed (*ἀγγελικῆς καὶ ἀνυπερβλήτου*), namely virginity (*τῆς παρθενίας*).”<sup>274</sup> In this teaching St. Athanasios is continuing the Patristic teaching on the sanctity of both virginity and marriage, and the more exalted nature of virginity. “If the virgin is exceptional and first among them, yet marriage follows after her and has its own boast...Therefore, marriage is not rejected, and moreover virginity is greater with God.”<sup>275</sup> Virginity is the way of the angels, holy, unearthly, unsurpassed, both rugged and difficult to accomplish. Marriage is the way of the world, but if embraced piously it too brings forth fruit. While virginity brings forth the perfect fruit a hundred-fold, Christian marriage may bring forth thirty-fold.<sup>276</sup> Virginity and marriage are a “two-fold grace.”<sup>277</sup> Both are ways of chastity, are honorable, and God has prepared many

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<sup>274</sup> *Ep. Amun.*, 766.71; PG 26, p. 1173; NPNF, p. 557.

<sup>275</sup> Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 280.

<sup>276</sup> *Ep. Amun.*, 766. 71; PG 26, p. 1173.

<sup>277</sup> Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 283.

mansions to accommodate in heaven both monks and married.<sup>278</sup> Heaven will be populated with everyone “whose actions are according to the law and who are pure in faith,”<sup>279</sup> virgin or not. No heretic can attack marriage without at the same time attacking virginity, for they are both from God.<sup>280</sup> For any continent person to condemn a married Christian is to “bring sin upon yourself.”<sup>281</sup> In heaven Mary will greet the virgins first, embrace them and lead them to Christ. Then the Lord will commend them to His Father saying, “All these have become like Mary, who is mine!” Then will come the married women who have preserved the “piety of marriage.” These will be greeted by the Holy Patriarchs rejoicing, who will bring them to the Lord saying, “All these have kept your law, and the bed they have not defiled.” Such shall heaven be according to the great Athanasios. “Virginity leads and walks in front, as she is accustomed, with great boldness,” but they will all be a “single chorus and a single symphony in the faith, praising God.”<sup>282</sup>

Christ was absolutely unique amongst the great teachers of the world in teaching virginity and enabling His disciples to embrace it. “Christ our Savior and King of all, had such power (*τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσεν*) in His teaching concerning it [virginity], that even children

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<sup>278</sup> There is a hiatus here in the critical text of *Ep. Fest. X*, 89.5; PG 26, p. 1399. According to the English translator of the NPNF series several fragments were found in the British Museum supplying this lack and enabling this English translation. “Not with virgins alone is such a field adorned; nor with monks alone, but also with honourable matrimony and the chastity of each one...To this intent He hath prepared many mansions.” NPNF, p. 529.

<sup>279</sup> Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 280.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 282-3.

<sup>281</sup> Brakke (1995), *On Virginity*, p. 306.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, *First Letter to Virgins*, pp. 280-81.

not yet arrived at the lawful age vow that virginity that lies beyond the law” (ὡς καὶ παιδία μὴπω τῆς νομίμης ἡλικίας ἐπιβάντα τὴν ὑπὲρ τὸν νόμον ἐπαγγέλλεσθαι παρθενίαν).<sup>283</sup>

Virginity is “beyond the law,” but failing to attain to virginity is not “contrary to the law,” for the Lord never commanded it but opened the door for it to be freely vowed.<sup>284</sup> “Virginity has no law. In fact, the person who has not become a virgin can be pious in marriage.”<sup>285</sup> Following his Master, Jesus, Athanasios vigorously promoted the embrace of monastic life amongst his flock. The *model virgin* for all to emulate, according to Athanasios, is the Virgin Mary, whom he set forth as the very “image of virginity” for all to emulate. All who wished to be virgins needed seriously to contemplate her life, and that which is found in the New Testament from the pen of St. Paul concerning virginity he learned from Mary’s way of life.<sup>286</sup> Athanasios called upon all men to honor the virgins, and even called upon Christian emperors to pay homage to the virgins, whom he confessed even the heathen admired as a true “temple of the Word” (ὡς ναὸν τοῦ Λόγου).<sup>287</sup> He praised the Emperor Constantine “of blessed memory” (ὁ τῆς μακαρίας μνήμης) for honoring the virgins above all the rest of men.<sup>288</sup> The bodily limbs of the holy virgins must be protected for they are in a special way the very limbs of the Savior (τὰ γὰρ μέλη τῶν παρθένων ἕξαιρέτως ἴδια τοῦ Σωτήρος ἐστὶ).<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> *Inc.* LI, 1.3-7; SC 199, p. 448; NPNF, p. 64.

<sup>284</sup> Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 279.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>287</sup> *Apol. Const.*, 33.30; PG 25, p. 640.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.30; PG 25, p. 640.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.31; PG 25, p. 640. The emphasis placed here on protecting and honoring even the limbs of the monastics should be read in the light of the Imperial persecution against anti-Arian and pro-Athanasian monastics, whose witness tormented the Emperor Constantius. Constantius himself published a letter calling for Athanasios’ arrest, calling him the “wicked Athanasios” and accusing him of having committed the basest crimes for which he deserves to be killed “ten times over”. NPNF, pp. 250-251.

The Saint, more than any other Father up to his day, established the paradigm for virgins as “brides of Christ” (*νύμφας τοῦ Χριστοῦ*).<sup>290</sup> Spiritual marriage, according to Athanasios, exists between *both* Christ and the Church, *and* Christ and the individual soul, especially the monastic.<sup>291</sup> Utilizing the Scriptural language of earthly marriage and reproduction St. Athanasios applies it to spiritual marriage and reproduction,

“But virginity, having surpassed human nature and imitating the angels, hastens and endeavors to cleave to the Lord, so that, as the Apostle said, they might ‘become one spirit with him’ (2 Cor. 6:17) and they too might always say: ‘Through fear of you, we have conceived and gone into labor and given birth to a saving spirit; we have begotten children upon the earth’ [Isaiah 26:17-18]...from this kind of blessed union, true and immortal thoughts come forth, bearing salvation.”<sup>292</sup>

While defining a unique New Covenant procreation of “true and immortal thoughts” by virgins, St. Athanasios defended both the continuity of the physical procreation mandate in the New Covenant and the legitimacy of marital sexual relations, which he called “blessed,” writing thus,

“What sin then is there in God’s name, elder most beloved of God, if the Master Who made the body willed and made these parts to have such passages?...That lawful use (*χρησιν...τῆν ἔννομον*) which God permitted when He said, ‘Increase and multiply and replenish the earth...the same act is at one time and under some circumstances unlawful, while under others, and at the right time, it is lawful and permissible. The same reasoning applies to the relations of the sexes (*περὶ τῆς μίξεως*). He is blessed (*μακάριος*), who, being freely yoked in his youth, naturally begets children (*τῇ φύσει πρὸς παιδοποιίαν κέχρηται*). But if

<sup>290</sup> *Apol. Const.*, 33.30; PG 25, p. 640. St. Athanasios here claims that this appellation for consecrated virgins is the custom of the Catholic Church as a whole.

<sup>291</sup> Here St. Athanasios is following Origen’s exposition on spiritual marriage in his works on the *Canticles* quite closely.

<sup>292</sup> Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 275. In his treatise *On Sickness and Health* St. Athanasios interprets this reference to Isaiah 26:17-18 further explaining that the spiritual *womb* is the productive capacity of thought, Brakke (1995), p. 311

he uses nature licentiously (*πρὸς ἀσέλγειαν*), the punishment of which the Apostle writes shall await whoremongers and adulterers.”<sup>293</sup>

The union of procreation and marital intercourse was an inseparable one in the Saint’s teaching for the married. He continued a consistent Alexandrian emphasis upon the law of nature defining the purpose and intent of marital intercourse as procreation alone. “The law of nature recognizes the act of procreation: have relations with your wife only for the sake of procreation, and keep yourself from relations of pleasure.”<sup>294</sup>

St. Athanasios applied the Scriptural prohibition against the dissolution of earthly marriage *both* to the episcopate of the Church forbidding the transference of a bishop from one diocese to another,<sup>295</sup> *and* to the spiritual marriage entered into between a nun and Jesus Christ. If the “human marriage” has this law, writes Athanasios, “how much more, if the Word joins with the virgins, is it necessary for the union of this sort to be indivisible and immortal.”<sup>296</sup>

St. Athanasios acknowledged and set forth as a model in his diocese the spiritual marriages of many Christian people inhabiting his diocese. He appreciated the potential of spiritual accomplishment in Christian marriage. Upon his return from his second exile in A. D. 346 he wrote that husbands and wives were greatly promoting asceticism among their children and vying with each other in virtue, in prayer, and in almsgiving. He writes, “In a word, so great was their emulation in virtue (*ὅλως τοσαύτη ἦν ἄμιλλα περὶ*

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<sup>293</sup> *Ep. Amun.*, 766.68-70; PG 26, p 1173; NPNF, p. 557. St. Athanasios does not condemn the pleasure of the marriage bed as sinful. Cf. Wahba (1996), pp. 191-2. He does, however, warn against the love of pleasure in general in many places in his writings.

<sup>294</sup> Brakke (1995), *Fragments on the Moral Life*, p. 316. This text is extant only in Coptic translation, and not in the original Greek.

<sup>295</sup> *Apol. Sec.*, 6.96-97; PG 25, p. 260. Interestingly, St. Athanasios in no place in his work expounds upon the divorce *exception clause* taught by Jesus.

<sup>296</sup> *First Letter to Virgins*, Brakke (1995), p. 274.

ἀρετῆν), that you would have thought every family and every house a Church (ὡς ἐκάστην οἰκίαν, καὶ οἶκον ἕκαστον νομίζειν ἐκκλησίαν), by reason of the goodness of the inmates, and the prayers which were offered to God.”<sup>297</sup> Asceticism was not only for virgins, but for the married too. Particularly, St. Athanasios counseled married Christians to practice sexual fasting for the purpose of concentrated prayer. This is what he argued St. Paul meant when he wrote that “those who have wives should be as those who had none” (1 Cor. 7:29).<sup>298</sup>

The Canons of St. Athanasios, for so long considered spurious but with many reasons deserving of embrace as authentic, have in most recensions been listed as one *long canon* on the priesthood, much of which deals with the issue of the priesthood and purity.<sup>299</sup> “No man that hath served the altar in impurity hath died a happy death.”<sup>300</sup> Again St. Athanasios writes, “Fear the altar and honor it, that it be not approached with small reverence, but in purity and fear. For the altar is a spirit and not animal (spirit and not physical), as I have formerly told you; and every soul which draweth nigh it while yet in impurity shall pray for purity: this is their purity.”<sup>301</sup> If bishops are capable they should practice continence, but regardless they should exercise great caution in overseeing and blessing the virgins of the Church.<sup>302</sup> If a clergyman’s wife dies, even if he is a deacon, he must be continent.<sup>303</sup> A priest must not enter into a convent of virgins

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<sup>297</sup> *H. Ar.*, 25.9; PG 25, p. 721; NPNF, p. 278.

<sup>298</sup> Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 283.

<sup>299</sup> Riedel and Crum (1904).

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, Canon 5, p. 11.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, Canon 77, p. 48.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, Canon 6, p. 13. Not even Moses was given the responsibility of leading the women for that was his sister, Miriam’s, responsibility.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, Canon 43.



unless he himself is elderly and his wife is still alive.<sup>304</sup> The canons forbid priests from celebrating the liturgy on days in which they have had relations with their wives, and recommend celibacy as the best practice for priests.<sup>305</sup>

St. Athanasios, in his 94<sup>th</sup> Canon, requires that parents marry their mature son without delay should he so desire, and place the culpability for any sexual fall squarely upon the parents should they unjustly delay the marriage. It is the duty of parents to guard the virginity of their sons, just as they do that of their daughters. For the preservation of virginity brings with it longevity, and those who secretly give up their virginity before marriage will die young. Parents, who raise their children to love abstinence, will find that God accepts this as though they were offering their own virginity. And again, if a parent has sinned sexually in his youth, he may be purified of this sin by teaching his own children to love purity.<sup>306</sup>

St. Athanasios evidences the thoroughness of his promotion of lay asceticism by calling upon *every Christian home* to offer a virgin to Christ, and teaching that this one virgin is the salvation of the house. He counsels the parents to watch their children, and choose one who is pious to dedicate to the monastic life. From a young age take this child to the monastery so that he may learn how to chant the services in proper tone.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, Canon 49.

<sup>305</sup> Brakke (1995), p. 185.

<sup>306</sup> Riedel and Crum (1904), Canon 94, p. 61.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, Canon 99, p. 63.

## St. Ephrem the Syrian

*Brief Profile.* St. Ephrem was born in A. D. 300. He was a contemporary of Chrysostom. St. Ephrem's birth marks the beginning of the Syriac golden age from the 4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Such worthies as Balai, Cyrillona, Aphrahat, Jacob of Sarug, and Narsai marked this period. The Syriac language is a dialect of Aramaic and was the *lingua franca* of the Middle East from the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Syrian Christian culture was decidedly bent towards sexual asceticism. Tatian's encratism, Mani's asceticism, and the sexual renunciation of the *Acts of Thomas* demonstrate this spiritual orientation.<sup>308</sup> Although Ephrem wrote exclusively in Syriac his writings were quickly translated into Greek, Armenian, Latin, Arabic, Coptic, Ethiopic, and later into Slavonic, Georgian, and Syro-Palestinian, and later still into German and French. The English translation of his work is still not complete. His corpus in Greek is second in size only to that of St. Chrysostom. His writings were very influential, and, according to the Church historian Sozomen his writings were translated into Greek during his lifetime.<sup>309</sup> We have every reason therefore to believe that Chrysostom was quite familiar with them. The two Church Fathers share not only many common theological interests, but a common hermeneutical approach to Scripture.<sup>310</sup>

St. Ephrem was a celibate deacon of the Church, is said to have attended the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in A. D. 325, to have visited St. Basil the Great who had a

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<sup>308</sup> Whether or not sexual renunciation was a part of the baptismal formula in the Church in Syria until the 4<sup>th</sup> century is much debated. Murray (1975), pp. 59-70.

<sup>309</sup> *H.E.III*. 16.1-2; GCS, pp. 127-128. Brock (2003) documents the speed at which St. Ephrem's writings were translated into multiple languages. He notes that St. Jerome was familiar with Greek translations of Ephrem less than two decades after the latter's death, p. 66.

great reverence for St. Ephrem, and to have sojourned in Constantinople.<sup>311</sup> He founded a catechetical school in Edessa, where his commentaries on Holy Scripture were textbooks until they were largely replaced by Syriac translations of the Greek commentaries of Chrysostom's friend, Theodore of Mopsuestia. St. Ephrem is regarded by many to be the *chief poet* amongst the Holy Fathers. He reposed on June 9<sup>th</sup>, A. D. 373, and there is an encomium to St. Ephrem traditionally ascribed to St. Gregory of Nyssa.

St. Ephrem the Syrian, and the Syriac Holy Fathers preceding Ephrem, taught that the consummation of conjugal relations was a post-Fall phenomenon. They argued this on the same exegetical grounds as did Chrysostom.<sup>312</sup> If the ancestral sin had not occurred Eve would have given birth,<sup>313</sup> since that was a blessing bestowed upon her as it was upon the animals, but she would have given birth without pain, and not to many children since those born to her would have been immortal.<sup>314</sup> In much of his exegetical work on the Old Testament Ephrem manifests a strong reliance on Jewish traditions.<sup>315</sup> He labors to portray the virtue of the Old Covenant righteous, especially with regard to marriage and virginity. In his interpretation of the animals on Noah's ark he goes further than Tertullian in suggesting not only that the animals came into the ark in monogamous pairs, but that they *refrained from intercourse while in the ark*.<sup>316</sup> As such the Ark of Noah was the temporary restoration of Paradise on the earth. He justifies the Patriarch Abraham

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<sup>310</sup> McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 47.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34. Most contemporary scholars discount the historical reliability of St. Ephrem's visits to St. Basil the Great and to Constantinople as recorded in the traditional Byzantine life of Ephrem.

<sup>312</sup> Brock (1998), *Hymns on Paradise*, p. 30.

<sup>313</sup> St. Ephrem does not explain *how* Eve would have conceived.

<sup>314</sup> McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 119. This is an interesting teaching by St. Ephrem especially in the light of the drastic reduction in infant mortality in modern times. Is he suggesting that *many* living children is not normative?

<sup>315</sup> In fact, St. Ephrem works are *permeated through and through* with these traditions.

taking another woman after Sarah's death by explaining that "no law concerning virginity or chastity had yet been set down," and by positing that Abraham was purely concerned with multiplying his seed in the fulfillment of the promise of God that the whole earth might be filled with worshippers of God.<sup>317</sup> He argues that the Patriarch Jacob despised polygamy, which is the reason that Laban withheld Rachel from him and granted Leah to him first for he knew that Jacob would not labor even seven days, let alone seven years, for another wife.<sup>318</sup> He noted the long periods of virginity maintained by those who eventually would be married: such as Noah (500 years), and Jacob (84 years).<sup>319</sup> He praised the asceticism of the Old Covenant proto-monks such as Elijah, Elisha, and Moses writing,

"Since Elijah repressed the desire of his body, he could withhold the rain from the adulterers. Since he restrained his body, he could restrain the dew from the whoremongers who released and sent forth their streams. Since the hidden fire, bodily desire, did not prevail in him, the fire of the high place obeyed him, and since on earth he conquered fleshly desire, he went up to the place where holiness dwells and is at peace. Elisha, too, who killed his body, revived the dead. That which is by nature mortal, gains life by chastity, which is beyond nature. He revived the boy since he refined himself like a newly weaned infant. Moses, who divided and separated himself from his wife, divided the sea before the harlot. Zipporah maintained chastity, although she was the daughter of pagan priests; with a calf the daughter of Abraham went whoring."<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134. Cf. McVey (1989), *Hymns*, p. 215.

<sup>317</sup> "Because no law concerning virginity or chastity had been set down, lest desire ever make a stain in the mind of that just man, because it had been told him, 'Kings of nations shall come forth from you,' and because God had said about him, 'I know that Abraham will command his children and grandchildren to keep my commandments,' Abraham took for himself a concubine after the death of Sarah, so that through the uprightness of his many sons who were to be scattered in lands throughout the entire earth, knowledge and worship of the one God would be spread." McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 171.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>320</sup> McVey (1989), *Hymns: Hymn 14 On the Nativity*, p. 144. He writes also that the virginity of Elijah caused the "Watchers of fire and spirit" to stand in wonder at one formed of earth. Brock (1998), *Hymns on Paradise, Hymn 6*, p. 118.

Despite the valiant ascetical efforts of the righteous, Old Covenant man from the start was not preserving his virginity. St. Ephrem notes that “those who dwelt in tents and had cattle” were not “preserving their virginity in their tents.”<sup>321</sup> According to Ephrem, virginity was despised in Zion.<sup>322</sup> With the Incarnation of Jesus Christ that would change.

St. Ephrem argues that from the time of the Virgin Mary the procreation and dominion mandate of Genesis 1:28 found its ultimate fulfillment in the *spiritual reproduction of consecrated virgins*. Christian virgins multiply words of praise to God’s glory. Ephrem scholar Kathleen McVey comments on his *Hymn 15 On the Nativity*, “He toys with the language and imagery of fertility religion, arguing, in effect, that the new message of Christianity is the reinterpretation of fertility in allegorical and spiritual terms.”<sup>323</sup> Consecrated virgins have exchanged the “transitory bridal couch” for the “bridal couch whose blessings are unceasing.”<sup>324</sup> For the virgin the soul is the bride, the body the bridal chamber, the guests are the senses and thoughts, and a single person like this is a wedding feast for the whole Church.<sup>325</sup>

The appearance of holy virginity with the coming into the world of the Theanthropos Jesus did not eclipse or make illicit Christian marriage, even though as a way of life virginity greatly surpasses marriage. Spiritual confidence for the

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<sup>321</sup> McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 129.

<sup>322</sup> McVey (1989), *Hymns, Hymn 19 On the Nativity*, p. 168.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, *Hymn 24 On Virginity*, p. 366.

believer resides chiefly in the practice of virginity. St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, “Chastity’s wings are greater and lighter than the wings of marriage. Intercourse, while pure, is lower. Its house of refuge is modest darkness. Confidence belongs entirely to chastity, which light enfolds.”<sup>326</sup> St. Ephrem was a great propagandist for monastic life, and he labored rigorously against its critics.<sup>327</sup>

“Pure intercourse” may be combined with “chaste marriage.” Just as all virgins are not virgins in body and soul, so it is that those who have given their virginity and their bodies to their spouses may “be crowned with victorious deeds” at the gate of the Kingdom, may “fill the place of virginity with their virtues,” and still have their souls “bound to the love of their Lord...wearing their love and desire for him stretched over all their limbs.”<sup>328</sup> Though marital intercourse is lower than virginity, it remains pure and blessed. St. Ephrem even composes a poetic prayer addressed to Jesus Christ asking His blessing upon the sexual intercourse of the Christian couple. “O Blessed Fruit conceived without intercourse, bless our wombs during intercourse. Have pity on our barrenness, Miraculous Child of virginity.”<sup>329</sup> For St. Ephrem marital intercourse is not antithetical to prayer, but an occasion for it.

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<sup>325</sup> “The soul is Your bride, the body Your bridal chamber, Your guests are the senses and thoughts. And if a single body is a wedding feast for You, how great is Your banquet for the whole Church?” Brock (1998). *Hymns on Paradise*, p. 28.

<sup>326</sup> McVey (1989), *Hymns*, Hymn 28 *On the Nativity*, p. 215.

<sup>327</sup> Vööbus (1958), p. 117.

<sup>328</sup> McVey (1994), *Letter to Publius* (1995), p. 350.

<sup>329</sup> McVey (1989), *Hymns: Hymn 7 On the Nativity*, p. 117.

## **Conclusion.**

With this cursory survey of the Christian ideological movements in the centuries leading up to Chrysostom we can see that the teaching of the Golden Mouth was not in a vacuum, nor without significant and deeply influential precedents. His own theological and ascetic formation took place under the influence of many currents both within and without the Church. He was a Christian for whom the Holy Scriptures were first and foremost his guiding light, but who actively read and studied Christian and non-Christian literature throughout his entire life, drawing upon the best within and without the Church, in order to articulate the teaching of Jesus Christ most forcefully and eloquently to the Christian people.

## Chapter Two: Terrestrial Angels: Marriage and Virginitv in Paradise

### Introduction.

Marriage and virginitv are significant pillars in St. John Chrysostom's theological worldview. An abundance of primary source material aids our understanding of his perspective on the subject. He, in fact, composed more treatises on asceticism and marriage than did any other Church Father in the Greek tradition,<sup>1</sup> and he devoted to the topic of virginitv an exclusive treatise entitled *On Virginitv*. He wrote extensively on monasticism, which, to his mind, was the primary outworking of virginitv in this age. His works on monasticism include *A Comparison between a Monk and a King*, *Against the Opponents of Monastic Life*, two *Letters to Fallen Theodore*, and two polemical treatises directed against the *subintroductae*.<sup>2</sup> Aspects of his thought on virginitv are also found in his treatises *Against Remarriage* and in his *Letter to a Widow*. Since the bulk of Chrysostom's literary work was devoted to Scriptural exegesis in the genre of commentary, much of our subject material is scattered throughout select homilies. Even when Chrysostom is not writing in the genre of Scriptural commentary *per se*, he

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<sup>1</sup> Clark (1983), p. vii, in Shore (1983). For a list of Chrysostom's ascetical treatises and comments on their later Byzantine publication as a corpus see Dumortier (1955), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> The two works are entitled *Instruction and Refutation against Those Men Cohabiting with Virgins* (directed towards the male participants) and *On the Necessity of Guarding Virginitv* (directed towards the female participants). The *subintroductae*, a word coined by the Antiochian theologians, were those male and female ascetics who practiced what they dubbed "spiritual marriage." The practice consisted of male and female ascetics cohabiting under the same roof, and, sometimes even in the same bed, while maintaining physical virginitv. This practice proved to be a public scandal to the Church, and was publicly condemned by at least six Church Councils in the 4<sup>th</sup> century alone, and by many particular Church Fathers. Clark (1977), pp. 171ff.



nevertheless regularly engages in Scriptural exegesis. His *On Virginity*, for instance, can be read as an extended commentary on 1 Corinthians 7.<sup>3</sup>

St. John's literary and homiletic interest in virginity and monasticism paralleled the cultural rise of monasticism in the late fourth century.<sup>4</sup> As a young man Chrysostom entered an *ἀσκητήριον*<sup>5</sup> placing himself under experienced elders<sup>6</sup> for some six years not far from his hometown of Antioch in Syria.<sup>7</sup> The last two of his six years of monastic life were spent in isolation in a cave, and only when he had severely broken his health did he return to Antioch. Male ascetics filled the desert and the major mountains in and around Antioch.<sup>8</sup> Not so with women. Most women who wished to take up monastic life lived as home ascetics.<sup>9</sup> However, though the number of female monasteries was small, the actual number of female ascetics (virgins and widows) was substantial, and their ascetical

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<sup>3</sup> So much so is this the case that in his later ministry when St. John was delivering his homilies on 1 Corinthians he merely summarized chapter 7 in one homily and referred his readers to his early composition *On Virginity*.

<sup>4</sup> It took time for monasticism to be appreciated by many established Romans. Libanius is representative of a significant contingent of fourth century Romans who considered monasticism contemptuous and degrading. Clark (1981), p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> A common Greek word for "monastery," possessing a semantic range that would include not only the three basic forms of monastic life as they would later be expressed and solidified in Byzantium (cenobium, skete, and hermitage), but also something of a spiritual retreat center where lectures would be delivered. Hunter (1988), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> The early Church historian Socrates identifies these elders as Karterios and Diodoros, the future bishop of Tarsus. *H.E.*, VI.3.8-9; GCS, p. 314. See Festugière (1959), pp. 179-192, for more on the education Chrysostom would have received in the brotherhood around Diodoros.

<sup>7</sup> The work of Sebastian Brock (1984, 1985) has contributed greatly to our understanding of the nature of Syrian ascetic life in late antiquity.

<sup>8</sup> Theodoret of Cyrrhus' *Religious History*, published in English under the title, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, is a graphic depiction of the monasticism contemporary to St. Chrysostom in and around Antioch. Many of the personalities that Theodoret mentions, such as the famous monk Macedonius the barley-eater who lived on Mt. Sylpios, were acquaintances of Chrysostom. Here is where one need look to get names and faces of those monks who descended upon Antioch as angels at the time of the statues crisis. For an excellent and duly famous article placing the monasticism and the image of the 'holy man' of Chrysostom's time and place within a general worldview and explaining the meaning society invested in the ascetics as mediators, detached strangers, sole bearers of objectivity, and true possessors of *παρηγορία* with God, see Brown (1971), pp. 80-101. Brown calls Theodoret's *Religious History* a "study of power in action," p. 87. For more on the Antiochian monasteries at the time of Chrysostom see Festugière (1959), pp. 329-346.

<sup>9</sup> Clark (1981), p. 247.

efforts were vigorous.<sup>10</sup> In one of his homilies, Chrysostom noted that the Church of Antioch supported something like 3,000 widows and virgins.<sup>11</sup> On another occasion he said that the Christian ascetics outnumbered the Christians who were married and living in the world.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter attempts to pinpoint theologically St. John Chrysostom's understanding of the pristine nature of man before the Fall, and to document his teaching concerning the nature of marriage and virginity as they existed in the Garden of delights. St. John's *Homilies on Genesis* are of particular value in this regard, but we will also reference other relevant works. Chrysostom expressed his fundamental anthropology in his teaching on mankind in Paradise. To grasp this anthropology, particularly as it relates to virginity, marriage and sexuality, is to obtain his *prism* through which we can then understand much of Chrysostom's teaching on virginity, monasticism, marriage, and sexuality, delivered consistently throughout the years of his pastoral life.

### **Pre-Fall and Post-Fall Virginity.**

In contemporary usage the semantic range of virginity is fairly limited. A 'virgin' is one who *has not had sexual intercourse*. Virginity in common linguistic usage is

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<sup>10</sup> Chrysostom in his address *On the Zeal of Those Who are Present*, probably delivered in the Basilica of St. Irene, speaks of young women, not yet twenty, who go without food and drink, mortify their bodies, crucify their flesh, sleep on the ground, wear sackcloth, lock themselves in narrow rooms, sprinkle themselves with ashes, and wear chains. *De Studio Praesentium*; PG 63,488-489. Cf. Musurillo (1956), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Hom. LXVI in Mt.*; PG 58.630. It should be noted as well that Chrysostom's mother, Anthusa, had lived the vast majority of her adult life as a widow, and Chrysostom's best friend, St. Olympias, was a widow turned ascetic. Anthusa was glorified as a saint by the Holy Synod of Greece in 1998, and her feastday was appointed as the Sunday falling during the octave of the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (2/2)- together with the two other mothers of the Three Holy Hierarchs: St. Emilia, mother of St. Basil the Great, and St. Nonna, mother of St. Gregory the Theologian.

<sup>12</sup> *Hom. XIII in Rom.*; PG 60.517.

identified primarily with a bodily state of sexual abstinence. This is a legitimate aspect of true virginity, but it is not primary,<sup>13</sup> nor is it, in the mind of Chrysostom, something that Adam and Eve would have readily suggested as an aspect of their virginity. We shall see in the course of this chapter that Adam and Eve knew no other state than ‘sexual’ virginity (if we can even describe them relevantly in these terms). Such a thing as sexual intercourse and the very sexual drive itself, as we know it today, did not exist in that Garden of delights.<sup>14</sup> The ‘delights’ there were of a decidedly non-carnal nature. This fact alone is evidence of the great dichotomy between pre-Fall and post-Fall virginity. Some additional breadth of meaning is expressed in popular usage by employing “virgin” to refer to *high levels of purity*.<sup>15</sup> These common definitions of “virginity” need to be expanded drastically if we are to comprehend at all what St. John means when he describes virginity in Paradise. We cannot simply use common concepts and project them back into Eden.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “For the uncorrupt soul is a virgin, though she have a husband: she is a virgin as to that which is Virginity indeed, that which is worthy of admiration. For this of the body is but the accompaniment and shadow of the other: whilst that is the True Virginity.” *Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.202; NPNF, pp. 498-99.

<sup>14</sup> We should remind ourselves not to project the post-Fall equation requiring sexual desire and arousal as a prerequisite for sexual intercourse back into the pre-lapsarian condition. Some Fathers point out that this equation which most often ties intercourse to lust, and in which the generative organs express an “irrational” life of their own is a chief expression of the Fall.

<sup>15</sup> In purchasing olive oil one may buy either 100% or “extra-virgin”! This I believe refers to the oil being derived from the first pressing. For Chrysostom there is no such thing as “extra-virgin”. “Virgin” was as pure as you get!

<sup>16</sup> The broad and spiritually deep understanding of virginity is reflected in a maxim attributed to St. Basil the Great by St. John Cassian, and otherwise unrecorded. “I do not know woman, but I am not a virgin.” *De Institutis Coenobiorum VI*, XVIII.26-28; CSEL XVII, p. 125; Ramsey (2000) p. 161. Cassian comments, “Well indeed did he understand that the incorruption of the flesh consists not so much in abstaining from woman as it does in integrity of heart.”

## Chrysostom's Pre-Fall Anthropology: Man as a Terrestrial Angel.

In describing the essential human condition in Paradise, Chrysostom sets forth an anthropology that is normative for all of his commentary on the topic of virginity. At its core his anthropology posits that Adam was designed and crafted by God to be a *terrestrial angel* (ἄγγελον ἐπίγειον).<sup>17</sup> Man is an unusual type of angel, but an angel nonetheless. In solidarity with the bodiless hosts, mankind in Paradise was in communion with God through the Holy Spirit. Man moved in the energies of God and radiated the light of the Godhead in a manner brighter than the noonday sun.<sup>18</sup> In Eden, man worshipped God in union with the angels. The devil's envy was especially incensed by the fact that Adam lived as an angel in a body.<sup>19</sup> The author of evil "seeing an angel who happened to live on earth, was consumed by envy, since he himself had once enjoyed a place among the powers above but had been cast down."<sup>20</sup> Man possessed a life in no way inferior to the angels, but enjoyed *in the body* the angelic "immunity from suffering" (ἐν σώματι τὴν ἐκείνων ἀπάθειαν κεκτῆσθαι).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53.124. Man shared with the angels a rational nature, a nature free of carnality, and one free from sin (though not from the possibility of sin).

<sup>18</sup> *Catech. II.27.14-15*; SC 50, p. 149. The Holy Fathers often speak of man's unique position in the created universe as being a source of envy for the devil (τοῦ διαβολοῦ τὴν βασκανίαν) and his angels. Central to this uniqueness is the fact that mankind alone serves as the unifying point of contact between the visible and invisible realms. Since man is constituted by both body and soul ineffably in one person, the material and immaterial universe find union in man. *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53.124.

<sup>19</sup> Chrysostom reflects here a common Patristic teaching concerning the envy of the devil. Tertullian delivers the very early Christian teaching concerning this point writing in his *Treatise on the Soul*, "The malignant being...in the beginning, regarded them [Adam and Eve] with envious eye". *De Anima*.XXXIX.1-4; CCSL II, p. 842; ANF, p. 219. Cf. St. Ephrem the Syrian says the devil was jealous because Adam and Eve were "richer in glory and reason" than all the creatures and they *alone* had been promised the eternal life that is given by the tree of life. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53.126; Hill (1986), p. 208. "Satan had succeeded in driving man from Paradise, but he would soon see them in heaven mingling with the angels." *Jud. VIII*; PG 48.929; Harkins (1963), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Hom. XVII in Gen.*; PG 53.134; Hill (1986), p. 222.

## The Characteristics of Man, the Terrestrial Angel.

According to Chrysostom death is not *natural* to man. Man was not created to die.<sup>22</sup> He was vivified by the breath of God. This “breath” is the origin of man’s soul, which contains the energizing force (*ἐνεργοῦσαν*) that guides man’s body.<sup>23</sup> Without a soul the human creature is a “lifeless shell” (*εἰκὼν ἄψυχος*) and useless (*εἰς οὐδὲν χρήσιμος*).<sup>24</sup> Man’s dignity proceeds from his having a soul. After receiving his soul, man became “bright, graceful, marked by beauty of form, abounding with intelligence (*πολλῆς τῆς συνέσεως πεπληρωμένον*), enjoying great aptitude for the performance of good deeds.”<sup>25</sup> Decay, death, ruin, pain, and a toilsome life are the results of man laying aside his virginal state of being. We upset the proper order (*ἀντεστρέψαμεν τὴν τάξιν*) between body and soul.<sup>26</sup> From the time of the Fall, man was dead by reason of the sentence against him. He became mortal.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> “Man is by nature mortal, inasmuch as he is made out of what is not; but by reason of his likeness to Him that is (and if he still preserved this likeness by keeping Him in his knowledge) he would stay his natural corruption, and remain incorrupt.” St. Athanasios, *Inc.*, 4.6.28-34; SC 199, p. 278; NPNF, p. 38. Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa, was a contemporary of St. Chrysostom, a fellow Antiochian by theological training and disposition, and wrote his *On the Nature of Man* some time during the last decade of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This treatise became a standard textbook of Patristic anthropology, and is first cited by St. Maximos Confessor (AD 580-662), and relied on heavily by St. John of Damascus (A.D. 675?- 750). Nemesius describes the state of Adam at creation in relation to mortality thus, “The Jews say that man was created at first neither avowedly mortal nor yet immortal, but rather in a state poised between the two, in the sense that, if he gave himself up to his bodily passions, he should be subject to all the changes of the body, but that if he put the good of his soul foremost, he should be deemed worthy of immortality. For if God had made man mortal from the first, he would not have appointed dying as the penalty of his offence, seeing that no one would condemn to mortality someone who was already mortal. If, to take the other case, God had made man immortal, he would not have subjected him to the need of nourishment. No immortal being is dependent upon bodily food.” *Nat. Hom.*, 15; PG 40.513; Telfer (1955), pp. 238-239.

<sup>23</sup> *Homil. XII in Gen.*; PG 53.103.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.104.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.104; Hill (1986), pp. 166-67.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.103.

<sup>27</sup> *Hom. XVII in Gen.*; PG 53.147.

Though partially created from the physical elements, man possessed heavenly dignity. When mankind did not obey God, he became earth and dust.<sup>28</sup> St. John calls them this *following* the Fall and not previous to it. Though man was originally made of earth and dust, these elements in no way *defined* man's existence as corruptible until *after* the Fall.<sup>29</sup> Man was made from the dust "from which one may derive clay, bricks, pottery and the like; but how," Chrysostom asks rhetorically, "is one to derive flesh, bones, nerves, arteries, fat, skin, nails and hair from dust?"<sup>30</sup> The creation of man's body is a mystery as is that of his soul. God made man of 'dust,' something even more lowly than 'earth.' God joined His breath to the dust to form man.<sup>31</sup> Even after the Fall, when man became subject to bodily necessities, he could still, by maintaining the supremacy of his soul in his person, walk on earth as though traversing heaven (*ἐν γῆ βαδίζοντες ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ διάγοντες*).<sup>32</sup>

Man lived in Paradise carefree,<sup>33</sup> and, though in bodily form, he lived as an angel.<sup>34</sup> Commenting on God's having placed man in the Garden, Chrysostom notes, "Do you recognize here a life free of any care? Do you see a wonderful existence? Like some angel, in fact, man lived this way on earth, wearing a body (*σῶμα μὲν περικείμενος*), yet being fortunately rid of any bodily needs (*ἔξω δὲ τῶν σωματικῶν ἀναγκῶν τυγχάνων*); like a king adorned with scepter and crown and wearing his purple robe, he reveled in

<sup>28</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.5.56; SC 125, p. 142.

<sup>29</sup> Tertullian writes, "Thenceforth it is man to the ground and not as before from the ground; to death but before to life." *Contre Marcion: Livre II, XI.2.11-14*; SC 368, p. 80; ANF, p. 308.

<sup>30</sup> *Hom. II in Gen.*; PG 53.30; Hill (1986), p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> This type of language, known as anthropomorphism, is used by and of God as a concession to our creaturely weakness and understanding. It is an expression of God's *συγκατάβασις*.

<sup>32</sup> *Hom. XII in Gen.*; PG 53.104.

<sup>33</sup> While man *lived* in Paradise, some Christian teachers taught that man was not *created* there, but rather *translated* there after creation. *Tertullien, Contre Marcion: Livre II, X,3.34-36*; SC 368, p.74.

<sup>34</sup> "He wanted us to be free from care and to have but one task, that of the angels, which is to unceasingly and unremittingly sing the praises of the Creator and to rejoice in contemplating Him." *Joannis Damasceni, F.O.*, 25.25-29; PTS 12, p. 72; Chase (1958), p. 231.

this life of freedom and great affluence in the garden (καθάπερ βασιλεὺς ἀλουργίδι καὶ διαδήματι κεκοσμημένος).”<sup>35</sup> Sharing with the angels an “immunity from suffering,” Adam was placed under the divine anesthesia of a special deep sleep when God created Eve from Adam’s rib.<sup>36</sup> Paradisal life was free of all trouble, distress, pain, grief, and all sense of bodily need.<sup>37</sup> It was filled with every pleasure. Man ate in the Garden, but this eating was purely for enjoyment and pleasure.<sup>38</sup> As terrestrial angels in Paradise, Adam and Eve “were not burning with desire (οὐκ ὑπὸ ἐπιθυμίας φλεγόμενοι), not assaulted by other passions (οὐκ ὑπο ἐτέρων παθῶν πολιορκούμενοι), not subject to the needs of nature (οὐ παῖς ἀνάγκαις τῆς φύσεως ὑποκείμενοι), but on the contrary were created incorruptible and immortal (ἄφθαρτοι κτισθέντες καὶ ἀθάνατοι), and on that account at any rate they had no need to wear clothes.”<sup>39</sup> Though man possessed a body, he was not limited by that body.<sup>40</sup> By virtue of being in the angelic state, man could not feel the onset of desire.<sup>41</sup>

In Paradise Adam and Eve were adorned in greater splendor than any earthly potentate. However, one might be led to conclude that Adam and Eve were “without clothes” in their original state from the fact that following the Fall their eyes were opened

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<sup>35</sup> *Hom. XIII in Gen.*; PG 53.109; Hill (1986), p. 177. Cf. *Hom. in Gen., XVI*, PG 53.130, where St. John describes Adam as clothed in a body, yet free of all bodily necessities

<sup>36</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53.120.

<sup>37</sup> *Hom. XVII in Gen.*; PG 53.143.

<sup>38</sup> Since man’s consumption in the Garden was an angelic consumption for pleasure and glory, and not for or from bodily necessity, no excrement was produced. The proper disposal of excrement and its complete separation from the tabernacle of God’s presence is taken up in the Torah. Its *uncleanness* demonstrates that it is a post-Fall phenomenon. In this present age the only paradisaal food available to man is the *holy eucharist*. This truth is expressed in the Church’s practice of not forbidding urination or defecation in the hours following the reception of the divine gifts. Precautionary words concerning vomiting following the reception of the gifts are common in the Church’s pastoral tradition, but no such words exist with regards to excretion. See Canon XXXV of St. John the Faster, Cummings (1957, repr. 1983), p. 950.

<sup>39</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53.123; Hill (1986), p. 202.

<sup>40</sup> *Hom. XVI in Gen.*; PG 53.126.

<sup>41</sup> *Hom. XXII in Gen.*; PG 53.188. Here by *desire* Chrysostom means *carnal desire*.

and they recognized that they were naked.<sup>42</sup> But this would be a misunderstanding of what is meant by “nakedness” showing an ignorance of Adam’s original garments. His attire and raiment were princely and heavenly, and consisted chiefly in his virginity.<sup>43</sup> The key to man’s bodily freedom was his “gleaming and resplendent vesture” (τοῦ λαμπροῦ ἐκεῖνου καὶ φαιδροῦ ἐνδύματος) of glory, which God provided for him. This vesture ensured that Adam and Eve were “prepared against bodily needs” (παρασκευάζοντος ἀνωτέρους εἶναι τῶν σωματικῶν ἀναγκῶν).<sup>44</sup> Man was also clothed in God’s esteem.<sup>45</sup> Prior to the *divesting* of man at the Fall, he was not even aware of his nakedness<sup>46</sup> for, in fact, man was not really naked (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦσαν γυμνοί), since his heavenly glory clothed him better than any earthly garment.<sup>47</sup>

The Lord rendered man liable to bodily necessities as a punishment for the Fall, and stripped Adam and Eve of the angelic way of life and its attendant freedom from

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<sup>42</sup> *Hom.XVI in Gen.*; PG 53.131. The “opening” of Adam and Eve’s eyes consisted not in something bodily as though prior to the Fall they had some form of visual impairment. Rather, it was a mental awareness of personal sin that they had never entertained in their state of purity.

<sup>43</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.5.59-62; SC 125, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> *Hom.XVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.149; Hill (1990), p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Hom.XIV in Gen.*; PG 53.116.

<sup>46</sup> Providentially, as I write this, I am engaged in my pastoral work in a conversation with a professing Christian who is a homosexual, and is arguing that traditional Christians ought to become more comfortable with public nudity since Adam and Eve were so “obviously” comfortable with it themselves. Traditional Christians, in fact, are far more “comfortable” with the Patristic teaching here expressed by Chrysostom, which makes it clear that simply throwing off one’s clothes does not restore one to the “unclothed” state of Adam and Eve in Paradise. St. Ephrem the Syrian goes so far as the following,

“Adam, who was set up as ruler and governor over the animals, was wiser than all the animals. He who set down names for them all is more clever than any of them. Just as Israel, without a veil, was unable to look upon the face of Moses, neither were the animals able to look upon the splendor of Adam and Eve; when the beasts passed before Adam and they received their names from him, they would cast their eyes downwards, for their eyes could not endure Adam’s glory...”

McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 107. St. Ephrem also argues in another place that not only the animals, but the evil one himself could not approach Adam as he approached the Lord in the desert, and was forced to come in a very lowly way. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>47</sup> *Hom.XVI in Gen.*; PG 53.131.



suffering.<sup>48</sup> Fallen man's garments of skin<sup>49</sup> were God's gift to man as a constant reminder of his original disobedience and consequent loss of his original garments. Adam and Eve divested themselves of their glory and of God's wonderful esteem when they fell.<sup>50</sup> Transgression stole the glorious raiment, which consisted in the glory and favor of heaven.<sup>51</sup> Sin clad man instead in "unspeakable shame" (*αἰσχύνῃ ἀφάτῳ*)<sup>52</sup> and confusion. Violation of the command stripped man of "unspeakable glory" (*τῆς δόξης ἐκείνης τῆς ἀφάτου*) and of the life which was but little inferior to the angels (*καὶ τῆς ζωῆς τῆς οὐδὲν ἔλαττον σχεδὸν ἐχούσης τῶν ἀγγέλων*).<sup>53</sup>

According to St. John, God created man as the pinnacle of the physical universe and as a king with the divine commission to rule,<sup>54</sup> as a sort of vice-regent, over all of the created realm. "The human being is the creature more important than all other visible beings (*Τὸ γὰρ τιμιώτερον ἀπάντων τῶν ὁρωμένων ζώων ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος*), and for this being all the others were produced (*δι' ὃν καὶ ταῦτα ἅπαντα παρήχθη*)- sky, earth, sea, sun, moon, stars, the reptiles, the cattle, all the brute beasts."<sup>55</sup> Man served as the vital link

<sup>48</sup> *Hom. XVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.150-151.

<sup>49</sup> "Garments of skin" is a Scriptural phrase deeply imbued by numerous Church Fathers with complex and significant meanings. For example, Tertullian writes, "It cannot be, as some would have it, that those 'coats of skins' which Adam and Eve put on when there were stripped of paradise, were really themselves the forming of the flesh out of clay, because long before that Adam had already recognized the flesh which was in the woman as the propagation of his own substance...and the very taking of the woman out of the man was supplemented with flesh...coats of skin are cutaneous covering which was placed over the flesh." *Res. Mort.*, VII.2.5-10; VII.6.22-23; CCSL II, p. 929; ANF, p. 551. St. Ephrem believed the "garments of skin" to be the skins of animals placed over human skin, most likely miraculously put by the divine hand to replace the fig leaves without any actual slaying of animals. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis* (1994), p. 121.

<sup>50</sup> *Hom. XVI in Gen.*; PG 53.131,133.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.131.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.131; Cf. *Hom. XVII in Gen.*; PG 53.135.

<sup>53</sup> *Hom. XVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.148.

<sup>54</sup> The concept of rule, *ἄρχης*, is one that permeates Chrysostom's teaching not just on man as the image of God in Paradise, but also in his teaching on man as the head of the home (see Ch. 4), and man as priest and head of a congregation. His most famous work, *On the Priesthood*, has an exceedingly large amount of material dealing with the subject of *priestly rule*. Ford (1997) highlights Chrysostom's emphasis also upon the various means of submission of the clergy to the laity, pp. 329-53.

<sup>55</sup> *Hom. VIII in Gen.*; PG 53.71; Hill (1986), p. 107.

between the vast angelic realms and the sensible universe.<sup>56</sup> Man labored in Paradise without sweat and served as the conduit of divine grace to the material world. The divine life flowed into him, nurturing him, and radiating from him to the entire cosmos. “For humanity alone and for no other reason did he create everything, intending a little later to place them like some king and ruler (τινὰ βασιλέα καὶ ἄρχοντα) over other things created by him.”<sup>57</sup> God created the physical world for a two-fold anthropocentric reason: for our use and benefit. First, God created the palace of physical creation, and then He created the king meant to enjoy the creation and to exercise God-given power over all visible things.

God Himself bids all the creatures to come under man’s authority and guardianship (ἐξουσίαν καὶ ἐπιτροπήν).<sup>58</sup> While numerous explanations had been proffered by earlier Church Fathers of the nature of the image of God in man,<sup>59</sup> Chrysostom taught that man’s divinely delegated *control* or *rule*<sup>60</sup> of creation is the whole sum of meaning

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<sup>56</sup> “Man’s being is on the boundary between the intelligible order and the phenomenal order. As touching his body and its faculties, he is on a par with the irrational animate, and with the inanimate, creatures. As touching his rational faculties he claims kinship...with incorporeal beings. It would seem that the Creator linked up each several order of creation with the next, so as to make the whole universe one and akin.” Nemesius, *Nat. Hom.*, 11; PG 40.508; Telfer (1955), p. 229.

<sup>57</sup> *Hom. VI in Gen.*; PG 53.60. Hill (1986), p. 87. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 88, “It was to show his love for us that he created them all, demonstrating the great regard he has for the human race, and it was for us to move from these creatures to bring to him a proper adoration.” In ch. 7 of his treatise *On Providence*, one of the two longest chapters of this treatise, Chrysostom describes the physical cosmos from the solar universe to the plant kingdom with gaping mouth and intricate detail. He exclaims, “And all these things for you, O man!” *Prov.* VII.33; SC 79, p. 126. This chapter is the richest in his corpus expressing his theology of creation and its anthropocentric reality.

<sup>58</sup> *Hom. VII in Gen.*; PG 53.68. “In the far off beginning, no other living creature dared to do man harm. They were all slaves and subjects of his, and obedient, so long as he controlled his own passions and the irrational element within him.” Nemesius, *Nat. Hom.*, 26; PG 40.532; Telfer (1955), p. 253.

<sup>59</sup> Tertullian writes that free will and self-rule were the image and likeness of God in man. *Contre Marcion: Livre II, VI, 3.16-20*; SC 368, p.48. Later Fathers, such as St. John of Damascus, were to posit similar understandings of “image.” “According to His image means the intellect and free will, while the ‘according to His likeness’ means such likeness in virtue as is possible.” *F. O.*, 26.19-21; PTS 12, p. 76; Chase (1958), p. 235.

<sup>60</sup> This emphasis on the image of God as “control of” and “authority over” creation, while not unique to Chrysostom, is an expression of Chrysostom committing himself to one particular interpretation in the Patristic tradition. Chrysostom’s near contemporary, St. Ephrem the Syrian, posited a similar interpretation

found in the description of man as God's "image."<sup>61</sup> In this emphasis he expressed a consistent Antiochian emphasis.<sup>62</sup> Though man has fallen, he has not completely lost his dominion over the animals. If at times the animals seemingly control man, this is often due to man's slothfulness.<sup>63</sup> In the beginning the beasts were in "fear" and "trembling," and responded to man's direction.<sup>64</sup> As a master giving names to slaves in his service, Adam named all the animals.<sup>65</sup> Even though some animals were "wild," they did not terrorize man.<sup>66</sup> This is manifested plainly by the fact of Eve's conversation with the serpent. The serpent's presence provoked no fear in Eve.<sup>67</sup> Though Adam at first wondered how he might provide for all the beasts, he was comforted by the knowledge of God's design that the earth provide nourishment for *both* man *and* beasts.<sup>68</sup> Man's esteem in the eyes of the animal kingdom was substantially damaged by Adam's Fall.

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but applied it to "likeness" and not "image." "It is the dominion that Adam received over the earth and over all that is in it that constitutes the likeness of God who has dominion over the heavenly things and the earthly things." This was an interpretation common to Jewish and Antiochian Christian traditions, and is also found in Severian of Gabala, and Theodoret of Cyrillus. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> *Hom. VIII in Gen.*; PG 53.72; Hill (1986), p. 110. "So 'image' refers to the matter of control, not anything else, in other words, God created the human being as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than the human being, under whose authority everything falls." To set in balance Chrysostom's teaching on the relationship between the earth and mankind it is important to note as well that he points out man's dependence on the earth as "nurse," "mother," "homeland," and "tomb." *Hom. IX in Gen.*; PG 53.77.

<sup>62</sup> Harrison (2002), pp. 267ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Hom. IX in Gen.*; PG 53.78. I find this defense of man's *continued supremacy* over the animal kingdom of interest in that, at other times, St. John argues that in the Fall man has *lost* God's image. Since for St. John the essence of the image of God is rule over creation, one would think he would use the examples of man's being tyrannized by creation as an example of the Fall. As we see here John does not argue in this way. If he is not contradicting himself (which is possible), one may understand St. John's words about man's *loss* of the image of God in the Fall to be conditioned and tempered by what he says here. The loss was neither *complete* nor *final*. Chrysostom says the central example of man's fallenness is actually his failure to exercise rule over *his thoughts*.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.79. When man forfeited his 'position of trust' he lost control also.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.79.

<sup>66</sup> "Consider from this, dearly beloved, how in the beginning none of the wild beasts then existing caused fear either to the man or to the woman; on the contrary, they recognized human direction and dominion, and as with tame animals these days, so then even the wild and savage ones proved to be subdued." *Hom. XVI in Gen.*; PG 53.127; Hill (1986), p. 209.

<sup>67</sup> *Hom. IX in Gen.*; PG 53.79.

<sup>68</sup> *Hom. X in Gen.*; PG 53.86.

From this point on some animals became adversarial to man,<sup>69</sup> yet even this reality was designed as a blessing from God to keep man from contentment in his fallen state.<sup>70</sup>

Man's dominion over creation was conditioned by the presence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God knew that man's great freedom and position of authority on earth could give rise in due time to harm, and so He planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and enjoined abstinence from its fruit in order to assist man in remembering that he owed his enjoyment of Paradise to God, and that the ultimate creator and master of the world was the Lord.<sup>71</sup> Prior to the Fall God required man to work, to till the Garden and watch over it. This did not involve servile work (it was both "painless" and "without difficulty"), but was a measure instituted to keep man from falling into spiritual indifference (*ῥαθυμίαν*) and indulgence (*ἀνέσει*).<sup>72</sup> Adam passed his time in the Garden as a king reveling in enjoyment.<sup>73</sup> Thus, both the design of the Garden and the divine vocation given to Adam were safeguards of his glorious existence.

That which was most tragically lost by mankind in the Fall was not one or another particular characteristic, but rather a *way of life*. This way of life was an illumined life of unceasing communion with God Himself and of unswerving virtue. When this life was violated and negated by man's transgression, God removed together with it the beauty of virginity (*τὸ τῆς παρθενίας κάλλος*).<sup>74</sup> Man was created in a state of total freedom (*ἐν*

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<sup>69</sup> Aspects of the entire creation became adversarial to man, not simply the animal kingdom. Floods, fires, famines, earthquakes, etc. came into being as dangerous post-Fall threats to man's existence. A good summary of these post-Fall phenomena from which we seek God's deliverance is found in the petitions of the Byzantine Lita and Artoklasia service. Essey (1989), pp. 32-40.

<sup>70</sup> *Hom. IX in Gen.*; PG 53.79.

<sup>71</sup> *Hom. XIII in Gen.*; PG 53.109-110; Cf. *Hom. XIV in Gen.*; PG 53.114.

<sup>72</sup> *Hom. XIV in Gen.*; PG 53.113.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.114.

<sup>74</sup> *Virg., XIV.5.57-58*; SC 125, p. 142

ἐλευθερία πάση).<sup>75</sup> In the Fall, mankind's freedom and very status as "human" was assailed through the temptation to please the flesh. "This, after all, is when a man becomes human, when he practices virtue" (Τοῦτο γὰρ ἄνθρωπος, ὅταν ἀρετὴν μετή).<sup>76</sup> To be human is to be holy. To lapse from holiness, according to Chrysostom, is to lapse from being human.<sup>77</sup>

In his pristine state of illumination Adam lived under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, much as did the later prophets who directly received the word of God. This prophetic nature is evident by Adam's extensive knowledge, which Chrysostom highlights in his commentary on the opening chapters of *Genesis*. Though God Himself had administered some type of general and divine anesthesia to Adam in order to preserve him from any pain associated with the removal of one of his ribs to fashion Eve, Adam was fully aware of the mode of her creation from his side. Chrysostom suggests that Adam's exclamation that Eve was now "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh" makes manifest that Adam lived in the inspiration of the Spirit, Who revealed to him things that he could not possibly have known through his own experience.<sup>78</sup> Adam demonstrated knowledge of an incredible magnitude, evidencing that he was under the influence of prophetic grace (προφητικῆς χάριτος) and the inspiration of instruction by the

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<sup>75</sup> *Hom. XVII in Gen.*; PG 53.146.

<sup>76</sup> *Hom. XXIII in Gen.*; PG 53.201. Chrysostom continues, "It is not having the appearance of a human being- eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks and other features- that establishes the human being; these, in fact, are parts of the body. I mean, we would call a human being the man who retains the character of a human being. But what is the character of a human being? Being rational... Still, it is not merely this attribute, but also being virtuous and avoiding evil and getting the better of improper passions, following the Lord's commandments- this is what makes a human being." Hill (1990), p. 95.

<sup>77</sup> Chrysostom teaches, "What a human being is, and how great is the noble birthright of our nature, and what degree of virtue this creature is capable of showing- these things were demonstrated more by Paul than all others... [He] demonstrates that the gap between angels and humans is not so great, if we would wish to be attentive to ourselves... he exceeded all human beings who have existed from the time there have been human beings." *Laud Paul, 2.1.1-13*; SC 300, pp. 142, 144; Mitchell (2002), p. 448.

<sup>78</sup> Tertullian posited the same thing, though apparently understood it as a *temporary* state rather than a permanent one. "Adam predicted the great mystery... He experienced the influence of the Spirit. For there

Holy Spirit.<sup>79</sup> Adam saw “everything through the eyes of the Spirit” (ἅπαντα ταῦτα ἐώρα τοῖς πνευματικοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς).<sup>80</sup> It was a sign of God’s great care for Adam that He honored him with prophecy.<sup>81</sup>

By creation God also endowed Adam with magnificent intelligence and unspeakable wisdom (τῆς σοφίας τῆς ἀφάτου).<sup>82</sup> This intelligence was demonstrated when God brought before Adam all of the animals for naming. Whatever name Adam gave the animal, that was its name. This act of naming not only demonstrated Adam’s “unrivalled authority” (ἐξουσίαν ἀπηρτισμένην) and “lordly dominance” (δεσποτείας αὐθεντίαν) over the animal kingdom, but his exceeding intellect.<sup>83</sup>

When the Lord God formed human beings in the beginning, He used to speak to them personally, in a way that was possible for human beings to understand Him.<sup>84</sup> In communicating with man, God *lisped*, as it were, in order to make Himself intelligible to His creatures. A singular demonstration of God’s condescension and love of Adam is evidenced by the fact that God instructed Adam in the Garden. God did not command or order, but “as friend to friend” (φίλος φίλω), so did God relate to Adam.<sup>85</sup> In Paradise God labored to instruct Adam in every detail “like a father to his own dear son.”<sup>86</sup> The

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fell upon him that ecstasy, which is the Holy Spirit’s operative virtue of prophecy.” *De Anima*, XI.4.33-39; CCSL II, p. 797; ANF, p. 191.

<sup>79</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53.122. St. Ephrem the Syrian said that Adam either spoke this through prophecy, or was given an understanding of what happened in a dream while he slept. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 105.

<sup>80</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53.123; Hill (1986), p. 203.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.124

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.122.

<sup>83</sup> *Hom. XII in Gen.*; PG 53.116; Hill (1986), p. 191. Here Chrysostom reflects a typical Jewish interpretation. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 104, fn. 138.

<sup>84</sup> The sending of letters to God’s people was actually a sign that He was *farther away* from His people.

<sup>85</sup> *Hom. XIV in Gen.*; PG 53.114. Likewise Tertullian writes of Adam, *Innocens erat et deo de proximo amicus et paradisi colonus*. *De Patientia*, V.13.45; CCSL I, p. 304.

<sup>86</sup> *Hom. XVII in Gen.*; PG 53.138; Hill (1986), p. 229.

paradigm of friends conversing was normative in Adam's relationship with God.<sup>87</sup> Following the tragic Fall of man into sin, God had to develop new ways of communication. Inspired written texts, as wonderful as they were as a sign of God's love for man and of His desire to communicate and commune with man,<sup>88</sup> were in fact a witness to man's tragic loss of face-to-face communion with God.<sup>89</sup> In this sense Holy Scripture is a gracious reality of a fallen existence, and will not exist in the Kingdom.

Adam's ignorance in relation to the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was not a deficiency in intellectual perception. A correct understanding is that Adam had no *first-hand knowledge of sin and its attendant shame*.<sup>90</sup> Certainly, Adam understood quite well the difference between a morally good and evil action. If not, he could not be blamed for the Fall.<sup>91</sup> Consequent to the Fall no knowledge concerning good and evil *per se* was supplied to Adam. Rather, he simply knew *on a different experiential plane*.

### **Paradisa Union and Post-Fall Marriage.**

Marriage, as we commonly understand it in our fallen condition, is a God-given concession to man's weakness. It is a divine indulgence to man in his fallen condition, and thus, had no relevance in Paradise. Thus, St. John is careful neither to exalt it unduly

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 53.138.

<sup>88</sup> St. Athanasios the Great recounts St. Antony rejoicing in the possession of Holy Scripture thus, "Do not be astonished if the Emperor writes to us, for he is a man; but rather wonder that God wrote the Law for men and has spoken to us through His own Son." *V. Anton.* 81.3.9-12; SC 400, p. 342; NPNF, p. 217.

<sup>89</sup> *Hom. I in Mt.*; PG 57.13.

<sup>90</sup> St. Ephrem taught that Adam and Eve knew evil only "by hearsay." McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 122.

<sup>91</sup> *Hom. XVI in Gen.*; PG 53.132. St. Ephrem argues likewise that Adam and Eve were not children "as the pagans say" but were young adults, fully mature and capable of great arrogance. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 106. Just what "pagans" offered such teaching about Adam and Eve is not specified, but certainly a number of earlier Fathers, such as St. Irenaeus, had taught that Adam and Eve were children.

(since it is for fallen man) nor to denigrate it (since it has a divine origin).<sup>92</sup> However, just as there exists a paradisaal virginity, so there exists a paradisaal union of man and woman;<sup>93</sup> and just as the substance of paradisaal virginity differs greatly from that which exists outside of Paradise, the same may be said of the union of man and woman. Chrysostom uses the word “marriage” with reference to “earthly marriage,” and does not employ the word when he is describing the union of man and woman in Christ in Paradise, and in the coming Kingdom.<sup>94</sup> The paradisaal condition of Adam and Eve is a mysterious union of the first man with his unique and co-equal helpmate, divinely provided to him for conversation, consolation, and to “share the same being.”<sup>95</sup> Eve was formed from the rib of her *husband*.<sup>96</sup> It does not involve the many aspects of earthly marriage so popularly associated with that state in the fallen age.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Virg.*, XXIV.4.52-55; SC 125, pp. 172, 174. Chrysostom, as with virtually all of the Church Fathers, has many critics on just this point. Some claim that St. John denigrates marriage, and uses the classical topos of the “worst case earthly marriage” to paint all marriage in unflattering colors. It is without doubt that St. John does indeed make regular use of this approach to marriage. Apparently such classification and stereotyping of the pains of earthly marriage was not felt to be inconsistent in the minds of the Fathers with an exultation of truly Christian marriage at the same time. Cf. McVey (1989), *Hymn 24 On Virginity*, pp. 365ff, for another example of this topos in St. Ephrem the Syrian. It might just as easily be argued that the apparent discomfort borne in some critics over these issues arises from a lack of appreciation of both the virginal state and the catastrophe and misery so often found in earthly marriage, as well as the uniquely contemporary and romantic notions of love, marriage, and sex. Having said this it is relevant to note that some Fathers, such as St. Jerome, employed this topos of miserable marriage with such invective and occasional carelessness that if some of his statements were taken literally and as illustrative of his true thought he would be judged as unorthodox. For example, on one occasion at least St. Jerome called marriage a “lesser evil.” Dumm (1961), p. 131.

<sup>93</sup> Adam and Eve enjoyed a virginal union of being (what many, but not Chrysostom, might call “marriage”) and a nuptial virginity at one and the same time. Such would not be the case for their descendants until, perhaps, they reach the eschaton.

<sup>94</sup> Therefore this chapter uses the same convention. Ford posits that “there is no doubt that Chrysostom considered Eve to be Adam’s wife in Paradise,” and cites Chrysostom’s Homily 15 on Genesis. (1996), p. 78. In fact, Chrysostom nowhere in this homily on the creation of Eve calls her Adam’s “wife” or uses the term “marriage” to describe their union in Paradise.

<sup>95</sup> *Hom. XI in Gen.*; PG 53:124.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*; PG 53.124. Here, quoting St. Paul, Chrysostom appears to affirm the union of Adam and Eve in Paradise as marriage, although his comments are not altogether clear and may simply refer to the fact that Adam would *become* her husband.

<sup>97</sup> Chiefly, it does not involve the carnal union of sexual intercourse.



When God had completed creating the entire cosmos, He fashioned man for whom He had made everything. When man lived in Paradise “there was no need for marriage.”<sup>98</sup> Chrysostom is clear that in Paradise mankind lived ‘as in heaven’ and was without marriage. In fact, all of the classical byproducts of marriage extolled through the ages in all great civilizations, such as large populations, developed cities, crafts, homes, etc., did not exist in Paradise, and yet this in no way diminished the happiness of that original state.<sup>99</sup> These extolled realities are superfluous and ought not to be greatly valued by man as in any way belonging to the essence of true happiness.

What then is the origin of earthly marriage? Marriage itself is the offspring of death, and is a mortal and slavish garment (τὸ θνητὸν καὶ δουλικὸν ἱμάτιον).<sup>100</sup> Since mortality and slavery did not exist in Paradise, marriage did not exist. St. John carries the thought of St. Paul further. St. Paul explained that where there is sin, there is death.<sup>101</sup> St. John carries this further by stating, “Where death is, there is marriage” (Ὅπου γὰρ θάνατος, ἐκεῖ γάμος).<sup>102</sup> The pattern is as follows: sin-death-marriage. Each of the main

<sup>98</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.3.34-37; SC 125, p. 140.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV.5.52-55; SC 125, p. 140.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV.5.66-67; SC 125, p. 142. Notice that St. John describes *both* virginity *and* earthly marriage as *garments*. They are representative garments. Virginity is the particular garment of Paradise and of a carefree life. Marriage is the garment of this present world and a toilsome life. Sometimes Chrysostom calls marriage *children’s garments*, and, as such, marriage is simply unable to encompass and adorn that perfect man, who in Christ has grown to maturity. *Ibid.*, XIV.5.65; SC 125, p. 142; XVI.1.5-11; SC 125, pp. 146, 148. Virginity is a golden robe, and is the garment of the Church. *Exp. in Ps. XLIV*; PG 55.202.

<sup>101</sup> “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” Romans 5:12.

<sup>102</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.6.70; SC 125, p. 142. Such teaching is the common teaching of St. Chrysostom’s illustrious 4<sup>th</sup> century colleagues such as Ss. Basil, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasios, Jerome, and Ambrose. The position was maintained consistently in the East over time as is evident in the work of St. John of Damascus, “The angels...have no need of marriage, precisely because they are not mortal.” *F. O.*, 17.40-41; PTS 12, p. 47; Chase (1958), p. 206.

components of marriage such as sexual intercourse (μίξεως), conception (σύλληψις), labor (ώδῖνες), and childbirth (τόκοι)<sup>103</sup> is a form of corruption (εἶδος φθορᾶς).<sup>104</sup>

Besides the essential connection of marriage to corruption, if one is joined to a wicked spouse, marriage becomes a hindrance on the road to salvation.<sup>105</sup> A wife and one's attention to her can be a great impediment to virtue (ὅσον πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἐμπόδιον).<sup>106</sup> Woman was originally created to be a helper to man; but like Adam, Eve rejected God's original intent and became a great source of temptation and treachery to man.<sup>107</sup> To some degree women in marriage provide help to men through child rearing and providing an outlet for men's desire; but apart from that, a woman really provides no help.<sup>108</sup> While many people foolishly rush into marriage as a lovely thing (ἐπέραστον πρᾶγμα), it is really a prison.<sup>109</sup> Marital problems are like thorns that stick to one's clothes when climbing across a hedge. One turns to pick one out, and is caught by several more.<sup>110</sup>

Despite such limitations, marriage is honorable and blessed. Marriage is a good bestowed upon fallen mankind by God as a concession to human weakness. It is in no way of equal honor with virginity; for if one believed this, one might very well conclude that two wives were better than one.<sup>111</sup> Rather, God gave marriage to man because his

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<sup>103</sup> St. John makes a distinction between those post-Fall realities that are God's gifts in this condition and those that are direct punishments for the transgression of the Fall. He notes, in discoursing on childbirth, that birth itself is not a punishment but birth with labor and pains. *Virg.*, LXV.10-11; SC 125, p. 332.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV.3.41; SC 125, p. 140.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, XLIV.2.39-44; SC 125, p. 254.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, XLV.2.33-34; SC 125, p. 256.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, XLVI.1.3-9; SC 125, pp. 256, 258. Modern feminists (and plenty of others too!) would not at all appreciate Ch. XLVI of *On Virginity* where Chrysostom cites numerous Scriptural examples of how women proved to be the stumbling blocks to men. His conclusion, quoting Sirach, is that there is scarcely any evil like that of a woman.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, XLVI.5.59-63; SC 125, p. 262. This raises the question concerning in what sense Eve was then originally created to be a "suitable help-mate" to Adam.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, XLVII.5.90-92; SC 125, p. 270.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, LII.8.134-139; SC 125, p. 298.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, XV.2.23-30; SC 125, p. 146. Again Chrysostom writes, "Tell me, will someone still dare to compare marriage with virginity? Or look marriage in the face at all?" *Ibid.*, XXXIV.5.61-62; SC 125, p. 202; Shore (1983), p. 47. Marital intercourse is granted as a remedy, but the consent to it that St. Paul

nature was totally out of control and unable to contain its violent passions.<sup>112</sup> Marriage was created as a harbor in the storm (λιμένα ἐν ἐκείνη τῇ ζάλῃ)<sup>113</sup> and to prevent unlawful unions (τῆς παρανόμου μίξεως).<sup>114</sup> While married persons have this harbor, the virgin “sails a harborless ocean” (πέλαγος πλεῖν ἀλίμενον).<sup>115</sup> Marriage is good for those who want to live the life of pigs (χοίρων βίον) and ruin themselves in whorehouses (ἐν χαμαιτυπείοις φθείρεσθαι).<sup>116</sup> If at times the flame of passions struggles to overwhelm the married person, the flame may be quickly put out by sexual intercourse. Marriage provides one with the “freedom for intercourse” (τὴν τῆς μίξεως ἄδειαν).<sup>117</sup> However, the virgin has no remedy to extinguish the flame. His only chance is to fight the fire so he is not burnt.<sup>118</sup> The virgin is called to walk on burning coals without being burnt. Marriage supports one who is about to fall. For those who are not tottering, it is no longer useful at all, but is actually an impediment to virtue.<sup>119</sup> Sexual pleasure is an integral part of the consolation of marriage. For his time Chrysostom was bold in suggesting that the pleasure of sexual intercourse may actually solidify the marriage bond. This is as far as Chrysostom would go in “sanctifying” marital intercourse. In fact, in other places of his

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gives is not “from one approving or praising it but from one scoffing at it with derision.” *Ibid.*, XXXIV.6.77-79; SC 125, p. 204; Shore (1983), pp. 47-48.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX.1.1-2; SC 125, p. 156. Chrysostom’s florid and highly descriptive language of the intense pressure of sexual desire is something from which he could speak *personally*. His contemporary biographer and disciple, Bishop Palladius, describes St. John’s flight to the desert as a young man as a result of the fact that St. John’s “youthful nature was bursting within him.” *V. Chrys.I*, V.17; SC 341, p. 108; Meyer (1985), p. 35.

<sup>113</sup> *Virg.*, XVII.4.56-57; SC 125, p. 154.

<sup>114</sup> *Hom. LIX in Gen.*; PG 54.517.

<sup>115</sup> *Virg.*, XXXIV.1.13-14; SC 125, p. 200; Shore (1983), p. 45. Chrysostom does suggest that the virgin may find a tranquil harbor *in a monastery*. *Oppugn. II*; PG 47.347-348.

<sup>116</sup> *Virg.*, XIX.2.14-18; SC 125, p. 158.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* L.1.1-2; SC 125, p. 284.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV.4.57-58; SC 125, p. 202.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV.9-10; SC 125, p. 174.

corpus, he explains away even the pleasure of sexual intercourse and suggests that the pleasure is really *no pleasure at all*.<sup>120</sup>

Chrysostom is clear, however, that marriage is *not* the maintenance in itself of a small brothel, but is rather a means to remain in holiness and dignity (*ἐν ἀγιασμῷ καὶ σεμνότητι*).<sup>121</sup> Marriage is not evil.<sup>122</sup> The nobilities (*τὰ σεμνὰ*) of marriage must not be undermined.<sup>123</sup> Marital intercourse itself presents “no hindrance” (*μὴ κώλυμα*) to the spiritual life.<sup>124</sup> Marital intercourse may be a lawful union (*νόμιμον συνοικέσιον*) if it takes place according to God’s laws, with self-control and dignity, and in a context of marital harmony (*ὁμονοία*).<sup>125</sup> The Chrysostom corpus contains a large amount of positive material on marriage.<sup>126</sup> For Chrysostom marriage is a “sweet ointment” (*μύρον*)<sup>127</sup> and

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<sup>120</sup> “For even in the act of intercourse there seems to be no pleasure, since the one who has consummated the union also has extinguished the pleasure; on the other hand, the one who is still in coitus does not experience pleasure, but rather tumult, confusion, frenzy, madness, great turmoil and violent shaking.” *Oppugn. II*; PG 47.346-347; Hunter (1988), p.118. In other places Chrysostom gives a positive interpretation to the pleasure of marital intercourse, *Hom.XII in Col.*; PG 62.388. All of St. John’s commentary upon physical pleasures of various kinds must be read in the light of his overarching conviction that *true pleasure* is virtue. “Nothing is more pleasurable than virtue, nothing sweeter than orderliness, nothing more amiable than gravity.” *Ibid.*, PG 62.389; NPNF, p. 320.

<sup>121</sup> *Virg.*, XIX.2.17-18; SC 125, p. 158.

<sup>122</sup> *Hom. XLIX in Gen.*; PG 54.446.

<sup>123</sup> *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.487. Hill’s translation of *τὰ σεμνὰ* as ‘holiness’ I think is unfortunate since not only does it opt for a less common usage, but it forces Chrysostom into a contradiction (where none be necessary) since elsewhere he explicitly states that marriage is not holiness. Cf. Hill (1986), p. 121. Chrysostom is quite consistent in his descriptive terms of marriage. St. John Cassian grants to marriage the power to sanctify but ranks it amongst *things indifferent*. *Conlatio XXI.XIV.2*. 13-14; CSEL XIII. p. 588; Ramsey (1997), p. 730.

<sup>124</sup> *Hom.XXI in Gen.*; PG 53.183. While Chrysostom is clear to teach that marital intercourse is not *necessarily* defiling [it can be, of course, if intention and practice are not Christian], he at the same time teaches that marital relations may keep even pious married Christians from rendering certain significant services to God. This is most evident in the case of the Virgin Mary who, according to Chrysostom, would not have been worthy of rendering her particular service to God if she had had relations with a man. *Hom. XLIX in Gen.*; PG 54.446. Cf. *Catech.*, VII.28.1-11; SC 50, pp. 243-244. where Chrysostom uses Cornelius the Centurion to demonstrate that neither marriage nor military service are necessary hindrances to virtue.

<sup>125</sup> *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.488. The emphasis on marital harmony here echoes that of Origen. See Ch. 1.

<sup>126</sup> One typical excerpt among many to be found in Chrysostom’s *Genesis* homilies is the following: “In other words, dearly beloved, had marriage or the raising of children been likely to prove a stumbling block on the way to virtue, the Creator of all would not have introduced marriage into our life lest it prove our undoing in difficult times and through severe problems. Since, however, family life not only offers us no obstacle to wisdom in God’s eyes as long as we are prepared to be on our guard, but even brings us much encouragement and calms the tumults of our natural tendencies...consequently he granted the human race

he is not ashamed to wax eloquent on the beauty of marital intercourse.<sup>128</sup> Chrysostom does not hesitate to assert that marital intercourse is a type of the “spiritual intercourse” (*συνουσία πνευματικῆ*)<sup>129</sup> between Christ and the Church. Marital sex is a “mystery of love” (*ἀγάπης μυστήριον*). It demonstrates by procreation the immense power of union (*πολλὴ τῆς ἐνώσεως ἢ ἰσχύς*).<sup>130</sup> The marriage union is the perfect type of *both* an individual soul’s and the corporate Church’s union with Christ.<sup>131</sup> Many are not able to endure the violence and the great battle of the passions entailed in the virginal state; marriage is the good that will save them.<sup>132</sup> Marriage is preferable to fornication.<sup>133</sup>

Marriage and sexual intercourse were also fashioned for procreation.<sup>134</sup> Procreation through sexual intercourse became the “greatest consolation” to man following the Fall. In the generation of children, the “fearsome visage of death” (*τοῦ*

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the consolation that comes from this source.” *Hom. XXI in Gen.*; PG 53.180; Hill (1990), p. 60. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>127</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.387. St. John describes the act of sexual intercourse as a sort of diffusing and co-mingling in which the two are not able to be differentiated but have been merged into one, much like the casting of ointment into oil to form one whole. *Ibid.*, PG 62.388.

<sup>128</sup> Chrysostom acknowledges that some who hear him do so will be ashamed and uncomfortable. He asks, “Why art thou ashamed of the honorable, why blushest thou at the undefiled? This is for heretics, this is for such as introduce harlots thither.” *Ibid.*, PG 62.388; NPNF, p. 319.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 62.389.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 62.387. The mystery is that as long as the two remain two they are incapable of becoming three. They add to their number by reducing their number to one.

<sup>131</sup> The theme of the spiritual marriage of the individual soul and the corporate Church to Christ the Bridegroom is a theme that permeates St. John’s catechesis as found especially in his *First Baptismal Instruction. Catech.*, I.1.1-13; SC 50, p. 108.

<sup>132</sup> *Virg.*, XXVII.1.2-5; SC 125, p. 176. To succeed you must have a soul fond of strife, violent and forceful against the passions.

<sup>133</sup> This *utilitarian* approach to marriage is pervasive in Chrysostom’s treatment of the subject. Marriage is in no way marveled at for itself. *Ibid.*, XXXIX.2.25-26; SC 125, p. 230.

<sup>134</sup> “Thou marriest a wife for chastity, and procreation of children.” *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.386; NPNF, p. 317. Cf., *Virg.*, XIX.1.2-3; SC 125, p. 156. St. John specifies in other places why God chose earthly marriage as the *mode* for procreation. St. John suggests a number of reasons in various places. These include the spiritual profit derived from labor and childbirth, and the unitive good of the pleasure of the sex act. For St. John the sexual union of marriage is an expression of the mystery of love through which the miracle of the reproduction of God’s image takes place. This union has great power. From one in the Garden God made one and then united these two into one again in procreation following the Fall. In the sex act the wife receives the sperm as the “purest gold” fusing in the pleasure of the sex act with her part (“other gold”), nourishes and cherishes the union of sperm and egg and contributes back a man. *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.388.

θανάτου τὸ φοβερόν προσωπεῖον) was reduced, and the resurrection was foreshadowed.<sup>135</sup> Marriage for the sake of raising a family was accepted as a legitimate desire by Chrysostom in his Old Testament commentaries.<sup>136</sup> However, though this was an original divine intention for earthly marriage, it was always secondary to the “greater reason” of quenching the fiery passion of man’s nature.

This emphasis on quenching the passions is evident in St. Paul’s teaching that “in order to avoid immorality” each man should take a wife. This is St. Paul’s consistent theme in 1 Cor. 7. Man and woman ought to come together not primarily for procreation, but so “that Satan may not tempt you.”<sup>137</sup> Later he says that if widows cannot exercise self-control they should marry. According to Chrysostom, this primary reason of marriage, to regulate man’s sexual passion (ὑπὲρ τοῦ σβέσαι τὴν τῆς φύσεως πύρωσιν),<sup>138</sup> is the only one of the two original divine intentions that remains relevant in the New Covenant. Since the earth, sea, and the whole world have already been inhabited, there is no need to bear any more children.<sup>139</sup> Procreation, the fruit of mortality and the quest for eternal memory, is, in fact, a reminder of human sin and the loss of the original glory of humanity.<sup>140</sup> This is why St. Paul nowhere suggests procreation as a reason for marriage. In fact, for Chrysostom, procreation was “that specious and grand reason for marriage” (τῆς εὐπροσώπου καὶ σεμνῆς αἰτίας τοῦ γάμου).<sup>141</sup>

<sup>135</sup> *Hom. XVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.154; Hill (1990), p. 12.

<sup>136</sup> *Hom. XXII in Gen.*; PG 53.189.

<sup>137</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:5.

<sup>138</sup> *Virg.*, XIX.1.3; SC 125, p. 156.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX.1.2-2.21; SC 125, pp. 156, 158. Chrysostom is quite bold here, for most of the Fathers place great emphasis upon the continuing necessity and good of procreation in this age. Chrysostom shares this emphasis with Tertullian. See ch. 1 footnotes 79-81.

<sup>140</sup> *Hom. XX in Gen.*; PG 53.167.

<sup>141</sup> *Virg.*, XXXIX.3.40-41; SC 125, p. 230; Shore (1983), p. 59.

Thus man, the ‘terrestrial angel,’ was not originally designed for, nor oriented toward sexual intercourse and procreation, as post-Fall man is. The sexual necessities of fallen nature and the tremendous sexual impulses, appetites, and drives of post-Fall man simply did not exist to trouble Adam and Eve. Sexual intercourse did not exist in the Garden.<sup>142</sup> It was the result of the Fall, at which time mankind became ‘beastly’ and ‘animal-like’<sup>143</sup> and began to demonstrate this through copulation.<sup>144</sup> St. John shared this fundamental assumption with virtually all of the Holy Fathers of the Christian Church.<sup>145</sup>

Chrysostom drives home this understanding of the origin of sexual intercourse in several places. In answering detractors,<sup>146</sup> who were even *within the Church* (which

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV.3.40-41; SC 125, p. 140. Did God intend for the animal kingdom to procreate via sexual intercourse in the Garden?

<sup>143</sup> After the Fall man was “compared to senseless beasts, and was become like to them.” *Joannis Damasceni, F. O.*, 24.42-44; PTS 12, p. 69, quoting the Psalm.

<sup>144</sup> Nowhere in the Holy Scriptures is this transformation into an animal state as a punishment for sin more graphically depicted than in the case of King Nebuchadnezzar. As a punishment for his pride Nebuchadnezzar’s mind was changed from that of a man to that of a beast, he was driven out from among men, he ate grass like an ox, his body was wet with dew, his hair grew as long as eagle’s feathers, and his nails grew like birds’ claws. *Daniel* 4: 16, 33. Describing the Fall of Adam in the terms of King Nebuchadnezzar’s judgment, St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, “David wept for Adam, at how he fell from the royal abode to the abode of wild animals. Because he went astray through a beast he became like the beasts: He ate, together with them as a result of the curse, grass and roots, and he died, becoming their peer...in that king [Nebuchadnezzar] did God depict Adam...Blessed is He who gave us in him an example of returning. Look at how great is our shame in comparison: our very confinement in darkness has become for us a source of pleasure; we are proud of the land of curses; how we love our confinement in a pit!” Brock (1998), *Hymns on Paradise, Hymn 13*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>145</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo, though sharing with Chrysostom many fundamental emphases, appears to have taught at least the actual *possibility* of sexual intercourse in the Garden. Professor Andrew Louth (1999) describes St. Augustine’s view of human sexuality in the original, paradisaical condition as “surprisingly positive,” p. 85. For what Louth terms “positive” (since St. Augustine affirms the possibility of sexual intercourse in the Garden and affirms the sexual differentiation in such continuity with present reality) many of St. Augustine’s saintly contemporaries would no doubt have termed “carnal” or “Jewish,” thought. I am unaware of a critique of St. Augustine’s teaching on this point by any of his Eastern colleagues.

<sup>146</sup> St. John suggested in no uncertain terms that the objections of those who found fault with his avid preaching of virginity more often than not stemmed from spiritual malaise and apathy. Objectors were looking for excuses to discredit virginity so they would not have to consider its moral force and example. Those who thought this way and proffered objections (such as the idea that if all were to embrace virginity civilization would fall into ruin) are enemies, natural men without understanding of spiritual things, and only ‘appear’ and ‘claim’ to belong to the Church. *Virg.*, XIV.2.17-25; SC 125, p. 138. A little later he says all their words are “excuses, pretexts, and ruses for...incontinence.” *Ibid.*, XIX.2.20-21; SC 125, p. 158. Continuing his ferocious rebuke of virginity’s detractors he says, “If he who calls his brother a fool will be led away directly to the fire of hell, how much anger will he call down upon his head who attacks this angelic way of life?” *Ibid.*, XXI.3.37-40; SC 125, p. 162; Shore (1983), p. 30. St. John was so determined to silence the detractors because he was very conscious of the influence of public opinion on

greatly offended Chrysostom),<sup>147</sup> Chrysostom argued that the original reproduction was not sexual in nature. “Tell me, what sort of marriage produced Adam? What kind of birth pains produced Eve? You could not say. Therefore why have groundless fears? Why tremble at the thought of the end of marriage, and thus the end of the human race?”<sup>148</sup> He was not ignorant of the possible Scriptural objections to this view. He explained, for instance, that although Adam and Eve had received the commission from God to ‘be fruitful and multiply,’<sup>149</sup> this did not imply sexual intercourse, or, for that matter, marriage. The case of Abraham shows that even marriage is incapable of producing offspring if God is not willing; and if God is willing even virginity can produce children.<sup>150</sup> Chrysostom utilizes this proposition to encourage infertile women, saying, “Let women not be distressed when they have no children; instead, let them give evidence of a thankful disposition and have recourse to the Creator and direct their request to him, the Lord of nature, not attributing childbirth to the intercourse of the partners nor to any other source than the Creator of everything.”<sup>151</sup>

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those just setting out on the path of virginity. It being so difficult a path novices needed all the support they could get. Despite St. John’s regular sparring with virginity’s detractors, he confidently states that at that time in the empire “virginity is admired everywhere by all.” *Ibid.*, XXII.2.14; SC 125, p. 164; Shore (1983), p. 31.

<sup>147</sup> As it did others before him like St. Athanasios the Great, who argued in the same way. “There are people who say lawless words against the bearer of God, saying that she got married, in order to create an excuse for themselves, just like the Pharisees, to increase the pleasure of marriage, lest virginity become manifest and put to shame their profitable choice.” Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 280.

<sup>148</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.6.75-77; SC 125, p. 142; Shore (1983), p. 22.

<sup>149</sup> Genesis 1:28.

<sup>150</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.6.80-82; SC 125, p. 144. St. John applies this same theme of the insufficiency of human endeavor apart from the special blessing of God to the subject of growing crops. *Hom.V in Gen.*; PG 53.52. Cf. *Ibid.*, PG 53.58. In another place Chrysostom emphasizes the complete submission of the elements and laws of the material universe to the will of the Creator. “By comparison with this the Creator of all creates everything in a way contrary to humankind so that you may learn even from this his ineffable power and the fact that, when he wishes, the very elements can be seen to perform in a way contrary to their own abilities in compliance with the Creator’s wishes.” Hill (1990), p.160. All of creation moves in direct obedience to God. So much is this the case that Chrysostom exhorts men to *imitate* the elements and be humbled by the fact that they so carefully obey God though they are without reason. Cf. “Neither intercourse nor anything else is capable of ensuring succession unless the hand from above intervenes and prompts nature to birth” *Hom.XII in Gen.*; PG 53.100; Hill (1990), p. 358.

<sup>151</sup> *Hom.XXI in Gen.*; PG 53.178; Hill (1990), p. 56.



Applying this perspective on God's providence to the many examples of infertility amongst the *pious women* of the Old Covenant, Chrysostom poses and answers this question: "What is the meaning of this gallery of sterile people?" (*Τί βούλεται τῶν στείρων τούτων ὁ χορός;*). God's providence so ordered these unusual turns of events involving long-sterile women who finally become mothers in order to prepare His people for the supreme "other-worldly" birth of Jesus Christ from His Virgin Mother. The unusual births of formerly infertile Sarah, Rebecca, etc. were Old Testament foreshadowings of the birth of Christ.<sup>152</sup> In the same way it is not the propagation of virginity that decreases the human population, but sin and, particularly, illicit intercourse, that provokes God to wrath. This is evident from Noah's time.<sup>153</sup>

How does Chrysostom interpret Adam's comments at the time when he first gazes upon Eve? In Adam's initial proclamation he asserts that, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and will cling to his wife and the two will become one flesh."<sup>154</sup> Chrysostom does not deny that Adam's statements refer both to marriage and sexual intercourse. Rather, St. John posits that these statements were prophetic in nature and demonstrate that Adam's understanding was inspired.<sup>155</sup> This is a necessary conclusion to make since "the consummation of that intercourse occurred after the Fall (*μετὰ γὰρ τὴν παράβασιν τὰ τῆς συνουσίας γέγονεν*); up till that time they were living like angels in Paradise and so they were not burning with desire" (*οὐχ ὑπὸ ἐπιθυμίας φλεγόμενοι*).<sup>156</sup>

<sup>152</sup> *Hom. XLIX in Gen.*; PG 54.445; Hill (1992), p. 44.

<sup>153</sup> *Virg.*, XVIII.3-7; SC 125, p. 156.

<sup>154</sup> Genesis 2:23.

<sup>155</sup> It could also be noted here that Adam's prophecy did not consist simply in a prediction of marriage and sexual intercourse, but also of fathers and mothers! How would Adam know about them?!

<sup>156</sup> *Hom. XI in Gen.*; PG 53.123; Hill (1986), pp. 202-3. This teaching concerning the consummation of intercourse following the Fall and expulsion from Paradise is common Patristic fare. See *Tertullien, Contre*

St. John roots his teaching on the origin of sexual intercourse in his exegesis of Genesis 4:1. “ ‘Now, Adam had intercourse with his wife Eve.’ Consider when this happened. After their disobedience, after their loss of the Garden, then it was that the practice of intercourse had its beginning. You see, before their disobedience they followed a life like that of the angels, and there was no mention of intercourse.”<sup>157</sup> According to Chrysostom the Scriptural text here clearly states that Adam did not ‘know’ his wife sexually until following the Fall.<sup>158</sup> Sexual intercourse is rooted in man’s Fall and subsequent death. It is not that marital intercourse is defiling.<sup>159</sup> Rather, intercourse is not impurity (*οὐκ εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν*), it is simply a distraction or waste of time (*εἰς ἀσχολίαν ἀγούσης*).<sup>160</sup> It is the fruit of being subject to the needs of the body. Those who are not in such a subjected state simply have no use or compulsion for sexual intercourse.<sup>161</sup>

He suggests that, while we have no concrete examples of exactly how in Paradise humans would have reproduced the image of God because of the temporal intervention of

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*Marcion, Livre IV.17.5.33*; SC 456, p. 218. For documentation concerning the same teaching in Ss. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athanasios the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Jerome see Dumm (1961), pp. 13ff.

<sup>157</sup> *Hom. XVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.153; Hill (1990), p. 10.

<sup>158</sup> Chrysostom’s near-contemporary, St. Ephrem the Syrian, and the Syriac Holy Fathers preceding Ephrem, taught clearly that the consummation of conjugal relations was a post-Fall phenomenon. They argued this on the same exegetical grounds as did Chrysostom. Brock (1998), p. 30.

<sup>159</sup> Not being “defiling” means to Chrysostom that sexual intercourse is not necessarily sinful. Chrysostom nowhere suggests that intercourse is “holy”, “sacred”, or even primarily “an expression of love”. These romantic notions are really quite modern, and lack any substantive Patristic source. At the same time Chrysostom is prepared to emphasize the *mysterious* nature of human sexuality and to associate it very closely with love in his *Homilies on Colossians*. For Chrysostom, however, the mystery of love is that between the spouses and the child which results from their union, not primarily between the spouses themselves.

<sup>160</sup> *Virg.*, XXX.2.40-41; SC 125, p. 192. It is not surprising that we find this notion of sexuality as a “waste of time” in Chrysostom’s treatise designed to promote monastic life. In stark eschatological terms St. John’s statement could be justified, as could many other activities that even a bishop must engage in such as the management of Church properties, the procurement of agricultural products for distribution to the poor, or the purchase of oil to keep lamps burning in the episcopal palace, etc. From one perspective these things are a “waste of time.” However, since Chrysostom elsewhere describes several positive functions of marital intercourse perhaps he would say that some things are helpful wastes!

the Fall, we have every reason to believe that they would have reproduced in a fashion consonant with their angelic being. God multiplied the angels without the aid of physical intercourse, and could have done so as well for mankind. “An infinite number of angels are at the service of God, thousands upon thousands of archangels are beside him, and none of them have come into being from the succession of generations, none from childbirth, labor pains and conception. Could he not, then, have created many more men without marriage? Just as he created the first two from whom all men descend?”<sup>162</sup> In this theory Chrysostom hints at an explanation more fully developed and previously set forth by St. Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>163</sup> Those who assume sexual intercourse was a part of life in the Garden of delights are guilty of projecting back into the original creation what has become normative for fallen man, and of a failure to appreciate the massive chasm<sup>164</sup> separating man’s life in Paradise from his life following the Fall.

### **A Union of Being Between Man and Woman in Paradise.**

The essence of virginity is not primarily a physical state. Physical virginity is an outworking of virginity of soul, and how this physical virginity is maintained in Paradise

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<sup>161</sup> “...there was no mention of intercourse. How could there be, when they were not subject to the needs of the body?” *Hom. XVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.153; Hill (1990), p 10.

<sup>162</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.6.75-82; SC 125, pp. 142, 144; Shore (1983), p.22. St. Ephrem the Syrian teaches that without sin Eve “would have given birth because she had received the blessing of birth along with the animals, she would not have given birth to many, for those to whom she would have given birth would have remained immortal. She would have been preserved from the pangs of their births, from the ignominy of having to raise them, and from wailing over their deaths.” McVey (1994), p. 119. Here St. Ephrem maintains a basic continuity with the fallen physiology of the birth process (minus various post-Fall additions), yet he denies such continuity in the matter of the physiology of conception itself. How or why he does this is not clear to my mind.

<sup>163</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa. *Hom. Opif.*, XVII; PG 44.188-192. “If they had kept the commandment unbroken forever, God could have increased the race by some other means [than the marriage union].” *Joannis Damasceni, F. O.*, 97.16-20; PTS 12, p. 228; Chase (1958), p. 394.

and outside Paradise are really quite different matters. Paradisal virginity is a *state of being likened to the angels*<sup>165</sup> in which our first ancestors were created.<sup>166</sup> It was a state of *undefiled* and *unceasing* communion with God. Paradisal man had silence ruling all within. His soul pursued no other activity but continually communed with God. He enjoyed an unspeakable depth of true pleasure.<sup>167</sup> He reveled in a heavenly contemplation without cares. In this virginal ethos man lived and moved physically, with a physicality free of carnality. Man had a body, but this body (unlike ours) was clothed in light and overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. Man's body was light, free from the necessities of fallen nature and carnal drives and impulses. St. John does not envision Adam and Eve as even contemplating the act of sexual intercourse (let alone performing it).<sup>168</sup> It is clear, then, that if we are to understand what Chrysostom means when he speaks of virginity in Paradise, we must be prepared to define virginity in non-sexual terms. We cannot simply use popular contemporary concepts and project them back in time and space into the Garden. Chrysostom's understanding of essential virginity is bound up intimately with his fundamental anthropology.

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<sup>164</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa describes the Fall as man himself being "viciously transformed" so that to gaze upon post-Fall man and to compare him to pre-Fall man is to witness some sort of grotesque distortion. *Or. Catech.*, VIII.17; SC 453, p. 188; NPNF, p. 482.

<sup>165</sup> The use of angelic in this context is explained in greater detail below.

<sup>166</sup> St. John describes the virginal *state of being* as the "absence of wicked and shameful desire, the absence of ornaments and superfluous cares" ...and "being unsoiled by life's cares. Without that what good is there in physical purity?" Virginity which entangles itself in the cares of the world is "much inferior to marriage." *Virg.*, LXXVII.3-9; SC 125, pp. 366, 368; Shore (1983), p.116.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, LXVIII.1.2-12; SC 125, p. 338. St. John utilizes the concept of pure or true pleasure in numerous places and defines it as *non-sensual*. This usage of pleasure is contrary to popular usage today, but must be recognized to understand Chrysostom's entire view of Paradise itself, which he describes in the language of the LXX as a "Garden of delights." God created all sorts of trees in the Garden to show His regard for man and provide him with trees that were beautiful to behold and pleasing to taste. Paradise was called the "Garden of delights" to emphasize the exceeding pleasure man derived from living there.

## Paradisaal Virginitat: Redemption and Restoration.

In the next few chapters we will see that different redemptive epochs have different definitions of “perfection.” With the advance of redemptive history, what was once perfect becomes imperfect later.<sup>169</sup> Earthly marriage was actually created by God to serve the cause of virginitat. If God had required virginitat, or even monogamous marriage, of ancient man in his infantile, post-Fall state, certainly man, unable to attain this, would have fallen over the precipice of immoderation and jeopardized his salvation.<sup>170</sup> God, however, was determined to release man from his inferior state and so, after a long period of training under the old law, the time came to call man to the heavenly philosophy of virginitat.<sup>171</sup>

Virginitat was in force from the time of man’s creation in the Garden.<sup>172</sup> Then man spilt his virginitat through gross spiritual adultery in the Garden. In response to this, God initiated His redemptive movement to recover man’s soul. First, He brought man into earthly marriage, permitting polygamy.<sup>173</sup> Second, He “rooted out” the “evil” of polygamy and more firmly established monogamous marriage.<sup>174</sup> Third, He has revealed

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<sup>168</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 53:123. Whether or not Adam and Eve were created with genitalia is not directly addressed by Chrysostom.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXIII.1.16-17; SC 125, p. 388.

<sup>170</sup> “God has not demanded from human nature outstanding virtuous conduct in the first age of man, inasmuch as it was too childish.” *Ibid.*, LXXXIV.1.13-15; SC 125, p. 390; Shore (1983), p. 126.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI.2.22-27; SC 125, p. 148.

<sup>172</sup> “So, at the outset and from the beginning the practice of virginitat was in force; but when through their indifference disobedience came on the scene and the ways of sin were opened, virginitat took its leave for the reason that they had proved unworthy of such a degree of good things, and in its place the practice of intercourse took over.” *Hom. XVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.153; Hill (1990), pp. 10-11.

<sup>173</sup> Polygamy was permitted by God because the human race was young and needed to multiply. Now “Christ has made men angels and raised us above this evil.” *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.489; Hill (1992), p. 124.

<sup>174</sup> St. John is clear that the “former practice” of polygamy was a permitted evil that God used primarily for the good of increasing the human race. Anyone living in the New Covenant and contemplating a return to this practice is contemplating something “spiritually harmful.” St. John explains that now “no one is free” to propose the practice of polygamy. *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.489; Hill (1992), p. 124.



His Kingdom and has drawn some to dramatically affirm and manifest the new order of living in God's Kingdom by forsaking the earthly concession of marriage and by embracing virginity. Finally, earthly marriage will be done away with in the Kingdom of heaven, and all will live as the angels. Just how God's redemptive plan unfolds in the area of marriage and virginity is the subject of our next chapter.

Virginity works, as should truly Christian marriage, to accomplish the same divine task of reducing the baseness of our souls and leading them to perfect virtue.<sup>175</sup> God has called us to one ambition only: to regain Paradise lost. Success in the battle against the devil and victory over evil is the path of return, and constitutes the reacquisition of the virginal life of Paradise. Whether one travels there by virginity, which is the most direct route, or by the blessed state of earthly marriage is not God's main concern;<sup>176</sup> it is the return to Paradise itself that is important.

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<sup>175</sup> *Virg.*, XVI.2.13-14; SC 125, p. 148.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, XLV.1.14-20; SC 125, p. 254.

### Chapter Three: From Childish Ambitions to Heavenly Acquisitions: Marriage and Virginitly in the Old and New Covenants

#### Introduction.

Having explored St. John Chrysostom's teaching concerning marriage and virginitly in Paradise, in this chapter I will attempt to survey his teaching concerning God's redemptive efforts to recover man to his lost dignity, and particularly, to a virginal way of life. Chrysostom sees the history of redemption as an organic whole in which, from the time of the Fall of man, God progressively works to restore man to his God-given dignity, which, as we have seen, includes virginitly. This invincible effort on God's part is expressed in Holy Scripture as the unfolding of a masterful plan, which engages man in the quest for returning to the angelic way of life. This plan mutated and matured as the ages of the covenant unfolded, and as man likewise advanced in spiritual development. God's intentions in each age are evident to the student of the Scriptures, and man's progressive recovery of nobility can be observed, especially as it is worked out in the ever-changing field of human sexuality.<sup>1</sup> The reappearance of virginitly marks the divine Incarnation of Christ, and is evidence of the Kingdom of God on the earth. This chapter will present this topic in two main sections: *Man and Virginitly in the Old Covenant*, and *Man and Virginitly in the New Covenant*.

While there are a few places in the Chrysostomian corpus in which St. John presents his views on this subject in a condensed manner, much of this chapter is an

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<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom thematically traces the progress of redemptive history in more areas than just basic anthropology and human sexuality. One example is his treatment of the unfolding of the liturgical and sacramental cycles of Jewish life which, according to St. John, were developed in the providence of God with increasing clarity to point to Christ. *Incomprehens.*, V.214-229; SC 28, pp. 288, 290. Cf. *Anom.*, VII; PG 48.764.

attempt to establish a coherent picture of the subject through distilling many and various comments scattered throughout Chrysostom's homilies and treatises.

### **Earthly Ambitions: Marriage and Virginitv in the Old Covenant.**

**The Status of Fallen Man.** We have seen thus far that, having broken faith with God, Adam found himself radically transformed.<sup>2</sup> He was bereft of the Holy Spirit. He was divested of his robe of glory. He was stripped of his princely and heavenly raiment, and found himself covered in shame and confusion. He had forfeited God's esteem. He no longer shared the angelic immunity from suffering. His labor became taxing and servile. He was clothed in garments of skin (*χιτώνας δερματίνους*).<sup>3</sup> He found himself torn by powerful passions and impulses, not the least of which was the tyranny of the sexual impulse. He found himself burning in lust.<sup>4</sup> He was oppressed by bodily necessities, and racked by hunger and thirst. The constitution of his nature itself became slothful, and tending toward perdition.<sup>5</sup> The evidence that he indeed was the image of God was lacking. His dominion over the animal kingdom was contested by numerous of his subjects, and his dominion over his own thoughts was severely tried. No longer were the physical "earth and ashes" (*ἐν γῆ καί σποδῶ*)<sup>6</sup> simply a component of man's being, but they had become the *defining element of man's existence*. He had lost the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit. No longer did God enable him to prophesy. His

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<sup>2</sup> One might suggest it is better to say "deformed." See Ch. 2 for a more extended description of this deformation.

<sup>3</sup> Man's "clothing" in all periods of redemption serves as an anthropological and eschatological signpost.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:9.

<sup>5</sup> *Hom. XVIII in Jn.*; PG 59.113.

<sup>6</sup> Job 30:19.



intelligence and perception were drastically dimmed.<sup>7</sup> Death, corruption, and the evil one had taken Adam's place as the new and illegitimate co-regents of the world. Worst of all, Adam no longer spoke with God face to face in friendship. Their communion and mutual friendship was shattered. In this newfound and tragic condition Adam occupied a unique position when compared to all of his posterity. He alone knew what it was like *not* to be subject to all these things. He knew that it did not *need* to be this way.

**Marriage and Virginit**y in the Old Covenant. Marriage was created for chastity, procreation,<sup>8</sup> and partnership (*κοινωνία βίου*).<sup>9</sup> Chrysostom posits that it was in response to Adam's new fallen condition that the Lord God established marriage as we know it.<sup>10</sup> Marriage is for mortals, and is a product and fruit of death. Sin-death-marriage is the equation of three progressive links. The establishment of marriage was designed by God for a redemptive purpose: to tame man's wild and out-of-control nature. "The profit of marriage is to preserve the body pure, and if this be not so, there is no advantage of marriage."<sup>11</sup> Without it, man would be unable to govern his mad sexual

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<sup>7</sup> This "accident" of the Fall caused very severe "brain damage."

<sup>8</sup> "Thou marriest a wife for chastity and procreation." *Hom. XII. in Col.*; PG 62.386; NPNF, p. 318.

<sup>9</sup> *Hom. V in 1 Thess.*; PG 62.426; Cf. *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.135ff. The idea of marriage as a life-long partnership in all areas of life is something that Graeco-Roman culture embraced prior to its Christianization. Treggiari (1991), pp. 9-11. This type of marital life was thought to be rooted in natural law.

<sup>10</sup> Union of man and woman certainly did exist in Paradise, but it was a spiritual and heavenly union of being quite unlike what we earthlings know as marriage, and so utterly devoid of the very things that constitute earthly marriage today, that Chrysostom does not refer to the intimate union of Adam and Eve in Paradise as *marriage*.

<sup>11</sup> *Hom. LIX in Mt.*; PG 58.583; NPNF, p. 371. Chrysostom's emphasis upon the primary purpose of marriage being the ordering of man's wild passions is clear in many places in his corpus. This is contrary to the opinions of many modern scholars who labor in vain to discover more modern and romantic notions in St. John's theology of marriage. See, for example, Roth (1986), p. 15. Roth writes, "Theologians have said too much about the value of virginity and about the sinfulness of the flesh, and too little about the possibility of a transfigured human love. Some hagiography gives the impression that married saints are those who gave up marital relations to live as brother and sister. This is not the way for most of us." It is ironic that Roth says this in an introduction to a select collection of Chrysostom's exegetical homilies Roth has entitled "On Marriage and Family Life," for who more than Chrysostom has had so much to say about virginity? Her comment about this "not being the way for most of us" would elicit, I think, a comment from Chrysostom to the effect of, "That is why 'most of us' will not be numbered among the saints." Cf.

drive, and all manner of fornication and perversion would dominate the world. Man needed a haven and a harbor amidst the violent war with the passions.<sup>12</sup> Woman was just that “harbor” (λιμὴν) and a “potent healing charm” (φάρμακον εὐθυμίας μέγιστον).<sup>13</sup> Man was sexually out-of-control, and the tyranny of lust could be curbed by marriage.<sup>14</sup>

This unbridled rapacity showed itself in many public sexual scandals in the Old Covenant.<sup>15</sup> The descendants of Seth were overcome by their lust.<sup>16</sup> Noah’s generation was so overcome by the pleasures of the flesh that in God’s eyes they lost their status as

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Ford (1996), pp. 53-54. Roth represents a very popular trend in Orthodox theology to romanticize marriage and to sacralize sex. The movement in the Orthodox Church appears to have begun in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with such Russian intellectuals as V. Soloviev and N. Berdyaev, who promoted their philosophical views through the Theological Institute in Paris. Paul Evdokimov became an articulate spokesman of these new views on marriage and sexuality, and through his writings these teachings came to Greece and influenced such a writer as C. Yannaras. English translations of both Evdokimov and Yannaras have had a great influence on English-speaking Orthodox who have taken up the cause, such as Sherrard (1976), and Chrysavgis (1996), who calls sex a “way of transfiguration,” “a glorification of God,” and a means of imparting saving grace. p. 4. It is amazing how an Orthodox theologian can turn the entire tradition on its head! Now more sex equals more grace! That should be popular! He goes on to say that St. Paul had a “poor view” of marriage and women, and so do monks, for that matter! *Ibid.*, p. 3. Generally these writers not only glorified sexual relations, likening the marriage bed to a sacred altar, but erroneously identified human and divine eros, attacked the Church’s canons on sexuality as expressions of Patristic psychopathology, and decried any teaching that placed a central emphasis upon procreation in marriage. For more on this aberrant strain in Orthodoxy see Rantosavlievich (1977). It should be noted that, after the publication of Rantosavlievich’s article, C. Yannaras drastically revised his opinions, which were published in his 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition of *The Freedom of Morality*. It is not coincidental that in this milieu a literal hermeneutic is often applied to King Solomon’s *Song of Songs*. The Fathers never interpreted the *Song of Songs* as a glorification of sex, except for Theodore of Mopsuestia, and for this reason he rejected the book outright as unholy, Louth (1993), p. 235. For an excellent text shattering the contemporary myth of ancient Greek Eros and demonstrating how far modern sentimental notions of sexuality are from ancient pagan Greek notions see Thornton (1997). For a text that accomplishes a similar task and more, but covering Slavic Christianity rather than Greek paganism, see Levin (1989). Brundage (1987) covers Western Christendom, but writes “I have not attempted to deal with the sexual beliefs and laws of Eastern Christendom,” p. 4. We await a scholarly publication of this kind for Greek Byzantine Christianity.

<sup>12</sup> *Virg.*, XXVII.1.2-5; SC 125, p. 176.

<sup>13</sup> *Hom. XXVI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.223; NPNF, p. 153. In another place Chrysostom says that God planted within our natures a “love charm”/ φιλτρον that binds man and woman to love each other. *Hom. II in Eph.*; PG 62.20. Chrysostom may be drawing here on St. Clement of Alexandria who uses the same imagery, see Ch. 1, p. 26, fn. 100.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 62.20.

<sup>15</sup> Tertullian writes that mankind in Adam had a “vicious nature, easily indulging concupiscence after whatever it had seen to be attractive to the sight, and looking back at the lower things, and checking its itching with fig leaves. Universally inherent was the virus of lust.” *La Pudicité*, VI.15.59-64; SC 394, p. 172; ANF, p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> *Hom. XXII in Gen.*; PG 53.189. Lust is here measured by St. John by the intent of intercourse. They were sexually active, not out of desire for a family, but because of lusting over comely figures.

human beings.<sup>17</sup> Marriage was created to excise such rapacity from man's nature through containment. Marriage was allowed in case one should exceed proper limits in admiring the bloom of youth and thus exciting passion.<sup>18</sup> Thus marriage was established following the Fall of man. It possessed a certain honor for what it was, but it in no way actually produced sanctity. This it was not able to do.<sup>19</sup> Marriage was a solemn thing, that through which God "recruits our race" and which is the source of numberless blessings, not the least of which is its serving as a "barrier against uncleanness." "Marriage is not holiness, but marriage preserves the holiness which proceeds from Faith (*Οὐχ ὁ γάμος ἁγιασμός, ἀλλ' ὁ γάμος τηρεῖ τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως ἁγιασμόν*)...marriage is honorable, not holy (*Ὁ γὰρ γάμος τίμιος, οὐχ ἅγιος*). Marriage is pure: it does not however give holiness (*καθαρὸς ὁ γάμος, οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἁγιωσύνην παρέχει*), except by forbidding the defilement of that holiness which has been given by our Faith" (*ἢ τὸ κωλῆειν τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως δοθεῖσαν μὴ μολύειν*).<sup>20</sup> This function, however, is a certain nobility itself, which must not

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Chrysostom uses *ἐπιθυμία* in both cases. These men should have had *ἐπιθυμία* for *παιδοποιία*, but instead that had it for *εὐμορφία*.

<sup>17</sup> *Hom. XXIII in Gen.*; PG 53.201. St. Ephrem notes, however, that Noah preserved his virginity for 500 years. He also notes that the Ark was the temporary restoration of Paradise where wolves and lambs dwelt in peace and even the animals refrained from sexual intercourse. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 134. Cf. McVey (1989), *Hymn 28 On the Nativity*, p. 215. Tertullian argued previously that Paradise appeared in the Ark by the fact that all the animals entered the Ark in monogamous pairs. *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, IV.5.38-47; SC 343, pp. 146, 148.

<sup>18</sup> *Exp. in Ps. XLIII*; PG 55.181. The proper limit, according to Chrysostom, in admiring this beauty is to do so up to the point of praising the Creator of such beauty but no further.

<sup>19</sup> Though not sanctity-producing, marriage cannot be blamed for the falls of men. "Many have perished in marriage, as Samson, yet not from marriage, but from their own deliberate choice." *Hom. XII in Phil.*; PG 62.274; NPNF, p. 241. "And if any persons have been hindered by the marriage state, let them know that marriage is not the hindrance, but their purpose which made an ill use of marriage." *Hom. VII in Heb.*; PG 63.68; NPNF, p. 402.

<sup>20</sup> *Hom. XXX in Heb.*; PG 63.210; NPNF, p. 504. This is an important text in discerning Chrysostom's theology of marriage since it was preached at the end of his life and only published posthumously. It is popular in modern Chrysostom scholarship to suggest that Chrysostom experienced a radical change in his thinking on marriage, and came to embrace a more modern notion of marriage as holiness and sex as love. This text, among others, brings this position into serious question. Note also here that Chrysostom roots the holiness of the individual believer in the faith itself. In Homily 10 he is more explicit saying, "Every believer is a saint in that he is a believer. Though he live in the world he is a saint...the faith makes the holiness." *Ibid.*, *Hom. X*; PG 63.87

be undermined.<sup>21</sup> Marriage does not have the power to make saints, but virginity does.<sup>22</sup> Yet certainly there are married saints.<sup>23</sup> For these reasons, because of its efficacy, Satan attacked it.<sup>24</sup>

Though marriage was not the origin and cause of righteousness, nevertheless we see many examples of married persons in the Old Covenant, who attained to righteousness. The holy Enoch was not hindered by marriage.<sup>25</sup>

It should be noted that, for Chrysostom, all of the fallen human condition, including marriage, was graciously designed by God to draw man back to communion with Himself. The radical changes and losses man incurred at the Fall were designed to create a great sense of discontent inside of man, which would then serve as inner motivation in man's struggle to lift himself out of the mire.<sup>26</sup>

Righteous marriage in the Old Covenant was something of a spiritual feat, not only because of man's fallen condition, but also due to the nascent redemptive epoch in which fallen man found himself. It was not easy for man in his young and infantile condition,<sup>27</sup> having so recently fallen, to contain himself within the bounds of God-

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<sup>21</sup> *Hom.. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.487.

<sup>22</sup> *Virg.*, XXX.2.19-21; SC 125, p. 190.

<sup>23</sup> Chrysostom acknowledges that one might even attempt to argue that marriage is the superior state since the hope of pious virgins is to be placed in the bosom of Abraham, a married man. Yet, according to Chrysostom, it would be mistaken to conclude from this that marriage is equal or superior to virginity.

<sup>24</sup> *Hom.. XII in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.104.

<sup>25</sup> "Let both men and women listen and learn about the just man's virtue, and not consider marriage to be an obstacle to pleasing God...neither marriage nor bringing up children nor anything else will be able to stand in the way of our being pleasing to God...Since, however, family life not only offers us no obstacle to wisdom in God's eyes as long as we are prepared to be on our guard, but even brings us much encouragement and calms the tumult of our natural tendencies, not allowing the billows to surge but constantly ensuring that the bark dock safely in the harbor, consequently he granted the human race the consolation that comes from this source...No hindrance came to this good man, did it, from intercourse with his wife or family cares?" *Hom.. XXI in Gen.*; PG 53.179; Hill (1990), pp. 59-60.

<sup>26</sup> *Hom.. IX in Gen.*; PG 53.79. This universal human quest for greatness need not be seen always as an issue of indefensible human pride, but of a guttural expression of man's memory of his original state. As such, it needs not to be eradicated but directed. Our Savior did not say, "Seek not," but, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (St. Matt. 6:33).

<sup>27</sup> *Virg.*, LXXXIV.1.15; SC 125, p. 390.

ordained marriage, since before Christ's coming the body of man was an "easy prey" for the passions. Old Covenant man was without flesh-mortifying Holy Baptism and the divine assistance of the Pentecostal indwelling of the Spirit, and so was weak in the face of temptation.

"Our body, before Christ's coming, was an easy prey to the assaults of sin (εὐχείρωτον ἦν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ). For after death a great swarm of passions entered also. And for this cause it was not lightsome (σφόδρα κοῦφον) for running the race of virtue. For there was no Spirit present to assist, nor any baptism to mortify. But as some horse that answereth not the rein, it ran indeed, but made frequent slips, the Law meanwhile announcing what was to be done and what not, yet not conveying into those in the race anything over and above exhortation by means of words."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, God, in His condescension and love for man, established a standard that was both accomplishable in this "first age" (ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις χρόνοις)<sup>29</sup> and redemptive, in so far as it furthered the recovery of man's primal dignity. Just how condescending the Almighty was to His Old Covenant people is described by Chrysostom,

"For he did not draw them to the highest kind of conversation, but allowed them to enjoy wealth, and did not forbid having several wives, and to gratify anger in a just cause, and to make use of luxury within bounds. And so great was this condescension, that the written Law (τὸν γραπτὸν) even required less than the law of nature (ὁ φυσικὸς νόμος). For the law of nature ordered one man to associate with one woman throughout...They therefore who lived under the old dispensation had no hardship done them by so moderate a system of laws being imposed upon them."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Hom. XI in Rom.*; PG 60.487-488; NPNF, p. 411. Tertullian applied this line of reasoning to the subject of fasting, arguing that God allowed carnivorous eating to Noah and his descendants since Adam and Eve had failed so miserably even with a single apple! Any strict dietary fasting would have been *simply too much* for man at the time. *De Ieiunio*, IV.19-22; CCSL II, p. 1260.

<sup>29</sup> *Virg.*, LXXXIV.1.14; SC 125, p. 390.

<sup>30</sup> *Hom. XIII in Rom.*; PG 60.512; NPNF p. 431. Here we see Chrysostom utilize a Stoic conception of the natural law, which included the notion of monogamy. The question of the influence of Stoicism upon Chrysostom is of great interest. It is clear that in regards to ethics he, like his ecclesiastical contemporaries, simply took for granted many Stoic principles such as virtue being the only good, the principle that no one can be harmed who does not harm himself, etc. On this last principle Chrysostom wrote a small text at the end of his life. At many points the reader does not know if he is reading Chrysostom, or perhaps Seneca or

**The Progress of Redemption and God's Condescension.** God's definition of perfection for man would change as man matured.<sup>31</sup> Old Testament perfection has become imperfect.<sup>32</sup> In the New Covenant believers must achieve a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees. Preaching from the life of the Old Testament priest Eli, on one of his favorite themes, the need for the careful upbringing of children, Chrysostom stated that we must ethically surpass Eli because the times in which he lived did not require much perfection, and our times require much greater philosophy.<sup>33</sup> This primitive stage in man's spiritual development required the Lord God to tailor all instruction and ethical requirements accordingly. This is the reason that the Almighty did not speak of His Son too often or too explicitly in the Old Covenant. Israel had just escaped polytheism and would have fallen quickly back into it if the Father had revealed much about His co-eternal Son.<sup>34</sup> This is also the reason the Lord God allowed His people to make animal sacrifices.<sup>35</sup> God made this "great condescension" because the Jews were "choking in their mad yearning for sacrifices. He saw that they were ready to

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Cicero. Colish's work (1985) on the Stoic tradition from antiquity to the early middle ages is comprehensive and erudite, but only for the Latin tradition. Nevertheless, in the early centuries East and West were so intermingled that her work is helpful for the Greek Fathers. The small treatise by Verbeke (1983) does give some attention to the Greek Fathers, and to the abiding influence of Stoicism in late antiquity even when Neoplatonism become dominant. He highlights the Stoic doctrines of "internal liberation," and the equality of all humans in relationship to virtue, as particularly attractive to Christian thinkers, p.4ff. He notes that the Stoic notion of impassibility was adopted by Chrysostom, p. 48, fn. 16. Seneca's younger Stoic contemporary, Musonius Rufus was influential in the area of marital ethics due to his treatise on the subject. Chrysostom shares many themes with Rufus, especially the latter's description of marriage and the family as a "school of virtue." Lutz (1947), no. 13-15, pp. 88-96. Chrysostom's influential contemporary, Nemesius of Emesa, was deeply influenced by Stoicism, and calls the Stoics the "wisest among the Greeks." *Nat. Hom.*, 142; PG 40.749; Telfer (1955), p. 403.

<sup>31</sup> *Virg.*, LXXXIII.1.16-17; SC 125, p. 388.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXIII, 2.21; SC 125, p. 388.

<sup>33</sup> *Oppugn.*, III; PG 47.353.

<sup>34</sup> *Incomprehens.*, V.214-229; SC 28, pp. 288, 290.

<sup>35</sup> By the quick demise of the sacrificial system God showed not only that He never wanted (only allowed) animal sacrifice, but also that it was very beneath the dignity of His majesty. *Is. Interp.*, 1.5.11-13; SC 304, p. 66.

go over to the idols if they were deprived of animal sacrifices...and so He let them.”<sup>36</sup> This under-developed soul in man explains much of the reason why hatred of enemies was tolerated in the Old Covenant, and forbidden in the New.<sup>37</sup> Oath-taking was permitted in the Old Covenant along the same lines. Such was the spiritual immaturity of man, but now the things of virtue have advanced (ἐπέδωκε τὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς).<sup>38</sup> The internal spiritual chaos of mankind expressed itself before the Incarnation in the constant external warfare that consumed the entire earth.<sup>39</sup> Prior to the Incarnation men were violent, without written and natural law, or a settled order.<sup>40</sup> It was Old Covenant man’s “dullness of thinking,” “recent conversion from idols,” and “frailty” that led God to permit the use of musical instruments in worship. He allowed this in order to “temper their spirits” and to “soften the heart” of Old Testament Israel’s resistance.<sup>41</sup> No aspect of Old Covenant life went untouched by expressions of God’s exceeding condescension, making allowances in every area that were not expressions of His perfect will.<sup>42</sup>

Israel’s spiritual immaturity is the rationale behind God’s primarily inspiring and motivating His people by the promise of *earthly blessings*.

“It was especially when the majority of people were handicapped by limitations that he gave them these material goods. He led the Jewish

<sup>36</sup> *Jud.* IV; PG 48.880; Harkins (1977), p. 86.

<sup>37</sup> *Exp. in Ps. CXXXVII*; PG 55.407. Much of the commentary on this psalm is dedicated to explaining the difference between an Old Testament and a New Testament approach to one’s enemies.

<sup>38</sup> *Hom. XVII in Mt.*; PG 57.261.

<sup>39</sup> The Incarnation, however, has filled the world with peace in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah that men shall beat their swords into ploughs. *Exp. in Ps. XLV*; PG 55.207. “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, *and on earth peace, good will toward men.*” St. Luke 2: 13-14.

<sup>40</sup> *Hom. V in Tit.*; PG 62.692.

<sup>41</sup> *Exp. in Ps. CL*; PG 55.497; Hill (1998), pp. 372-3.

<sup>42</sup> Tertullian writes of the Old Covenant, “There were concubines in those days. But although the Church did come in figuratively in the synagogue, yet it was necessary to institute certain things which should afterward deserve to be lopped off or modified...by means of the wide licence of those days, materials for subsequent emendations were furnished beforehand, of which materials the Lord by His Gospel, and then the Apostle in the last days of the Jewish age, either cut off the redundancies or regulated the disorders.” *La Son Épouse*, II.2.9-3.13, 4.17-21; SC 273, p. 96; ANF, p. 40.

people, at any rate, along such a way of living. Wealth abounded for them, remember, life was lengthened into old age, all diseases were absent; for those believing in God there was granted destruction of enemies, profound peace, trophies and victories, the blessing of large families, and everything of this kind. But when our Lord Jesus Christ came calling us to heaven and urging us to spurn the here and now (*τῶν ἐνταῦθα πείδων καταφρονεῖν*), encouraging the love of those other goods, and detaching us from things of this life (*ἀποσχίζων ἡμᾶς τῶν βιωτικῶν*), it was appropriate for these things to be reduced, and all riches to be found instead in those other things, now that we had become perfect. In the case of children, too, their parents provide them when still small with such things as footwear and clothing, gold trinkets and armlets; but when they grow up, they take these things from them and give them other things of greater importance, reputation in public life, prominence in high society, confidence in the imperial court, offices and influence, thus drawing them away from childish ambition. That is exactly what God did: he led us away from those trifling and childish things, and promised us the things of heaven. So do not pine for what is passing and fleeting, and let not your spirit be stunted.”<sup>43</sup>

Being spiritual infants God led His people from the promise of material things as if they were tiny tots.<sup>44</sup> Taking a long-term approach to man’s recovery the Lord God not only held out many earthly incentives for righteousness, but made certain calculated allowances for man both for divorce and polygamy that He would later abolish. The “Jews rejected one wife and took another because of their limitations.”<sup>45</sup> These allowances are not expressions of God’s will for man, but rather are evidence of His condescension, in that the Lord viewed the Old Covenant as a long period<sup>46</sup> of training during which man would gradually approach, once more, God’s original intention. The old Law did not “forbid delicacy” nor did it stigmatize the enjoyment of earthly pleasure as superfluous and vain. Even so it was possible for the pious in the Old Covenant to

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<sup>43</sup> *Exp. in Ps. IV*; PG 55.55; Hill (1998), pp. 65-66.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, CXXVII; PG 55.370.

<sup>45</sup> A primary limitation was their being so prone to polytheism. *Ibid.*, CIX; PG 55.266. God was correcting the limitations of each generation by creating laws about food requirements, and required places of prayer, none of which were laws from the beginning.

<sup>46</sup> *Virg.*, XVII.1.15; SC 125, p. 150.



recognize these things as “profitless” and “total emptiness.”<sup>47</sup> In such a context of permissiveness marriage and its earthly trappings were highly esteemed.

**Virginity in the Old Covenant.** Perpetual virginity in the Old Covenant was neither practiced nor known.<sup>48</sup> It was simply beyond man’s reach.<sup>49</sup> In order for it to be re-established on the earth God needed to bring His Kingdom close to man, and thus change man.<sup>50</sup> As the Old Covenant history progressed we do see a number of Holy Prophets who embraced lives of virginity and in their persons foreshadowed the coming age. They were essentially proto-monks. They foreshadowed and prophesied in their persons the return of virginal life under the New Covenant. Chrysostom does not hesitate to call the Holy Prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah,<sup>51</sup> “monks” (*μοναχοί*), and to demonstrate that they were more powerful than any earthly potentate, mightier than death, and the “common saviors of the earth.”<sup>52</sup> These ancient virgins are especially “worth beatifying” because they practiced a height of virtue at a time when no one was

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<sup>47</sup> *Subintr.*; PG 47.513; Shore (1983), p. 202.

<sup>48</sup> The greatness of virginity is demonstrated in that the righteous of the Old Covenant did not practice it. *Hom. LXXVIII in Mt.*; PG 58.711. Though consecrated celibacy was not practiced in the Old Covenant, a memory of that life in the Garden remained. St. Ephrem says virginity was despised in Zion. McVey (1989), *Hymn 19 On the Nativity*, p. 168.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. For the relevant and conflicting opinions of other Fathers concerning the existence of pre-Christian consecrated virginity see fn. 279 in Ch. 1.

<sup>50</sup> “Among the ancients, if any were found practicing virginity, it was quite astonishing. But now the thing is scattered over every part of the world.” *Hom. XII in Rom.*; PG 60.499; NPNF, p. 420.

<sup>51</sup> St. John Cassian notes Elijah, Jeremiah and Daniel as Old Testament virgins. *De Institutis Coenobiorum VI*, III.18-19; CSEL XVII, p. 117. Ramsey (2000) notes that Jeremiah’s virginity was based on Jeremiah 16:2 and is mentioned by St. Jerome in his *Against Jovinianus*, p. 164. St. Jerome, who was a contemporary of St. John Chrysostom and lived for a short time in Antioch while Chrysostom was there, wrote extensively on the subject of marriage and virginity. Many of his themes are intimately similar to those of Chrysostom who wrote his treatise on virginity prior to St. Jerome’s work. It would be profitable to explore the nature of the dependence of Jerome upon Chrysostom. For an extensive description of St. Jerome’s views see the dissertation of Dumm (1961).

<sup>52</sup> *Comp.*; PG 47.391; Hunter (1988), p. 74. The parallel between certain Old Testament prophets and monastics of the New Covenant can be pushed too far, for the Prophet Isaiah was married and had relations with his wife (Isa. 8). Chrysostom is careful in his use of the Old Testament for typological purposes. He shows his flexibility in referring to them, by not only describing them as proto-monks, but as proto-types of righteous married folk, whose virtue was not hampered by wedlock. The prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Moses all had both wives and households and this did not hamper their virtue. *Hom. LV in Mt.*; PG 58.548.

practicing it. They traveled alone, and did not enjoy the encouragement of fellowship, which is an immense help in the pursuit of godliness.<sup>53</sup>

**Polygamy in the Old Covenant.** One of the early dispensations God made to man was to allow him to marry more than one wife.<sup>54</sup> Polygamy began in the life of an accursed man: Lamech. It was not a practice from the beginning. It became common, however, even among the righteous. The greatness of Abraham, however, was not due to his marriage but to his character. His marriage too was stained by polygamy, instigated by his wife Sarah. It was enough if man would refrain from marrying certain near relatives.<sup>55</sup> Thus God focused upon regulating marriage in this way. Surrounded by pagan peoples such as the Persians,<sup>56</sup> who did not even refrain from intercourse with their own mothers,<sup>57</sup> it was sufficient for Israel to follow the Mosaic proscriptions against marriage and sex within varying degrees of relations (Lev. 18).<sup>58</sup> Marriage between kin was also forbidden<sup>59</sup> as a device designed to promote the unity of the human race, uniting various clans together via a single marriage, and assuring the mutual integration of various human races.<sup>60</sup> If one thought that marriage was somehow sanctity-producing then one might easily come to believe that two wives were better than one, and this is

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<sup>53</sup> *Exp. in Ps. XI*; PG 55.144.

<sup>54</sup> *Hom. X in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.547.

<sup>55</sup> Initially, not even this proscription prevailed since it was necessary for brothers and sisters to marry in order to populate the earth sufficiently so that there were more marital options. *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.489.

<sup>56</sup> The Greeks were just as poor, being addicted as they were to pederasty. *Hom. V in Tit.*; PG 62.693.

<sup>57</sup> *Hom. VII in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.451. This was a common Christian criticism. It appears as early as Tertullian who writes that not only the Persians but the Macedonians also had illicit intercourse with their mothers. He claims Ctesias as his source. *Apologeticum*.IX.16.73-74; CCSL I, p. 104. Cf. *Ad Nationes*. I.XVI.4.26-28; CCSL I, p. 34.

<sup>58</sup> Some Greek pagan notions of marriage were not much better. Chrysostom decries Plato for arguing to make women common to all men. This was nothing other than a direct frontal assault on the institution of marriage itself by Plato.

<sup>59</sup> After, that is, the initial multiplication following Adam's creation at which time the marriage of kin was necessary.

<sup>60</sup> *Hom. XXXIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.290.

manifestly untrue.<sup>61</sup> Polygamy, though evil, was tolerated by God even in the lives of His most devoted Old Covenant servants.<sup>62</sup> “He who had two wives was not unclean, and David, who had many wives, was not unclean. But when he had one unlawfully, he became unclean.”<sup>63</sup> Polygamy was also permitted because the human race was young and needed to multiply.<sup>64</sup>

**Sexual Intercourse and Procreation in the Old Covenant.** As marriage itself originated post-Fall, so did sexual intercourse and procreation as we know it.<sup>65</sup> Sexual intercourse, in fact, was an expression of mankind’s new coarseness and bestial nature. Human copulation was learned from the animals themselves. Though it is not paradisaical, nevertheless copulation is meant to be dignified.<sup>66</sup> It was not “illicit”<sup>67</sup> in marriage, but it was carnal. In one and the same homily Chrysostom argues that marital sex is not “altogether pure” (*οὐ σφόδρα καθαρὸν*), and so, according to the Scriptures, a wife who had borne a child was unclean, *and* that uncleanness is not connected to the sexual act itself

<sup>61</sup> *Virg.*, XV.2.23-30; SC 125, p. 146. St. Ephrem the Syrian found a way to pedagogically utilize even the most flagrant polygamous indulgences: that of King Solomon with his 1000 wives and concubines. “King Solomon took fully a thousand wives- a very licentious thing! Our glorious Lord made disciples of myriads of myriads of virgins- a powerful, splendid thing!” McVey (1989), *Hymn 25 On Virginity*, p. 374.

<sup>62</sup> *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.489. Though God permitted polygamy amongst many of His Old Covenant righteous, it was by no means practiced by all the righteous. Tertullian points out Old Testament monogamists such as Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and Joshua. *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*, VI.4.41-50; SC 343, p. 156. St. Ephrem also writes, “If Laban had not withheld Rachel from Jacob...he would not have been persuaded to work for her for seven days [let alone seven years], not because she was ugly but because he hated to be married to two wives.” McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 176.

<sup>63</sup> *Hom. III in Tit.*; PG 62.682; NPNF, p. 531.

<sup>64</sup> *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.489. Tertullian writes, “Laxity is always allowed to the beginning of things. The reason why any one plants a wood and lets it grow, is that at his own time he may cut it. The wood was the old order, which is being pruned down by the new Gospel, in which withal, ‘the axe has been laid at the roots.’ *Exhortation a la Chasteté*, VI.2.18-3.21; SC 319, p. 90; ANF, p. 54.

<sup>65</sup> Tertullian describes the Fall of man as the seduction of Eve by the serpent, who sowed his evil word in her ear. Eve “conceived” in Paradise and brought forth *diabolum fratricidam*. *De Carne Christi*, XVII.6.38-41; CCSL II, p. 905.

<sup>66</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.388.

<sup>67</sup> Nowhere in the Old Covenant do we see marital intercourse censored. Rather, it was the various forms of “illicit” intercourse that provoked outbursts of God’s wrath such as happened in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. *Virg.*, XVIII.3-13; SC 125, p. 156. St. Ephrem writes, “Intercourse is not defiled, nor is marriage accursed.” McVey (1989), *Hymn 28 On the Nativity*, p. 215.

but an improper use of it. A fornicator is not unclean because he had sex, but because he had sex with someone who was not his wife.<sup>68</sup>

Following the Fall women were given a certain “sexual power over men,” which served to protect women from being easily cast off by men who now lorded over them.<sup>69</sup> A woman’s “beauty” became for man the “greatest snare.”<sup>70</sup> The unity of husbands and wives is preserved by God granting to man the stronger sexual desire. This is why the Scripture reads, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife.”<sup>71</sup> It is the man who takes the initiative. The stronger desire in the man was God’s design in order, by the tyranny of this erotic love (τῆ τυραννίδι τούτου τοῦ ἔρωτος), to bend down (κατακάμψη) the superior man and subject (ὑποτάξη) him to the weaker party.<sup>72</sup> God honored the man with rule, and armed the woman with the power of sexual allurements.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the woman is able to practice chastity more easily than the man because she has “no such strong flame disturbing her.”<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps the best example of marriage in the Old Covenant comes from the life of the Holy Patriarch Abraham.<sup>75</sup> His sexual relations were honorable and without passion.<sup>76</sup> The life of the Holy Patriarch Abraham and all the righteous married of the

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<sup>68</sup> *Hom. III in Tit.*; PG 62.682. Chrysostom prefaces his comments by saying to his congregation, “You see how many ways of uncleanness there are.” *Ibid.*, 681.

<sup>69</sup> *Subintr.*; PG 47.502. St. Ephrem the Syrian writes that Eve was guilty herself of seeking this dominion over Adam. “She hastened to eat before her husband that she might become head over her head, that she might become the one to give the command to that one by whom she was to be commanded and that she might be older in divinity than that one who was older than she in humanity.” McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 113.

<sup>70</sup> Chrysostom refines this statement by saying, “Not the beauty of woman, but unbridled gazing.” *Stat. Hom. XV*; PG 49.158.

<sup>71</sup> Genesis 2:24.

<sup>72</sup> *Hom. XXXIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.289.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 61.291.

<sup>74</sup> *Hom. X in 2 Tim.*; PG 62.659; NPNF, p. 516.

<sup>75</sup> Chrysostom has a deep love for the Patriarch Abraham, which is expressed in his literary devotion to Abraham evidenced throughout his corpus.

<sup>76</sup> *Hom. XXXVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.356-357.

Old Covenant demonstrates that sex provided no fundamental hindrance to spiritual life.<sup>77</sup> After the Patriarch received his son he ceased sleeping with his wife (*μετὰ τὸ παιδοποιῆσαι, οὐκέτι ὠμίλησε τῇ γυναικί*).<sup>78</sup> Abraham married only late in life, after the “flower of youth” had passed, showing both his great sexual restraint and that he was not marrying for the sake of passion (*δεικνύς ὅτι οὐ πάθους ἔνεκεν τοῦτο ἐποίει*) but only on account of God’s promise (*ἀλλὰ ὑπηρετούμενος τῇ ἐπαγγελίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ*).<sup>79</sup> The Patriarch Jacob demonstrated that even Old Testament believers could exercise exceedingly great sexual restraint. He patiently waited for a wife for 14 years, and for this display of patience God rewarded him with speedy and abundant procreating.<sup>80</sup>

Procreation through the sex act was, according to St. John, the greatest consolation to fallen man. It offered some small beachhead against the encroachment of death. Because procreation was such a profound blessing, which was viewed by Israel as a victory against death and as being central to the coming restoration of the world through the Messiah, sterility and barrenness were considered curses from God. Despite this we have numerous Old Covenant examples of pious women afflicted with barrenness. On a number of occasions St. John addressed his congregation concerning this reality to explain that these incidents were providential foreshadowings of the Virgin Birth. Not only did the cases of barrenness demonstrate that God is involved miraculously in every conception, and that birth is not merely a biological reality, but

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<sup>77</sup> *Hom. XXI in Gen.*; PG 53.183.

<sup>78</sup> *Hom. XXIV in Heb.*; PG 63.168. St. Ephrem argues that this is the very thing that Hagar feared Abraham would do after she had conceived Ishmael. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 156.

<sup>79</sup> *Hom. XXIV in Heb.*; PG 63.168. St. Ephrem the Syrian extols not only Abraham but Sarah also saying that even in her old age she preserved her modesty, which was demonstrated by her only coming to the “door of the tent” when the three angelic visitors approached. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 156.

<sup>80</sup> *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.493.

also these barren women prepared the world to accept the miracle of a birth without a father.<sup>81</sup>

Sexual intercourse is given for the procreation of children.<sup>82</sup> The essential unity between sexual intercourse and procreation is everywhere assumed by Chrysostom.<sup>83</sup> This assumption is evidenced, for example, in St. John's explanation of the sin of Sodom. Rather than focusing only on the functional "unnaturalness" of the sex of the Sodomites, Chrysostom writes, "Sodom devised a *barren intercourse* (μίξιν ἄγονον), not having for its end the procreation of children (οὐκ εἰς παιδοποιῖαν τελευτῶσαν), so did God bring on them such a punishment, as made the womb of the land even barren, and destitute of all fruits."<sup>84</sup> And again, God hath annexed desire for sex to procreation (τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τῶν σωματῶν ἐνέδηκε ταῖς παιδοποιίας).<sup>85</sup> On the contrary, it could be said of the marital intercourse between the Holy Patriarch Abraham and Righteous Sarah that, "their one concern was the heir not their pleasure."<sup>86</sup> Carnal desire was imparted from the first as an inducement to insure the increase of the race.<sup>87</sup> St. John calls the bridal-chamber the "chamber of procreation" (τὸ ταμιεῖον τῆς γενέσεως).<sup>88</sup> The necessary end of desire is procreation.<sup>89</sup> Desire is implanted by God for the "rearing of families."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See Ch. 2 for extensive documentation.

<sup>82</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.387.

<sup>83</sup> This is a basic Patristic assumption, though found in various Fathers with varying degrees of emphasis.

<sup>84</sup> *Stat. Hom. XIX*; PG 49.191; NPNF, p. 467.

<sup>85</sup> *Hom. LXXXV in Jn.*; PG 59.462.

<sup>86</sup> *Hom. XXXVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.356. St. John calls the Patriarch Abraham in this homily a "man of steel" (ἀδάμας) and a "noble athlete of God" (γενναῖος ἀθλητῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ). Readers of Chrysostom might suggest that fidelity to his sexual ethic demands such a *superman*.

<sup>87</sup> *Hom. XVII in Mt.*; PG 57.256.

<sup>88</sup> *Hom. XXIV in Rom.*; PG 60.626. This may, in fact, be a reference to the womb and not to the bridal chamber.

<sup>89</sup> *Hom. XXIV in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.563.

<sup>90</sup> *Comm. In Gal. V*; PG 61.669; NPNF, p. 39. Similar quotes could be multiplied, see *Hom. II in Eph.*; PG 62.20.

## Heavenly Acquisitions: Marriage and Virginity in the New Covenant.

**Virginity in the New Covenant.** God delayed the restoration of virginity in order to avoid a disastrous result similar to a mother pulling away her milk from a nursing infant and introducing a new and tougher diet. Though virginity was the case at the beginning and prior to marriage, for the above reason it was not reintroduced to mankind until the appropriate time.<sup>91</sup> As the Old Covenant drew to a close God's redemptive plan for mankind had advanced and had prepared mankind for a radical transformation. Signposts of this spiritual evolution appeared in the presence of St. John the Baptist and the Holy Virgin Mary.<sup>92</sup> Not coincidentally both of them were unmarried, life-long virgins. The spiritual evolution of human sexuality had reached a significant turning point. In these two great saints we see the initial flowering of the radical change that would take place in man with the Incarnation of the Son of God. When the Son of God became Man, no longer were the old conceptions of perfection relevant.<sup>93</sup> God ceased to lead His people by the promise of earthly blessing. In the past God rewarded the faithful

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<sup>91</sup> *Virg.*, XVII.5.58-75; SC 125, p. 154.

<sup>92</sup> Chrysostom lived in the midst of much debate in the Church concerning a proper theological understanding of the person and role of the Holy Virgin Mary. He did not employ the erroneous theological term "Christotokos" promoted by Theodore of Mopsuestia. Yet, in his exegesis of a number of Gospel pericopes involving the Virgin he presents interpretations, apparently drawing on Origen, that contain what later Christians would judge sub-Christian Marian conceptions. Following the Council of Ephesus (A. D. 431) these interpretations would disappear. To associate Chrysostom with some of his close colleagues, such as Diodoros and Theodore of Mopsuestia, in Christological error, would be a mistake. Chrysostom showed himself immensely adept and theologically competent on the complex Christological issues of his time. Cf. Lawrenz (1989), pp. 148-153; Grillmeier (1965), pp. 417-421. St. Athanasios writes, "Mary remained in virginity forever... Mary, the bearer of God, remains a virgin so that she might be a pattern for everyone coming after her. If a woman desires to remain a virgin and bride of Christ, she can look to her life and imitate it." Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 280.

<sup>93</sup> "But in truth after that the Lord, coming in our flesh, joined together the Godhead and flesh without any confusion or mixture, then the practice of the life of heaven spreading throughout the world was implanted in human bodies." St. Ambrose, *De Virg.* I.3.13; PL 16.192; NPNF, p. 365.

with children and prosperity, but now the reward is heaven itself.<sup>94</sup> The promise in the Old Covenant was *long life*, but now the promise is *eternal life*.<sup>95</sup> St. Paul could now assert that believers have been “blessed with every *spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places in Christ.”<sup>96</sup> These are spiritual blessings (*ευλογίαι πνευματικάί*) in distinction from those that are carnal and Jewish. Prior to the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, the Lord God could not motivate His people to ethical magnanimity based on heavenly reward because the fearsome face of death remained, staring upon the faithful, nor had death’s “brazen gates yet been broken, and its edge had not yet been blunted.”<sup>97</sup>

Man progressed to a much higher degree, when Jesus brought with Him His Kingdom. When Christ came to earth He found our bodies with many lame limbs, weak and failing, and He made them perfect, restoring them to their healthy state.<sup>98</sup> In the same way as He perfected and completed our bodies so He did to the Law itself. He corrected, molded and greatly improved it. The imperfection of the Law was not of its own nature, but rather came into being with the passage of time. As man matured by his advances in virtue the Law became progressively imperfect, in the same way that the

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<sup>94</sup> *Exp. in Ps. CXXVII*; PG 55.370. It should be noted that St. Paul in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians* encourages virginity using this Old Testament emphasis on earthly realities. By suggesting virginity as a means to *avoid* the difficulties of earthly marriage St. Paul was relating to the Corinthians as though they were sub-Christian. No wonder that *before* speaking to them about virginity and marriage (1 Cor. 7) he first told them that he could not speak to them as to spiritual persons but as to carnal babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-2). St. Paul’s teacher, Christ Himself, did not approach the subject of virginity this way, but rather “promised the kingdom of heaven.” Although in the pronouncing of His *beatitudes* Christ did mingle earthly rewards with heavenly, according to St. John. *Hom. XV in Mt.*; PG 57.223.

<sup>95</sup> *Hom. XLVII in Jn.*; PG 59.264.

<sup>96</sup> Ephesians 1:3. *Hom. I in Eph.*; PG 62.11.

<sup>97</sup> *Hom. XXXII in Gen.*; PG 53.299; Hill (1990), p. 266. It was this reality that death had not yet been slain that led Chrysostom to often encourage his readers not to judge the Old Testament righteous for excessive mourning or other spiritual practices inappropriate to the New Covenant. *Hom. LXVII in Gen.*; PG 54.577.

<sup>98</sup> *Anom. A*; PG 48.789.



weapons used to train a child became superfluous when the child becomes a grown man.<sup>99</sup>

New Testament Law is a more demanding ethical code and uses the Old Testament with a deeper application.<sup>100</sup> Religious laws in the New Covenant are thus much stricter than are those in the Old Covenant.<sup>101</sup> Unlike the epoch of the Old Covenant, we New Covenant believers have climbed to a “loftier peak, we strip ourselves for a more rigorous athletic contest. For what else is commanded of us but that we live like those intellectual and incorporeal powers?”<sup>102</sup> The Old Law has “ceased” (ἐπαύσατο) and is “fruitless” (ἀργεῖ) since the Incarnation.<sup>103</sup> Because of the anthropological changes that took place after the Incarnation the effort for virtue has become easier, and, because “greater assistance” has been given to man from above, Christ established “a greater goal” (μείζονα τὰ σκάμματα) for man.<sup>104</sup> Thus, man has been ennobled and received more divine aid, yet at the same time the ethical bar has been greatly elevated. This is how we are to understand His command that we *surpass* the righteousness of the scribes and the

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, X; PG 48.790. Chrysostom here also explains Christ’s teaching in St. Matt. 5:18 that He had not come to “abolish the law and the prophets” in this context of the progress of redemptive history. Christ was about to *drastically simplify and deepen* the laws of the Old Testament and bring them to their proper intent, and so before doing so and in order to cut off the accusation that He was nullifying the Old Testament He wisely affirmed His commitment to Old Testament Law.

<sup>100</sup> *Hom. XVI in Mt.*; PG 57.237-254. This entire homily is devoted to explaining just how Christ did not abolish the Law, but fulfilled it. At the same time Chrysostom would agree with Tertullian who wrote, “The New Testament is compendiously short, and freed from the minute and perplexing burdens of the Law.” *Contre Marcion, Livre IV*, 1.5.42-44; SC 456, p. 60; ANF, p. 349.

<sup>101</sup> *Stat. Hom. XIX*; PG 49.195. As an example of this St. John writes, “If under the law it is necessary for a thief to give four-fold, how much more under grace?” *Hom. LII in Mt.*; PG 58.525. And another example, “If, where the getting of wealth was allowed, and the enjoyment of it, and the care of it, there was such provision made for the [*sic*] succoring the poor, how much more in that Dispensation, where we are commanded to surrender all we have?” *Hom. IV in Eph.*; PG 62.36; NPNF, p. 69.

<sup>102</sup> *Subintr.*; PG 47.513; Shore (1983), p. 202. This apparent inconsistency in suggesting that the angelic life is a commandment can be resolved by noting that Chrysostom was writing to committed ascetics. For just how seriously the vows of celibacy and asceticism were taken one need only refer to Chrysostom’s *Letter to the Fallen Theodore*. Chrysostom consistently affirms that if Theodore continues in the rejection of his ascetic vow his soul would be ruined.

<sup>103</sup> *Jud. II*; PG 48.858.

<sup>104</sup> *Hom. XI in Rom.*; PG 60.488.

Pharisees. With the coming of more grace has also come more and greater trials.<sup>105</sup> Christ has transformed human capacity, giving men wings without changing fundamental human nature. It is like iron coming into contact with fire: the iron becomes fire, but retains its own nature. With the coming of the Holy Spirit the flesh of man has become lighter, “wholly spiritual,” “crucified in all parts,” and “flying with the same wings as the soul.” This transformation has rendered self-denial possible and turned hunger, stripes, and prisons into painless undertakings.<sup>106</sup> Old Covenant ways of living, including the areas of marriage and sexuality, are beneath New Covenant Man. St. John says,

“Since we have been vouchsafed a larger and more perfect teaching, God having no longer spoken by the prophets, but ‘having in these last days spoken to us by His Son,’ let us show forth a conversation (πολιτεΐαν) far higher than theirs, and suitable to the honor bestowed on us. Strange would it be that He should have so far lowered Himself, as to choose to speak to us no longer by His servants, but by His own mouth, and yet we should show forth nothing more than those of old. They had Moses for their teacher, we, Moses’ Lord. Let us then exhibit a heavenly wisdom worthy of this honor, and let us have nothing to do with the earth” (μηδὲν ἔχωμεν κοινὸν πρὸς τὴν γῆν).<sup>107</sup>

The presence of the Kingdom of Christ on the earth and in the heart of men can in no more drastic way be proved to the world than by observing the establishment of perpetual virginity and monastic life.<sup>108</sup> St. John Chrysostom describes this redemptive-

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<sup>105</sup> *Is. Interp., Prologue.57-59*; SC 304, p. 40.

<sup>106</sup> *Hom. XIII in Rom.*; PG 60.518; NPNF p. 435.

<sup>107</sup> *Hom. XI in Jn.*; PG 59.100-101.

<sup>108</sup> No early Father more eloquently and forcefully taught this than did St. Athanasios the Great in a famous passage from the *Life of Antony*. Cf Ch. 1, p. 58; *Incarn.*, 48.1.1-3.13; SC 199, p. 440; Brakke (1995), p. 17. St. Chrysostom treasured this *Life of Antony* and extolled it as full of prophecy. *Hom. VIII in Mt.*; PG 57.89-175-90-176.

historical movement,<sup>109</sup> and its expression in human sexuality, with the beautiful illustration of a mother bird and her nestlings.<sup>110</sup> Initially, the mother rears her young. Then, she nudges them into the air, escorting them from the nest. If they are too weak, they are permitted to remain in the nest until they are able to gather sufficient strength to fly off with security. Christ, the mother bird, has come to escort us all from the nest of the world and marriage. Those who remain in the nest do so because of their “plodding nature,” and “deep sleep,” and because they are “attached to worldly things.”<sup>111</sup> Those who are *truly noble* “quit the nest with great ease and fly high in the air and skim the heavens.”<sup>112</sup> It is God’s wish that mankind now leave marriage behind and grow up.<sup>113</sup>

Our Savior Himself is the font and glory of virginity,<sup>114</sup> from which men may draw and imbibe virginal waters. By living a virginal life of complete communion with God He lived as the perfect Man, as Adam was intended to live.<sup>115</sup> By stripping Himself of all earthly possessions in order to do His Father’s will alone Christ fulfilled and modeled the very *definition of virginity*.<sup>116</sup> By union with Him through baptism Christians are spiritualized and incorporated into His life. This spiritualization in baptism

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<sup>109</sup> Chrysostom also describes the progress of redemption as a movement from communion with God via *letters*, to a *writing on the heart*, to a heavenly, immediate, and unceasing communion with God in heaven. *Hom. I in Mt.*; PG 57.13-14.

<sup>110</sup> Chrysostom employs this “mother-bird” analogy in several other places. He uses it to describe the way St. John the Baptist progressively revealed the Messiah to the Jewish nation. *Hom. XIII in Jn.*; PG 59.88. Cf. *Hom. XXI in Jn.*; PG 59.128, on how Christ Himself progressively disclosed His own divine identity to His disciples. St. Ephrem the Syrian uses a similar word-picture and calls the mother bird “chastity.” McVey (1989), *Hymn 24 On Virginity*, p. 365.

<sup>111</sup> *Virg.*, XVII.2.18-20; SC 125, p. 150.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII.2.20-22; SC 125, p. 150.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII.3.28; SC 125, p. 152. Tertullian writes of second century Christians who “beat away from them entirely the power of sensual sin, by a virgin continence, still boys in this respect when they are old.” *Apologeticum*, IX.19.90-92; CCSL I, p. 105; ANF, p. 26.

<sup>114</sup> “Virginity is as much more honorable than marriage as an angel is superior to man. But what am I saying – an angel? Christ Himself is the glory of virginity.” *Joannis Damasceni, F. O.*, 97.59-61; PTS 12, p. 229; Chase (1958), p. 396.

<sup>115</sup> St. Ephrem posits that Christ’s virginity served as a high-priestly vestment. McVey (1989), *Hymn 16 On the Nativity*, p. 151.

<sup>116</sup> *Hom. LXXVII in Mt.*; PG 58.713.

is fundamentally one of the soul. While the radical spiritualization of the body will take place only at the Second Coming of Christ, nevertheless the spiritualization of the soul has tremendous consequences for the body even in this life.<sup>117</sup> St. Paul is an example of both a spiritualized soul and body. His virginal life of complete consecration to God found its root in his baptism, and such is the source of all virginity.<sup>118</sup>

With the Kingdom present, the present age speeding to its own termination, and the Resurrection at the door, it is really *not* the time for marriage.<sup>119</sup> We are not living in the Old Covenant. Today the standard of “perfection” and spiritual maturation is much higher, and the path of salvation is much narrower (*πολλῶ στενωτέρα γέγονεν ἡ ὁδός*).<sup>120</sup>

“For since virtue hath been now made an easier thing (for which cause also we are under far stricter obligations of religious living), consider how men’s condition lay when the Law prevailed, and how at present, since grace hath shone forth. The things which aforesaid seemed not possible to anyone, virginity (*παρθενία*), and contempt of death (*θανάτου ὑπεροψία*), and of other stronger sufferings, are now in full vigor through every part of the world (*πανταχοῦ τῆς οἰκουμένης κατώρδωται*), and it is not with us alone, but with the Scythians, and Thracians, and Indians, and Persians, and several other barbarous nations, that there are companies of virgins,

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<sup>117</sup> St. Ephrem describes some of the healing effects of the Incarnation on human nature in his *Hymn 37 On Virginity*,

“His body was newly mixed with our bodies, and His pure blood has been poured out into our veins, and His voice into our ears, and His brightness into our eyes. All of Him has been mixed into all of us by His compassion, and since He loves his church very much, he did not give her the manna of her rival. He had living bread for her to eat. Wheat, the olive and grapes, created for our use- the three of them serve You symbolically in three ways. With three medicines You healed our disease. Humankind had become weak and sorrowful and was failing. You strengthened her with Your blessed bread, and You consoled her with Your sober wine, and You made her joyful with Your holy chrism.”

McVey (1989), p. 425.

<sup>118</sup> *Hom. XI in Rom.*; PG 60.488. Besides St. Paul, St. John the Theologian was a supreme example of consecrated virginity amongst the Apostolic band. It is for this reason, according to St. John Cassian, that Christ loved him so. *Conlatio XVI.XIV.3.25-27*; CSEL XIII, p. 449.

<sup>119</sup> *Virg.*, LXXIII.1.6; SC 125, p. 350. St. John Cassian reflects the distinction of law/marriage-grace/virginity so common in the Patristic tradition. “For we are not ‘under the law’ which, in commending the lawful rights of marriage, also fosters and stores up deep within us the heat that helps to promote the practice of unlawful fornication, but we are ‘under grace’ which, in introducing the incorruption of virginity, also arrests that harmless and simple bodily movement and likewise the pleasure of lawful sexual intercourse.” *Conlatio XXII.VII.9-14*; CSEL XIII, p. 624; Ramsey (1997), p. 769.

<sup>120</sup> *Virg.*, XLIV.1.12-13; SC 125, p. 252.

and clans of martyrs, and congregations of monks, and these now grown even more numerous than the married (πλείους οὔτοι λοιπὸν τῶν γεγαμηκότων εἰσί), and strictness of fasting, and the utmost renunciation of property. Now these are things which, with one or two exceptions, persons who lived under the Law never conceived in a dream.”<sup>121</sup>

Due to the presence of the Kingdom, virginity has become extremely accessible.<sup>122</sup>

**Monasticism as the Expression of New Covenant Virginity.** This increased accessibility<sup>123</sup> of virginity is illustrated by the vast number of monks and nuns that populate the Christian empire.<sup>124</sup> Virginity had been planted everywhere in the world.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *Hom. XIII in Rom.*; PG 60.517; NPNF p. 434.

<sup>122</sup> *Virg.*, XXXV.2.26; SC 125, p. 210; Shore (1983), p. 50. This “extreme accessibility” flows from the Christian baptismal font. St. John taught that at baptism the baptized become like angels on earth, radiating more brilliantly than the sun, *Catech.*, II.27.1-14; SC 50, p. 148. It logically follows then that if the newly baptized becomes angelic in this way that it would be natural to return to an angelic way with regard to sexuality.

<sup>123</sup> When speaking about perpetual virginity Chrysostom is set apart from his spiritual predecessors by rarely speaking of continence as a *gift of God*, and more often than not speaking of it completely as a decision for the will of man. He goes so far as to interpret St. Paul’s words concerning each man having “his own gift from God, one in this manner, another in that” (1 Cor. 7) as not literal but words of condescension from the Apostle. For this Chrysostom is criticized by Elizabeth Clark (1983) in her introduction to Chrysostom’s work *On Virginity*, pp. xix-xxii. Chrysostom does, however, in other places in his works emphasize the nature of virginity as a *charism*. However he says that virginity is a gift from God *to the willing*. If you are willing then God will give the gift. St. Clement of Rome in writing to the Corinthians at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century maintains this emphasis of the Apostle Paul, ὁ ἀγνός ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ μὴ ἀλαζονεύσθω, γινώσκων, ὅτι ἕτερος ἔστιν ὁ ἐπιχορηγῶν αὐτῷ τὴν ἐγκράτειαν. *I Clem.*, 38.2; SC 167, p. 162. St. John Cassian shared Chrysostom’s love of virginity, but labored to emphasize that such chastity was only possible by the special grace of God and was simply a means to obtain purity of heart. He relates this story as an example of how such chastity might be obtained,

“Abba Serenus was filled by the gift of chastity so that he no longer felt disturbed by natural impulses even when asleep... With prayers day and night, then, and with fasting and vigils, he pleaded tirelessly for internal chastity of heart and soul... an angel in a vision seemed to open his belly, and pull out a kind of fiery tumor from his bowels, cast it away, and restore all his entrails to their original place. ‘Behold,’ he says, ‘the impulses of your flesh have been cut out, and you should know that today you have obtained that perpetual purity of body which you have faithfully sought.’”

*Conlatio VII.II.2.21-28*; CSEL XIII, p. 180; Ramsey (1997), p. 247. Cf. *Conlatio XII.IV.2.25-28*; CSEL XIII, p. 338.

<sup>124</sup> Though monasticism had flourished and filled the empire by the time Chrysostom writes, he himself notes that monasticism took time to flourish in the Church. The beauty of virginity flourished, not immediately, but some time later after the foundation of the Church. *Exp. in Ps. XLIV*; PG 55.202. And

Monastic life is the most appropriate response to the advance of redemptive history. It is eschatologically apropos.<sup>126</sup> Christ went about sowing the seeds of virtue among human beings and turned them into angels (ὁ Χριστὸς...τὴν ἀρετὴν καταφυτεύσας ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, καὶ ἀγγέλους, ὡς εἶπεῖν, ἐξ ἀνθρώπων αὐτοὺς ἐργασάμενος).<sup>127</sup> Since Christ's coming men have been able to re-engage the race with the incorporeal powers. Man's taking up of virginity is a step toward restoration to Paradise in that it once again brings mankind into equality with the angels. The battle for virginity is a battle against natural compulsions, and an emulation of the angels. Earth and dust compete eagerly to equal the life of those in heaven, and corruption has undertaken battle with incorruption.<sup>128</sup>

The angelic life has been re-established on the earth. In contrast to life in the Old Covenant St. John posits, "What else is commanded of us but that we live like those intellectual and incorporeal powers?"<sup>129</sup> Christ has led New Covenant man to the angelic life.<sup>130</sup>

The monastic way of life is the angelic way of life.<sup>131</sup> It is essentially *pure Christianity*, and as such serves as a constant example to married Christians. To St. John

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again, "For at that time [when St. Paul was writing to the Corinthians- JT] there was not even a trace of any one leading a monastic life." *Hom. XXV in Heb.*; PG 63.177; NPNF, p. 481.

<sup>125</sup> *Hom. VIII in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.458-459. St. Athanasios the Great writes, "When the Lord came into the world, having taken flesh from a virgin and become human, at that time what used to be difficult became easy for people, what used to be impossible became possible. What formerly was not abundant is now seen to be abundant and spread out." Brakke (1995). *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 280.

<sup>126</sup> This eschatological justification for celibate life is brought out by St. Paul in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*. "But this I say, brethren, *the time is short*: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (7:29).

<sup>127</sup> *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.489.

<sup>128</sup> *Virg.*, XXVII.2.32-34; SC 125, pp. 178, 180.

<sup>129</sup> *Subintr.*; PG 47.513. Shore (1983), p. 202. Cf. *Virg.*, XXVII.2; SC 125, 180.

<sup>130</sup> *Hom. XI in Rom.*; PG 60.489 St. Ephrem calls virginity the "dear friend" of the "Watchers." "Watchers" is St. Ephrem's word for the angels. McVey (1989), *Hymn I On Virginity*, p. 263.

<sup>131</sup> Tertullian, in his treatise *On Prayer*, says that Christians are "candidates for angelhood." *De Oratione*, III.3.15; CCSL I, p. 259. St. John Cassian follows Chrysostom in teaching,

"For by no virtue do fleshly human beings so nearly approximate and imitate the way of life of the angelic spirits as by the deserts and grace of chastity, whereby those who are

there is only one purpose for the present life. The present life is designed simply as a groundwork and “starting point” for the life to come. The one who is a foreigner here will be a citizen up there (ὁ τῶν ἐνταῦθα ξένος τῶν ἄνω πολίτης ἔσται).<sup>132</sup> If Christians do not learn this lesson this life becomes “worse than a thousand deaths!”<sup>133</sup> The present life is a type of school (ἐν διδασκαλείῳ τινὶ τῷ παρόντι βίῳ) in which men are “under instruction by means of disease, tribulation, temptations, and poverty, and the other apparent evils, with a view to our becoming fit for the reception of the blessings of the world to come.”<sup>134</sup> Monastics are the world’s chief instructors concerning this all important lesson. Chrysostom in very many places emphasizes that the monastic life is simply the authentic Christian life.

The monastic way is the way of the Cross. The crucified virgin (ἡ παρθένος ἐσταυρωμένη) lives free from troubles of this present life and reveling in happiness.<sup>135</sup> The crucified life is best modeled by the monk.<sup>136</sup> There are not two standards of Christian conduct, one for the monk and one for the married man.<sup>137</sup> St. John writes,

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still living on earth...possess here in their frail flesh what is promised that the holy ones will have in the world to come once they have laid aside their fleshly corruption.”  
*De Institutis Coenobiorum VI*, VI.28-5; CSEL XVII, pp. 118-119; Ramsey (2000). p. 156.

<sup>132</sup> This perspective on the present life is the ῥίζα and ὑπόθεσις of virtue. The one who considers himself a citizen here will be a stranger in heaven, and the one who considers himself a citizen in heaven will be a stranger here. *Exp. in Ps. CXIX*; PG 55.341.

<sup>133</sup> *Stat. Hom. VI*; PG 49.86; NPNF, p. 384. As such we ought groan for this life as creation does, and not for death. *Ibid.*, V; PG 49.71.

<sup>134</sup> *Hom. X in Rom.*; PG 60.473; NPNF, p. 404.

<sup>135</sup> *Exp. in Ps. XLIV*; PG 55.202. The image of the crucified monk is graphically depicted in the well-known fresco (in the narthex of Philotheou Monastery on Mt. Athos) of “The Crucified Monk.” *ΑΓΙΟΝ ΟΡΟΣ* (1983), p. 4. See appendix one. p. 239.

<sup>136</sup> *Philogon.*, VI; PG 48.752. If the laity are to model themselves upon the monks, who are the monks to model themselves upon? Chrysostom answers by presenting the image of St. Paul as the ultimate Christian. Paul crucified himself to the world, and “regarded not only the attractive features of human bodies, but all things, as we do dust and ashes. He was as unmoved by them as a corpse encountering another corpse. So precisely did he lull to sleep the surges of nature, that he never, ever, experienced a single human passion.” *Laud Paul*, 1.9; SC 300, p. 126; Mitchell (2000), p. 445.

<sup>137</sup> “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. For surely he wrote not these things to solitaries only, but to all that are in cities. For ought the man who lives in the world to have any advantage over the solitary, save only the living with a wife? In this point he has allowance, but in others none, but it

“You certainly deceive yourself and are greatly mistaken if you think that there is one set of requirements for the person in the world and another for the monk. The difference between them is that one is married and the other is not; in all other respects they will have to render the same account.”<sup>138</sup> The Holy Scriptures do not know two standards, but one single Christian ethic. The laws governing monks and married Christians are common to both groups, except for those dealing with marriage, and even here St. Paul calls upon the married to imitate the monks.<sup>139</sup> All humanity is called upon to return to the protological state and to go beyond it. The Holy Scriptures want all to live the life of the monks, even if they should happen to have wives (*Αί Γραφαί...ἅπαντας τὸν τῶν μοναχῶν βούλονται βίον ζῆν, καὶ γυναῖκας ἔχοντες τύχωσιν*).<sup>140</sup> Christ asks (not commands) men to lay aside the childish garments of earthly marriage and to put on more fitting and perfect clothes, the clothes of virginity.<sup>141</sup> Parents should do everything they can to raise monastic children. This doesn’t mean that all children must become monks, but they must be trained as “athletes of Christ,” and if they become monks that is a blessing, but it is not insisted upon.<sup>142</sup> To oppose monasticism is ignorance so great, that a greater ignorance could not be.<sup>143</sup>

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is his duty to do all things equally with the solitary.” *Hom. VII in Heb.*; PG 63.67; NPNF, p. 402. In his work *On Providence* Chrysostom applies the regulative force of the Precious Cross to married life. *Prov.*, XVII.7, p. 228.

<sup>138</sup> *Oppugn.*, III; PG 47.372; Harkins (1977), p. 156. Continuing to lament the notion that God has a double standard St. John writes, “Therefore, when Paul orders us to imitate not only the monks, not only the disciples of Christ, but Christ Himself, when he decrees the greatest punishment for those who do not imitate them, how can you say that this way of life is a greater height? For all people must reach the same point! And this is what overturns the whole world, the idea that only the monk is required to show a greater perfection, while the rest are allowed to live in laxity. But this is not true! It is not!...the same philosophy is demanded of all.” *Ibid.*, PG 47.374; Harkins (1977), pp. 158-159.

<sup>139</sup> *Hom. VII in Mt.*; PG 57.81-82.

<sup>140</sup> *Oppugn.*, III; PG 47.373. Chrysostom writes again, “What would our own life be if we all imitated the monks?” *Ibid.*, PG 47.366; Harkins (1988), p. 148.

<sup>141</sup> *Virg.*, XV.1.5-7; SC 125, p. 146.

<sup>142</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 19.282-287; SC 188, pp. 102, 104.

<sup>143</sup> *Oppugn.*, III; PG 47.366.



Since monasticism is the concrete example of true Christian life for married Christians and all Christians in the world, there should be regular interaction between monks and believers in the city. The original Christians, who were “first instructed by the Apostles,” though they were city dwellers “showed forth the piety of the occupiers of the desert.”<sup>144</sup> Contemporary monastics were simply living the Christian life that the faithful did at the founding of the Church (Οὕτως οἱ ἐν τοῖς μοναστηρίοις ζῶσι νῦν, ὡσπερ ποτὲ οἱ πιστοί).<sup>145</sup> “The disciples of those days were better than the teachers of these” (ἐπειδὴ οἱ τότε μαθηταὶ τῶν νῦν διδασκάλων κρείττους ἦσαν),<sup>146</sup> quips Chrysostom. Every city dweller should imitate the self-denial of the monks and those who have wives and are busy with households should pray, fast, and learn compunction. In fact, the reality that monks have had to flee to the desert is an unfortunate reality in no way essential to monasticism.<sup>147</sup> The command of Christ was to let one’s light shine *before men* and not in the deserts where there are no men. It is only because the men of the cities had banished virtue that the true seekers of purity had no alternative but to flee them. It is time to transplant the ascetic life practiced in the mountains into the cities (Διὸ, παρακαλῶ, τὴν φιλοσοφίαν τὴν ἐκεῖθεν καὶ ἐνταυθα εἰσαγάγωμεν), in order that the cities will

<sup>144</sup> It was not just the nature of cities and placement of monks that had changed since apostolic times according to Chrysostom. Commenting upon the liturgical practice of separating men and women inside the Temple by physical barriers he notes that this itself was an expression of spiritual degradation since during the apostolic times men and women worshipped together in purity. Since then Christian men had become “frantic horses” and Christian women “courtesans” and so changes had to be made. *Hom. LXXIII in Mt.*; PG 58.677.

<sup>145</sup> *Hom. XI in Ac.*; PG 60.97.

<sup>146</sup> *Hom. VI in Eph.*; PG 62.47, NPNF, p. 78. Cf. *Hom. XI in Ac.*; PG 60.97.

<sup>147</sup> St. John’s positive perspective on the nature of cities in and of themselves, apart from sinful influences, is shared by his contemporary Nemesius of Emesa who writes, “Because of the arts and sciences and the useful things to which they lead, we have mutual need of one another. And because we need one another, we come together into one place in large numbers, and share with each other the necessities of our life, in common intercourse. To this human assemblage and cohabitation we have given the name of city. And therein we have profit one from other, by propinquity, and by not needing to travel. For man is a naturally sociable animal, and made for citizenship. No single person is in all ways self-sufficient. And so it is

become *true cities* (ἵνα αἱ πόλεις γένωνται πόλεις).<sup>148</sup> Monks have fled the cities because a demonic culture has taken root in them that is so pervasive as to necessitate the geographical departure of those whose only interest is purity.<sup>149</sup> It was only because the cities had decided to imitate Sodom that the monks left.<sup>150</sup> The mountain dwellers left the cities because love had waxed cold, the sinner went unpunished, and the rulers were sickly, and so they fled as from an “enemy,” and an “alien,” and “not from a body to which they belonged.”<sup>151</sup>

In fact, Chrysostom’s Antiochian parishioners had experienced the temporary *re-integration* of monks in the city on one occasion during the great trial of the statues. It was at that time, when the city of Antioch feared for its very existence, that the monks descended from the mountains and suddenly appeared in the city as angels arriving from heaven,<sup>152</sup> leading St. John to exclaim that “our city has suddenly become a monastery” (μοναστήριον ἡμῖν ἢ πόλις ἐξαίφνης ἐγένετο).<sup>153</sup> Christians in the world should diligently seek out the holy men living in the mountains and in the deserts, and make special pilgrimages to visit them and give alms.<sup>154</sup> The faithful living in the cities ought to

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clear, how that cities exist for the sake of intercourse, and for the sake of learning from each other.” *Nat. Hom.*, 19; PG 40.520-521; Telfer (1955), p. 243.

<sup>148</sup> *Hom.*, XXVI in *Rom.*; PG 60.644.

<sup>149</sup> Describing this “demonic culture” Chrysostom brings forward as examples that males commit shameless acts with other males in public. The “new and lawless love” / ἔρως καινός καὶ παράνομος (i.e. pederasty), so often joined with the study of rhetoric, had invaded Antioch. *Oppugn.*, III.PG 47.360.

<sup>150</sup> *Hom.*, VII in *Mt.*; PG 57.82. Commenting on the sin of Sodom St. John writes, “How great is that sin, to have forced hell to appear even before its time?” *Hom.*, IV in *Rom.*; PG 60.420; NPNF, p. 358.

<sup>151</sup> *Hom.*, VI in *Eph.*; PG 62.47; NPNF, p. 78.

<sup>152</sup> *Stat. Hom.*, XVII; PG 49.172-173. St. Athanasios the Great says the virgins presented on the earth a “picture of the holiness of the angels.” *Apol. Const.*, 33, PG 25.640; NPNF, p. 252.

<sup>153</sup> *Stat. Hom.*, XVII; PG 49.175. This was, in fact, Chrysostom’s basic vision: The Gospel transforming the city into a monastery. It was also one of the few times Chrysostom witnessed anything like it. It is no wonder that St. John exhorted his congregation at the time not to *change back* to life as it was before the statues trial. He suggested that the city leave the hippodrome, theatre, public baths, etc. closed as they were during the tense days under Imperial wrath. Sadly for Chrysostom his wish did not come true.

<sup>154</sup> Chrysostom, like St. Athanasios the Great, was a great promoter of monastic life, and strenuously argued for its necessity in the Church and the world. As St. Chrysostom calls upon the Christian faithful to

“inquire diligently” for holy men, visiting them in the recesses of the desert in order to offer them alms with their own hands, and to embrace their holy feet (*ποδῶν ἁγίων*), which are “more honorable to touch than the heads of others” (*πολλῶ γὰρ ἐντιμότερον τῶν ἐκείνων ἄπτεισθαι ποδῶν, ἢ τῆς ἐτέρων κεφαλῆς*).<sup>155</sup> These desert-dwelling monks are shining lights (*λαμπτήρες...φαίνοντες*).<sup>156</sup> At the same time the faithful should work to reform urban life so that monastics could return to their native cities. If the monks will not come back, nevertheless all Christians should import monastic spirituality into the cities.<sup>157</sup> Chrysostom laid down no law that married Christians must become just like hermits, though that would be beautiful, but rather says, “Enjoy thy baths, take care of thy body, and throw thyself freely into the world, and keep a household, have thy servants wait on thee, and make free use of thy meat and drinks. But everywhere drive out excess” (*πανταχοῦ τὴν πλεονεξίαν ἔκβαλλε*).<sup>158</sup>

In his *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* St. John argues for the supremacy of monastic life in the genre of Plato’s *Republic*.<sup>159</sup> Monks are portrayed as

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honor monastics, St. Athanasios called upon Emperors to do the same, and stated that even heathens admired Christian virgins as “temples of the Word.” *Apol. Const.* 33, PG 25.640; NPNF, p. 252.

<sup>155</sup> St. Athanasios made this argument in order to defend Nicene virgins from physical persecution at the hands of Imperial soldiers. *Apol. Const.*, 33:31; PG 25, p. 640.

<sup>156</sup> *Hom. XIV in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.575. While promoting the giving of alms and hospitality to monastics especially, Chrysostom decries those who serve *only* monks. *Hom. X in Heb.*; PG 63.87.

<sup>157</sup> “Let us give heed to temperance, and to all other virtues, and the self-denial that is practiced in the deserts, let us bring into our cities.” *Hom. LV in Mt.*; PG 58.549; NPNF, p. 344.

<sup>158</sup> *Hom. XIII in Eph.*; PG 62.97; NPNF, p. 115. St. John says the married are permitted to embellish marriage with “full tables” and “apparel,” but should exercise restraint. St. John did not forbid these things “lest I should appear clownish to an extreme.” *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.386; NPNF, p. 317.

<sup>159</sup> “Isn’t it appropriate for the rational part to rule, since it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul, and for the spirited part to obey it and be its ally?” Chambry (1946), *La République*, Livre IX.571.c, p. 47; Cooper (1997), p. 342. Book 9 of Plato’s *Republic* is given to explain that the truly happy person is the philosopher since he *rules over himself as a king*. Chrysostom’s *Comparison between a Monk and King* is modeled after Plato’s paradigm comparing a philosopher to a king. It should be noted that this treatise, *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, is the *only* place in St. John’s corpus that approaches the Greek philosophers in a positive way. This may be partially explained by the treatise’s intended audience since Chrysostom was writing to pagan parents, as well as Christian, to justify their children embracing the monastic life. The treatise was also designed to refute St. John’s teacher Libanius’ apologetical work on behalf of the apostate emperor Julian. Libanius sought to hold up Emperor Julian as a

the *ultimate guardians*. They are the truly just ones, who have established a proper balance of soul and as such can serve as models to society.<sup>160</sup>

Besides advocating a significant interaction between virginal monks and married Christians,<sup>161</sup> St. John also expected the monks to cooperate with the leadership of the Church and faithfully assist the bishops in their spiritual labors. Chrysostom, in a homily attended by monastic fathers, called upon them, who were completely crucified to the world (*οἱ διὰ πάντων σταυρώσαντες ἑαυτοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ*), to labor together with (*συγκροτῶσιν*) the bishops (*τοὺς τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν προεστῶτας*) with prayers, harmony (*ὁμονοία*), and love.<sup>162</sup>

**Marriage in the New Covenant.** Is marriage then done away in the New Covenant? Has it become illicit? Absolutely not. Chrysostom joins the centuries old

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model philosopher, and St. John's work presented the monks as a counter to this ideal. Chrysostom's readers are expected to conclude that the ultimate *Hellenic task*, the true philosophy, is to be found in the monastic life. The Gospel is the ultimate *Republic*. *Hom. I in Mt.*; PG 57.20.

<sup>160</sup> The monk as model for Christians is the central theme of *A Comparison between a King and a Monk*. *Comp.* PG 47: 391. Though Chrysostom shares many basic philosophical assumptions with Plato, he thinks very poorly of Plato's sexual ethics. In the first homily in his series on *St. Matthew* Chrysostom says that the *Republic* is ridiculous and that Plato was "inspired by a demon" when he wrote it. Again in one of the opening homilies in his series on *St. John* he says that the Greek philosophers are ridiculous and, among other evils, spent their whole lives destroying the dignity of marriage. Cf. *Hom. II in Jn.*; PG 59.31. Pythagoras is called a sorcerer. *Hom. I in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.507. St. John suggests that Plato is basically an idiot with the mind of a fly since he made women common to all, and suggested that women should fight alongside men in warfare. *Hom. IV in Ac.*; PG 60.47-48. It is clear then that in articulating a Christian vision of marriage Chrysostom not only had to avoid the excesses of certain heretical groups that despised marriage, but also to fight against prevailing pagan notions that defamed marriage.

<sup>161</sup> Though extolling monastic life to a great measure St. Chrysostom was not naïve concerning spiritual problems amongst monastics and took many measures as a bishop to reform monastic life, for which he was not always loved by monks. St. John's spiritual son, the monk and monastery builder St. John Cassian, wrote concerning chastity amongst monks the following, "There is the matter of perfect chastity and purity when, thanks to the grace of God, we see that we have been free for a long time from genital pollution. Lest we believe that we shall no longer be troubled by this simple disturbance of the flesh and thereby grow proud deep within ourselves, as if we did not carry about the corruptibility of the flesh, it humiliates us and catches us short once again with an ejaculation that is very unobtrusive and simple and that reminds us by its sting that we are but human beings." *Conlatio III, XV.10-18*; CSEL XIII, p. 110; Ramsey (1997), p. 165. And again, "What the Lord has bestowed [special chastity] by a special favor upon a few cannot be seized upon by all." *Conlatio XIII, VII.5.2-4*; CSEL XIII, p. 404; Ramsey (1997), p. 509.

<sup>162</sup> *Philogon.*, VI; PG 48.752.

chorus of Patristic refutation of the heretical abolishers of marriage.<sup>163</sup> Throughout his ministry St. John attacked Gnostic heretics who were enemies of the physical creation, and forbade marriage and marital intercourse. Due to the early Gnostic teachings against marriage we have many early Patristic treatises defending marriage. Marriage remains good and blessed, serving its primary functions, and working in symbiosis with monastic life.

Can a married Christian be saved? Yes, says Chrysostom,

“But they must expend greater effort if they wished to be saved, because of the constraint imposed on them. For the person who is free of bonds will run more easily than the one who is enchained. Will the latter then receive a greater reward and more glorious crown? Not at all! For he placed this constraint upon himself when he was free not to.”<sup>164</sup>

Again St. John asks, “Cannot the person who lives in the city and has a house and wife be saved?” He answers that certainly there are many ways to salvation. This is evident from our Savior saying that in heaven there are many mansions. St. Paul affirms the same when he suggests that in the Resurrection there will be many types and degrees of glory, one of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars. Certainly the monk and the married Christian can both be saved, but they will not possess the same eternal glory.<sup>165</sup> “There are choirs of virgins (*χοροὶ παρθένων*), there are assemblies of widows (*κηρῶν σύλλογοι*), there are fraternities of those who shine in holy wedlock (*τῶν ἐν*

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<sup>163</sup> Besides those we mention in Ch. 1, we might also refer to the refutations of “Gnostics” by St. Justin Martyr and St. Irenaeus. St. Athanasios points out the virginity and marriage is a “two-fold grace.” It is impossible to do away with one without doing away with the other. Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 283. Cf. McVey (1989), *Hymn 1 On Virginity*, p. 263, where St. Ephrem says that those “ashamed to assume the condition of marriage...fell into the snares of sin.”

<sup>164</sup> *Oppugn. III*; PG 47.376; Hunter (1988), p. 161.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 47.356.

γάμῳ σώφροσι λαμπόντων φρατρίαι);<sup>166</sup> in short, many are the degrees of virtue”(πολλοὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς οἱ βαθμοί).<sup>167</sup>

Marriage is not necessarily a hindrance to salvation. “A man can take great care of his virtue- even though he has a wife, care of children, and the management of a household.”<sup>168</sup> At the end of his extended *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, in which St. John gives vast counsel for Christian marriage, he waxes so bold as to say, “If any marry thus, with these views, he will be but little inferior to monks; the married but a little below the unmarried.”<sup>169</sup> Unfortunately, the ideal is rarely achieved, which caused Chrysostom to complain, saying, “There is not now time to describe the troubles of marriage” (οὐδὲ γὰρ καιρὸς νῦν τὰς νιφάδας ὑπογράφειν τοῦ γάμου).<sup>170</sup> While monasticism is to be preferred to marriage, it is to be preferred as a “better” above a “good”, and not as a “good” above an “evil.”

Though eschatologically this is *not* the time for marriage, yet marriage not only remains good and honorable, but itself has experienced a radical transformation. In fact, the essence of earthly marriage deepens in the New Covenant and more graphically shows forth its prototype. Marriage is a “mystery and a type of a mighty thing.”<sup>171</sup> Earthly marriage in the New Covenant is designed to show forth the true “spiritual marriage”<sup>172</sup> between Christ and the Church, and between Christ and the individual

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<sup>166</sup> Again, it is not Chrysostom’s custom to call marriage “holy,” and this is an unjustified translation by Chambers of a Greek word better translated “chaste” or “temperate.”

<sup>167</sup> *Hom. XXX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.254; NPNF, p. 178-179.

<sup>168</sup> *Catech.*, VII.28.3-9; SC 50, p. 243; Harkins (1963), p. 117.

<sup>169</sup> *Hom. XV in Eph.*; PG 62.147.

<sup>170</sup> *Exp. in Ps. XLIV*; PG 55.202.

<sup>171</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.387; NPNF, p. 317.

<sup>172</sup> *Catech.*, I.1.3; SC 50, p. 10.

believing soul. This is the true glory of Christian marriage.<sup>173</sup> Though earthly marriage in the New Covenant continues in the world of sensible realities it has become a great mystery, which images the spiritual marriage between God and man. The New Testament emphasis on “one wife” is a central expression of earthly marriage being patterned upon its heavenly prototype: spiritual marriage. This is why the clergy of the Church are restricted to one wife without the possibility of divorce and remarriage.<sup>174</sup> With Christ’s marriage to the Church true “spiritual marriage” (γάμοι πνευματικοί)<sup>175</sup> has taken place.

Monogamy not only is the original creation ordinance for marriage, but it shows forth the heavenly reality that Christ the Bridegroom is not a polygamist.<sup>176</sup> He has but one bride for all eternity, the Church. This spiritual marriage between Christ and the Church extends its radiance over man by effecting just the opposite of what earthly marriage does. Earthly marriage robs a virgin of her virginity. Spiritual marriage with Christ takes many, including those who have already lost their virginity, and re-creates

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<sup>173</sup> Divine love is spoken of with the analogy of marriage by the Scripture writers not to bring it down to an earthly level, but by using the tender and familiar to lead one to a deeper understanding of God’s tender love. *Is. Interp.*, 7.23-28; SC 304, pp. 78, 80.

<sup>174</sup> *Hom. X in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.549. Chrysostom calls this “moderate virtue” and praises God’s wisdom for not confining the clergy within “too narrow a limit.” Tertullian writes, “There is a caution in Leviticus: ‘My priests shall not pluralize marriages’...they who are chosen into the sacerdotal order must be men of one marriage; which rule is so rigidly observed, that I remember some removed from their office for digamy.” *Exhortation a la Chasteté*, VII.5, 10-13; SC 319, p. 92; ANF, p. 26.

<sup>175</sup> *Hom. XV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.125. Spiritual marriage exists between *both* Christ and the Church, *and* Christ and the individual soul, especially the monastic. Utilizing the Scriptural language of earthly marriage and reproduction St. Athanasios applies it to spiritual marriage and reproduction. “But virginity, having surpassed human nature and imitating the angels, hasten to cleave to the Lord, so that, as the Apostle said, ‘Through fear of you, we have conceived and gone into labor and given birth to a saving spirit; we have begotten children upon the earth’ [Isaiah 26:17-18]...from this kind of blessed union, true and immortal thoughts come forth, bearing salvation.” Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 275. Cf. St. Athanasius, “Such as have attained this virtue [of virginity], the Catholic Church has been accustomed to call the brides of Christ.” *Apol. Const.* 33; PG 25.640; NPNF, p. 252. St. John Cassian applies the notion of spiritual marriage also to male monastics. “If, therefore, the grace of our love is compared to those dispositions by which carnal love maintains its unity, it is certainly a hundred times sweeter and nobler.” *Conlatio XXVIII*. XVI.3.25-27; CSEL XIII, p. 705; Ramsey (1997), p. 848.

<sup>176</sup> Tertullian writes, “He [Christ] stands before you as a monogamist in spirit, having one Church as His spouse, according to the figure of Adam and Eve, which figure the apostle interprets of that great sacrament of Christ and the Church, teaching that, through the spiritual, it was analogous to the carnal monogamy.” *Le Mariage Unique*, V.7.48-52; SC 343, p. 152; ANF, p. 62.

them as virgins. Spiritual marriage restores virginity, making non-virgins virgins. “In the world virgins remain such before marriage, but not so after marriage. Here it is not like that. But even if they are not virgins before marriage, after the marriage they become virgins. Thus the whole Church is a virgin” (*ἐπὶ τοῦ κόσμου παρθένοι μένουσι πρὸ τοῦ γάμου, μετὰ δὲ τὸν γάμον οὐκέτι. Ἐνταῦθα δὲ οὐχ οὕτως· ἀλλὰ καὶ μὴ ὡς παρθένοι πρὸ τοῦ γάμου τούτου, μετὰ τὸν γάμον παρθένοι γίνονται. Οὕτω πᾶσα ἡ Ἐκκλησία παρθένος ἐστί*).<sup>177</sup>

The glory of this spiritual marriage is also witnessed by the fact that, unlike earthly suitors who are looking for beauty and wealth, Christ took to Himself the most uncomely and impoverished of brides and made her comely and wealthy.<sup>178</sup> The earthly dowry contract is a type of the covenant between God and man effected in the promises of obedience to the Bridegroom in Holy Baptism. Through a spiritual birth one enters into a spiritual marriage, not of passion or the flesh, but “wholly spiritual, the soul being united to God by a union unspeakable, and which he alone knoweth.”<sup>179</sup>

This union is typified by the one flesh union of marriage, which renders a man and wife not two men, but one man.<sup>180</sup> Marital intercourse is a type of “spiritual intercourse” (*συνουσία πνευματικῆ*) between Christ and the Church.<sup>181</sup> The earthly nuptial

<sup>177</sup> *Hom. XXIII in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.553-554. St. Ephrem writes, “O you, virginity, your destruction is simple for all, but your restoration is easy only for the Lord of all.” McVey (1989), *Hymn 2 On Virginity*, p. 267. Cf. Brock (1998), *Hymn 8 On Epiphany*, p. 32. “See, people being baptized and becoming virgins.” It should be remembered here that the connection in the early Syriac Church between baptism and the practice of literal virginity was quite close. Many Syrian Christians delayed baptism explicitly so that in the embrace of baptism there would be an embrace of celibacy, and that only after they had raised a family. There may be more in St. Ephrem’s statement than if Chrysostom had said the same words. Murray (1975), p. 80.

<sup>178</sup> *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.137ff.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 62.141; NPNF, p. 148.

<sup>180</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.387-388.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, PG 62.389.



chamber is a type of the baptismal font. The ultimate nuptial chamber is in heaven,<sup>182</sup> where there is a beauty preserved for eternity not subject to aging, disease, or anxiety, but is “ever-blooming.” If the bridal chamber be so beautiful, asks St. John, what will the Bridegroom be like? (*Εἰ δὲ ὁ νυμφῶν οὕτω καλὸς, τίς ἄρα ἔσται ὁ νυμφίος*).<sup>183</sup> Chrysostom graphically describes the union of Christ and the believer in the reception of the Holy Eucharist in the imagery of the consummation of earthly marriage via intercourse,

“But what shall I say? It is not in this way only that I have shown My love to thee, but by what I have suffered. For thee I was spit upon, I was scourged. I emptied myself of glory, I left My Father and came to thee, who dost hate Me, and turn from Me, and art loath to hear My Name. I pursued thee, I ran after thee, that I might overtake thee. I united and joined thee to myself, ‘eat Me, drink Me,’ I said. Above I hold thee, and below I embrace thee. Is it not enough for thee that I have thy First-fruits above? Doth not this satisfy thy affection? (*οὐ παραμυθεῖται τοῦτο τὸν πόθον*) I descended below: I not only am mingled with thee, I am entwined in thee. I am masticated, broken into minute particles, that the interspersion, and commixture (*ἡ μίξις*), and union may be more complete. Things united remain yet in their own limits, but I am interwoven with thee. I would have no more any division between us. I will that we both be one.”<sup>184</sup>

The reception of the Holy Gifts is the ultimate blending of flesh for Christians to embrace Christ and to satisfy all their love.<sup>185</sup> As earthly lovers are joined in a week long marriage feast, so the lover of Mankind weds Himself in Holy Baptism to the neophytes,

<sup>182</sup> *Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.202. In the same vein St. Ephrem the Syrian writes concerning the “bridal couch of delights”, “You have exchanged the transitory bridal couch for the bridal couch whose blessings are unceasing.” McVey (1989), *Hymn 24 On Virginity*, p. 366.

<sup>183</sup> *Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.202.

<sup>184</sup> *Hom. XV in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.586; NPNF, pp. 463-464. “Let us be blended into that flesh. This is effected by the food which He hath freely given us, desiring to show the love which He hath for us; He hath kneaded up His body with ours, that we might be a certain One thing, like a body joined to a head...He hath given to those who desire Him not only to see Him, but even to touch, and eat Him, and fix their teeth in His flesh, and to embrace Him, and satisfy all their love.” *Hom. XLVII in Jn.*; PG 59.260; NPNF, p. 166.

<sup>185</sup> And again, “This body that he given to us both to hold and to eat; a thing appropriate to intense love.” *Hom. XXVII in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.204; NPNF, p. 143.

and the Bright Week festivities serve as a type of heavenly wedding feast.<sup>186</sup> As in all typology the reality exceeds the type, for “no lover, even if he be violently mad (*καὶ σφόδρα ἢ μανικός*), is so inflamed with his loved one as is God in His desire for the salvation of our souls.”<sup>187</sup> God wishes to unite with us more than any lover with his beloved.<sup>188</sup>

Though marriage remains good and honorable, believers should not “pine” after the earthly blessings of marriage and family life as though they were living in the Old Covenant. This would be to live like a Jew concerned with wealth, long life, large families, etc. This would be to ignore the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ came calling us to heaven, and that He is now urging us to spurn this present life and all it has to offer.<sup>189</sup> It is possible for one to live married with a great number of children and things, and still to “despise what they have.”<sup>190</sup> The one who finds his happiness in God drives out every earthly pleasure, and shows them to be pleasures in name only. Belonging to God is true pleasure and happiness. Anyone who experiences this pleasure will care little for others.<sup>191</sup> This is St. John’s maxim, ‘He who desires earth shall not obtain heaven and shall lose earth.’<sup>192</sup> Chrysostom thought that many Christians of his time were living as Old Covenant believers, and for this reason radically misinterpreted the true signs both of

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<sup>186</sup> St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, “The soul is Your bride, the body Your bridal chamber, Your guests are the senses and thoughts. And if a single body is a wedding feast for You, how great is Your banquet for the whole Church?” Brock (1998), *Hymns on Paradise*, p. 28.

<sup>187</sup> *Trois Catéchèses Baptismales*, 2.3-6; SC 366, p. 214; Harkins (1963), p. 162.

<sup>188</sup> *Exp. in Ps. CXIV*; PG 55.316. Tertullian used similar graphic language to describe how Christ loves pious Christian women martyrs who refused to wear cosmetics. “Go forth now to martyrdom already arrayed in the cosmetics and ornaments of prophets and apostles; drawing your whiteness from simplicity, your ruddy hue from modesty; painting your eyes with bashfulness, and your mouth with silence; implanting in your ears the words of God; fitting on your necks the yoke of Christ... Thus painted, you will have God as your Lover!” *De Cultu Feminarum*, II.XIII.7.35-45; CCSL I, p. 370; ANF, p. 25.

<sup>189</sup> *Exp. in Ps. IV*; PG 55.55.

<sup>190</sup> *Hom. X in 1 Thess.*; PG 62.459; NPNF, p. 368.

<sup>191</sup> *Exp. in Ps. IX*; PG 55.124.

<sup>192</sup> *Hom. V in Mt.*; PG 57.62.

God's friendship (τὰ τῆς φιλίας σύμβολα) and of His enmity (τὰ τῆς ἔχθρας).<sup>193</sup> They thought that the presence of wealth, long life, and many children were the signs of God's blessing when in fact they were often just the opposite. Such was not the case at the foundation of the Church. During those blessed days the married lived like monks, and so St. Paul called married men "saints."<sup>194</sup>

New Testament marriage is also distinguished from Old Testament marriage by the abolition of the divine concessions and dispensations given to man in the Old Covenant. Hence, both polygamy and divorce with remarriage is abolished. When the human race was in need of multiplication God permitted polygamy, but following the Incarnation Christ has made men angels and raised them above this evil. In the New Covenant polygamy has become spiritually harmful (ψυχοβλαβές).<sup>195</sup> Neither are men allowed to put away women with a simple writ of divorce.<sup>196</sup> Now such improper divorce and remarriage is considered adultery.<sup>197</sup> Remarriage, while permitted under certain conditions, is in no way esteemed as the ideal. Though a second marriage is legal in civil law, it is liable to many accusations.<sup>198</sup> To remarry displays both an unfortunate

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<sup>193</sup> *Exp. in Ps. XII*; PG 55.149. One ought not to think that God has abandoned him because of the presence of personal misfortune. On the contrary, the sure sign that God has abandoned someone is if they are living in sin and all is going swimmingly! Modern secular culture, debased and drowning in its own prosperity, ought not have false peace because fire and brimstone have not fallen from the sky. The affluence of a mightily ascending stock market may be worse.

<sup>194</sup> *Hom. I in Eph.*; PG 62.9.

<sup>195</sup> *Hom. LVI in Gen.*; PG 54.489.

<sup>196</sup> By the constraint of these new standards for divorce, Christ drove men to desire virginity. *Hom. LXII in Mt.*; PG 58.599.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII; PG 57.261. Another aspect of the spiritual understanding of marriage is witnessed in the Patristic application of teaching concerning earthly marriage to relationships between the clergy and faithful of the Church. St. Athanasios writes, "'Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed.' For if this expression applies to a wife, *how much more* does it apply to a Church, and to the same Episcopate; to which whosoever is bound ought not to seek another, lest he prove an adulterer according to Holy Scripture" [emphasis mine]. *Apol. Sec. 6*; PG 25.260; NPNF, p. 104.

<sup>198</sup> *Hom. II in Tit.*; PG 62.671.

love of the world and a lack of ability to learn from the sorrows of a first marriage.<sup>199</sup> Even those who remarry after the death of a spouse are socially stigmatized and, though they are not legally penalized, they are not honored.<sup>200</sup>

**Procreation and Sexual Intercourse in the New Covenant.** Though providing no fundamental hindrance to a spiritual life,<sup>201</sup> sexual intercourse did, even in the Old Covenant, keep one from offering certain services to God. This is why the Virgin Mary herself embraced consecrated virginity. Without it she could have never fulfilled her spiritual task.<sup>202</sup> It is a fact that those engaged in marriage and the upbringing of children simply do not have time to give themselves to the deep study of Holy Scripture and the acquisition of heavenly wisdom. This is one of the reasons the Lord God has fashioned the Holy Priesthood. The priest labors *on behalf of* the married.<sup>203</sup> That is not to say that the sexual intercourse of the married is opposed to prayer. Separating for a time for prayer and fasting means separating sexually for *intense* and *concentrated* prayer, and is not meant to pit prayer against intercourse. It is possible to have sex with a wife (*ὁμιλεῖν γυναικί*) and give heed to prayer, but continence perfects (*ἀκριβεστέρα*) prayer. The

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<sup>199</sup> Tertullian, *Sur Le Mariage Unique*, 1.10-12, 23-27; SC 138, pp. 160, 162.

<sup>200</sup> *Hom. LXIII in Jn.*; PG 59.354.

<sup>201</sup> “And laying down the definition of a virgin and her that is not a virgin, he names, not marriage nor continence but leisure from engagements and multiplicity of engagements. For the evil is not in the cohabitation, but in the impediment to strictness of life.” *Hom. XIX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.159-160; NPNF, p. 111.

<sup>202</sup> *Hom. XLIX in Gen.*; PG 61.446. Cf. *Peccata Fratrum Non Evulganda*. PG 51.360. *Καὶ πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο, φησὶν, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω; Καὶ μὴν διὰ τοῦτο ἔσται τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκεις. Εἰ γὰρ ἐγίνωσκεις ἄνδρα, οὐκ ἂν κατηξιώθης ἐπερετήσασθαι τῇ διακονίᾳ ταύτῃ.*

<sup>203</sup> *Hom. I in Rom.*; PG 60.391.

injunction to “pray without ceasing” is not a command to cease sleeping with one’s wife.<sup>204</sup>

Because procreation has fulfilled its two-pronged task of bringing forth the Messiah and of filling the earth,<sup>205</sup> it no longer remains a reason for marriage.<sup>206</sup> In negating the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28 as relevant in a physical sense of fallen reproduction St. John is standing upon the teaching of previous Fathers and Teachers of the Church.<sup>207</sup> Tertullian at the end of the second century already was teaching that the world was overpopulated.

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<sup>204</sup> *Hom. XIX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.153. The semantic range of *ὄμιλεῖν* and *ὄμιλία* allows a translation as general as “to live with”/ “life with” or as specific as “to have sex with”/ “sex with.” Here I have adopted the more specific translation due to the context, and other examples of the specific use by Chrysostom. Cf. *Ibid.*, *Hom. XIV*; PG 61.120; *XXXVII*; PG 61.320. Chrysostom takes a view that is directly opposed by many Western Fathers (and Eastern, though not as commonly), who suggest that sexual intercourse is inconsistent with unceasing prayer and thus inescapably sinful. The Venerable Bede is a typical example. In his commentary on 1 Peter he writes the following, “Prayers are hindered by the conjugal duty because as often as I perform what is due to my wife I am not able to pray. But if according to another statement of the apostle we must ‘pray without ceasing’ (1 Thessalonians 5:17) I must therefore never gratify my conjugal duty lest I be hindered at my hour of prayer in which I am ordered always to persevere.” *In Prim. Ep. Petri*, PL 93.55; Ward (1998), p. 57. In this teaching Bede is following his mentor, St. Gregory the Great.

<sup>205</sup> *Virg.*, XIX.2-3; SC 125, p. 156. This Patristic interpretation of the fulfillment of the creation mandate to procreate is echoed by Chrysostom’s disciple St. John Cassian.

“For up until the coming of Christ it was proper for the blessing of those primordial words to be in force, according to which is said: ‘Increase and multiply and fill the earth.’ Therefore it was most just that from the stock of human fruitfulness, which flourished advantageously in the Synagogue in accordance with the dispensation of the age, blossoms of angelic virginity should spring forth and the aromatic fruits of chastity should grow sweetly in the Church.”

*Conlatio XVII.XVIII.1.22-28*; CSEL XIII, p. 478; Ramsey (1997), p. 597. For an exploration of the influence of Chrysostom upon Cassian, who literarily styled himself a disciple of St. Chrysostom even decades after leaving Constantinople, see Rousseau (1978), pp. 169-174.

<sup>206</sup> It is important to note here that the fulfillment of the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply and to populate the world (Gen. 1:28) does not provide, for Chrysostom, a justification for abolishing the requirement of procreative sex in marriage as some modern theologians like to interpret him. Rather, for Chrysostom, something much more drastic is evidenced. For him, the fulfillment of the creation mandate provides a justification, for those who are able, to abolish marriage altogether.

<sup>207</sup> “‘Grow and multiply’; that is, if no other command has yet supervened; The time is already wound up; it remains that both they who have wives act as if they had not’ for of course, by enjoining continence, and restraining concubinance, the seminary of our race this latter command has abolished that ‘grow and multiply.’” Tertullian, *Exhortation a la Chasteté*, VI.1.7-2.12; SC 319, p. 90; ANF, p. 53. Cf. Tertullian, *Le Mariage Unique (De monogamia)*. VII.3.22-23; SC 343, p. 158. St. Ephrem the Syrian also reinterprets the procreation mandate of Genesis 1:28 in allegorical and spiritual terms. He argues that, from the time of the Virgin Mary, consecrated virgins are the chief reproducers for they are “fruitful and multiply” words of

“What most frequently meets our view (and occasions complaint), is our teeming population: Our numbers are burdensome to the world, which can hardly supply us from its natural elements; our wants grow more and more keen...pestilence, and famine, and wars and earthquakes have to be regarded for nations, as the means of pruning the luxuriance of our race.”<sup>208</sup>

Though procreation is no longer a legitimate justification for marriage, God remains a lover of little children,<sup>209</sup> and procreation is everywhere expected by Chrysostom of those who use their natural sexual rights in marriage.

Sex is no longer eschatologically apropos. Marriage does fashion a “lawful bed” (*τὴν ἐυνήν τὴν δικαίαν*), and in marital intercourse sanctification remains as long as there is moderation.<sup>210</sup> But while there is nothing inherently sinful or defiling about marital intercourse<sup>211</sup> (Chrysostom regularly states that such a suggestion is heretical) this does not mean that the Apostle, who clearly permits it, in any way admires it. Chrysostom suggests that St. Paul actually neither approves nor praises it, but simply permits it, “while scoffing at it with derision.”<sup>212</sup> Such scoffing, however, cannot advance to any

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praise to God’s glory. McVey (1989) comments on *Hymn 15 On the Nativity*, “He toys with the language and imagery of fertility religion, arguing, in effect, that the new message of Christianity is the reinterpretation of fertility in allegorical and spiritual terms,” p. 145. Later Fathers such as St. John of Damascus continued this line of thought. “‘Increase and multiply’ does not mean increasing by the marriage union exclusively”, nor would that have taken place at all if the Fall had not occurred. *F. O.*, 97.18; PTS 12, p. 228; Chase (1958), p. 394.

<sup>208</sup> *De Anima*, XXX.4.24-29; CCSL II, p. 827; ANF, p. 210.

<sup>209</sup> Tertullian writes of the theological implications of the Marcionite prescription of marriage, “Marcion’s god, who is an enemy of marriage, how can he possibly be a lover of little children?...Pharaoh forbade children to be brought up, he will not allow them even to be born.” *Contre Marcion: Livre IV*, XXIII.5.44-49; SC 456, pp. 296, 298; ANF, p. 386.

<sup>210</sup> *Hom.LXIII in Jn.*; PG 59.354.

<sup>211</sup> Not only is intercourse between married Christian believers not defiling, but intercourse between a Christian spouse with an unbelieving spouse is not only not defiling to the believer, but the believer is said to “sanctify” the unbeliever. Chrysostom comments that the unbeliever does not actually become holy, but that St. Paul used exaggerated expression in order to remove any fear from the believing spouse. *Hom. XXXIX in I Cor.*; PG 61.340-341.

<sup>212</sup> *Irg.*, XXXIV.6.77-79; SC 125, p. 204.

sinful expressions such as the mutilation of genitalia, since they remain God's handiwork for procreation and the succession of our race.<sup>213</sup>

In an early treatise St. John attempts to downplay even the pleasure of coitus, arguing that it is no pleasure at all,<sup>214</sup> since it both so quickly evaporates and is preceded by unpleasant convulsions.<sup>215</sup> This early attempt to undermine the idea of sex as pleasurable appears to be abandoned by Chrysostom in his teaching in later life, at which time he actually posits that the pleasure of marital intercourse is a great power used by God to further marital unity and serve as a profound adhesive between the two parties.<sup>216</sup> Even in the New Covenant sexual intercourse remains a link of unity between spouses.<sup>217</sup> Though admitting the intense carnal pleasure of marital intercourse and its unitive good for the weak, Chrysostom nevertheless encourages his flock to take the high road of sexual self-control (τὴν ἀνωτέρω τῆς ἐγκρατείας ὁδόν), taming and weakening sexual desire

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<sup>213</sup> *Hom. XXXI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.258. Chrysostom continues, "Wherefore also the Roman legislators punish them that mutilate these members and make men eunuchs, as persons who do injury to our common stock and affront nature herself." *Ibid.*, PG 61.258; NPNF, p. 182.

<sup>214</sup> In attacking the pleasure of coitus Chrysostom is continuing a long Christian tradition of holding sexual pleasure in contempt. Debating along the same lines Tertullian posits, "What greater pleasure is there than the distaste of pleasure itself?" *De Spectaculis*, XXIX.2.6-7; CCSL I, p. 251; ANF, p. 91.

<sup>215</sup> *Oppugn. II*; PG 47.346-347. Cf. *Hom. II in 2 Thess.*; PG 62.476.

<sup>216</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.388. Chrysostom does take up the theme of sexual intercourse being in reality no pleasure at all in *Hom. XXII in 1 Cor.*; PG 62.186-188 preached about AD 392/3 only some 6 or 7 years before his more "sympathetic" *Homilies on Colossians*. Cf. *Hom. XXXVII in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.320 where St. John argues that, while carnal pleasure is brief and the relief from passionate desire it affords is but temporary, the pleasure of the continent is ten thousand times superior for it consists of crowns, rewards, converse with the angels, boldness, and blessed and immortal hopes. Chrysostom reveals in these homilies that his people were regularly challenging his teaching on sex, and especially finding it hard to be convinced that intercourse was not pleasurable. This is one area where it is evident that Chrysostom's pastoral experience led him to alter his approach. Another example is his pastoral advice for the proper education of children. In his *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* St. John argued that parents should give the education of their children into the hands of the monks alone. Later, in his *Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children*, he admits that that goal was too ambitious, and that parents should do their best to expose their children to monastics regularly while doing the core of the educating themselves. In a rare moment in which St. John reveals his inner life to his flock he writes, "I do not mean by this, hold him back from wedlock and send him to desert regions and prepare him to assume the monastic life. It is not this that I mean. I wish for this and *used to pray that all might embrace it*; but as it seems to be too heavy a burden, I do not insist upon it." *Educ. Lib.*, 19.282-287; SC 188, pp. 102, 104; Laistner (1951), p. 95.

<sup>217</sup> *Exp. in Ps. CXXXVII*; PG 55.385.

by asceticism. “We have the desire for sex, but when we philosophize, we render the tyrannous desire weak” (ἀσθενῆ ποιοῦμεν τὴν τυραννίδα).<sup>218</sup> Just because carnal desire is implanted within us does not mean that we should use it.<sup>219</sup> When one is possessed by “carnal desire” (ἐπιθυμίασ σωματικῆς) it is profitable to think about hell so as to cool the passion.<sup>220</sup> This effort to tame the sexual urge and demonstrate restraint is a violent war. Encouraging his sheep St. John writes,

“Chastity is self-restraint (σωφροσύνη ἐστὶν ἐγκράτεια), and the mastering of pleasures which fight (τὸ μαχομένων περιγενέσθαι τῶν ἡδονῶν), just as in war the trophies are most honorable when the contest is violent, not when no one raises a hand against us. Many are by their very nature passionless; shall we call these good tempered? Not at all. And so the Lord after naming three manners of the eunuch state, leaveth two of them uncrowned, and admitteth one into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>221</sup>

St. John provides guidance for married Christians with regards to sexual desire and intercourse. Chrysostom writes that St. Paul, while “permitting the enjoyment of this desire,” was “often laying down rules for a lawful intercourse.”<sup>222</sup> These rules were given as an effort to secure the virtue of the body, which is its subjection to the soul.<sup>223</sup> Sexual desire is itself a natural desire planted in us from the beginning.<sup>224</sup> “For of desires, some are necessary (ἀναγκαῖαι), some natural (φυσικαί), some neither the one nor

<sup>218</sup> *Hom. LXXXV in Jn.*; PG 59.462.

<sup>219</sup> “For carnal desire is implanted in us, and yet it is not by any means necessary that because it is implanted in us, therefore we should use it, or use it immoderately; but we should hold it in subjection, and not say, ‘Because it is implanted in us, let us use it.’” *Hom. XV in Heb.*; PG 63.122; NPNF, p. 442.

<sup>220</sup> *Hom. II in 2 Thess.*; PG 62.476.

<sup>221</sup> *Hom. XXXVI in Jn.*; PG 59.205-206; NPNF, p. 127.

<sup>222</sup> *Hom. V in Tit.*; PG 62.690; NPNF, p. 539.

<sup>223</sup> *Hom. V in Eph.*; PG 62.42.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. “The generative faculty likewise belongs to that part of the bodily functions not answerable to reason. For it is quite involuntary that we emit semen while dreaming. And the urge to intercourse is in our nature, for we find ourselves impelled toward it against our deliberate will. But the sexual act itself is unquestionably within our control, and is an act of the soul. For while it is consummated by organs subject



the other<sup>225</sup> ...carnal desire (*ὁ τῶν σωμάτων ἔρως*) is natural indeed but not necessary, for many have got the better of it, and have not died.”<sup>226</sup> Desire itself is not sin, but becomes sinful when it goes beyond the laws of marriage.<sup>227</sup> “The body has a natural desire, not however of fornication, nor of adultery, but of pleasure.”<sup>228</sup> In order for marital intercourse to be legitimate it must be chaste. Commenting on Proverbs 5 Chrysostom interprets the references to one’s fountain and stag as references to one’s wife. A husband is to enjoy his wife sexually with temperance (*ὥστε αὐτῆς ἀπολαύειν μετὰ σωφροσύνης*). King Solomon uses the image of the fountain and stag because of the purity

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to impulse, it is within our power to abstain and to master the impulse.” Nemesius, *Nat. Hom.*, 113; PG 40.700; Telfer (1955), p. 368.

<sup>225</sup> This teaching on the nature of necessary and/or natural pleasures is found in almost identical form in Chrysostom’s contemporary Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa.

“Of the pleasures called bodily, some are both necessary and natural, and without them life would not be possible; for example, the pleasures of the table, which bring satisfaction to our need, and the pleasure from clothes which we have to have. On the other hand, there are pleasures that are natural but not necessary, such as normal and legitimate marital intercourse. For this accomplishes the preservation of our race as a whole, and yet it is quite possible to live in celibacy without it. Again there are pleasures that are neither necessary nor natural, such as drunkenness, lasciviousness, sordid love of money, and gross over-eating...Therefore a true man of God must pursue only the pleasures that are both necessary and natural, while, at his rear, the man in virtue’s second rank may indulge other pleasures besides, which, while natural, are not necessary, provided always that they are fitting, moderate, mannerly, seasonable, and in their right place....In short, those are to be accounted good pleasures that carry no grief bound up in them, involve no repenting afterwards, give rise to no countervailing harm, keep within bounds, and do not distract us from our worthier occupations too much or too tyrannously.”

*Nat. Hom.*, 101-102; PG 40.680; Telfer (1955), p. 353. The same distinctions are reproduced verbatim by St. John of Damascus in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. *F. O.*, 27.1-24; PTS 12, p. 80-81ff; Chase (1958), pp. 239-240.

<sup>226</sup> *Hom. LXXIV in Jn.*; PG 59.403; NPNF, p. 273; cf. *Hom. LXXX in Mt.*; PG 58.728; *Virg.*, LXXV.1.19-24; SC 125, p. 358. A natural desire that is *necessary* is the desire for food and drink. A superfluous desire that is neither natural nor necessary is the desire of wealth. Chrysostom’s spiritual son, St. John Cassian, reproduces this distinction in his *Institutes* in his chapter on avarice as well as in his *Conferences. Conlatio I.III.17-18*; CSEL XIII, p. 121; Ramsey (1997), p. 183. In another place Chrysostom says that “lust is natural,” and if a man does not approach a woman sexually “nature performs her part.” *Hom. I in Tit.*; PG 62.690.

<sup>227</sup> *Hom. XIII in Rom.*; PG 60.508.

<sup>228</sup> *Hom. I in Eph.*; PG 62.42; NPNF, p. 74. St. John Cassian writes, “If we want to cast carnal desires from our hearts, we should at once plant spiritual pleasures in their place, so that our mind, always bound to them, might have the wherewithal to abide in them constantly and might spurn the allurements of present and temporal joys.” *Conlatio XII.V.3.21-25*; CSEL XIII, p. 340; Ramsey (1997), p. 439.

of marital intercourse (*διὰ τὸ καθαρόν τῆς τοῦ γαμοῦ συνουσίας*).<sup>229</sup> “Desire managed with moderation (*μετὰ μέτρου*) makes you a father, but neglected it in many cases drives you down into lewdness and adultery.”<sup>230</sup> “Use marriage with moderation, and thou shalt be first in the kingdom.”<sup>231</sup> For the married to “take pleasure is not forbidden but in chastity, not with shame, and reproach and imputations.”<sup>232</sup>

One of several helps to moderation<sup>233</sup> in marriage is the pious practice of fasting from sexual relations.<sup>234</sup> The Jews in the Old Covenant practiced such sexual fasting as

<sup>229</sup> *Exp. in Ps. IX*; PG 55.126.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, CXLVIII; PG 55.491; Hill (1998), p. 362. Again we see the essential connection in Chrysostom between sexual intercourse and procreation. Many today would say, “Desire managed with moderation makes you happy/fulfilled/satisfied”, while Chrysostom says, “Desire managed with moderation makes you a father.”

<sup>231</sup> *Hom. VIII in Heb.*; PG 63.68. This example of modesty and moderation in the use of the blessed conjugal relations in Christian marriage has been maintained and promoted throughout the centuries, and is still promoted in Orthodox devotional literature. The modern Saint Cosmas Aitolas relates this beautiful story,

“In the East there was a priest named John who was married and had twenty children. One day a bishop visited his home and saw the children and asked whose they were. ‘Mine,’ said the priest, ‘God gave them to me.’ The bishop asked him, ‘How long have you been married?’ ‘Eighteen years,’ answered the priest. The bishop replied, ‘You’ve had twenty children in eighteen years? You should be unfrocked!’ ‘Allow me to explain to you, bishop, the priest answered, ‘and if then you find it proper to unfrock me, let God’s will be done.’ The priest began his story: ‘I, bishop, have had some education. At the age of eighteen I became a reader, at twenty-five a deacon, and at the age of thirty a priest, without paying a dime. I married in accordance with the divine canons. First, my wife and I went to confession, then we went to church and were married and received holy Communion. After three days we came together. As soon as my wife became pregnant, we separated until she gave birth. We came together again only after the forty-day churching service. Again we separated after she became pregnant and came together again only after the forty-day churching. In this way, Your Grace, we had twenty children.’ The bishop then said, ‘May you be forgiven and blessed. Go ahead and have fifty even a hundred children!’ So the blessed Priest John taught his children their letters and instructed them with counsel. He lived well on earth, and went to paradise.”

Vaporis (1977), pp. 42-43.

<sup>232</sup> *Hom. VII in Mt.*; PG 57.81; NPNF, p. 49. Chrysostom’s emphasis upon modesty in marriage, and particularly in marital sexuality is reminiscent of Plutarch’s counsel to a new wife that her modesty and chastity ought to especially shine when in bed and the candle goes out. *Moralia: Conjugal Precepts 46*, Loeb (1927-1928), p. 334.

<sup>233</sup> St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, “Chastity’s wings are greater and lighter than the wings of marriage. Intercourse, while pure, is lower. Its house of refuge is modest darkness. Confidence belongs entirely to chastity, which light enfolds.” McVey (1989), *Hymn 28 On the Nativity*, p. 215.

<sup>234</sup> Throughout the history of the Church certain pious couples have embraced a permanent fasting from sexual relations in their marriages. At certain periods when the ascetic strength of the Church was high the literature bears witness to the fact that the practice of marital celibacy was not at all uncommon. See

is evident in many places in the Old Testament. We who enjoy so much grace and have received the Holy Spirit should have far more zeal in this practice than the Jews.<sup>235</sup> If we do not, we will find ourselves without excuse.<sup>236</sup> With regard to sexual fasting Chrysostom makes no censure of marital relations during pregnancy.<sup>237</sup> Even though the subject of whether it was blessed of God for one spouse to desert another against their will for the sake of entering monastic life and practicing continence was much debated in the era of Chrysostom, we do not find him weighing in on either side of the debate,<sup>238</sup>

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Tertullian, "How many are there who from the moment of their baptism set the seal of virginity upon their flesh? How many who by equal mutual consent cancel the debt of matrimony- voluntary eunuchs for the sake of their desire after the celestial kingdom." *A Son Epouse*, VI.2.8-11; SC 273, p. 110; ANF, p. 42. St. Athanasios the Great says that St. Paul taught this practice in 1 Cor. 7:29. Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 283.

<sup>235</sup> *Virg.*, XXX.1.1-15; SC 125, pp. 188, 190.

<sup>236</sup> Sexual fasting was particularly required by certain Holy Fathers on the eve prior to receiving holy communion. St. John Cassian forbids communion to one who has an emission on the eve of communion due to an "ascent to pleasure" rather than an involuntary nocturnal emission. *Conlatio XXII*. V.2.6-14; CSEL XIII, p. 620. St. Seraphim of Sarov taught, "Remain in the world, get married. Don't forget conjugal intercourse...observe chastity. Remain continent on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as on Sundays and all holidays. For not practicing chastity on Wednesdays and Fridays children are born dead, and for not observing holidays and Sundays wives die in childbirth." Moore (1994), pp. 291-292.

<sup>237</sup> St. Chrysostom's contemporary, Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa, relates human ability to copulate during pregnancy to that of hens and doves which are "mounted almost daily." He continues, "Women...exercise their free will in having intercourse after conception, as they do in other matters." He, like Chrysostom, makes no ethical judgment of such exercise of will as do other Church Fathers.. *Nat. Hom.*, 115; PG 40.704; Telfer (1955), p. 370.

<sup>238</sup> Just how interested many Holy Fathers were in the debate and how divisive it could be is reflected in the teaching of Chrysostom's spiritual son, St. John Cassian, who devoted a large section of Conference 21 "On Pentecost" to the subject. Cassian relates these words of Abba Theonas to his wife,

"Hence, if it is possible for you to accept this reasoning and to turn with me to that most desirable form of life, so that together we might serve the Lord and escape the punishment of Gehenna, I will not reject our married love. On the contrary, I will embrace it with still greater affection. For I recognize and venerate the helpmeet who was assigned to me by the Lord's decree, and I do not refuse to cling to her in Christ by an unbroken covenant of love. Nor will I separate from myself what the Lord has joined to me by the law of our primordial condition as long as you yourself are what the Creator wanted you to be. But if you want to be not my helpmeet but my seducer, and if you prefer to give your support not to me but to the adversary, and if you think that the sacrament of matrimony was given you so that you might defraud yourself of the salvation offered you and also keep me from being the Savior's disciple, then I will manfully lay hold of the words uttered by Abba John, or rather by Christ himself, to the effect that no carnal affection should be able to keep me from a spiritual good. For 'whoever does not hate father and mother and children and brothers and sisters and wife and fields, and his own soul besides, cannot be my disciple.' When, therefore, despite these and other such words the woman's attitude was unbending...inspired by the grace

though he does teach that one spouse is not entitled to deprive the other against his will (ὁ ἕτερος ἀποστερεῖν τὸν ἕτερον μὴ βουλόμενον).<sup>239</sup>

Giving more advice in this context Chrysostom counsels spouses not to bring the poison of the theatre into the house.<sup>240</sup> Sexual unchastity comes not from the act itself,

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of God, he at once took steps to carry out his decision...he immediately stripped himself of all his worldly property and took flight to a monastery...But no one should think that we have made all of this up in order to encourage spouses to divorce...I ask the reader kindly first of all to find me blameless, whether he is pleased or displeased with this, and either to praise or to blame the actual doer of the deed. I myself have not offered my own viewpoint in this matter but have presented a factual history in simple narrative form, and it is right that, just as I do not claim for myself any praise from those who approve of this deed, neither should I feel the anger of those who disapprove of it. Let each person, then, have his own opinion about this...But I warn him to refrain from censorious criticism, lest he believe himself fairer or holier than the divine judgment, by which even the wonders of apostolic miracles were conferred on this man. I shall not even mention the opinion of numerous fathers, who manifestly did not only not blame his action but even lauded it.”

*Conlatio XXI.IX.5.14-X.3.12*; CSEL XIII, pp. 583-5; Ramsey (1997), pp. 726-727.

This debate has troubled the Church throughout every age. An interesting incident in which one spouse wanted to leave for a monastery against the will of the other is recorded in the *Life of St. Columba*.

“Once when St. Columba stayed as a guest in Rathlin Island, a layman came to him and complained that his wife had an aversion to him, so he said, and would not allow him to lie with her. The saint called the wife to him and, so far as he was able, began to reproach her, saying: ‘Why, woman, do you attempt to deny your own flesh? For the Lord says, ‘Two shall be in one flesh.’ Therefore your husband’s flesh is your flesh.’ To which she answered: ‘I am prepared to do anything...except this one thing...if you tell me to cross the seas and remain in some woman’s monastery I would do it.’ ‘It cannot be right to do what you say. For as long as your husband is alive, you are subject to the law of your husband. It is unlawful to put apart those whom God has joined together.’ Having said this, he went on with this suggestion: ‘Today, the three of us- husband and wife and I- shall fast and pray to the Lord.’ ‘I know,’ she said, ‘that things which seem difficult or even impossible will be possible for you, for God will grant you what you ask.’ Why say more? Both husband and wife consented to fast that day with St. Columba. That night, while the couple slept, St. Columba prayed for them. The next day, in this husband’s presence, he charged the wife: ‘Woman, will you today do what yesterday you said you were ready to do and enter a monastery of women?’ ‘Now,’ she said, ‘I know that the Lord has heard your prayers for me. For the husband whom I hated yesterday I love today. For during last night, I know not how, my heart was changed within me from loathing to love.’ Why linger? From then until the day of her death, the heart of the wife was fixed entirely on her husband’s love, so that she never afterwards refused the dues of the marriage bed as she used to.”

Adomnan of Iona, *The Life of St. Columba*, translated by Richard Sharpe, pp. 194-195.

It is recorded in the life of St. Seraphim of Sarov, “A married couple separated and divided their children. The husband went to Sarov and came to Father Seraphim. As soon as the Saint saw him, he began to rebuke him sternly and, contrary to his wont, said to him in a menacing tone: ‘Why don’t you live with your wife? Go to her, go!’” Moore (1994), pp. 293.

<sup>239</sup> *Virg.*, LXXV.1.21-22; SC 125, p. 358.

nor from the “loins” or the “brains,” but from an “ungoverned will” and “neglected mind.” If the will and the mind are temperate no harm will come from nature’s motions.<sup>241</sup>

Chastity should especially involve the control of one’s gaze.<sup>242</sup> Desire grows by looking.<sup>243</sup> “If you wish to look (*ὀρᾶν*) and derive sexual satisfaction (*τέρεσθαι*), look on your own wife and love her from beginning to end” (*ἔρα διηνεκῶς*).<sup>244</sup> To look upon another is to touch that person with one’s eyes and to wrong both your spouse and the one being gazed upon.<sup>245</sup> If you practice chastity in marriage nothing is equal to the pleasure of wife and children.<sup>246</sup> Chastity in marriage is ensured especially by the practice of chastity *before* marriage. For this reason, young men should marry early, not long after the onset of desire at about fifteen years of age.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> *Hom. VII in Mt.*; PG 57.81. And again, “Flee the theatre and all its immoralities. Thou hast a wife...what is equal to this pleasure?” *Ibid.*, XXXVII; PG 57.428; NPNF, p. 250.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, LXII; PG 58.600.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII; PG 57.256-257. St. Ephrem writes, “Do not annul by your eyes the vows of virginity your mouth has vowed.” McVey (1989), *Hymn 2 On Virginity*, p. 269. In contrast to those who ruin their souls via improper gazing, the Virgin Mary “turned her face away from everything to gaze on one beauty alone.” *Ibid.*, *Hymn 24 On Virginity*, p. 367.

<sup>243</sup> *Hom. XVII in Mt.*; PG 57.256-257. That erotic attachment begins visually is taught by Plato and many other Greek philosophers, who spoke in depth about the link between the eyes and the soul. Aristotle noted that the eyes work with the genitalia in ejaculation by contracting together in the emission of semen, Leyerle (1993), pp. 159ff. St. Ephrem in his *Hymns on Virginity* describes the immense power of infatuation, often begun with gazing. McVey (1989), *Hymn 1 On Virginity*, p. 265.

<sup>244</sup> *Hom. XVII in Mt.*; PG 57.257. Tertullian encourages Christian women to do all that they can to insure that others do not look upon them lustfully. “In the eye of perfect Christian modesty, carnal desire of one’s self by others is not only not to be desired, but even execrated, by you- why excite toward yourself that evil passion? Why invite toward yourself that which you profess yourself a stranger?...Let a holy woman, if naturally beautiful, give none so great occasion for carnal appetite...she ought not to set off her beauty, but even to obscure it.” *De Cultu Feminarum*, II.1.1-3, III.1.1-3; CCSL I, pp. 354, 357; ANF, pp. 19-20.

<sup>245</sup> *Hom. XVII in Mt.*; PG 57.257. Even the virgins themselves inside the church could be so ill-clad as to provide a serious temptation for the gaze of married men. *Hom. VIII in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.544. St. John Cassian lists as the fifth mark of chastity the ability of a person to discuss or read concerning sexual relations and/or procreation without any assent to the pleasurable action coming to mind, reckoning it no differently than brickmaking or some other task. *Conlatio XII*.VII.3.21-4.4; CSEL XIII, pp. 345-346.

<sup>246</sup> *Hom. XXXVIII in Mt.*; PG 57.428.

<sup>247</sup> *Hom. IX in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.546; NPNF, p. 437.

The ascesis involved in taming the sexual impulse is especially difficult for the married man.<sup>248</sup> He has a task more difficult than the monk, for he must crucify his desires while in the actual presence of his wife, and to be deprived of gratification that appears immediately before his eyes may be considered the very definition of punishment.<sup>249</sup> However, it is possible, if we only will it, to win every contest against nature.<sup>250</sup> By spiritual labors in marriage one can reject the influence of society which has made “sins into an art.” Not only can married Christians, through ascesis appropriate to their station in life, nearly rival the monks, according to Chrysostom, but their marriage can become a “type of the presence of Christ,” and Christ and the choir of His angels will come to such a marriage. Christ will again work a wedding miracle as He did at Cana, and turn water into wine. He will turn the water, which is the unstable, dissolving, and cold desire for sex, into something truly spiritual.<sup>251</sup> Married Christians can become virgin souls (ταῖς ψυχαῖς ταῖς παρθένοις) by freeing themselves from worldly thoughts (τῶν

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<sup>248</sup> Although difficult for the married man, the expectation of the blessing of increased marital love born of marital abstinence is enough to encourage him.

“A hundred times greater delight is to be gotten from married abstinence, too, than that which is offered to two people in sexual intercourse... I once used to have a wife in the wanton ‘passion of lust’ but now I have her in the dignity of holiness and in the true love of Christ. The woman is the same, but the value of the love has grown a hundredfold.”

St. John Cassian, *Conlatio XXIII, XXVI.3.27-4.1. 6.22-25*; CSEL XIII, pp. 705-706; Ramsey (1997), p. 848.

<sup>249</sup> *Hom. XIV in I Cor.*; PG 61.120. Tertullian writes in similar vein, “Great is the struggle to overcome concupiscence; whereas a concupiscence the enjoyment whereof you have never known you will subdue easily, not having an adversary in the shape of the concupiscence of enjoyment...” *De Virginibus Velandis*, X.4.20-23; CCSL II, p. 1220; ANF, p. 34. And again, “The widow has a task more toilsome, because it is easy not to crave after that which you know not, and to turn away from what you have never had to regret. More glorious is the continence which is aware of its own right, which knows what it has seen.” *A Son Épouse*, VIII.2.11-13; SC 273, pp. 116, 118; ANF, p. 43.

<sup>250</sup> *Laud. Paul. 6.3.16-17*; SC 300, p. 264; Mitchell (2000), p. 476.

<sup>251</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.389.

νοημάτων τῶν βιωτικῶν). The incorrupt soul is a virgin, even if having a husband (Ἡ ἀφθορος ψυχὴν παρθένος ἐστὶ, καὶ ἄνδρα ἔχει).<sup>252</sup>

This spiritual struggle in marriage, however, is the path to restoring the dignity intended in marital intercourse and recovering the “proper nobleness”<sup>253</sup> of marriage and sexuality, something which St. John Chrysostom believed to be the will of God and thus was very zealous to see accomplished. Toward this end of refashioning earthly marriage into spiritual marriage St. John provided extensive spiritual counsel to married couples, explaining in concrete terms how to pattern their family life in such a way as to incarnate in the world the Evangelical way of life so pristinely lived by the monks. Our next chapter will examine this topic in greater detail.

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<sup>252</sup> *Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.201.

<sup>253</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.388.

## Chapter Four: Spiritual Marriage, Monastic Family, and Domestic Church

**Introduction.** St. John Chrysostom is well known for his extensive ascetical writings. He was a great philo-monastic. The Church is rich with his literary treasures dealing with monastic themes as we have already surveyed. Besides being an accomplished ascetic himself and greatly enriching the ranks of the Church's athletes by his exhortations and teachings, he was a man of the city, and a pastor thoroughly imbued with a message of sanctification for the married Christians, who constituted his flock. St. Chrysostom knew nothing of the false dichotomy and imposed adversarial relationship between monastery and Christian home so consistently in history<sup>1</sup> hurled against the Church and, sadly, so prevalent in much of the modern Orthodox world. He was a great lover of the monastic brotherhood, while, at the same time, being no enemy of the family or of the Christian home. He had a profound vision for both states of life.

Though he did not leave us many treatises exclusively devoted to the practice of the Christian family,<sup>2</sup> we do find extensive instruction, with copious practical details for family life, permeating his many homilies delivered to the faithful. This spiritual and practical family guidance shows Chrysostom to be *not only* a concerned shepherd of souls, *but also* one very knowledgeable of the intimacies of the household and quite hopeful of the vocation of the Christian family. Throughout his homiletic labors, which were born of deep pastoral love,<sup>3</sup> we are able to perceive his grand vision of the true

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<sup>1</sup> Most violently at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

<sup>2</sup> His treatise *On Vain Glory and the Proper Education of Children* is certainly an exception to the rule. Marrou (1956) argues that this treatise has been "unjustifiably neglected" by pedagogues, p. 420.

<sup>3</sup> It is not often noted that St. John Chrysostom displayed an immense asceticism in the very act of *preparing his homilies* for his faithful. He certainly could have gotten away with far less homiletical effort



Christian family. In fact, his writings convey his deep vision of the *spiritual potential* of a marriage truly founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ: teachings that applied equally to monk and married person. He did not see a great chasm between monastery and Christian home, nor did he find anything inconsistent about vigorously promoting celibate life, while giving great encouragement and practical guidance to married Christians. Instead, in his works he wove together a beautiful harmony and mutual fertilization in which married Christians were called to live a Christian asceticism, not easy (what asceticism of any value is?),<sup>4</sup> but relevant and practical to their everyday living and capable of exalting them to great spiritual heights. St. John's broad and

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and sweat, had his heart allowed him to do so. Thankfully, it did not, and so he did not. St. John excelled in the asceticism of *disciple and student of the word* during his time under the tutelage of Diodoros and Karterios in Antioch, and in the years of cave-ascetic life following when he was a young man. In his *Letter to Theodore* he writes of their common life in the ascetic brotherhood as spent thus: ὅλαι μὲν εἰς ἀναγνώσεις ἡμέραι, ὅλαι δὲ εἰς εὐχὰς ἀνηλίσκοντο νύκτες. *Thdr.* I.51-52; SC 117, p. 50. He never seemed to tire of "whole days in reading" and "whole nights in prayers" for this life did not end when he embraced service to the Church, but, rather, was transformed into the similar asceticism of teaching priest and homilist. His great desire to articulate the truth and bring it forth for the benefit of the flock brought him, in his words, anguish, like a mother in labor. See *Incomprehens.*, 333-340; SC 28, p. 130. This homiletical asceticism took a great toll on the body of the preacher. In Discourse 6 in his *Homilies against Judaizing Christians* Chrysostom explains to his flock the reason for his hoarseness. It is like a soldier in battle who is slaying the enemy here and there and breaks his sword. He must then retreat and obtain a new sword, which is easier, in fact, than the spiritual warrior regaining his vocal strength! *Jud.*, VI; PG 48.904. St. John took the Savior's words to St. Peter to demonstrate his love by "feeding my sheep" quite literally. Cf. *Sac.*, II.1.1-65; SC 272, pp. 100-104. Such literary and oratorical asceticism is a priest's salvation according to St. Paul's first letter to St. Timothy (4:15-16). "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things, for as you do this you will insure both your own salvation and that of those who hear you."

<sup>4</sup> In the *Letter to Marcella* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry, the author writes to his wife, "No two things can be more entirely opposed to one another than a life of pleasure and ease, and the ascent to the gods." Places (1982), 8.13-15, p. 109; Zimmern (1896), p. 58. This letter bears witness to Porphyry's conception of marriage, and demonstrates a great degree of continuity between Neoplatonist conceptions of marriage and Patristic notions. This is clear in affirming that sexual relations must not be for pleasure but for procreation, and that marriage should be a mutual striving for philosophy and the acquisition of virtue, which is the highest and most precious possession of man. Both the Fathers and the Neoplatonists depended heavily upon Stoicism here to inform their marital conceptions. Cf. The undergirding teaching of Musonius Rufus on these points, Lutz (1947), pp. 85-97, and of Plutarch, *Moralia: Conjugal Precepts* 48, Loeb (1927-1928), pp. 339-40. Grubbs (1995) argues that not until John Chrysostom did the Church attempt to set forth its own marital ethics, p. 65. Prior to that it lived on the moral capital of aspects of Greek culture. Such a statement is too drastic as is apparent from our Ch. 1, and especially the teaching of St. Clement of Alexandria.

inclusive vision of sanctification for both monk and married person has not always been embraced, and in recent time often not even understood, by some leaders of the Church.

Chrysostom's approach to marriage in comparison with monastic life has been particularly perplexing to some modern scholars, especially those scholars who themselves come from anti-monastic religious traditions. These scholars are unable to properly understand St. John's exaltation of the celibate life. His words appear excessive and his ascetic paradigm incompatible with the embrace of married life. This misjudgment is understandable since it most often comes from those scholars who have no personal experience or conception of the *ἀσκητήριον*, where the angelic life is being lived out. They have never witnessed the *ὁμόνοια* of monastery and Christian home. Often these scholars speak of the ascetic life as some sort of unique ecclesiastical fixation in various epochs of the life of the Church, rather than as the normative expression of Christianity found in all ages.

On the other hand, some scholars are struck by the wealth of guidance Chrysostom gives to Christian families and find it difficult to understand how St. John could *both* so vigorously promote virginity, *and* at the same time present such wholesome and hopeful spiritual guidance to Christian families. Various suggestions are proffered to harmonize what appears to be an internal contradiction in the emphases of St. John. Most commonly, it is suggested that Chrysostom changed his mind. According to this line of thinking, St. John abandoned his fervent ascetic vision, and, as he matured as a pastor, *grew* into his love and appreciation of the Christian family. Others suggest that this pastoral change was occasioned by a previous change in his theological vision, one that

distanced himself from his previous “eschatological” emphases and led him to propagate a vision more “incarnational.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Carter (1962), pp. 357-364. Cf. Musurillo (1956), pp. 7-8; Hill (1998), pp. 174-175; *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 35. Hill accuses Chrysostom of regularly disparaging marriage in comparison with virginity, and then goes on to suggest that Chrysostom, at other times, contradicts himself, and promotes an egalitarian model in which marriage and virginity are seen as two equal paths to God. The latter emphasis, according to Hill, has been a “significant contribution to Christian spirituality allowing for diversity of practice.” How Chrysostom’s exaltation of virginity does not allow for a diversity of practice is unstated by Hill. Perhaps he means, “allowing for a diversity of practice, *with an assumed equality*.” I contend that Chrysostom did not disparage marriage by exalting virginity, nor did he establish parity between marriage and virginity by, at another time, exalting marriage. Elizabeth Clark fills her introduction to Shore’s (1983) translation of Chrysostom’s *On Virginity* with criticisms of Chrysostom, attempting to argue that Chrysostom has not correctly interpreted the Apostle, pp. xi-xxvii. Her criticisms include the following: 1. Chrysostom’s interpretation of St. Paul would have startled the latter. 2. Chrysostom never acknowledges that the virginity of his time is significantly different (more fixed in status, etc.) than that of St. Paul’s time. 3. Chrysostom *read into* St. Paul’s teaching about the permissibility of virgins and widows to marry, assuming that these were virgins and widows who *had not already pledged themselves to chastity*, when, according to Clark, no such detail is evident in Paul’s writings. 4. Chrysostom is said to have “different reasons” than St. Paul for preferring marriage. Paul is said to have expected the return of Jesus at any moment, an eschatological hope which was to quickly fade away. It is this *mistaken eschatology* which is said to have informed St. Paul’s opinions concerning the preference of virginity. Chrysostom on the other hand completely misses the “plain meaning of the text” (that “the time is short”) and so misreads Paul. 5. Chrysostom significantly alters the Pauline motivations for celibacy. Paul saw celibacy as a *practical measure* to facilitate Christian living in anticipation of Christ’s advent. Chrysostom changed celibacy into a semi-divine *ontological status*. Paul discusses virginity as a practical matter, and Chrysostom couches it in Greek philosophical categories foreign to Paul. 6. Chrysostom argued that sexual intercourse and biological reproduction were post-Fall phenomena, and Clark suggests this would have “astounded” Paul. 7. Chrysostom has a more negative attitude toward women than did Paul. 8. Chrysostom “bends” Paul’s words to make his celibacy a matter of Paul’s choice and not a gift of God as St. Paul himself testified that it was. Chrysostom mistakenly interprets Paul’s references to virginity being a “gift of God” by saying that he only said this out of humility. 9. Chrysostom is said to go “far beyond” Paul’s modest warnings concerning the difficulties of married life when he employs the Greek *topoi* concerning miserable marriages. 10. Chrysostom is said to be far more opposed to 2<sup>nd</sup> marriages than Paul was. 11. Clark concludes by positing that Chrysostom’s “moral framework” in approaching virginity was significantly different from Paul’s resulting in Chrysostom’s commentary on 1 Cor. 7 being as much an *eisegesis* as an *exegesis* (pp. vii-xvii). In answer to Clark’s criticisms I suggest the following: 1. This is pure conjecture. 2. Chrysostom acknowledges elsewhere in his writings that the practice of consecrated virginity did not just immediately flower in the early Church but progressed over time. Since the continuity between the practice of the Apostolic age and that of St. John’s was so great there was no need or reason for Chrysostom to highlight the differences. He would not deny the developments Clark notices, but, I believe, would suggest that they were irrelevant for his argument. 3. Clark is “reading into” the silence of St. Paul by denying the possibility as much as she accuses Chrysostom of doing so in affirming it. As well, the matter of the “previous pledge” (1 Tim. 4) of these women argues in behalf of Chrysostom’s emphasis. 4. It is not Chrysostom who misinterprets Paul, but Clark. Her assumption of St. Paul’s mistaken eschatological hope is based on presuppositions not accepted by Chrysostom nor proven by Clark. 5. This (practical vs. ontological) is a false dichotomy. 6. Again she makes a gratuitous assumption, based on an argument from silence. 7. This criticism is based on what I believe is Clark’s mistaken notion that the Pastoral Epistles were not written by St. Paul (and even on her own mistaken assumption her premise cannot be proved- Cf. 1 Cor. 11, 14). 8. Clark here ignores the genre of the text, the intended audience, and the wealth of other places in Chrysostom’s corpus where he does emphasize the matter of virginity being a divine charism. In this text he is writing for decision, to produce ascetics, and so he appeals to will. 9. Certainly Chrysostom does go far beyond the Apostle since he wrote far more on the subject. This does

I suggest that such commentary is most often born of the modern critic's own inability to conceptually maintain Chrysostomian paradigms for both marriage and virginity at the same time. Nowhere in the saint's works does he ever recant, rescind, overturn, or even substantially modify his words concerning asceticism found in his earliest and most "enthusiastic" works. In fact, Chrysostom continued to preach the ascetic life, to exalt virginity, to criticize worldly marriages, and to give practical spiritual guidance for the married until the very end of his life. Not only does he *not* rescind his earlier teaching, but, *on the contrary*, after years of being a pastor, he still refers to his early and quite controversial work, *On Virginity*, as the cogent and abiding expression of his mind on the subject of asceticism. The reference he makes to his work *On Virginity* was occasioned by the fact that in his series of *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* St. John covered the entirety of Chapter 7 in one homily. To justify such a brief treatment of such an important chapter for the Christian understanding of asceticism Chrysostom says the following,

“Now if we have passed lightly by what he [Paul] says of virginity (περὶ τῆς παρθενίας), let no one accuse us of negligence; for indeed an entire book (ὀλόκληρον βιβλίον) hath been composed by us upon this topic and as we have there with all the accuracy which we could (μετὰ ἀκριβείας τῆς ἡμῶν ἐγχωρούσης), gone through every branch of the subject, we considered it a waste of words to introduce it again here. Wherefore, referring the hearer to that work as concerns these things, we will say this one thing here: We must follow after continence (ἐγκράτειαν).”<sup>6</sup>

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not mean, however, that they are in contradiction. If Paul would have expounded on what he meant by the “married will have troubles in this life” what does Clark think he would say? 10. I think this criticism must stand. 11. It is, I suggest, Clark herself who is guilty of eisegesis of Paul and Chrysostom.

<sup>6</sup> *Hom. XIX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.160; NPNF, p. 111. These homilies were preached during his priesthood in Antioch, and are considered to be some of the finest and most polished homilies he delivered.

His posthumously published *Homilies on St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews*, probably the last series of homilies Chrysostom delivered to his flock,<sup>7</sup> continue to impress ascetic themes into the minds of his congregation. So where is this theological and pastoral change? I suggest that it is a phony scholarly construct created to explain *an apparent discrepancy* in Chrysostom's teaching, that has no existence in reality outside of the minds of his critics.

Chrysostom always demonstrated an appreciation of the Christian family. The example of his own early life refutes the notion that he, in his early years, deprecated the Christian family, and failed to hold it in proper balance with the ascetic life. Had such been the case it is unlikely that he would have heeded his mother's request to significantly delay his own departure for Mt. Sylpios until her death. Not only did he acquiesce to her request, but he did so without complaint as a dutiful son who appreciated his family responsibilities. It is reasonable to conjecture that Chrysostom knew so much about the Christian home and appreciated its potential so vividly exactly because he had had such a home himself in the example of his pious mother, St. Anthusa.<sup>8</sup>

In his early works Chrysostom railed against earthly marriages, utilizing a common topos on the sorrows of marriage taken from Greek philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Yet Chrysostom *continued* to warn against the evils of such marriage throughout his ministry.<sup>10</sup> He never ceased using this model.<sup>11</sup> He did not "mature" out of such

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<sup>7</sup> Though this has been assumed by much Chrysostomian scholarship in the last several hundred years Allen (1997) has raised questions concerning this, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> In his *On the Priesthood* Chrysostom writes a memorial to his mother which Dom Chrysostomus Baur (1959) calls, "one of the most beautiful literary memorials of Christian antiquity, and, full of gratitude" showing that "not a breath of discord had marred the beautiful tenderness of the relations between the mother and child," p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> See Treggiari (1991), pp. 207ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Exp. in Ps.*, XLV; PG 55.202. Here he says that time does not suffice for him to describe the troubles of married life.

criticism, because the reality of such sub-Christian unions never ceased. That he would use this topos less and that we would see a greater attention being given to the subject of the sanctification of the Christian family in the years following his ordination to the priesthood *is to be expected* since he received the pastoral charge of hundreds of married families. As a result of this change in his ecclesiastical position, his emphases changed, and became those that were designed to sanctify his sheep, for whom he was responsible. But this was no change in theology, and no step away from a radical eschatological vision. Rather, it is evident that his spiritual counsels to married couples throughout his years as priest and bishop are permeated with a vivid and realized eschatology, upon which he expected married Christians to live their lives.<sup>12</sup>

This present chapter is designed to excavate a wealth of spiritual guidance given to the family from the breadth of St. John's writings, and to posit in so doing the true mind of St. John Chrysostom concerning the spiritual nature and potentiality of the Christian home. His exhortations to Christian families demonstrate his concept of married asceticism, his assumption of the single ethical standard for monk and married person, and his understanding of how the presence of the Kingdom of God following the Incarnation of our Savior has elevated the nature and practice of marriage.

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<sup>11</sup> As Chrysostom did not fail to castigate sub-Christian marriage throughout his ministry, neither did he fail to attack *false virginity*. From the false virginity of the heretics which was based upon aberrant theology and improper motives, to the compromised virginity of Orthodox believers devoid of almsgiving and love, Chrysostom used another Patristic topos to criticize bogus asceticism. He did not just do this to the married state. Virginity which entangles itself in the cares of the world is "much inferior to marriage." *Virg.*, LXXII.5-9; SC 125, p. 368; Shore (1983), p. 116. Chrysostom mocked the charletan ascetics who practiced their bogus asceticism and performed their spurious miracles for food or pay. *Hom. LXXVII in Mt.*; PG 58.710. Cf. Musurillo (1956), p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, X; PG 57.190; NPNF, p. 66. "For the signs too are now complete, which announce that day. For 'this Gospel of the Kingdom,' saith He, 'shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.' Attend with care to what is said... Wherefore I entreat you now to be awakened."

**Family Real Estate: Married Poverty and Dispossession.** Married life is centered in the family home. It involves the possession of personal property. It is as such that marriage is sometimes criticized by St. John as demanding of its participants too much earthly concern. The ascetic is praised for his detachment from earthly things, and his dispossession, which enable him to focus his mind upon the things of the Lord.<sup>13</sup> Is it possible for married couples, who must own property, to be sanctified? Chrysostom answers this positively, and provides many practical counsels about how married couples should use their family homes.

The possession of property is justified by its use. Married Christians should not build elaborate houses designed for display, and should be very thoughtful about the size of their habitation. If someone puts on a sandal larger than one's foot the sandal becomes a hindrance rather than a help. The same is true concerning the family home. It should be just big enough to meet the needs of the family and no more. Most families need nothing more than a house with three rooms, and ought to remember that some large families only have one room in which to dwell.<sup>14</sup> To construct a house excessively large impedes one's progress to heaven and is an irresponsible use of finances, which God has given, not for the construction of excessively large homes, but for distribution to those less fortunate. In fact, one of the primary causes of involuntary poverty is the desire for families to live separately, each in its own home.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXVIII; PG 58.713. It is precisely this dispossession which constitutes virginity, St. Chrysostom here says. This type of almsgiving affectionately binds Christ Himself to the practitioner.

<sup>14</sup> *Hom. XX in Heb.*; PG 63.197. This pedagogical tool of calling to mind the less fortunate is a great boon to Christian simplicity, and has always been in the arsenal of Christian parents and teachers.

<sup>15</sup> *Hom. XI in Ac.*; PG 60.97. In this homily St. John imagines with his congregation what would happen to Antioch if all the Christian families sold their possessions and merged them together as did the early Christians in Jerusalem. He suggests that doing so would eliminate poverty immediately in Antioch (he estimated that there were 50,000 poor there), and that not a single pagan would be left, who did not convert

If someone would like to build a large home it is not forbidden, as long as one builds it in heaven by his generous almsgiving on earth.<sup>16</sup> If you have an extra house the thing to do is to sell it and give it to the needy. In so doing you will, in fact, be giving a house to yourself in the next life.<sup>17</sup> Christ never once entered into an elaborate house, but into the homes of fishermen. Christ considers homes that are filled with virtue to be beautifully adorned. The poor state of a home is not in a disordered kitchen or untidy bed but in the sin of those who inhabit it.<sup>18</sup> The Patriarch Abraham is the model for married Christians, for Abraham did not cover his roof with gold as he could of, being a rich man, but he established his home in a tent near an oak tree, content with its shade. This humble dwelling was to God so illustrious that angels visited. The tent of Abraham was poorly appointed, but it was “more illustrious than the halls of kings” (*τῶν βασιλικῶν αὐλῶν λαμπρότερον*).<sup>19</sup> By his contempt of riches and luxury, and by his refusal to own a home the married Abraham was more austere than many monks who were living at the tops of the mountains outside of Antioch.<sup>20</sup>

Chrysostom criticized those who sought expensively adorned furniture, and fancy beds. He taught that the truly beautiful bed is “King David’s bed” full of tears of confession. The Patriarch Jacob taught us to hold fancy beds in contempt by laying on the bare ground and using a rock for his pillow, and God showed his pleasure in such asceticism by granting to Jacob a vision as he slept. Married Christians ought to use the practice of sleeping on the ground (*καταδικάζωμεν χαμεννίαις*) as a sort of self-imposed

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to Christianity, drawn irresistibly to the Church by the witness of the faithful. The monks in the mountains of Antioch were already living this communal way and were examples for the faithful to imitate.

<sup>16</sup> *Stat., II*; PG 49.41.

<sup>17</sup> *Exp. in Ps., IX*; PG 55.122.

<sup>18</sup> *Hom. LXXXIII in Mt.*; PG 58.751.

<sup>19</sup> *Stat., II*. PG 49.40; NPNF, p. 349.

<sup>20</sup> *Prov., XIII.2*; SC 79, p. 188.



penance for certain sins.<sup>21</sup> Especially contemptible is the practice of perfuming bed linens, which is a practice rooted in luxury.<sup>22</sup> The furniture of a Christian household must be prayers, alms, supplications and vigils.<sup>23</sup> Costly tapestries, decorated couches, and elaborate beds do not make a well-appointed home. Rather justice, contempt of money, honor and human values, and the embrace of poverty do.<sup>24</sup>

The aristocracy, who own large estates, should see to it that a church is built on their property, and they should maintain a priest and a deacon on site, who can not only lead them in daily prayers, but teach the whole surrounding village, edify the laborers, bless the wine-press and crops, provide increased estate security, provide for the perpetual memorial of the founders of the church until the Second Coming of Christ, and call down God's blessing.<sup>25</sup> To build a church is a worthy way to give to the poor (*Εἴ τι ἔχεις πένητας ἀναλῶσαι, ἐκεῖ ἀνάλωσον*).<sup>26</sup> This was not only a suggestion given by St. John to the wealthy, but he laid it down as a law that there should be no estate without a church. Such a requirement reflected his great concern for the evangelization of the peasants in the rural areas where the Gospel had not thoroughly gone.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Hom. XI in Mt.*; PG 57.202.

<sup>22</sup> *Laz., I*; PG 48.974.

<sup>23</sup> *Hom. LXXXIII in Mt.*; PG 58.752.

<sup>24</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 15.232-236; SC 188, p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> *Hom. XVIII in Ac.*; PG 60.147.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid., XVIII*; PG 60.147.

<sup>27</sup> Concern for the evangelization of country Christians and the theological education of rural priests continued to be on Chrysostom's heart throughout his ministry. We must remember here the great divide between city and town at this time. The massive chasm between city and village life was not just linguistic (Greek in the cities and Syriac in the villages), nor educational, nor class related, but primarily a matter of the "iron laws of peasant life in a Near Eastern environment." City and village life were two styles of life rooted in millennia of traditional and conflicting rhythms of life. To describe the later theological separation between Chalcedonian Greek city culture and Monophysite Syriac village culture as the result of the reduction of assimilating power of Graeco-Roman society is simplistic. Chrysostom's interest in the evangelization of villages in his diocese was a missionary enterprise of great scope, and in pursuing it he was following the lead of the Syrian ascetics. It was the Syrian holy men who united town and countryside. Brown (1976), pp. 153-165.

Always having the eschatological Day of Judgment in his mind as he guides his flock, Chrysostom has this to say about home-building,

“Is it a fine thing to build one’s self splendid houses, to have servants,<sup>28</sup> to lie and gaze at a gilded roof? Why then, assuredly, it is superfluous and unprofitable. For other buildings there are, far brighter and more majestic than these; on such we must gladden our eyes, for there is none to hinder us. Wilt thou see the fairest of roofs? At eventide look upon the starred heaven. ‘But,’ saith some one, ‘this roof is not mine.’ Yet in truth this is more thine than that other. For thee it was made, and is common to thee and to thy brethren; the other is not thine, but theirs who after thy death inherit it. The one may do thee the greatest service, guiding thee by its beauty to its Creator; the other the greatest harm, becoming thy greatest accuser on the Day of Judgment, inasmuch as it is covered with gold, while Christ hath not even needful raiment. Let us not, I entreat you, be subject to such folly, let us not pursue things which flee away, and flee those which endure; let us not betray our own salvation, but hold fast to our hope of what shall be hereafter; the aged, as certainly knowing that but a little space of life is left us; the young, as well persuaded that what is left is not much. For that day cometh so as a thief in the night. Knowing this, let wives exhort their husbands, and husbands admonish their wives; let us teach youths and maidens, and all instruct one another, to care not for present things, but to desire those which are to come.”<sup>29</sup>

**The Typikon of the Domestic Church.** St. John counseled that the Christian home be well-ordered according to a certain *domestic typikon*. The ecclesiastical ethos of the Christian home is maintained by a fervent and continual link with the Church. The blessing of the household is contingent upon a faithful participation in the prayers of the

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<sup>28</sup> Chrysostom, in his 40<sup>th</sup> homily on 1 Corinthians, very boldly exhorted his faithful to vocationally train their slaves and then free them. He abruptly ended his exhortation saying, “But I see that I am making you angry!” *Hom. XL in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.354. Cf. Gordon, B. (1989), pp. 116ff for more on Chrysostom’s approach to scarcity, and St. Gregory of Nyssa’s anti-slavery text. It is not true that the Fathers *never* called for the abolition of slavery.

<sup>29</sup> *Hom. XLVII in Jn.*; PG 59.268-270. Chrysostom practiced what he preached. When he inherited the Episcopal Palace in Constantinople from his predecessor Bishop Nektarios, he found large amounts of precious marble stored for use in the palace. Chrysostom sold them, and used the funds for a hospital.

Church. No excuse should be tolerated in families for staying away from religious services.<sup>30</sup> Time in the Church should be preferred to time anywhere else.

“What profit do you gain which can outweigh the loss you bring on yourself and your whole household when you stay away from the religious service? Suppose you find a whole treasure house filled with gold, and this discovery is your reason for staying away. You have lost more than you found, and your loss is as much greater as things of the spirit are better than the things we see.”<sup>31</sup>

Again Chrysostom discloses the secret of the virtuous life: “Nothing contributes to a virtuous and moral way of life as does the time you spend here in church (*πολιτείαν δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφίαν οὐδὲν οὕτως, ὡς ἡ ἐνταῦθα ποιεῖ διατριβή*)...the time we spend here in church is the basis of every blessing” (*Ἡ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα διατριβὴ πάντων ὑπόθεσις ἐστὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν*).<sup>32</sup> The sanctification of the Christian family starts and ever continues, according to Chrysostom, by a faithful participation in the life of the corporate body of the Church. The sanctity of home life is a sanctity *derived* from the holiness of the Church, and the latter undergirds every joy of the home. It is not the sanctity of the family that is primary and that produces the same in the Church, but vice versa. One day in seven, the Lord’s Day, must be consecrated to the matters of the soul and should be free of worldly endeavors.<sup>33</sup> On the Lord’s Day parents should especially teach their children the Christian faith.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> On several occasions St. John labored to assure his faithful that it was entirely appropriate to come to church after having eaten a meal, when the service at the church was non-eucharistic. *Stat., IX*; PG 49.103-104. Cf. *Hom. X in Gen.*; PG 54.82.

<sup>31</sup> *Anom., XI*; PG 48.800-1; Harkins (1984), pp. 281-3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid., XII*; PG 48.811; Harkins (1984), pp. 305-6.

<sup>33</sup> *Hom. V in Mt.*; PG 57.55.

<sup>34</sup> *Hom. III in Jn.*; PG 59.37.

Imitating the practices of the Church, the Christian home should have formal prayers every morning and evening.<sup>35</sup> The husband and wife must be sure to pray together (*Εὐχαὶ γενέσθωσαν ὑμῖν κοιναί*).<sup>36</sup> Upon arising, which should be done before the sun, and before washing, one should say his prayers. For just as water washes the body, so prayers wash the soul.<sup>37</sup> Following the evening meal the family should give themselves to thanksgiving (*Ὁ γὰρ μετὰ τὴν τράπεζαν καιρὸς εὐχαριστίας ἐστὶ καιρὸς*), and not to drunkenness and excess.<sup>38</sup> Married couples can imitate the self-denial of the monks by giving themselves to thanksgiving and psalm singing in the home.<sup>39</sup> After our Savior fed the multitudes He did not dismiss them to sleep but taught them. To such instruction families should commit themselves following their meals.

Each person should strictly judge his own behavior during the day just before retiring for bed. If one remembers hell before going to bed, the sleep will be peaceful.<sup>40</sup> Nighttime is the special time for prayer. If one is awakened in the middle of the night he should consider this as an opportunity for prayer and arise. Prayer at night is particularly effective.<sup>41</sup> Families should arouse themselves in the middle of the night to pray, and should wake even very young children to join them for at least one or two prayers before putting them back to sleep. By so doing, the parents will not only be imitating Jesus who prayed through the night as an example for Christians to come, but will accustom their children to disciplining their sleep and making it the servant of prayer. This practice

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<sup>35</sup> *Exp. in Ps.*, CXL; PG 55.431.

<sup>36</sup> *Hom. XV in Eph.*; PG 62.117.

<sup>37</sup> *Exp. in Ps.*, V; PG 55.65. I have found this counsel particularly helpful in my pastoral life. When a parishioner finds it difficult to faithfully perform his *κανόνα* I forbid him to brush his teeth in the morning if he has not prayed. This simple obedience greatly encourages fidelity to one's prayer rule.

<sup>38</sup> *Laz. I*; PG 48.974. Cf. *Hom. LXXXII in Mt.*; PG 58.740.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, LV; PG 58.548.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, XLII; PG 57.454-5.

<sup>41</sup> *Exp. in Ps.*, CXXXIII; PG 55.386.

turns homes into churches (*Εἴ σοι καὶ παιδία ἐστὶ, διανάστησον καὶ τὰ παιδία, καὶ γενέσθω διὰ πάντων ἡ οἰκία ἐκκλησία διὰ τῆς νυκτός*).<sup>42</sup>

Christian families should practice fasting.<sup>43</sup> Christians are not to live to eat, but, rather, are to eat to live (*Οὐ γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐγενόμεθα καὶ ζῶμεν, ἵνα φάγωμεν καὶ πίνωμεν. ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἐσθίωμεν, ἵνα ζῶμεν*).<sup>44</sup> Such fasting is not only for the older and stronger members of the family, but even for the infants<sup>45</sup> and the family pets. The animals of the pagan Ninevites fasted, and the Prophet Joel required that even the infants on the breast fast. Families should become proficient in fasting so that it functions as a proper medicine. They must pay attention to the time fasting should be practised (Wednesdays and Fridays especially),<sup>46</sup> the quantity and severity of the regimen, the temperament of their individual bodies, the nature of the country, the season of the year, the particulars of the fasting diet, and many other particulars. If we pay such attention to our body when it is sick, how much more should we when this type of attention to the body is in the direct service of the health of the soul? Most of all, families should insure that when they fast they are actually sinning less.<sup>47</sup>

Families should regularly make pilgrimages to the shrines of the martyrs. Such pilgrimages will obtain for the family much joy and happiness. Families who bring their troubles to the relics of the saints, even to their sepulchres for they too have been filled

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<sup>42</sup> *Hom. XXVI in Ac.*; PG 60.203. Here we see clearly St. John's concept of familial asceticism. Cf. *Educ. Lib.*, 22.323; SC 188, p. 108, where Chrysostom argues that all parents should shorten the sleep of their children for the purposes of prayer from their youth.

<sup>43</sup> *Hom. LV in Mt.*; PG 58.548.

<sup>44</sup> *Laz. I*; PG 48.975. Here Chrysostom echoes Socrates, as did St. Clement of Alexandria before him.

<sup>45</sup> *Stat. III*; PG 49.52. Chrysostom posits that the Prophet Joel calls upon young children to fast because they are able to appease the Lord's wrath more easily than adults since they themselves, being innocent, are not the cause of His displeasure.

<sup>46</sup> Youths are to be taught to fast, not always, but rather on Wednesday and Fridays. *Educ. Lib.*, 79.954-5; SC 188, p. 184.

<sup>47</sup> *Stat. III*; PG 49.53.

with grace (οὐδὲ γὰρ τὰ σώματα μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ θῆκαι τῶν ἁγίων πνευματικῆς εἰσι τεπληρωμένοι χάριτος), will return to their homes with great joy and consolation.<sup>48</sup> Pilgrimage to see the ascetics in the desert will enable the family to estrange itself from the world. The ascetics in the monasteries (μοναστήρια) are like light-houses, drawing all men to their calm and preserving from shipwreck those who make friends with them. “Go then to their tabernacles. To go to the monastery of a holy man is to pass, as it were, from earth to heaven” (Ἄπιθι πρὸς τὰς τῶν ἁγίων σκηνάς. ὡσπερ ἀπὸ γῆς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, οὕτως ἐστὶν εἰς μοναστήριον ἀνδρὸς ἁγίου καταφυγεῖν).<sup>49</sup>

It should be the custom of the family to exercise spiritual care when they pass through the thresholds of their homes to enter the world. Upon leaving the house one should without fail say, “I renounce thee Satan, thy pomps, and service and I enter into Thy service O Christ.”<sup>50</sup> The sign of the Precious Cross should be inscribed on the doorposts of the dwelling and throughout the house on windows and walls.<sup>51</sup> Such will offer immense protection to the home. “For if we, on seeing the places in which criminals are beheaded, shudder; think what the evil must endure, seeing the weapon, whereby Christ put an end to all his power, and cut off the head of the dragon.”<sup>52</sup> Parents who have small

<sup>48</sup> *Pan. Ign.*; PG 50.595. Family pilgrimages were encouraged by St. John not just to the shrines of martyrs and holy sites such as Job’s dunghill in Arabia (see *Stat. V*; PG 49.69), but also to monastic settlements and holy men scattered in the deserts.

<sup>49</sup> *Hom. XIV in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.575.

<sup>50</sup> *Catech. II*; PG 49.240; Harkins (1963), p. 191. St. John delivered this exhortation to the catechumens who were familiar with such public renunciations since they were part of the conversion process they were undergoing.

<sup>51</sup> *Hom. LIV in Mt.*; PG 58.537. It was pious custom in the time of Chrysostom for Christian women to wear small portions of the Holy Gospels on chains around their necks similar to Jewish phylacteries, and to have something similar above their beds at home. *Ibid.*, *LXXII*; PG 58.669. Cf. *Stat.*, *XIX*; PG 49.196, where Chrysostom says that these suspended Gospels are a powerful protection, and calls upon those who wear them to imprint their message upon their minds.

<sup>52</sup> *Hom. LIV in Mt.*; PG 58.537; NPNF, p. 336.

children, who are not able to cross themselves, should make the sign of the Cross on the foreheads of these young ones until they are old enough to do it themselves.<sup>53</sup>

**Almsgiving in the Home.** Besides establishing a temporal prayer discipline in the home, the Christian family should exert itself in almsgiving. If at all possible, families should dedicate *one entire room* in the home to providing shelter for the needy. It should be a guestroom reserved for Christ himself,<sup>54</sup> who will most assuredly come and dwell there in the presence of the poor. Even if it is not glamorous and is underground Christ will not disdain it. Families should say among themselves, “This is Christ’s cell” (*Τοῦτο τὸ κελλίον τοῦ Χριστοῦ*). In so doing Christian families can even joyfully compete with the Church in liberality, and, in the process, the poor man in receiving of the family’s generosity will become for the home a wall, fence, shield and spear to protect from the enemy. For, “where alms are, the devil dares not approach, nor any other evil thing” (*Ἐνθα ἐλεημοσύνη, οὐ τολμᾷ προσελθεῖν ὁ διάβολος, οὐδὲ ἄλλο τι τῶν δεινῶν*).<sup>55</sup>

Besides the poor, families should seek to offer hospitality to holy men. To accustom the floor of one’s house to the feet of the saints is to shelter oneself from the demons.<sup>56</sup> While giving special attention to the monks, Christian families must not fail to offer great hospitality to all of their brothers and sisters. “If then we see even a secular person in misfortune, let us stretch out our hand to him. Let us not be zealous for those only who dwell in the mountains; they are indeed saints both in manner of life and in faith (*ἅγιοι μὲν γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι καὶ βίῳ καὶ πίστει*); these others however are saints by their faith, and many of them also in manner of life (*ἅγιοι δὲ καὶ οὗτοι τῇ πίστει, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ*

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<sup>53</sup> *Hom. XII in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.106.

<sup>54</sup> *Hom. XLV in Ac.*; PG 60.319.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, *XLV*; PG 60.320; NPNF, p. 277.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, *LIII*; PG 60.373.

βίω).”<sup>57</sup> Families must be careful not to spend more money on the maintenance of domestic pets than on the care of the poor. This was a tragedy taking place in Chrysostom’s day, and today has progressed to a far more ludicrous degree in the Western world.<sup>58</sup>

Almsgiving should be associated clearly with the prayer life in the home, just as it is in the Church. Each family should keep a small alms chest (*κιβώτιον πενήτων*) at home in the prayer corner of the family.<sup>59</sup> At the hour of prayer alms should *first* be deposited and *then* prayer commenced. Each time income is received at least 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the income (*μη ἔλαττον τῆς δεκάτης μοίρας*) should be deposited in this box. This will give power to prayer, and make the house holy. Another version of this box should be kept near one’s bedside, and prior to retiring some gift should be deposited. This will bring on undisturbed sleep (*ἀφαντασίαστος ἔσται ἡ νύξ*).<sup>60</sup> One should especially remember almsgiving as death approaches. Having said that, however, it a great temptation to reserve almsgiving until one’s death and this is a tragic mistake and often a sinful justification for delinquency in almsgiving during one’s life. It may be that death will come quickly and no opportunity may be given to the greedy in life to make alms at death.<sup>61</sup> It is improper to bequeath a large estate to one’s children. Instead, one should give them a much better inheritance by giving away one’s money to the poor in their name, and so making God their debtor.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Hom. X in Heb.*; PG 63.87; NPNF, p. 416. Here, at the end of Chrysostom’s pastoral life, we see his same two-fold emphasis on the exalted nature of monasticism, and the potentiality of piety in the world.

<sup>58</sup> Chrysostom complained that some families spent more money on their pets than on their own needy kin! *Hom. XLVII in Jn.*; PG 59.268. What would St. John have said if pastorally faced with the contemporary rise of pet cemeteries, health insurance policies, surgical centers, luxury foods, etc.?!!

<sup>59</sup> Brown (1988) says that this was a Jewish custom that Chrysostom “reluctantly admired,” p. 313.

<sup>60</sup> *Hom. XLIII in I Cor.*; PG 61.372-3.

<sup>61</sup> *Hom. LXXVIII in Mt.*; PG 58.713.

<sup>62</sup> *Hom. VII in Rom.*; PG 60.452-453.



**The Enthronement of Holy Scripture in the Home.** Nothing is to characterize the home life of Christians as much as the study of Holy Scripture. Indeed, love for the divine sayings is the surest sign of spiritual health, according to St. John Chrysostom.<sup>63</sup> The Scriptures are to be perused constantly at home, but in anticipation of the upcoming Church services and in reflection upon what has been read and preached about in Church.<sup>64</sup> Chrysostom opens one of his homilies on St. John's Gospel with these words which express his guidance concerning Scripture reading by his faithful in preparation for the Divine Liturgy,

“I desire to ask one favor of you all, before I touch on the words of the Gospel; do not refuse my request, for I ask nothing heavy or burdensome... What then is it that I require of you? That each of you take in hand that section of the Gospels which is to be read among you on the first day of the week, or even on the Sabbath, and before the day arrive, that he sit down at home and read it through, and often carefully consider its contents, and examine its parts well, what is clear, what obscure, what seems to make for the adversaries, but does not really so; and when you have tried, in a word, every point, so go to hear it read. For from zeal like this will be no small gain both to you and to us.”<sup>65</sup>

It is not possible for one to be saved without taking advantage of spiritual reading (Οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν, οὐκ ἔστι τινὰ σωθῆναι μὴ συνεχῶς ἀναγνώσεως ἀπολαύοντα πνευματικῆς).<sup>66</sup> Such literary asceticism is not the sole domain of monks, but is the calling of secular

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<sup>63</sup> *Hom. XV in Gen.*; PG 54.118. We should not forget, however, that such dependence on Holy Scripture is itself a witness to our fallen condition. The inspired written word is only the *δεύτερος πλοῦς*: Second to the life Adam enjoyed, when man was so pure that the Spirit in the heart was what now ink is on the page. *Ibid.*, I; PG 57.13.

<sup>64</sup> Chrysostom used to announce his upcoming homiletical topics in advance to his congregation so that they could read up on the subject and prepare themselves for the study. *Laz. III*; PG 48.991.

<sup>65</sup> *Hom. XI in Jn.*; PG 59.77.

<sup>66</sup> *Laz. III*; PG 48.993.

Christians as well.<sup>67</sup> Chrysostom does not tire in exhorting his faithful to discuss his homilies at home. He wants them to chew on his words.<sup>68</sup>

“When you go home, therefore, discourse of all these things with those who are in your house; and as many persons often do, when they come back from a meadow, having plucked there a rose, or a violet, or some flower of that kind, they return twisting it about with their fingers; and as some, again, when they quit the gardens to go home, take with them branches of trees, with their fruit upon them...so indeed do thou, departing from hence [the Liturgy], take an exhortation home to thy wife, to thy children, and all thine household.”<sup>69</sup>

Such spiritual discussions should constantly take place in the home, the father should always have a spiritual book in his hands, and even neighbors should be invited to join.<sup>70</sup> Fathers are to be like paternal birds who, having found some nourishment, immediately fly off to deposit the goods in the mouth of mother and young ones.<sup>71</sup> Chrysostom expected that fathers utilize the dinner table for instruction. Scripture stories should be retold by the father at the table. The mother should listen carefully so she can reiterate the stories and question the children about them at a latter date. The father should make significant ethical applications from the stories, and then later ask the children to retell the stories themselves. In this way he insures that the stories are well understood. Such knowledge will thrill the hearts of the children when they hear the stories read in church, and are familiar with them and able to anticipate the reading. This will give them a great sense of pride.<sup>72</sup> Families would do well not even to wait until they get home to discuss what was read and preached in church, but on the way home begin

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, III; PG 48.992.

<sup>68</sup> *Stat. VI*; PG 49.90. Cf. *Laz. III*; PG 48.992; *Hom. II in Gen.*; PG 53.31. This attention to the homily will turn the house into a church.

<sup>69</sup> *Stat. VI*; PG 49.90; NPNF, p. 388.

<sup>70</sup> *Hom. VI in Gen.*; PG 53.61. Chrysostom places great responsibility on the shoulders of Christian families for the spiritual well-being of their neighbors. As the Church is a beacon of light to the world, so every Christian home is expected to be to the neighborhood. Cf. *Ibid.*, VII; PG 53.69.

<sup>71</sup> *Hom. V in 2 Thess.*; PG 62.499.

the discussion.<sup>73</sup> Christians must guard carefully the grace they have received in church, and not, after having just taken a bath, run right back into the bog. What has been heard must be solidified by reflection.<sup>74</sup> The sacred books of the Church are to be carefully studied at home, and from this study flow countless blessings.<sup>75</sup> Of all the oracles of Sacred Scripture, it is most important that attention be given to the reading of the Holy Gospels.<sup>76</sup> Such reading in the home should be done by a man with his head uncovered, and by a woman with her head covered.<sup>77</sup>

No excuse will be accepted for ignorance of Holy Scripture. Such ignorance is the root of all society's ills (*Τοῦτο πάντων αἴτιον τῶν κακῶν, τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι τὰς Γραφάς*).<sup>78</sup> How is it possible that so many can memorize the lyrics of satanic songs but are not able to memorize Holy Scripture?<sup>79</sup> It is the greatest insult to God to be indifferent to the reading of Holy Scripture. It would be better for indifferent Christians to tie up their Bibles and bury them in dung, than to continue to allow them to sit in their homes unread and unheeded. It is the greatest disgrace to show such indifference.<sup>80</sup> Those who say that the Scriptures repeat the same old things over and over are condemned by their own ignorance for they cannot even name the prophets!<sup>81</sup> It is impossible to exhaust the meaning and richness of Scripture.

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<sup>72</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 39-41; SC 188, pp. 130-138. Here Chrysostom also demonstrates what he means to his listeners but narrating and applying several Scripture stories for his listeners to give them an exact model of how to proceed.

<sup>73</sup> *Hom. XIV in Gen.*; PG 53.117.

<sup>74</sup> *Hom. V in Mt.*; PG 57.55.

<sup>75</sup> *Hom. XXIX in Gen.*; PG 53.262.

<sup>76</sup> *Hom. LIV in Jn.*; PG 59.296.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, LIV; PG 59.295.

<sup>78</sup> *Hom. IX in Col.*; PG 62.361.

<sup>79</sup> *Hom. II in Mt.*; PG 57.30. For more on Chrysostom's attitude toward popular music see Petropoulos (1989), pp. 159ff.

<sup>80</sup> *Hom. XIX in Ac.*; PG 60.155.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX; PG 60.156. Cf. *Hom. XXXI in Rom.*; PG 60.667.

**Christian Education of Children.** The proper education of children was something that St. John gave much attention to. Though he himself profited greatly from classical Greek education (*ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία*), he made a frontal assault upon the educational norms of his society as he argued for an authentic Christian education (*ἐν Χριστῷ παιδεία*). The educational goal is no longer to be that established by Hellenistic rhetoric, but the Christian formation of the child as spiritual athlete.<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to underestimate how *radical* Chrysostom was being to attack Greek paideia. This form of education had not only been established for centuries, but there were virtually no viable Christian alternatives in the late fourth century.<sup>83</sup> What Chrysostom was promoting was both radical and novel, and could be compared in gravity to a wholehearted rejection of state education in the post-Christian west.<sup>84</sup> The system under criticism was immensely dominant. Chief amongst the criticisms of Chrysostom leveled against traditional Greek rhetorical studies in his *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* is the *moral danger* that Christian youth are placed in if they follow typical Greek patterns of education. Pederasty is what Chrysostom had in the forefront of his mind.<sup>85</sup> He lamented that so many parents knew how their children were being morally polluted, but tolerated it as the *status quo*.

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<sup>82</sup> Chrysostom called rhetoric, “an ostentatious display of adolescents at play.” *Oppugn. III*; PG 47.368; Hunter (1988) writes, “Here Chrysostom maintains that the moral formation which rhetorical education requires cannot be found in the Greek tradition,” p. 153. Chrysostom’s relationship with his teacher, the prime rhetor of Antioch, the famed pagan Libanios, has long been a subject of discussion. Hunter (1989) pp. 129-135, explores the development of the relationship between the two for the years after Chrysostom left Libanios’ tutelage and the notion that in a significant number of Chrysostom’s works Libanios was in view.

<sup>83</sup> Marrou (1956) is an excellent source for understanding the classical Greek educational milieu at this time. He notes how many metaphors Chrysostom drew from the Greek gymnasium, pp. 184ff; Cf. Alfeyev (2003), pp. 54ff for the availability of theological education in the first six centuries and the process of synthesizing classical Greek and Christian educations.

<sup>84</sup> Indeed, what Chrysostom was promoting was even more radical since classical Greek education had been entrenched longer than any contemporary system has, and exercised a greater monopoly.

“But the parents of the children who are being violated bear it in silence; they do not bury themselves in the earth along with their children, nor do they think of some remedy for that evil. If it were necessary to take the children to a foreign land to save them from this sickness, or to the sea, or to the islands, or to an inaccessible land, or to the world beyond us, should we not do and suffer all these things so as not to allow these defilements?...But now, when such a great plague has spread everywhere, not only do we ourselves drag them down into the depths, but we drive away those who wish to set them free as if they were corrupters. What rage, what thunderbolts do these crimes not deserve?”<sup>86</sup>

The best context for this Christian education is the pedagogy of the monastics, but since that is not always possible, the parents must make sure that the children have as monastic and spiritual an education as possible. It is incumbent on parents to exert the greatest concern regarding their children’s education. St John lamented the fact that so many parents direct their efforts to insuring that their children become rich, instead of wise.<sup>87</sup> Typically parents took great pains to give their children training in arts, literature, and speech, but paid no heed to their acquisition of virtue.<sup>88</sup> Just as some conscientious parents show immense care to insure that their children are progressing in secular learning, so they should show the same care to insure that their children are making progress in the school of the Church and in Christian development.<sup>89</sup>

Though Christian education was a theme that St. John visited in many contexts and at many times, as a priest in Antioch about A. D. 388 he delivered a famous homily on *On Vainglory and The Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children* that was dedicated to providing a paradigm for the Christian education of children. It is the most dense portion of his corpus given to this subject. In that homiletical treatise he argues the following.

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<sup>85</sup> On the connection between paedophilia and Greek classical education see Marrou (1956), Pt. I, Ch. 3, pp. 50ff, who devoted an entire chapter of his classic work to this theme.

<sup>86</sup> *Oppugn. III*; PG 47.362. How would Chrysostom castigate parents today for allowing their children to sit through state sponsored *sex education* in which co-eds roll condoms onto each others’ fingers?

<sup>87</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 16.239-242; SC 188, p.96.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 18; SC 188, p. 95.

The pedagogical task is the *responsibility of parents*. They are the ones ultimately accountable for the education of their children. If they are to enlist the assistance of tutors and pedagogues they must take thorough care that these are positive influences and helpful in the goal of acquiring virtue.<sup>90</sup> Parents are to regard themselves as artists. Like painters (*ζωγράφοι*) or sculptors (*λιθοξόοι*) they must fashion their children. As painters place their canvas on the easel and add to it day by day, so parents must inspect their children daily, giving their leisure time to the improvement of the artwork, adding what is lacking and removing what is superfluous.<sup>91</sup>

Christian education must begin from the earliest age for the lessons learned in early youth remain with the child for good or ill. Parents must make good use of the beginning of their children's lives.<sup>92</sup> When children are young they are like warm wax and the impress (*κηρός*) that they receive will soon harden and remain.<sup>93</sup> As young plants need the greatest amount of care so do young children.<sup>94</sup> Toward this end parents should give an incentive to goodness to their children from the start by giving them Christian names. It is not proper to name our children after our forebears. No righteous man in the Scriptures did this. Rather, we are to name our children after the righteous, martyrs, bishops and apostles so that every time they hear their name they will be encouraged to emulate the saints.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Hom. XXXVII in Gen.*; PG 53.293.

<sup>90</sup> This is clear from the fact that St. John constantly refers to the parents as holding responsibility for their children's education, and speaks of tutors as servants of the parents.

<sup>91</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 22.306-312; SC 188, pp. 106-108.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.292; SC 188, p. 104.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.288-290; SC 188, p. 104.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.470-472; SC 188, p. 128.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.646-651; SC 188, pp. 144-146. Chrysostom also forbids the superstitious naming rituals of the Greeks involving the lighting of multiple lamps and watching to see which goes out first. Such customs he calls a great disgrace and laughable. *Ibid.*, 48.653-659; SC 188, p. 146. Cf. *Hom. XII in I Cor.*; PG 61.105. For more on the significance of names and the changing of names in Holy Scripture one may see Chrysostom's treatise, *De Mutatione Nominum, Hom. II in Ac. 9:1*; PG 51.123-132.

Chrysostom considered the most important instruction to be that concerning the Church's feast days. As God commanded the Jews to do, so Christian parents must teach their children the significance of the Christian feasts. To fail to do so is to be condemned as a neglectful parent, and to be such is to be worse than a murderer of one's own children. There is nothing worse than to corrupt the soul, and to harm the soul of a child is far worse than to harm his body. Some parents allow their children to be formed by listening to satanical songs (*διαβολικά μελίσματα*). Such parents need to be severely chastised. It is these neglectful parents who do not teach their children the Scripture stories.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, in order to fulfill their educational tasks, the parents must have Christian education themselves and know the laws of Christ, in order to pass them on to their children.<sup>97</sup> If parents wish their children to be disciplined and well-educated in virtue they must be so themselves.<sup>98</sup> Basic ethics must be taught thoroughly at home so that the priest at church can teach the deeper truths of Scripture.<sup>99</sup>

The proper education of children requires the consecration of all their senses to God. Chrysostom begins with the tongue. Children must be trained from the beginning to speak only words of reverence, giving thanks, singing solemn hymns, speaking about God and "heavenly philosophy" (*περὶ φιλοσοφίας τῆς ἄνω*).<sup>100</sup> Children must be taught to use their tongues not to criticize others, but to pinpoint their own faults. Banishing evil speaking the child must be taught to sing hymns to God instead of shameful songs. If the child is accustomed to foul speech the parent should not despair of improving him. On

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<sup>96</sup> *Exp. in Ps.*, XLIII; PG 55.169. For more on Chrysostom's expectation for parents to teach their children Holy Scripture see the section in this chapter entitled *The Enthronement of Holy Scripture in the Home*.

<sup>97</sup> *Oppugn. III*; PG 47.357. Hunter (1988), p. 134.

<sup>98</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 70.849-852; SC 188, p. 170.

<sup>99</sup> *Stat.*, .XVI, PG 49.164.

<sup>100</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 28.400; SC 188, p. 118.

the contrary, if parents follow the advice St. John is offering them, the child would be thoroughly reformed within two months and his good habits will have become second nature.<sup>101</sup>

Next, attention must be given to the education of the ears. Nothing harmful should be heard by the child. Parents are to imagine that their child is a great and holy house being erected for God. Builders do not let just anyone approach their building while it is in process. Only those that are well-fitted to contribute to the building are allowed to draw near. Such should be the standard employed by parents for permitting associations with their children.<sup>102</sup> If the child has been around lewd speakers the parent should punish, if possible, those so speaking, and inquire zealously what was said to correct it.<sup>103</sup> Next St John calls upon parents to protect the child's sense of smell from fragrant scents and perfumes, which weaken the soul, and make it effeminate. Such scents fan desires.<sup>104</sup>

Then there is the sight, fairest of all the senses but difficult to guard. Here the parent must employ strict laws, and the first of these is this: never permit your child to attend the theatre so that he is not corrupted via his ears and eyes (*μηδέποτε εἰς θέατρον πεμπέσθω τὸ παιδίον, ἵνα μὴ λύμην ὀλόκληρον καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν δέχεται*).<sup>105</sup> When he is in public and walking through the squares he should have a mature companion with him to help shelter him. Especially young men should be kept away from the sight of young women, and should never bathe in mixed company.<sup>106</sup> As

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.441; SC 188, p. 124.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.483-490; SC 188, p. 130.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.706-709; SC 188, p. 152.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.720-721; SC 188, p. 154.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.733-734; SC 188, p. 154.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.754-756; SC 188, p. 158. Chrysostom worked against the common communal bathing system of the Roman Empire. The Roman baths were centers not just for washing, but for exercise, leisure,



in all training, it is not sufficient simply to shelter a child from corrupting influences. The parent must also expose the child to healthy influences. The eyes must not only avoid impurity, but must be exposed to fair sights such as the sun in its splendor, the flowers and meadows, and beautiful books (*βιβλίων κάλλη*). Such sights, and many others like it, will nourish the child and contain him.<sup>107</sup>

The sense of touch must be trained to be austere, and to avoid soft raiment and bodies.<sup>108</sup> If such strictness is going to be well accepted by a child, the parent must both remind the child of the righteous youths who have lived this way and been greatly blessed, and the parent must promise to the child many tangible blessings from his own hand, such as a beautiful wife, a fitting inheritance, an imminent wedding, recreation, the site of fair buildings, and many gifts.<sup>109</sup> By bestowing these “harmless pleasures” (*τέρφεις ἀβλαβεῖς*) the child will patiently bear the rejection of the theatre.

The most effective means of education is emulation. This is why the child must be sheltered from evil influences, and it is also the reason why parents should labor to associate their children with holy people, and especially other youths, who are being carefully raised.<sup>110</sup> It is important for the children to know their own bishop or priest (*τὸν*

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exposure to art and cultural programs, the establishment of business contacts, and general socializing. They might be compared to the modern American gym. Much of this communal bathing took place in a co-ed environment that bred sexual immorality. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century bath house architecture changes from communal pools to the more private and modest individualized tubs, under Christian influence, Ward (1992), pp. 125-147. The only converse a young man should have with a woman, should be that with his own mother. *Ibid.*, 62.772-773; SC 188, p. 160. One of the primary reasons for this is that “intimacy breeds attachment” (*αἱ συνήθειαι τὰς φιλίας τίκτουσιν*). *Hom. II in Eph.*; PG 62.20. Should a young man find himself comfortable in the intimate presence of a young woman there is no stopping the natural bonds that will develop and often find sexual expression.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.747-750; SC 188, pp. 156-158. Laistner (1951) notes that beautiful books may be a reference to illuminated manuscripts, but that is not at all certain since Chrysostom elsewhere criticizes those who possess books written with golden letters on fancy parchment, and calls such books vainglorious. He says that they simply display the books and do not read them. See pp. 138-139.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.776-784; SC 188, p. 162.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.759-760; SC 188, p. 158; Cf. *Ibid.*, 78.931-934; SC 188, p. 180.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.932; SC 188, p. 180.

τῆς ἐκκλησίας προεστῶτα) personally, to hear words of praise from his lips, and to hear his father priding himself on this before others. This intimacy with the priest is a “protection of chastity” (σωφροσύνης φυλακτήριον).<sup>111</sup> While doing so the father must instill in the child a disdain for sinful ways of life through argument and mockery. He must teach his son that the sight of naked women and the hearing of foul speech are for pathetic people. Chrysostom encourages fathers to take their sons into public in the evening in order to watch the old men coming out of the theatre and to jeer (καταγελᾶτω) at them as buffoons and fools, since they have less sense than the young and even in their old age are inflamed with desire.<sup>112</sup> The son should then be reminded that for such behavior these men will receive only shame (αἰσχύνην), reproach (ᾠνειδος), and condemnation (κατάγνωσιν). Such mockery will strengthen the child’s sense of culture, and help him to understand that his way of life is the more exalted.

**Spousal Relations and Domestic Polity.** The well-ordered Christian home begins in the proper relationship between husband and wife. “There is nothing which so welds our life together as the love of man and wife” (Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως ἡμῶν συγκροτεῖ τὸν βίον, ὡς ἔρωσ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός).<sup>113</sup> The husband must have the highest regard for the salvation of his wife. If he neglects her salvation, he is storing up for himself great vengeance.<sup>114</sup> The husband should be continually concerned with keeping his wife free

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.1010-1013; SC 188, p. 190.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.956-962; SC 188, p. 184.

<sup>113</sup> *Hom. XV in Eph.*; PG 62.136. In Chrysostom’s counsels on the supreme importance of marital harmony, and in his conception of the very ethos of home life, he reflects the conjugal precepts of Plutarch to a great degree.

<sup>114</sup> *Jud. II*; PG 48.860.

from anguish, and not take too much notice of her words of complaint.<sup>115</sup> The husband should seek to break off his wife's bad passions little-by-little, utilizing small steps.<sup>116</sup>

There is no democracy in the Christian home.<sup>117</sup> Rather the Christian home must be a benevolent monarchy. God has established a detailed governing order.

“In order that the one might be subject, and the other rule (for equality is wont oftentimes to bring in strife) he suffered it [the family] to be not a democracy (*δημοκρατίαν*), but a monarchy (*βασιλείαν*); and as in an army, this order one may see in every family. In the rank of monarch, for instance, there is the husband; but in the rank of lieutenant and general, the wife; and the children too are allotted a third station in command. Then after these a fourth order, that of the servant. For these also bear rule over their inferiors, and some one of them is oftentimes set over the whole, keeping ever the post of the master, but still as a servant. And together with this again another command, and among the children themselves again another, according to their age and sex... And everywhere hath God made governments at small distances and thick together, that all might abide in concord and much good order.”<sup>118</sup>

How is it that love can exist in such a hierarchy where fear is required? Chrysostom answers, “It will exist there, I say, preeminently. For she that fears and reverences him as being the head, and loves him as being a member, since the head itself is a member of the body at large.”<sup>119</sup>

To the husband God entrusted the market-place, and to the wife God entrusted the home. The man feeds and the woman clothes.<sup>120</sup> The husband works in the politics of

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<sup>115</sup> *Hom. XXXVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.357.

<sup>116</sup> *Hom. XXX in Mt.*; PG 57.368. In this homily Chrysostom uses the same metaphor of the artist fashioning his masterpiece to describe the work of a husband on a wife, that he uses in his *On the Right Upbringing of Children* for the work of parents on their children.

<sup>117</sup> Where there is democracy there will not be peace. *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.141. Rule must be one, for the wife is a second, but not equal authority. *Ibid.*, XX; PG 62.140.

<sup>118</sup> *Hom. XXXIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.289-290; NPNF, p. 204. Cf. *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.140; NPNF, p. 146. “The wife is a second authority; let not her than demand equality, for she is under the head; nor let him despise her as being in subjection, for she is the body; and if the head despise the body, it will itself also perish. But let him bring in love on his part as a counterpoise to obedience on her part. For example, let the hands and the feet, and all the rest of the members be given up for service to the head, but lead the head provide for the body, seeing it contains every sense in itself. Nothing can be better than this union.”

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, XX; PG 62.141; NPNF, p. 147. Harrison (2002) comments that Chrysostom “emphasizes the loving transformations of hierarchical relationships,” pp. 267ff.

<sup>120</sup> *Hom. XXXIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.291. Cf. *Ibid.*, 2.110-116; SC 138, p. 170, for another of countless such references in Chrysostom's corpus.

the city, while the wife assumes the large portion of the household administration.<sup>121</sup>

Should she cease to do this the whole life of the city would come to a screeching halt.<sup>122</sup>

Christian spouses must work together. No domestic violence is tolerated by Christ. The husband must not threaten his wife for he is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church.

“The partner of one’s life, the mother of one’s children, the foundation of one’s every joy, one ought never to chain down by fear and menaces, but with love and good temper. For what sort of union is that, where the wife trembles at her husband? And what sort of pleasure will the husband himself enjoy, if he dwells with his wife as with a slave, and not as with a free-woman? Yea, though thou shouldest suffer anything on her account, do not upbraid her; for neither did Christ do this.”<sup>123</sup>

Nothing is as grievous to a Christ-loving husband than to be in strife with his wife, who is to him both a harbor, and a “potent healing charm” to rejoice his heart. The husband must consider her love to be more precious than all things, and if he is called to bear other’s burdens, much more he must his own wife’s.<sup>124</sup> There can never be a justification for in any way trampling upon one’s wife. The more patient a husband is, the more glorious his rule is shown to be. It is living in the light of the Cross of Christ and devotion to bearing it that should regulate all interaction between husband and wife and produce blessed harmony.<sup>125</sup>

**The Discipline and Admonition of the Lord.** There is perhaps no aspect of St. John Chrysostom’s counsels for Christian homes further distant from contemporary norms than the subject of the discipline of children. In this upside down age in which

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<sup>121</sup> Chrysostom’s mother, St. Anthusa, was so gifted in such household financial management that she could boast that despite losing her husband early, and having to raise St. John, she had not tapped into his inheritance at all. *Sac.* 1.5; SC 277, p.88.

<sup>122</sup> *Hom. XX in 2 Tim.*; PG 62.659.

<sup>123</sup> *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.137; NPNF, p. 144.

<sup>124</sup> *Hom. XXVI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.223.

laws are enacted criminalizing the spanking of children, and young people are so despised as to be indulged their every passion, St. Chrysostom's counsels are most terribly needed.

St. John placed great emphasis upon the proper discipline of children by parents. In his preaching St. John consistently presented to his congregation Scriptural examples of both good and bad parents. Of all Scriptural examples concerning the discipline of children he liked to use the case of Eli the priest more than any other. Eli was the priest during the childhood of Samuel the prophet and judge. It was Eli who guarded the ark of the covenant, and who trained the young Samuel. He was a pious man, but he was a failure as a father. His two sons, Hophni and Phineas, were renegades and debauched, and, while Eli was grieved by their behavior and disciplined them with verbal rebuke, he failed as a father, and brought upon himself and his entire family the wrath of the Lord. Eli was all words, and no action. He figures largely in St. John's *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* as the example to parents of how *not* to discipline their children.<sup>126</sup>

Fathers have the responsibility for maintaining the discipline of their entire households, including their wives. Should any member of the household require it, including the wife, they should be sent by the father to bed without dinner.<sup>127</sup> It is by vigilant discipline that a father proves his love for his child, and his true fatherhood, for human fatherhood and discipline is modeled upon the divine model. As God's discipline authenticates the recipient as a true, and not bastard son,<sup>128</sup> so on the human plane the

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<sup>125</sup> *Prov.*, XVII.7; SC 79, p. 228.

<sup>126</sup> *Oppugn. III*; PG 47.353-354. Eli could be the patron of modern child rearing.

<sup>127</sup> The context of this admonition was a case in which the wife and children would not cease to swear. *Stat.*, V; PG 49.79.

<sup>128</sup> Hebrews 12:4ff.

same dynamic is at work.<sup>129</sup> Parents demonstrate themselves to be true parents by both providing for (θεραπεύοντες) their children and beating (τύπτοντες) them: one as much as the other.<sup>130</sup>

Chrysostom taught very clearly that a father must exercise proper anger and corporal punishment. He knew nothing of the modern secularist notion, so common in child psychology primers, that the proper discipline of a child (body and soul) should be accomplished without the chastisement of the body.<sup>131</sup> Such a teaching was never countenanced by St. John Chrysostom and was regarded by him as fundamentally nonsensical.<sup>132</sup> It is out of love for a son that a father must be angry at his sins. To not be angry is to demonstrate indifference.<sup>133</sup> Sometimes the father must use anger as a trick, feigning a fit of anger in order to avoid severely punishing the child. To do this is to follow the divine model for God often threatens hell *exactly so* that men will take concern not to go there. Good fathers learn to heighten fear through the use of their words, and so steer their children to a good course.<sup>134</sup> Just as God disciplines His children by many methods, and especially uses physical chastisement such as sickness and pain, so earthly fathers must corporally discipline their children. The same discipline is applied by the

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<sup>129</sup> *Stat.*, VII; PG 49.93.

<sup>130</sup> *Exp. in Ps.*, CX; PG 55.284. Cf. *Ibid.* CXVII; PG 55.329. Here Chrysostom says a father is seen *most of all* to be a father when he corporally disciplines his son.

<sup>131</sup> As I prepared this chapter the front page of the *London Times* carried an article concerning a veteran female elementary school teacher, who after decades of devoted teaching was being arraigned in criminal court on the charges of “slapping” the face of an out of control and unruly young boy. This boy had attacked a number of other students, and in an attempt to look at him in the eyes in order to verbally correct him the teacher simply grabbed his chin to turn his face into visual contact with her own. For this she was accused of assault by two colleagues who witnessed the incident. The court allowed her to go free because there was insufficient evidence that she had actually slapped the boy. Chrysostom would consider this not only the crucifixion of common sense, but social insanity and societal suicide.

<sup>132</sup> Such was the very sin of Eli.

<sup>133</sup> *Exp. in Ps.*, II; PG 55.51.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, VII; PG 55.99.

teachers in school.<sup>135</sup> While corporal discipline must be employed to establish an atmosphere of respect and fear, the father must be wary of over-using the rod and creating a contempt for such discipline in the child. The father should use a gradation of disciplines including a stern look, incisive and reproachful words, gentleness and promises, and not just blows. The goal should be for the child to fear blows but not to receive them.<sup>136</sup> As soon as the father recognizes the profit that has come to the child through fear of punishment he should then exercise forbearance, since this is something human nature needs. Of paramount importance is that the father not make empty threats. Threats are only of use when they are accompanied by the belief that they will be carried out.<sup>137</sup>

Parents must show special vigilance during the adolescent period of their children's lives to guard them from impurity.<sup>138</sup> Sons must be carefully regulated, and daughters must be prepared for marriage by staying home and learning from their mothers how to assume the domestic management of the household.<sup>139</sup>

“Mothers, be specially careful to regulate your daughters well; for the management of them is easy. Be watchful over them, that they may be keepers at home (*οἰκουρούς*). Above all, instruct them to be pious, modest, despisers of wealth, indifferent to ornament. In this way dispose of them in marriage. For if you form them in this way, you will save not only them, but the husband who is destined to marry them, and not the husband only, but the children, not the children only, but the grandchildren...For they ought to go from their father's house to marriage, as combatants from the school of exercise (*καθάπερ ἀθλητὴν ἐκ παλαίστρας*), furnished with all necessary knowledge, and to be as leaven able to transform the whole lump to its own virtue. And let your sons be so modest, as to be distinguished for their steadiness and sobriety, that they may receive great praise both from God and men. Let them learn to

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<sup>135</sup> *Hom. VI in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.532.

<sup>136</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 30.414-415; SC 188, p. 120.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.416-418; SC 188, p. 122.

<sup>138</sup> *Hom. LIX in Gen.*; PG 54.517-8.

<sup>139</sup> *Hom. IX in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.547-8.

govern their appetites, to avoid extravagance, to be good economists, affectionate, and submissive to rule. For so they will be able to secure a good reward to their parents, so all things will be done to the glory of God.”<sup>140</sup>

It is important for parents to teach their children how to properly sing the songs of the Church, and to forbid them from listening to evil songs. If they succeed in weaning children from these evil songs and teaching them the pious use of speech then the miracle of the dumb speaking will have truly occurred (*Ἐὰν ἀντὶ σατανικῶν ῥῥῶν μάθῃς ψαλμοὺς πνευματικούς, κωφὸς ὢν ἐλάλησας*).<sup>141</sup> In the face of widespread fornication amongst the youth, Chrysostom placed the blame at the feet of their parents. They disciplined their horses and animals, but not their own children. They especially failed to secure wives for their sons at the appropriate time.<sup>142</sup> To guard the virginity of a son and daughter is to make a great contribution to their future marriage. The ensuing marital love will be wholly pure and perpetually faithful, and God will fill that marriage with every blessing since it was contracted according to His commandments.<sup>143</sup>

Wise parents should pray into existence the future spouses of their children,<sup>144</sup> just as the Patriarch Abraham committed the finding of a wife for Isaac to prayer. They should teach their sons what to look for in a wife. Desirable qualities in a wife are not external appearance and riches, but nobility of soul and virtue.<sup>145</sup> Weddings should be arranged according to Christian customs with less emphasis upon dowry contracts

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, IX; PG 62.547-8; NPNF, p. 437.

<sup>141</sup> *Hom. XXVII in Mt.*; PG 57.388.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, LIX; PG 58.583. Cf. *Hom. V in 1 Thess.*; PG 62.426, where Chrysostom argues that fathers should put their sons under the yoke of marriage at an early age.

<sup>143</sup> *Educ. Lib.*, 81.984-995; SC 188. pp. 186-188. Again Chrysostom speaks about a well-educated boy thus, “If we lead him to the bridal chamber with a training such as this, consider how great a gift he will be to the bride.” *Ibid.*, 87.1043-1045; SC 188, p. 194. See St. Athanasios’ teaching on this point in Ch. 1.

<sup>144</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.390.



(συνθήκαι) and negotiated terms, things which are ridiculous (τὰ καταγέλαστα), as was common in the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.<sup>146</sup> The marriage rites should be dignified, and priests should be asked to solidify the harmony of the union by means of prayers and blessings (ἱερέας καλεῖν καὶ δι' εὐχῶν καὶ εὐλογιῶν τὴν ὁμόνιαν τοῦ συνοικεσίου συσφίγγειν).<sup>147</sup> There should be great solemnity and no satanic dancing.<sup>148</sup> Wedding feasts should be sober, for if they are Christ Himself will resume working wedding miracles at them.<sup>149</sup>

Chrysostom placed such emphasis upon the proper fatherly discipline of children because he viewed this discipline as a major means of obtaining a grand goal. Christian fathers were to strive to be, “fathers of noble children, builders of Christ-bearing temples, trainers of heavenly athletes, preparing them for combat, guiding them aright.”<sup>150</sup> Parenting in St. John’s conception was no trivial task, but a labor of the greatest spiritual significance.

**Conclusion.** St. John Chrysostom conceived of the Christian home as a *domestic asketerion*. It was a place for spiritual training and the acquisition of virtue. “Let thy home be a sort of arena, a stadium of exercise for virtue, that having trained thyself well

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<sup>145</sup> *Hom. XLVIII in Gen.*; PG 54.442. Chrysostom reflects the teaching of the Stoic, Musonius Rufus, on what to look for in a wife. Lutz (1947), p. 91.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, XLVIII; PG 54.442. Cf. Treggiari (1991), pp. 323-364. This chapter is dedicated to the intricacies of dowries. The legal complexities surrounding dowries in late antiquity are formidable, and make the common prenuptial agreement so prevalent in modern society appear simplistic. Comments like this one by Chrysostom enable us to perceive how marriage was worked out at this period. In a number of places in his corpus Chrysostom makes comments that allow us to grasp the common societal norms and standards for marriage, which he was so feverishly laboring to adjust. Another example is Chrysostom’s acknowledgement of the Roman adultery laws which permitted a husband even to execute his wife for adultery, but not vice versa. Cf. *Virg.*, LII.7.110-112; SC 125, p. 296.

<sup>147</sup> *Hom. XLVIII in Gen.*; PG 54.443.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, LI.7; PG 54.486.

<sup>149</sup> *Hom. XII in I Cor.*; PG 61.104-5. Here Chrysostom argues against the custom of extravagant and immoral wedding feasts. He argues along the lines of St. Clement of Alexandria, saying such customs have a deceptive power and should be negated regardless of their universality. Cf. *Hom. XX in Col.*; PG 62.389.

<sup>150</sup> *Oppugn. III*; PG 47.386; Hunter (1988), p. 176.

there, thou mayest with entire skill encounter all abroad” (*Ἄγων ἔστω καὶ παλαιότερα ἀρετῆς ἢ οἰκία, ἵνα ἐκεῖ καλῶς γυμνασάμενος, μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς ἐπιστήμης τοῖς ἐν ἀγορᾷ προσβάλλῃς*).<sup>151</sup> Every day the married Christian rises in his own form of monastery. He has his own brotherhood and fellow ascetics in his wife and children. There he is called by God to anoint himself for the contest each day, and to exercise himself in the home against all the passions (*ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας γυμναζόμενοι κατὰ παθῶν*).<sup>152</sup>

“Let each one, on returning home, call his own wife, and tell her these things, and take her to help him; and from this day let him enter into that noble school of exercise, using for oil the supply of the Spirit. And though thou fall once, twice, many times in thy training, despair not, but stand again, and wrestle; and do not give up until thou hast bound on thee the glorious crown of triumph over the devil, and hast for the time to come stored up the riches of virtue in an inviolable treasure-house.”<sup>153</sup>

This is the domestic vision of St. John Chrysostom. This is the saving path discerned in the Christian family. The goal of the Christian home is to change the home into a monastery, to make the home into a small church (*ἡ οἰκία γὰρ Ἐκκλησία ἐστὶ μικρά*),<sup>154</sup> and thus contribute to the grander vision of sanctifying the city itself, and manifesting the Kingdom of God on the earth.<sup>155</sup> Should a couple succeed in so consecrating their union to Christ and having a truly “spiritual marriage” (*γάμος πνευματικός*)<sup>156</sup> they will be “but little inferior to monks; the married but little below the

<sup>151</sup> *Hom. XI in Mt.*; PG 57.202; NPNF, p. 74.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, XI; PG 57.202.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, XI; PG 57.202; NPNF, pp. 74-75.

<sup>154</sup> *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.143. While Chrysostom often calls the Christian home a small church, in his explanation of why a bishop needs to first have demonstrated his virtue by ruling his own wife and children with dignity, he also calls the church a small home / *μικρά οἰκία*. *Hom. X in I Tim.*; PG 62.519.

<sup>155</sup> *Stat.*, XVII; PG 49.175. Here Chrysostom rejoices that Antioch, during the statues crisis, had suddenly become a monastery.

<sup>156</sup> *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.141.

unmarried.”<sup>157</sup> This apostolic charge of St. Chrysostom to his sheep who were married is a fitting conclusion to our paper:

*Μετὰ συμμετρίας τῷ γάμῳ χρῶ, καὶ πρῶτος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ ἔσῃ καὶ πάντων ἀπολαύσεις τῶν ἀγαθῶν.*<sup>158</sup>

Use marriage appropriately, and you shall be the first in the Kingdom and enjoy every good thing!

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, XX; PG 62.117; NPNF, p. 151.

<sup>158</sup> *Hom. VII in Heb.*; PG 63.68.

## Chapter Five: Barren Intercourse: Contraception in the Teaching of St. John Chrysostom

### Introduction.

Modern western culture is a *contraceptive culture*. Contraception is so central to contemporary life, that many moderns simply could not maintain their lifestyle without it. The *sacrament* of modern contraceptive culture is “the pill.” In some circles it is more politically correct to question the validity and worth of the Church’s sacraments than to discuss that of society’s sacrament, the pill, and contraception in general.<sup>1</sup> So thoroughly permeated is modernity with contraceptive ideas and assumptions<sup>2</sup> that any teacher who ventures to discuss the subject in any critical fashion will learn the meaning of the adjectives: provocative and incendiary.

This reality marks one of the greatest cultural and moral revolutions of modern times.<sup>3</sup> Contraception has transitioned from being officially condemned by every

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<sup>1</sup> See Smith (1991) for an excellent introduction to the history of theological debate leading up to and following the publication of the Papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1965, as well as for a competent analysis of various pro/con arguments for contraception. She notes that this age “thinks no more of using contraception than of taking aspirin,” p. xv. This assertion has proved true in my pastoral experience where discussions concerning the frequency of the reception of holy communion with parishioners are more easily negotiated than discussions concerning the use of contraception.

<sup>2</sup> Not only do these ideas thoroughly permeate American state educational curricula from the earliest through the latest grades, but they lie at the base of many domestic social policies, foreign policy, and international monetary aid. No aspect of contemporary life is free from a commitment to contraception, aggressively promoted as a solution to human suffering. For more information on this subject I refer the reader to the work of both *Human Life International* founded by Father Paul Marx, and the *Population Research Institute* founded by Mr. Steve Mosher.

<sup>3</sup> According to the UN Chronicle (Vol. XXXIX, Number 3, September-November, 2002), the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed “substantial use increase” of contraception. The UN Population Division monitors contraception use throughout the world (153 countries), as part of its vigorous promotion of contraception. According to their statistics, worldwide, 62% or 650 million of the more than 1 billion married or “in-union” women of reproductive age are using contraception. Even in the less developed nations some 60% of women use contraception. Africa has the lowest use figures with only 25% using. Contraceptive use is highest in predominantly Roman Catholic (!) Latin America. Methods are also monitored: 9 of 10 contraceptors use modern methods. Of these 20% utilize female sterilization, 15% utilize intrauterine devices (IUD, which are abortifacient), and 8% use oral pills. In developed countries there is greater dependence on oral pills (17%), and condoms (15%). 6% of married women in the world utilize the rhythm method. It should be noted that as the UN rushes to provide contraception, especially to developing countries, the birth rate in the developed world has fallen so low that most countries are not

Christian Church as late as 1930<sup>4</sup> (thus being used only sporadically and without sanction by the faithful of those Churches) to being officially endorsed by many Christian bodies and being used as a norm by the preponderance of Christian people in every part of the world today. The medical effectiveness of artificial contraception has greatly increased in modern times, as well as its ease of procurement, its variety of form, and its financial feasibility for the average person. All of these realities, added to the new religious sanction (even if only by silence or pastoral tolerance), have helped produce a religious and sexual worldview amongst Christians that at least tolerates, and often openly promotes, the use of artificial contraception amongst married couples (even among sexually active singles!).

Knowledge of this contemporary moral milieu is important as we examine contemporary interpretations of St. John Chrysostom. Just as it is important for the scholar to understand the worldview of any Church Father as he interprets Holy Scripture, so likewise it is important to understand the worldview of any scholar who interprets the Fathers. The fact is, modern scholarship approaches the interpretation of Patristic texts with a set of cultural assumptions- such is inescapable. Good scholarship

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even reproducing themselves (less than 2.2 children on average per couple). The consequences for the growth, or lack thereof, of the Christian Church are immense, and many other concerns, such as the massive immigration of non-Christian peoples to Christian nations to fill the vacuum, have arisen as a byproduct. Such attitudes, during particularly prosperous periods, towards raising families have arisen at various times in the past provoking government intervention to encourage marital procreation. Such was the case in the Roman Empire under Augustus. Treggiari (1991), pp. 60ff. Musonius Rufus taught that the Roman Empire at his time showed a great interest in its families having many children, rewarding those who had large families and punishing those who procured abortions. Rufus argues that it is better to leave siblings to our children than possessions. Lutz (1947), pp. 97-101. The absence of any UN documentation of abortion as a means of birth control is terribly unfortunate and deceiving. Perhaps the UN would argue that abortion is not birth control since the fetus exists. This argumentation, however, would exclude the IUD from UN documentation. As a priest it has been my pastoral experience that the vast majority of abortions to which I have become privy have been for birth control. One example in which a woman procured 17 abortions comes to mind, and her example, sadly, is not rare these days.

<sup>4</sup> Kippley (1985), pp. 4-9. This text documents not only the traditional opposition to abortion by the Roman Catholic Church, but the *consistent Protestant opposition* to artificial contraception in all major denominations right up until the 1930 revolution concerning the subject at the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church.

acknowledges such presuppositions exist, and poor scholarship functions as though from a *tabula rasa*. Particularly in the area of sexuality post-modern opinion has greatly influenced both interpretations and appraisals of the Fathers' teaching on sexuality in late antiquity. It is an area where the gap between the worldview of the subject and that of the present day researcher is often so large that academic temptations quickly arise.

One such temptation is the temptation to treat the Patristic author as *a primitive*. To assume that his *obvious lack of enlightenment* is born from a lack of contemporary knowledge, and to conclude that *certainly if he had lived in the modern world he would not maintain such a position*. There is some truth in the latter assumption, for certainly no Father would maintain his position in *exactly the same way* as he originally did should he be in the midst of our discourse today. We assume he would fulfill the labor of synthesizing his perception of the teaching of the Church with modern information and intellectual genres. That is one thing. To assume, however, that he would certainly jettison his position and adopt one more palatable to modern sensitivities is an unjustified leap. The Church Fathers showed themselves in their own ages very capable of maintaining and promoting teachings radically at variance with popular sentiment.

Another academic temptation, particularly powerful to those post-moderns who have a personal commitment in some sense to the abiding authority of the Patristic tradition, is to *attempt to interpret the Fathers in accord with contemporary norms of theological or moral orthodoxy*. This temptation has been particularly strong in the case of Chrysostom because his teachings in general are regarded by the Church as centrist, and as possessing special authority. For this reason he is considered one of the "ecumenical teachers" (*οἴκουμενικοὶ διδάσκαλοι*) of the Church, and is numbered amongst the Three Holy Hierarchs, together with Ss. Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian,

whose teachings, more than any other Fathers, are universally recognized sources of authority. To find oneself in disagreement with St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite is, perhaps, more acceptable for Orthodox Christians than to find oneself locked in disagreement with a Chrysostom, Basil or Gregory.

Chrysostom, due to his immense corpus and influence in the history of the Church, together with his stringent ethical commitments and his willingness to address intimate moral aspects of Christian life as an archpastor *par excellence*, has caused the modern scholar astonishment, and often embarrassment. Such is the case especially in his teaching on gender roles, marriage and remarriage, sexuality, and particularly for our subject here: contraception. Needless to say, Patristic scholarship has the task of resisting these temptations, and of honestly presenting the teachings of the Fathers under discussion, free of agenda-based interpretive grids. Only after such work, can a Christian concerned with the teaching of the Church Fathers, proceed to evaluate his own or others' contemporary faith with that of the Fathers. To understand and appreciate both the essence and the value of Chrysostom's teaching on contraception we must first examine the societal presuppositions concerning the subject during his era.

**Contraception in Late Antiquity.** Struck with the rapidity of change and the confusing array of new contraceptive technologies today one may easily conclude that we are dealing with a *uniquely modern ethical question*. It is not unusual to hear, in ethical conversation concerning contraception, the notion posited that previous generations in the Church did not have to address these ethical issues because artificial contraception did not exist. While there are significant modern developments in the field of contraception, which are unique to the modern age, the fundamental question of the moral legitimacy of

artificial contraception is an ancient one. Artificial contraception is virtually as ancient as conception itself, and it has formed a specific field within medicine and ethics for millennia. There is virtually no form of artificial contraception commonly used today,<sup>5</sup> that did not have its forerunner in late antiquity. Sterilization, coitus interruptus, pharmacological contraceptive applications, material and chemical barrier methods, and abortion were all well known in their ancient forms, and were commonly practiced in the ancient world. Both ancient physicians and Church Fathers were quite aware of these methods, and often made abundantly clear distinctions between contraception and abortion.<sup>6</sup> Neither the concept of artificial contraception, nor the distinction between abortifacient<sup>7</sup> and non-abortifacient methods of contraception, are novel concepts.<sup>8</sup>

The Stoic and educated Roman, Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79), authored a famous encyclopedia entitled the *Natural History*. Though his Stoic philosophical commitments led him to oppose artificial contraceptives (procreation being the only justification for sexual intercourse), he nevertheless related a large, though not complete, amount of contraceptive information in his work.

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<sup>5</sup> The two most common forms of modern contraception are “the pill” and the condom. While the pill has been popularly used only since about 1950, there were many pharmacological forms of contraception used in the ancient world, and practitioners of contraception were used to obtaining their advice on contraception from physicians. While the condom as we know it derives from an invention of Dr. Condom, a physician at the court of Charles II (1660-1685), and did not become popular until the vulcanization of rubber in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, physical barrier methods were popular in the ancient world and were described in medical textbooks. Riddle (1992), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> The same could be said of state politicians.

“The second century Empire legislated against both abortifacient and contraceptive drinks where death resulted to the consumer. This kind of legislation is primarily a protection of existing adult life. Its secondary effect, however, in discouraging the sale of powerful drugs which might occasionally kill a woman, should not be overlooked. It made dealers in abortifacients and contraceptives act at their peril...almost as much as the widespread use of abortifacients, the use of contraceptive potions was officially recognized as a bad example in the state.”

Noonan (1965), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> An abortifacient is an *ἐκβάλιον*. Riddle (1992), pp. 78, 85.

<sup>8</sup> “Our distant ancestors could distinguish between a contraceptive and an abortifacient and...they knew more about reproduction than we credit them with... We too easily draw a hard line that separates us from the premodern period...our times are not as unique as we think they are.” Noonan (1965), pp. vii-ix.



Soranos, who practiced medicine during the reign of Emperor Trajan (AD. 98-117), wrote a definitive work on gynecology in Greek that would serve as a standard text on the subject for centuries to come. In this work he makes a clear distinction between contraception and abortion in these words,

“A contraceptive differs from an abortive (ἀτόκιον δὲ φθορίου διαφέρει), for the first does not let conception(σύλληψιν) take place, while the latter destroys (φθείρει) what has been conceived (σύλληψιν). Let us therefore call the one ‘abortive’ (φθόριον) and the other ‘contraceptive’ (ἀτόκιον)...it is safer to prevent conception from taking place than to destroy the fetus.”<sup>9</sup>

Soranos recommended “vaginal wool suppositories and the application of olive oil, honey, cedar resin, alum, balsam gum, or white lead to prevent sperm from passing into the uterus.”<sup>10</sup>

The great authority on pharmacology in late antiquity was Dioscorides, who wrote an authoritative five-volume text on the subject entitled *Materials of Medicine*.<sup>11</sup> This text expands, to an even greater degree than Soranos’ work, the subject of contraceptives (ἀτόκιοι), prescribing contraceptive vaginal suppositories, herbal oral contraceptives, “root” medicines and abortifacients, and even male contraceptives.<sup>12</sup> Dioscorides provided some twenty herbal contraceptive recipes in his work.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. there was a medical consensus about what were contraceptive plants and what were abortifacient drugs. Dioscorides’ Graeco-Roman pharmacology formed the basis for the drug lore of later Byzantine medicine as is evident in the pharmaceutical lists of Aetios of Amida, Paul of Aegina, and Alexander of Tralles.

<sup>9</sup> Temkin (1956), p. 62; Noonan (1965), p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> *ODB* Vol. 1, p. 527.

<sup>11</sup> This book was a common text in Constantinopolitan libraries at the time of St. John Chrysostom. A well preserved Constantinople manuscript dates from about A.D. 512. Noonan (1965), p. 41. See Gunther (1934) for an English translation with Byzantine illustrations.

<sup>12</sup> The phrase describing the effect of one plant is: “ἐκβάλλει δὲ ἔμβρυα.” Noonan (1965), p. 39.

The great physician of classical antiquity, and the most influential on Christian thought in late antiquity was the Roman physician and philosopher, Galen (A.D. 129-210?). Galen synthesized Hippocratic teaching, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics into a coherent medical theory that was at the core of Greek medical pedagogy, and was embraced by early Byzantine physicians. One such physician, Oribasios<sup>14</sup> (A.D. 325-396) who was a contemporary of St. John Chrysostom,<sup>15</sup> made a synopsis of Galenic medicine, combining it with the most up-to-date medical knowledge, entitled *Medical Collection*.<sup>16</sup> This version of Galen was followed by later Byzantine physicians such as Aetios of Amida<sup>17</sup> (A.D. 530-600), Paul of Aegina (d. A.D. 642), and Alexander of Tralles<sup>18</sup> (A.D. 525-605) and was the version of Galen known to St. Photios the Great.<sup>19</sup>

The evidence concerning early Byzantine medicine at the time of St. John Chrysostom demonstrates clearly that the Graeco-Roman medical tradition had been thoroughly embraced, and Byzantine physicians were in “full command of herbs and drugs.”<sup>20</sup> The appearance of contraceptive prescriptions in medical texts of influential Christian physicians shows that even when the physician might have been morally

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<sup>13</sup> *ODB*, Vol. 1, p. 527.

<sup>14</sup> He was the personal physician and librarian of the Emperor Julian the Apostate. *ODB*, Vol. 3, p. 1532.

<sup>15</sup> He was driven into exile by emperors succeeding Julian, but returned to Constantinople where he lived until his death just prior to Chrysostom's arrival in the city. Chrysostom demonstrates a broad range of medical knowledge in his writings and often utilizes medical analogies in his sermons.

<sup>16</sup> *ODB*, Vol. 2, p. 816. The text was commissioned by Emperor Julian, but unfortunately does not survive. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 1533.

<sup>17</sup> Aetios compiled a sixteen volume medical encyclopedia entitled *Tetrabiblion*. In this work he simplified both Galen and Oribasios. This work has significant sections on gynecology and obstetrics. The work as a whole awaits a modern edition. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander was one of five sons of a prominent physician named Stephen. His most famous brother was Anthemos, the architect of Hagia Sophia. Alexander was distinguished by his great enthusiasm in the practical application of pharmaceuticals. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> A Latin translation of the text was made by the 5<sup>th</sup> century and Arabic physicians used Oribasios in translation.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 1646. Dr. John Scarborough writes that Byzantine pharmacologists utilized over 700 simples, derived from plants, animals (including insects), and minerals. Byzantine drug lore became the model for later Arab medicine.

opposed to the use of drugs for contraceptive or abortive purposes, often the author could not keep himself from documenting the prescription for such uses.

Like our modern era, late antiquity was very familiar with contraception, and it was readily available to most persons. We should not be surprised therefore to find in the Church Fathers specific references to contraception in general, and to specific forms of contraception in particular. It was a subject upon which the Fathers spoke, often in particulars. This fact itself should be noted, since in today's religious context one often hears an opinion expressed that the matters of the bedroom are not to be discussed by priests.<sup>21</sup> Whether such an opinion is true might be fruitfully discussed, but the fact that

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<sup>21</sup> An example may be found in the writings of the twice-married Paul Evdokimov (1985) in his misguided study *The Sacrament of Love*, where he quotes a Russian priest, Fr. V. Palchkovsky, who writes that Russian priests never ask questions of married parishioners concerning their marital sexuality, not wanting to "penetrate the intimacy of the union," p. 175. Such a statement is tantamount to consigning a significant aspect of Christian marital life to darkness, by excluding it from the gracious molding of the voice of Christ in Holy Tradition. If Holy Tradition has something to offer married Christians it is the responsibility of the priesthood to convey it. If Evdokimov is right, and the priests have nothing to say, the faith must not be relevant to this aspect of marital life. How sad is that! The notion that marital sexuality is off limits for priestly instruction and investigation is also clearly historically false, since the Patristic tradition is replete with Fathers giving very specific sexual advice to husbands and wives. One need only think of the vast canonical tradition of penances associated with sexual sins, many of which are associated with the married and concern the "details." From as early as the Canons of the Council of Elvira (early 4<sup>th</sup> century, one half of the canons were dedicated to sexuality), through the medieval penitentials, to the Russian confessional manuals so popular up through the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we see great priestly attention being given to these intimate sexual matters. If a priest is not to explore such matters how are these canons relevant? Indeed, one may say that, especially in the West, intimate matters of sexuality became *the* central concern of confession. This is witnessed to in the tradition of penitentials in which sexuality is at the forefront of concern. Cf. Payer (1984), Brundage (1984, 1987), McNeill (1990), and Bieler (1963) for entire books dedicated to the subject of priestly counsel on intimate sexual matters. Levin (1989), in her *tour de force* text on Slavic Christianity, states that Orthodox Christianity in both its Byzantine and Slavic expressions has always considered sexuality a *public matter*, p. x. She writes that if a Slavic priest communed a fornicator or adulterer he shouldered the sin for society expected public accountability. "Private" sexuality was unknown to Orthodox society, p. 34. It is no wonder that such a sacralizer of sex as Zion (1992) would confess in his introduction that in reading Levin's work (which is simply the documentation of the consistent approach to sexuality in Slavic Christianity) he was filled with "unmitigated gloom." It is not surprising that he would feel this way since his own opinions on the subject are shown to be so drastically out of accord with the consistent tradition of his own Church. Gabriel (1996), p. 71, quotes Irene Goreinov in her work *St. Seraphim of Sarov*, as saying, "When he spoke with married people, the starets never got into details of the marital life. It was sufficient for him to ask of spouses that they have mutual faith and love." Such a statement is shown to be false in the work of Moore (1994), pp. 291-292, where he records that St. Seraphim of Sarov taught, "Remain in the world, get married. Don't forget conjugal intercourse...observe chastity. Remain continent on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as on Sundays and all holidays. For not practicing chastity on Wednesdays and Fridays children are born dead, and for not observing holidays and Sundays wives die in childbirth." Hardly an example of "never getting into details of marital life." Bishop Kallistos Ware documents the contemporary rise of this type of priestly hands-off

the Fathers, Chrysostom included,<sup>22</sup> consistently addressed such intimate matters and expected to be obeyed is without dispute.

### **Chrysostom on Contraception.**

“The use of contraception was condemned by church fathers.” Such is the opening of the listing “Contraception” in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*.<sup>23</sup> This statement is easy enough to demonstrate; however, it may be misunderstood. While there was universal opposition to contraception amongst the Fathers, there was not a single standard used to oppose it, nor a single perspective on the nature of its moral turpitude and ethical gravity. We shall see in what follows that St. John Chrysostom put forth a multi-tiered opposition to contraception working from his own perspective on the purpose of sexual relations and marriage. St. John’s broader perspective on the purpose of conjugal relations, and the connection between sexual intercourse and procreation was not a position shared in everything by all, or even most, of the Fathers previous to and following him.

In particular, Chrysostom placed *greater emphasis* upon the help that marital intercourse gives against the temptation to fornication and lasciviousness, than he did upon the procreative nature of sex. He did not negate the latter, or consider it optional for married couples. However, he did clearly rank it second in importance to the use of

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approach to marital sexuality in the most recent edition of his *The Orthodox Church*, see footnote 51 of this chapter. This demand from so many contemporary theologians for priests to stay out of married Christian’s sexual business goes hand in hand with the novel belief in the sacramentality of the marriage bed and the glorification of sexual love. See Ch. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Riddle (1992), p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Volume 1, p. 526. Levin (1989) documents how this universal opposition to contraception, and the heavy penances associated with its practice, passed from Byzantium to Slavic Orthodox lands, pp. 177ff.

marital relations as an antidote to lust. This emphasis is clear in a passage in his *On Virginity* in which he is interpreting the Apostle Paul's teaching on marriage in 1 Cor. 7.

“So marriage was granted for the sake of procreation, but an *even greater reason* was to quench the fiery passion of our nature. Paul attests to this when he says: ‘But to avoid immorality, every man should have his own wife.’ He does not say: for the sake of procreation. Again, he asks us to engage in marriage not to father many children, but why? So ‘that Satan may not tempt you,’ he says. Later he does not say: if they desire children but ‘if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry.’ At the beginning, as I said, marriage had these two purposes but now, after the earth and sea and all the world has been inhabited, only one reason remains for it: the suppression of licentiousness and debauchery” [emphasis mine].<sup>24</sup>

Chrysostom does not maintain this position inflexibly or in such a way pastorally that he would cast upon his parishioners an aversion to childbearing in marriage. At the end of his ministry he still proclaimed the two-fold purpose of marriage as chastity and procreation.<sup>25</sup> However, he always maintained the priority of the first purpose, and this emphasis, combined with other more minor, but ostensibly positive, emphases on marital intercourse,<sup>26</sup> enabled Chrysostom to be free from a position more open to the charge of reductionism that defended marital intercourse *only for the purpose of procreation*. This latter stance was taken up by many Fathers, and often led to a prohibition forbidding marital intercourse during pregnancy, prior to weaning, and in old age. No such prohibition is found in Chrysostom.

Western Christianity, following St. Augustine and many other Fathers, largely adopted the view that the *primary* purpose of marital intercourse was procreation.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Virg.*, XIX.2-3; SC 125, p. 156; Shore (1983), p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.386. Cf. *Comment. Gal. V.*; PG 61.669.

<sup>26</sup> Its unitive good and function as a marital superglue, its miraculous production of a one-flesh child, its typological importance as a picture of the intimate union of the believer with Christ in the eucharist, etc.

<sup>27</sup> That is not to say that St. Augustine did not value the role conjugal intercourse played in containing passion. He most certainly did.

Procreative intent was necessary in the conjugal act in order to justify its use.<sup>28</sup> Intercourse simply as a curb to lust was sinful itself, regardless of its effectiveness. Chrysostom does not share this perspective.<sup>29</sup>

In the last forty years, essentially from the publication of the papal encyclical of 1965 entitled *Humanae Vitae*,<sup>30</sup> the Roman Catholic Church has promoted officially what is known as *natural family planning* (NFP). Natural family planning, which is essentially the marital ascesis of abstinence during fertile periods in the menstrual cycle, is hailed by the Latin Church as in accord with that Church's condemnation of artificial contraception. Regardless of the efforts of Catholic moral theologians to justify its use it cannot be defended within the framework of a teaching on marital intercourse that requires *procreative intent* to justify intercourse. The key ingredient of *procreative intent*, which is the very thing that justified marital intercourse in the Stoic and later western emphasis on intercourse, is obviously lacking since married couples are engaging in intercourse explicitly with the hope that they will *not* conceive. Ironically, it is only in the worldview of a St. John Chrysostom, where procreation does not have the place of prominence in the justification of marital intercourse, that natural family planning can

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<sup>28</sup> Procreative intent was not sufficient by itself, however, to make the marital act sinless. On top of this was the requirement to pursue it without passion or self-gratification, essentially rendering the marital act impossible to perform without sin.

<sup>29</sup> It would be a fruitful investigation to compare St. Chrysostom with St. Augustine and a number of influential later Fathers such as St. Caesarius of Arles, highlighting how a western embrace of St. Augustine's emphases and a consequent rejection (consciously or unconsciously) of Chrysostom's teaching (concerning the primacy in marital sexuality of curbing lust, and in the purity of lawful marital relations and their harmony with prayer), defined the western approach to marriage, procreation, and contraception. This western perspective also influenced dramatically the notion of clerical marriage and celibacy. I would argue that at least some of the Western antipathy toward clerical marriage and the Eastern acceptance of the same is due to differing perspectives on the conjugal relations in marriage typified in the differences between Chrysostom and Augustine.

<sup>30</sup> Calegari (1978). In this encyclical the lawfulness of natural family planning is promoted, and the claim is made that the Church in this promotion is "consistent," p. 14. For Orthodox reactions to *Humanae Vitae* at the time of its promulgation see Edgecumb (1968), pp. 305-308.

find a moral justification.<sup>31</sup> In fact, St. John encourages much of what NFP encourages when he calls his parishioners to the practice of sexual fasting.

It is noteworthy that we find Chrysostom's teaching on contraception not in a treatise designed on the subject or even in his homilies more directly related to marriage and family life, but in a homily on the subject of avarice. In a duly famous homily against avarice Chrysostom painted a verbal portrait of the money lover. It is a hideous sight indeed. The avaricious man is a "monster" with,

"Darting fire from his eyes, black, having from either shoulder serpents hanging down instead of hands; and let him have also a mouth, with sharp swords set in it instead of teeth, and for a tongue a gushing fountain of poison and some baneful drug; and a belly more consuming than any furnace, devouring all that is cast unto it, and a sort of winged feet more vehement than any flame; and let his face be made up of a dog and of a wolf; and let him utter nothing human...perhaps what we have said seems to you to be terrible, but we have not even yet fashioned him worthily...the covetous man is much more fierce even than this, assailing all alike like hell, swallowing all up, going about a common enemy to the race of men. Why, he would have no man exist, that he may possess all things."<sup>32</sup>

From avarice personified St. Chrysostom applies this passion loving mentality to a subject he calls "sweet and universally desirable" (τό τε γλυκὺ καὶ πᾶσιν ἐπέραστον): procreation. The money loving monster does not welcome having children. Instead, he views it as a grievous reality that must be resisted. As if this desire were not evil enough, "many" even go so far as to pay money to be childless, have "maimed their nature,"

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<sup>31</sup> The Latin argument that with NFP the couple remains "open" to conception, while they are actively attempting to avoid it!, is specious and could just as easily be applied to those using an *artificial* means of contraception. Certainly God has worked miracles of conception in the face of artificial contraceptives as well. That is not to say, on the other hand, that the use of NFP and artificial contraception are morally equivalent. NFP, the practice of sexual abstinence, is *the* traditional means of spacing offspring, and does not seek to have its cake and eat it too. My point above is simply that NFP does not fulfill the common western demand for procreative intent to justify marital intercourse. *Humanae Vitae* does not affirm the procreative intent teaching of St. Augustine, and acknowledges the validity of spouses seeking not to have a child. Smith (1991), p. 119.

<sup>32</sup> *Hom. XXVIII in Mt.*; PG 57.356-357; NPNF, p. 194.

having committed infanticide, and have not permitted children even to begin to live.<sup>33</sup> Chrysostom associates the contraceptor as the companion of the monster avarice. He is also companion to the murderer and the mutilator.

Chrysostom also opposed contraception via castration promoted by certain heretical groups.<sup>34</sup> Castrators do the deeds of murderers.<sup>35</sup> Such opposition to heretical encouragement to castration was designed to oppose *both* the Gnostic demonizing of the physical creation *and* their subsequent aversion toward procreation. Writing in his *Commentary on the Galatians* he says,

“Where then are those who dare to mutilate themselves; seeing that they draw down the Apostolic curse, and accuse the workmanship of God, and take part with the Manichees? For the latter call the body a treacherous thing, and from the evil principle...cutting off the member [the penis- JT] as being hostile and treacherous. Ought they not much rather to put out the eyes, for it is through the eyes that desire enters the soul? But in truth neither the eye nor any other part of us is to blame, but the depraved will only. But if you will not allow this, why do you not mutilate the tongue for blasphemy, the hands for rapine, the feet for their evil courses, in short, the whole body?...the perception of a sweet perfume by the nostrils hath bewitched the mind, and made it frantic for pleasure...it is the sin of the soul, for to pamper the flesh is not an act of the flesh but of the soul, for if the soul choose to mortify it, it would possess absolute power over it. But what you do is just the same as if one seeing a man lighting a fire to a house, were to blame the fire, instead of him who kindled it...in like manner desire is implanted for the rearing of families and the ensuring of life.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> “ἀλλὰ μηδὲ φῆναι τὴν ἀρχὴν συγχωρήσαντες.” *Ibid.* XXVIII; PG 57.357.

<sup>34</sup> St. John of Damascus in his work *Book Of Heresies*, much of which is a verbatim reproduction of each anakephalaiosis (chapter heading and summary- it is not at all certain that the Damascene was at all familiar with St. Epiphanius’ work in its entirety) of St. Epiphanius’ *Panarion* or *Medicine Chest*, attempted a fairly complete listing of early heresies...See Louth (2002), p. 56. St. Epiphanius documents many early heresies which rejected marriage due to their Gnostic assumptions. One sect, the *Valesians*, were universally castrated and were said to castrate visitors by force. *Haer.* 34-64, 58.1.19-24; GCS, p. 358.

<sup>35</sup> *Hom. LXII in Mt.*; PG 58.599. It should be noted that castration is a form of contraception. It was opposed by the Fathers not just because it reflected a Gnostic disdain for creation, but because it was a form of contraception. It should be noted that according to the UN Chronicle cited earlier in this chapter the predominant form of contraception today remains a form of castration: sterilization. Sometimes, such as in present-day China and Africa, this sterilization is involuntary.

<sup>36</sup> *Comment. Gal. I*; PG 61.668-669; NPNF, p. 39.



Such mutilation both accused God's creation, *and* fails to fulfill the function of desire: procreation. Castration cannot quench lust. That is something only reason (*λογισμὸς μόνος*) can do.<sup>37</sup> Here is the Stoic emphasis of submitting bodily passion and sexual intercourse to reason Christianized by St. John. This consistent link between pleasure and procreation is emphasized by Chrysostom on many occasions. Those who would separate the two realities, something which Chrysostom says cannot be done,<sup>38</sup> must invent a *new perspective on pleasure* for Chrysostom.

That many heretics embraced contraception and were criticized by the Church Fathers is evident in the writings of a contemporary and prominent personage in the life of St. John Chrysostom: St. Epiphanius of Cyprus. In his famous refutation of heresies, *The Panarion, or Medicine Chest*, this contemporary of Chrysostom described his personal experience with what we now often call "Gnostic" heretics within the Church. The saint describes the following practices and labels them "ceremonies of the devil:"<sup>39</sup> oral sex,<sup>40</sup> coitus interruptus,<sup>41</sup> masturbation,<sup>42</sup> homosexual intercourse,<sup>43</sup> and the offering to God of human semen obtained by these methods.<sup>44</sup> Epiphanius presents these Gnostics as the diametric opposite of blessed Christian marital intercourse. What is particularly emphasized by St. Epiphanius is the contraceptive nature of heretical intercourse.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Hom. LXII in Mt.*; PG 58.599.

<sup>38</sup> See previous chapters dealing with the link between procreation and sexual pleasure. In Chrysostom's mind blessed pleasure can never be separated from its corresponding pain (childbirth and rearing) nor from its God intended purpose (marital unity via the procreation of children- the concrete one flesh).

<sup>39</sup> *Anac.* 26.14.6; GCS 25, p. 294.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.4.6; GCS 25, p. 305.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.11.10; GCS 25, pp. 288ff. St. Epiphanius is the first Patristic writer to explicitly argue that the sin of Onan was coitus interruptus.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.11.1; GCS 25, pp. 288ff.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.13.1; GCS 25, p. 292.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.4; GCS 25, pp. 280-281.

<sup>45</sup> Noonan comments in a footnote in his text about the similarities and possible source connections between certain branches of Gnostic groups mentioned by Epiphanius and 4<sup>th</sup> century tantrism in India with its emphasis upon sexual union without insemination as a means to the supreme bliss. Noonan (1965), footnote 49, pp. 96-97. Additional connections to modern notions of sexual relations as ecstatic religious experience, as sacramental in nature, extolling such ideas as the idea that the marriage bed is a "holy altar"

“They exercise genital acts, yet prevent the conceiving of children. Not in order to produce offspring, but to satisfy lust, are they eager for corruption.”<sup>46</sup> Such were the teachings of one of the most influential and internationally acclaimed hierarchs of St. Chrysostom’s day. In attacking the sexuality of heretical groups, including their contraceptive tendencies, St. John was joining ranks with other powerful Christian teachers of his time.

Chrysostom delivers his most poignant teaching against contraception in his sermons on St. Paul’s *Epistle to the Romans*. Forbidding prostitution St. John says,

“Τί σπείρεις ἔνθα ἡ ἄρουρα σπουδάζει διαφθεῖραι τὸν καρπὸν; ἔνθα πολλὰ τὰ ἀτόκια; ἔνθα πρὸ τῆς γενέσεως φόνος; καὶ γὰρ καὶ τὴν πόρνην οὐκ ἀφίης μείναι πόρνην μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνδροφόνον ποιεῖς. Εἶδες ἀπὸ μέθης πορνείαν, ἀπὸ πορνείας μοιχείαν, ἀπὸ μοιχείας φόνον; μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ φόνου τι χεῖρον· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔχω πῶς αὐτὸ καλέσω· οὐ γὰρ τεχθέντα ἀναιρεῖ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τεχθῆναι κωλύει. Τί τοίνυν; Καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δωρεὰν ὑβρίζεις, καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῦ μάχη νόμοις, καὶ ὅπερ ἐστὶ κατάρρα, τοῦτο ὡς εὐλογίαν μεταδιώκεις, καὶ τὸ ταμιεῖον τῆς γενέσεως ταμιεῖον ποιεῖς σφαγῆς, καὶ τὴν πρὸς παιδοποιίαν δοδεῖσαν γυναῖκα πρὸς φόνον παρασκευάζεις;”<sup>47</sup>

“Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where there are medicines of sterility? Where there is murder before the birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you contemn

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etc. found even within certain circles in Orthodox Christianity might be profitably explored. I refer to notions expressed in the writings of such as Philip Sherrard, Paul Evdokimov, Dn. John Chrysavgis, George Gabriel, Basil Zion, and Christos Yannaras. As an example take Gabriel’s (1996) words, “The plain meaning of Chrysostom’s words is... You do not need procreation as an excuse [for intercourse]. It is not the chief reason for marriage. Neither is it necessary to allow for the possibility of conceiving, and thus having a large number of children, something you may not want. He spoke in a manner that was understood perfectly by his audience,” p. 67. Now here is a case in which a student of Chrysostom commits a logical fallacy. True, Chrysostom does not require procreative intent to justify intercourse, but that is a long way from arguing that intercourse is legitimate when one is artificially contravening conception. The two are not the same thing, and Chrysostom nowhere permits the latter. In fact, as we have shown, he forbids it. Gabriel goes on to say, “In some patristic writings, we should point out, it is possible to find a passing reference to procreation as the purpose of marriage, but it is never intended as a canon or formula,” p. 68. Such a statement is truly shocking coming from someone as versed in the Patristic texts as Gabriel has appeared to be. Whether or not we agree with the Fathers, it is hardly honest to say that one may find but “passing reference” to procreation as the purpose of marriage in the Fathers. It is, in fact, commonplace.

<sup>46</sup> As quoted in Noonan (1965), pp. 96-97.

<sup>47</sup> *Hom. XXII in Rom.*; PG 60.626-627.

the gift of God, and fight with His laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter?"<sup>48</sup>

What is translated here as “medicines of sterility” is the Greek word *ἀτόκια*. Here Chrysostom refers directly to artificial contraceptives. He condemns abortion as murder in this text, and laments not only abortion but all efforts to prevent formation and begetting of the child altogether: whether abortifacient or contraceptive. His reference to *ἀτόκια* in the midst of opposition to abortion allows the reader to grasp how Chrysostom does not draw a sharp line of demarcation between abortion and contraception. It would be a profound mistake, however, to conclude that the reason St. John does not draw a sharp line of demarcation between abortion and contraception is because St. John imagines all contraception to be abortifacient. This erroneous understanding is supported by William Zion in his text *Eros and Transformation* (1992).<sup>49</sup> St. John enjoyed the privilege of a thorough-going Greek education, which included a far greater emphasis upon medical knowledge than does general education today. He was well aware of the differences between contraceptive drugs and abortifacients.

To his mind both abortion and contraception were repugnant because they committed five violations in unison. These five criticisms, found in his *Homily 24* in his

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<sup>48</sup> Noonan (1965), p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> Zion (1992), p. 242. As one of the very few books on the subject of sexuality written from a purported Orthodox position in the English language it has received a wide circulation, especially among priests. While the author is to be commended for launching into an area so little explored by contemporary Orthodox and for bringing to his readership an awareness of the abundance of primary Patristic material related to the topic of sexuality, the text unfortunately employs without sufficient caution European higher Biblical criticism, and demonstrates an undue reliance upon contemporary Latin scholastic moral theology. Therefore on occasion the Patristic witnesses are forced into contemporary grids of thought foreign to the minds of the authors. Such is the case when dealing neatly with the difference between abortifacient and non-abortifacient contraception. It is noteworthy that Zion ends his work by arguing that an Orthodox conception of marriage must not be built upon the Patristic notions of angelic life in Paradise but upon what he calls the “importance of the Incarnation” for the Christian life, p. 335. Here a false dichotomy is presented, for it is the Incarnation which makes the angelic life possible!

*Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, form the core of St. Chrysostom's opposition to both abortion and contraception.

1. Both abortion and contraception create a *barren sowing* [Τί σπείρεις ἔνθα ἡ ἄρουρα σπουδάξει διαφθεῖραι τὸν καρπὸν;] Their use creates a context in which the sexual act is designed to be barren, and the conjugal act is denuded of its purpose.<sup>50</sup> In utilizing this “sowing” imagery Chrysostom evidences the influence of Stoic philosophy for this was the central image in Stoic literature for marital intercourse. It is common stock in the Patristic arsenal, and is one of the main emphases in the ecclesiastical opposition to contraception.<sup>51</sup>
  
2. Both abortion and contraception *treat despitefully the gift of God* [Τί τοίνυν; Καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν δωρεὰν ὑβρίζεις;]. The reference here is no doubt to the Scriptural teaching that children are a gift from God,<sup>52</sup> and the use of abortion and contraception is thus a despising of children.
  
3. Both abortion and contraception *are expressions of fighting against God's laws* [καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῦ μάχη νόμοις]. Here in this reference to

<sup>50</sup> This notion of the vileness of ‘barren intercourse’ is also used by Chrysostom in his commentary upon the sin of Sodom, and the unlawfulness of homosexuality. See Ch. 3, fn. 84. It is also a portion of the logic behind the Church's forbiddance of anal and oral sex.

<sup>51</sup> Noonan (1965) writes, “If one asks, then, where the Christian Fathers derived their notions on marital intercourse- notions which have no express biblical basis- the answer must be, chiefly from the Stoics,” p. 48. The Holy Fathers did not accept all aspects of this Greek philosophical approach to intercourse anymore than they accepted without qualification other philosophical notions. For instance, apart from Tertullian, one will search in vain amongst the Fathers for the Stoic emphasis on bearing large families and in so doing strengthening the state.

<sup>52</sup> Psalms 126 and 127 in the LXX are good examples of the Scriptural mentality concerning the gift of children.

fruitful procreation as a part of the *natural law* we see the adoption of fundamentally Stoic philosophical notions by Chrysostom. In this he follows many Fathers, such as St. Clement of Alexandria, who, more than any early Father emphasized the natural law requirements of marital intercourse. The use of abortion and/or contraception fights against the natural use of sexual intercourse, turning it into something *unnatural*.

4. Both abortion and contraception *turn the curse of barrenness into a blessing, and treat the blessing of fruitfulness as a curse* [καὶ ὅπερ ἐστὶ κατάρρα, τοῦτο ὡς εὐλογίαν μεταδιώκεις].<sup>53</sup>
5. Both abortion and contraception *misuse women* [καὶ τὸ ταμιεῖον τῆς γενέσεως ταμιεῖον ποιεῖς σφαγῆς, καὶ τὴν πρὸς παιδοποιῖαν δοθεῖσαν γυναῖκα πρὸς φόνον παρασκευάζεις].

Though St. John directly refers to pharmacological contraceptives he nowhere in his corpus addresses other particular forms of contraception such as coitus interruptus<sup>54</sup> and oral sex. We can deduce from earlier and later Greek authors that such sexual expressions were strictly forbidden.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Thus, aborters and contraceptors, call the good evil, and the evil good, and fall under the 'woe' of the Prophet Isaiah, *Prophecy of Isaiah* 5:20.

<sup>54</sup> St. John Chrysostom calls Onan an "evil man" but does not identify the sin of Onan recorded in Genesis 38 as the sin of coitus interruptus, as did Ss. Epiphanius and Jerome. *Hom. LXII in Gen.*; PG 54.533.

<sup>55</sup> Such an assumption may be supported by the teaching of St. Theodore of Tarsus (A. D. 602-690), a Greek educated in Athens, who became the Archbishop of Canterbury at the end of his life (A. D. 668-690). He was installed in the post by Pope Vitalian, who was concerned, however, that Theodore not promote Greek customs in Roman realms. St. Theodore, a great scholar throughout his life, has left history only one work: *The Penitential of Theodore*. Though it is not a direct literary production of Theodore

Just how confusing the contemporary Orthodox Christian ethical scene is on the subject of contraception is apparent in the statements concerning it found in the definitive work by Bishop Kallistos Ware entitled *The Orthodox Church*. In the first version of the text published in 1963 we read,

“Artificial methods of birth control are forbidden in the Orthodox Church.”

The *revised first edition* printed in 1984 reads,

“The use of contraceptives and other devices for birth control is on the whole strongly discouraged in the Orthodox Church. Some bishops and theologians altogether condemn the employment of such methods. Others, however, have *recently* begun to adopt a less strict position, and urge that the question is best left to the discretion of each individual couple, in consultation with the spiritual father.”

In the *revised second edition* printed in 1993 we read of yet another change.

“Concerning contraceptives and other forms of birth control, differing opinions exist within the Orthodox Church. *In the past* birth control was in general strongly condemned, but today a less strict view is coming to prevail, not only in the west, but in traditional Orthodox countries. Many Orthodox theologians and spiritual fathers consider that the responsible use of contraception within marriage is not in itself sinful. In their view, the question of how many children a couple should have, and at what intervals, is best decided by the partners themselves, according to the guidance of their own consciences.”<sup>56</sup>

Bishop Kallistos does not so much defend a moral position on the subject of contraception, as he simply articulates how the great winds of change, which have been blowing so violently in the western world in the last forty years, and have so altered the traditional moral landscape of the Christian West, particularly in its understanding of procreation, sexual relations, and contraception have not spared the Orthodox Church

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himself, it consists of answers given by the saint to the priest Eoda, and its authenticity and importance are generally recognized. Geary (1998), p. 250. In chapter two (*Of Fornication*) the code records, “He who ejaculates into the mouth of another shall do penance for seven years; this is the worst of evils. Elsewhere it was his judgment that both [participants in the offence] shall do penance to the end of life; or twelve

from their influence. With such clarity how could any Orthodox layperson be confused?! This is certainly a pregnant moment in the life of the Church, and one in which the synthesis of Tradition and contemporary Christian moral norms ought to be fervently sought. In that quest the contribution of St. John Chrysostom will certainly be of great value.

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years, or as above seven." For more on the subject of oral sex, and the influence of Theodore's proscription see Payer (1984), pp. 30ff.

<sup>56</sup> Ware, Timothy (Bishop Kallistos) (1963), p. 302; (1984), p. 302; (1993), p. 296.

## Chapter Six: Celestial Bodies and Spiritual Consortship: Marriage and Virginity in the Eschaton

### Introduction.

Christian views of virginity and sexuality are rooted firmly in a developed anthropology: both *protological* and *eschatological*.<sup>1</sup> This suggestion certainly holds true for the theology of St. John Chrysostom. Chrysostom, like most Patristic authors, develops his understanding of human sexuality, and especially the subject of virginity, from a much larger vision of the human person as he was created by God originally in the Garden of delights (protological), and as he will ultimately be recreated in the future Kingdom (eschatological).

Our previous chapters have examined Chrysostom's grand vision of the human race as it was originally created, as it fell from its pristine condition, and as it has progressively recovered its dignity and primal glory through the unfolding of the mighty acts of God. What is the final chapter of this divine drama? What shall man become? This chapter is designed to answer these questions by examining Chrysostom's eschatological anthropology, giving special attention to the future existence of marriage and virginity. This task is more challenging for the researcher because the Chrysostom corpus contains no dense treatise on the topic nor anything comparable to the extended sections on protological anthropology found in his *On Virginity* and his *Homilies on Genesis* or on the outworking of marriage and virginity in this age found in his many

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw (1998), p. 183. If one wishes to understand the nature and God-intended practice of human sexuality, one must first understand what it means to be *human*. This is the very point that so much contemporary discussion of sexuality fails to examine, and thus both popular descriptions and prescriptions



homilies delivered to his parishioners. Instead we have attempted to compile a coherent theological picture based upon a general survey of Chrysostom's writings, here and there gleaning comments regarding our theme. His Scriptural commentary on passages concerning the future resurrected state merits special attention.

The task of coherently describing an eschatological anthropology faces the additional challenge of discoursing upon a subject which is in most ways *beyond fallen human comprehension*. "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him."<sup>2</sup> St. Paul himself was left speechless following a personal transportation up into Paradise. That which he experienced there was in his own words *inexpressible*.<sup>3</sup> Chrysostom demonstrates a profound awareness of the difficulty of developing a clear conception of the eschatological state.<sup>4</sup> Those good things of the life to come are "beyond words" (*τὰ ἀπόρρητα*).<sup>5</sup> "Beloved, now we are children of God, *and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be*."<sup>6</sup> St. Ephrem the Syrian writes,

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fall more naturally (from a Patristic perspective) under the category of *purely animal sexuality* rather than *human sexuality*.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 2:9.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 12:4.

<sup>4</sup> "But observe, how when he is discoursing about the things to come, he is unable to tell clearly the blessings, but speaketh of glory and honor. For in that they transcend all that man hath, he hath no image of them taken from this to show, but by those things which have a semblance of brightness among us, even by them he sets them before us as far as may be, by glory, by honor, by life. For these be what men earnestly strive after, yet are those things not these, but much better than these, inasmuch as they are incorruptible and immortal." *Hom. V in Rom.*; PG 60.425; NPNF, p. 362.

<sup>5</sup> *Exp. in Ps. XLVIII*; PG 55.231. Not only is the exact nature of the future state a mystery, but the *means* of the transformation is likewise beyond our grasp. Speaking of this Chrysostom offers the following advice, "Inquire not; God doeth it; be not too curious." *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.468.

<sup>6</sup> 1 St. John 3:2. The mystery of the future resurrected state is wittingly expressed in *The Resurrection of the Body*, a poem by Christopher Derrick: "He's a terror - that one. Turns water into wine, turns wine into blood, what on earth does He turn blood into?" as quoted by Kreeft (1990), p. 98. This poem posits a very relevant question since St. Paul teaches, "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:50). St. Gregory of Nyssa in his *On the Soul and the Resurrection* teaches that believers will know the nature of the Resurrection only by their experience of it. *Anim. et Res.*; PG 46.121ff.

“Do not let your intellect be disturbed by mere names, for Paradise has simply clothed itself in terms that are akin to you; it is not because it is impoverished that it has put on your imagery; rather, your nature is far too weak to be able to attain to its greatness, and its beauties are much diminished by being depicted in the pale colors with which you are familiar. For feeble eyes cannot gaze upon the dazzling sight of its celestial beauties...That Garden is the life-breath of this diseased world that has been so long in sickness.”<sup>7</sup>

With these sentiments Chrysostom would whole-heartedly concur.

### Chrysostom’s Kingdom<sup>8</sup> Anthropology.

#### The Certainty of the Resurrection State.

Chrysostom labors in many places to establish the certainty of the future resurrected state.<sup>9</sup> In discoursing on the future resurrected state Chrysostom reflects on the original Edenic creation, and compares the miraculous feat of the original creation *ex nihilo* with that of the re-creation that takes place in the Resurrection.

“Let no one therefore go on disbelieving the Resurrection: but if a man disbelieve, let him think how many things He made from nothing, and admit it as a proof also of the other. For the things which are already past are stranger by far, and fraught with overpowering wonder. Just consider. He took earth and mixed it, and made man; earth which existed not before this. How then did the earth become man? And how was it produced from nothing? And, how, all the things that were made from it? The endless sorts of irrational creatures; of seeds; of plants; no pangs of travail having preceded in the one case, no rains having come down upon the others; no tillage seen, no oxen, no plough, nor any thing else

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<sup>7</sup> Brock (1998), *Hymn 11 on Paradise*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>8</sup> We are using the term “Kingdom” here to describe the *final* and *eternal* state of mankind in the New Heavens and the New Earth, and not to describe life in the Church prior to that state.

<sup>9</sup> This was a common occupation of Church Fathers in the first centuries of the Christian era due to the denial of the bodily resurrection not only by early Christian heretics, but by “the aggregate school of all the philosophers.” Tertullian, *Præ. Haer.*, VII.4.11-12; CCSL I, p. 192; ANF, p. 246.

contributing to their production? Why, for this cause the lifeless and senseless thing was made to put forth in the beginning so many kinds of plants and irrational creatures, in order that from the very first He might instruct thee in the doctrine of the Resurrection. For this is more inexplicable than the Resurrection. For it is not the same thing to rekindle an extinguished lamp, and to shew fire that has never yet appeared. It is not the same thing to raise up again a house which has fallen down, and to produce one which has never at all had an existence.<sup>10</sup> For in the former case, if nothing else, yet the material was given to work with; but in the latter, not even the substance appeared...to man the Resurrection seems impossible but not to the unsleeping Eye” (τῷ ἀκοιμήτῳ ὀφθαλμῷ).<sup>11</sup>

The *two creations* are intimately linked in his mind, and the reality of the first creation *ex nihilo* is the assurance of the future re-creation of all. This connection between the creation of the world and its certain recreation is an original Christian theme. The abhorrence at the idea that God would abandon His fallen creation (especially the human being: body and soul) runs deep in the mind of the Church. Tertullian writes on this theme, “God forbid! God forbid! That He should abandon to everlasting destruction the labor of His own hands, the care of His own thoughts, the receptacle of His own Spirit, the queen of His creation, the inheritor of His own liberality, the priestess of His religion, the champion of His testimony, the sister of His Christ!”<sup>12</sup>

Besides the prophetic nature of the original creation, Chrysostom argues that God’s victory over evil necessitates a future bodily resurrection. If the Resurrection is not a bodily one, but one merely of human souls then “the worst enemy of all, death,

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<sup>10</sup> In like manner Tertullian writes, “He is most competent to recreate who created, inasmuch as it is a far greater work to have produced than to have reproduced, to have imparted a beginning, than to have maintained a continuance. On this principle, you may be quite sure that the restoration of the flesh is easier than its formation.” *Res. Mort.*, XI.10.33-36; CCSL II, p. 934; ANF, p. 553.

<sup>11</sup> *Hom. XVII in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.141, 143; NPNF, p. 98. This excerpt is partially lifted *verbatim* from St. Methodios’ *Treatise on the Resurrection. Res. XIV*; PG 18.285. This extended quote demonstrates the theological centrality of eschatology for Chrysostom. So fundamental is the coming Resurrection of mankind that St. John sees it foreshadowed and prophesied in the original creation, which as a “lifeless and senseless” thing (words used to accurately describe the human corpse prior to resurrection) brings forth new life.

remains” (ὁ χαλεπώτατος ἐχθρὸς ἀπάντων θάνατος μένει), and God has not triumphed.<sup>13</sup> The certainty of the future resurrection of the body is also demanded ethically,<sup>14</sup> Chrysostom argues. God’s just judgment demands that the body that sins give account of its sins.<sup>15</sup> The continuity between this body and the resurrected body is demanded ethically for justice’s sake. St. John again picks up this ethical theme in his *Homilies on St. Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* where he is found discoursing against the heretics who taught that a different body will be raised up at the Resurrection. St. John asks, “So one body sins and another is punished?”<sup>16</sup>

The certainty of the future resurrected state, however, does not stop the devil from vigorously attacking the Orthodox belief in the Resurrection itself. This the devil does knowing that the one who does not expect that he shall rise again and give an account will not quickly apply himself to virtue. If we are *not* to be raised then the physical creation is of more value than we because it lasts longer. Conversely, the one who is certain of the future Resurrection is motivated by this conviction to live this temporary and earthly life in the light of the coming Resurrection, and will be buoyed in his pursuit of virtue by this faith conviction.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Res. Mort.*, IX.2.7-11; CCSL II, p. 932; ANF, p. 552.

<sup>13</sup> *Hom. XXXIX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.342; “For victory is this, the winning of those things which have been carried off and detained. But if men’s bodies are to be detained in the earth, it follows that the tyranny of death remains, these bodies for their part being holden, and there being no other body for him to be vanquished in.” *Ibid.*, XXXIX; PG 61.342; NPNF, p. 240.

<sup>14</sup> On this point St. John is building on a traditional Christian apologetic for the resurrection of the body. Cf. Tertullian, “It is not right that souls should have all the wrath of God to bear: they did not sin without the body, within which all was done by them.” *Apologeticum*, XLVIII.4.33-39; CCSL I, p. 166; ANF, p. 53. Cf. *Res. Mort.*, XIV.10.34-45; CCSL II, p. 937; *Ibid.* LVI.1.1-5.22; CCSL II, p. 1003.

<sup>15</sup> *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.470.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, X; PG 61.470.

## The Transfiguration as a Type of the Resurrected State.

The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ on Mt. Tabor “enigmatically and in part”<sup>18</sup> reveals how our body will be after the Resurrection.<sup>19</sup> The Transfiguration was designed to manifest the future glory so that the disciples would not grieve over their own death or that of the Lord.<sup>20</sup> In the Transfiguration he gave the disciples a vision of heaven.<sup>21</sup> This vision, however, was curtailed in order not to overwhelm the disciples. They saw only as much of His brightness as they were able to bear. The future glory is far brighter: Christ will come in the glory of the Father, accompanied by the archangels and cherubim (not just by Moses and Elijah), and not merely having a cloud over His head, but “even heaven itself being folded up.”<sup>22</sup> In actuality the glory of Christ revealed on the mountain was far brighter than the sun for the sun’s glory would not have caused the disciples to fall down.<sup>23</sup> This same accommodation to human weakness in foretelling the Lord’s resurrected glory is applied while foretelling all mankind’s resurrected glory. The Lord teaches that the “righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom.”<sup>24</sup> In fact, the glory shall be more than the sun (*πλέον ἢ ὁ ἥλιος*). The future brightness of the saints (*τὴν μέλλουσαν λαμπηδόνα τῶν ἀγίων*) is depicted by this analogy since we know no other star

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<sup>17</sup> The ethical ramifications of denying the future Resurrection and judgment are beautifully set forth by Tertullian, “There is no one who lives so much in accordance with the flesh as they who deny the resurrection of the flesh.” *Res. Mort.*, XI.2-3; CCSL II, p. 933; ANF, p. 552.

<sup>18</sup> *Delic.*; PG 51.352.

<sup>19</sup> Here it should be noted that just as Chrysostom imagined a radical deformation taking place in the human body at the time of the Fall with drastic consequences for body and soul, while maintaining a continuity of essence, so in the Resurrection a similar such drastic transformation will take place.

<sup>20</sup> *Hom. LVI in Mt.*; PG 58.549.

<sup>21</sup> St. John suggests that the Lord set forth a vision of *hell* in the teaching on Lazarus and the rich man in Hades (St. Luke 16). *Ibid.*, LVI; PG 58.549.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, LVII; PG 58.554; NPNF, p. 349.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, LVII; PG 58.555.

<sup>24</sup> St. Matthew 13:43.

brighter than the sun, not because the light of the saints is to “be so much and no more.”<sup>25</sup> St. John describes the future glorification of the human body and its subsequent incorruptibility as a result of grace sent from above. This is what St. Paul means when he says that our future habitation comes down from heaven. He is referring to the grace of incorruptibility which will come down.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Lord’s Resurrection as a Type of Our Own.**

While the Transfiguration of Christ pictures the future glory of all the righteous in the Kingdom, the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the primary model of glorified humanity.<sup>27</sup> Christ’s Resurrection from the dead both guarantees and models the future Resurrection.<sup>28</sup> Transported to a state of awe while reflecting upon the glory of the coming transformation of the human body, Chrysostom cries out,

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<sup>25</sup> *Hom. LVI in Mt.*; PG 58.555. Cf. Chrysostom, commenting upon the teaching, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” writes, “Not because it will be just so much only, but because this star is surpassed in brightness by none that we know. He uses the comparisons that are known to us” *Ibid.*, XLVII; PG 58.482; NPNF, p. 293. Chrysostom is zealous not to diminish the conception of future glory in any way by earthly comparisons.

<sup>26</sup> *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.467.

<sup>27</sup> A comment on Chrysostom’s Christology is relevant here. It is often assumed, since Chrysostom was so evidently a part of the “Antiochian school” of theology and Scriptural exegesis, that he shared the Christological emphases of his teacher Diodoros of Tarsus, and his colleague Theodore of Mopsuestia, and as such would be focused upon refuting Apollinarianism and affirming the human soul and complete human nature of Christ. Such a conclusion is, in fact, mistaken. The representatives of the Antiochian school were really quite diverse in their teachings. It is not at all the case that there was great Christological consensus in Antioch at this time in the first place. It is more likely, I believe, that the Alexandrian Christology was much more dominant in the Church, and that Theodore really went off theologically on his own. Whatever the exact genesis of Theodore’s Christology, it is clear that Chrysostom did not in any way share his Christology. Chrysostom’s Christology is fundamentally dependent upon St. Athanasios and the Alexandrian emphases. For a defense of this position see Grillmeier (1975), pp. 418-421. For more on the difference in Christology between Chrysostom and Theodore see Lawrenz (1989), pp. 148-153.

<sup>28</sup> *Hom. XXXIX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.336-337. The guarantee or pledge to men offered by Christ’s own Resurrection is explained by Tertullian, “As the Mediator between God and man, He keeps in His own self the deposit of the flesh which has been committed to him by both parties- the pledge and security of its entire perfection...the very same flesh which was once sown in death will bear fruit in resurrection life- the same in essence only more full and perfect.” *Res. Mort.*, LI.2.11-13; CCSL II, p. 994; ANF, p. 585. St.

“What? Shall this our body be fashioned like unto Him, who sitteth at the right hand of the Father, to Him who is worshiped by the Angels, before whom do stand the incorporeal Powers, to Him who is above all rule, and power, and might?”<sup>29</sup>

So great is this promised glory of conformity to Christ’s exalted body that if one were to fall away from such a hope into hell the tragedy of losing such an exalted position would far outweigh in measures of grief the actual torments of hell.<sup>30</sup> The same power that Christ exercised in His own Resurrection He will use to accomplish this great transformation of righteous humanity.<sup>31</sup>

In Christ’s resurrected body we see the pattern of our own resurrection. *Both* a continuity of body *and* a discontinuity exist. The Lord’s resurrected body was really His earthly body that died, as is evident from its bearing the marks of crucifixion.<sup>32</sup> While it is not proper to an incorruptible body to show the prints of the nails or to be “tangible by a mortal hand,” Christ allowed both of these realities in His great condescension.<sup>33</sup> Yet in the Resurrection it exists in a different form (*τὴν μορφὴν ἀλλοιοτέραν*) “full of much awfulness” (*πολλῆς ἐκπλήξεως γέμουσαν*).<sup>34</sup> Christ had become “far more excellent in the

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Athanasios posits the same, “It is truly a subject of joy, that we can see the signs of victory against death, even our own incorruptibility, through the body of the Lord. For since He rose gloriously, it is clear that the resurrection of all will take place: and since His body remained without corruption, there can be no doubt regarding our incorruption.” *Ep. Fest. XI*; PG 26.14.1411; NPNF, p. 538.

<sup>29</sup> *Hom. XIII in Phil.*; PG 62.279.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII; PG 62.279.

<sup>31</sup> Chrysostom posits this question, “Which requireth the greater power, to subject demons, and Angels, and Archangels, and Cherubim, and Seraphim, or to make the body incorruptible and immortal? The latter certainly much more than the former; He showed forth the greater works of His power, that you might believe these too.” *Ibid.*, XIII; PG 62.279; NPNF, p. 244.

<sup>32</sup> The marks of crucifixion on the Lord’s resurrected body no more are evidence of corruption than the walking on the water prior to the Resurrection is evidence that His human nature was other than our own. *Hom. LXXXVII in Jn.*; PG 59.474.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXVII; PG 59.474.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXVII; PG 59.475.

flesh.”<sup>35</sup> Christ’s resurrected body was no longer “passible” (οὐ σῶμα παθητὸν ἔχων) but was immortal and incorruptible, and not needing food (οὐ δεόμενον τροφῆς).<sup>36</sup> Why then did Jesus eat and drink after His Resurrection? Not because of need, but to establish the full assurance of His Resurrection.<sup>37</sup> Exactly *how* Christ physically ate<sup>38</sup> with His disciples in His resurrected body is unknown to Chrysostom.<sup>39</sup> Christ’s resurrected body was also completely refined (λεπτὸν), light (κοῦφον) and “free of all density” (παχύτητος πάσης ἀπήλλακτο).<sup>40</sup> Since Christ was able to walk upon the waters even while “clad in a body weighing Him down and subject to suffering” we ought not be surprised that after He assumed it back incorruptible that He makes a way through the air.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXVI. PG 59.469; NPNF, p. 324. This is what St. Mary Magdalen needed to learn when she clutched Christ and He told her, “Touch Me not.”

<sup>36</sup> *Hom. LXXXII in Mt.*; PG 58.740.

<sup>37</sup> *Hom. in Ac.I*; PG 60.19. St. John of Damascus writes, “Even though He did taste food after the resurrection, it was not in obedience to any law of nature, because He did not feel hunger, but by way of dispensation that He might confirm the truth of the resurrection.” *F. O.*, 74.1-6; PTS 12, p. 172; Chase (1958), p. 335. Cf. Tertullian writes, “Death will cease; so there will be no more need of the nutriment of food for the defence of life.” *Res. Mort.*, LXI.4.20-21; CCSL II, p. 1010; ANF, p. 593.

<sup>38</sup> Acts 1:4.

<sup>39</sup> “But the, ‘how,’ it is not ours to say; for these things came to pass in too strange a manner, not as though His nature now needed food, but from an act of condescension, in proof of the Resurrection.” *Hom. LXXXVII in Jn.*; PG 59.476; NPNF, p. 329. Later theologians such as St. Gregory Palamas and St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite describe the “consumption” of food by Christ as a process of the food being burned up by His divine energies.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXVII; PG 59.474; NPNF, p. 328. This is the explanation of *how* Christ was able to pass through closed doors when appearing to His disciples after the Resurrection. Interestingly, St. John uses some of these very same words to describe the future glorified bodies of the righteous, confirming in these descriptions again that Christ’s resurrected body is the *model* and *pattern* for the saved. It is interesting to consider that not only a *reduction in density* may explain our Savior’s ability to pass through closed doors, but an *increase in density*. Is it reasonable to think that it could have been a radical increase in density that allowed Christ to pass through the door much as a lead pipe would pass through water? In this case the door, not Christ’s body, would be the fine/thin element. This conception was first presented to me by Dr. Knox Chamblin, my professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS. This notion of the things of heaven being more “solid” than the things of earth appears elsewhere in contemporary Western theology. Its Patristic foundation is, to my mind, suspect.

<sup>41</sup> *Exp. in Ps. XLVI*; PG 55.214. St. Ephrem the Syrian meditated on how the innumerable multitudes of resurrected bodies would spatially be contained in the Kingdom of Heaven. His answer was derived from meditation upon the nature of spiritual beings. He noted that a “legion” of demons dwelt in one possessed man, and wrote thus, “That whole army dwelt in a single body. A hundred times finer and more subtle are the bodies of the righteous when they are risen, at the Resurrection: they resemble the mind which is able, if it so wills, to stretch out and expand, or, should it wish, to contract and shrink; if it shrinks, it is in some place, if it expands, it is in every place.” Brock (1998), *Hymn 5 on Paradise*, p. 105.



## The Nature of the Resurrected State – Continuity and Discontinuity.

### The Continuity of the Resurrected State.

If the Resurrection of Christ Himself is the main clue to discerning the nature of glorified humanity what conclusion about that future state can we draw from Christ's Resurrection? Much of St. John's teaching on the future resurrected body occurs in his commentary upon chapter 15 of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. St. John devoted five extended homilies to expounding the Holy Apostle's teaching in this chapter.<sup>42</sup> In these homilies St. John labored to emphasize the reality that the resurrected body maintains *both* a continuity with our present fallen bodies *and* a discontinuity. The Resurrection is a transfiguration of our earthly and mortal bodies, and not an eradication thereof, nor an entirely new creation.

St. John's whole approach to explaining the nature of the resurrected body is a careful theological exposition designed to avoid two heretical poles that plagued the early Christian communities. On the one hand Chrysostom sought to distance himself from a *Gnostic* conception of the resurrected state.<sup>43</sup> It was widely believed that the influential

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<sup>42</sup> Homilies 38-42 of 44 Homilies on 1 Corinthians.

<sup>43</sup> From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century many Christian teachers posited a bodiless redemption, and were regarded as heretics by the Church. St. Clement of Alexandria labored against many of the misconceptions foisted upon the Church by these heretics. Origen's affirmation that the "form" of the body would be raised was very controversial for he seemed to substantially limit what was included in this "form." Much debate filled the Church in the early centuries on the nature of the resurrected body, and Origen was often at the center of the debate. This debate with Origen, however, was an "in-house" debate. Even St. Methodios, whose 3 volume *Treatise on the Resurrection* targeted Origen, referred to Origen as a "man of the Church." Not until the 6<sup>th</sup> century were some of Origen's teachings *officially* condemned by the Church as heretical, and often his positions were discussed and criticized only in forms that were taken by later theologians who claimed to be his disciples. Despite Chrysostom's discriminating use of Origen, St. John himself was

Origen had taught that the *spiritual body*<sup>44</sup> vouchsafed the righteous in the coming Kingdom was immaterial and was *not* the continuation of the earthly body in a transfigured state.<sup>45</sup> Origen taught that the *original embodiment* of man took place as a result of the fall of pure souls. The body is thus thought to be given for the perfection of the soul. Once the body has accomplished its purpose and the soul is perfected there no longer remains a need for this material body as we know it. What Origen actually taught concerning this matter is not at all clear.<sup>46</sup>

This theology of Origen is expressed in his interpretation of the “coats of skin”<sup>47</sup> given to Adam and Eve as *bodies themselves*. This interpretation was not accepted by the Fathers of the Church, and Origen found a vigorous opponent and instrument of censure in St. Methodios of Olympus.<sup>48</sup> In his *On the Resurrection*<sup>49</sup> St. Methodios attacked many aspects of the original *Origenism*.<sup>50</sup> The hierarch of Olympus opens his discourse

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accused of Origenism by St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, who refused communion with Chrysostom and would not so much as see St. John while visiting Constantinople, and by Patriarch Theophilos of Alexandria (Chrysostom’s arch-nemesis). At the shameful *Synod of the Oak* the 15<sup>th</sup> accusation of the Monk Isaac against Chrysostom was that he had “given hospitality to Origenists” (the Tall Brothers from Egypt). Kelly (1995), p. 301. It would be of interest to explore the connection between Chrysostom and Evagrius Ponticus via Heraclides, Evagrius’ disciple, whom Chrysostom consecrated Bishop of Ephesus in A. D. 401, as well as the link to Evagrius via St. Cassian.

<sup>44</sup> 1 Cor. 15:42. “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

<sup>45</sup> Brown (1988) summarizes Origen’s radical view of the resurrected state thus: “The body was poised on the edge of a transformation so enormous as to make all present notions of identity tied to sexual differences, and all social roles based on marriage, procreation, and childbirth, seem as fragile as dust dancing in a sunbeam,” p. 128.

<sup>46</sup> Chadwick (1948), documents that much of the 6<sup>th</sup> century criticism of Origen on these matters did not address Origen’s authentic teaching. Emperor Justinian accused Origen of teaching that the resurrected body will be spherical, taking his doctrine from Plato’s *Timaeus*. Yet neither Ss. Jerome or Methodios are aware of Origen teaching such a doctrine. One of the anathemas against Origen was concerning a quote that was actually from Evagrius, pp. 85ff.

<sup>47</sup> Genesis 3:21. Explanations of the exact nature of these “coats of skin” abound amongst Patristic writers, however, the varying interpretations of the Holy Fathers agree on the point that these “coats of skin” are not the original *embodiment of man*.

<sup>48</sup> See the section on St. Methodios in Ch. 1..

<sup>49</sup> ANF, pp. 364ff.

<sup>50</sup> The term *Origenism* is here qualified in an effort to acknowledge that while *Origenism* as a heresy has been consistently batted about in Church history the definition of what exactly that *Origenism is* has changed drastically. Some aspect of Origen’s teaching may be singled out at a certain time and place (e.g.

on the Resurrection by stating, “Now the question has already been raised, and answered,<sup>51</sup> that the “garments of skin” are not bodies. Nevertheless, let us speak of it again, for it is not enough to have mentioned it once.”<sup>52</sup> Chrysostom demonstrates in his homilies his profound awareness of the diverse heretical teachings surrounding notions of the resurrected body.<sup>53</sup> Commenting upon St. Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians where is found the verse, “For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon,” Chrysostom says, “Here again he hath utterly and manifestly stopped the mouths of the heretics, showing that he is not speaking absolutely of a body differing in identity, but of corruption and incorruption.”<sup>54</sup>

In articulating an Orthodox position on the subject, Chrysostom relied heavily upon St. Methodios of Olympus. In a number of homilies touching on the Resurrection, St. John frequently quotes *verbatim* or *near verbatim* from St. Methodios.<sup>55</sup> The human

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3<sup>rd</sup> century Palestine by St. Methodios) as heretical (his Anthropology, for instance), and *Origenism*, as defined at that time, may mean one thing. At another place and time (e.g. AD 553 at the 5<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council in Constantinople) completely different aspects of Origen’s thought (his deficient Trinitarianism) may be highlighted for condemnation, and thus Origenism may at that time mean something quite different. This fluidity of definition is not surprising due to both the immense size of the corpus of Origen and his substantial popularity amongst the theologically competent in the Church. St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian composed a *Philokalia* exclusively composed of excerpts from Origen’s writings, while St. Epiphanius of Cyprus vigorously set about to abolish Origen’s influence in the Church. See Clark (1992), p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> I am uncertain as to whom St. Methodios is here referring.

<sup>52</sup> *Res.*; PG 18.268; ANF, p. 364.

<sup>53</sup> “But some of the heretics say, that it is another body that is raised.” *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.470. Cf. *Hom. XXXIX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.336

<sup>54</sup> *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.468. St. Ephrem the Syrian interprets the Lord’s cursing of the fig tree as a prophecy of the “unclothing” that will take place in the Resurrection. Humanity will be re-clothed in the glory of Paradise and fig leaves will no longer be necessary. McVey (1994), *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup> The modern scholar, Jean Danielou, has traced this literary and theological reliance on St. Methodios’ teaching concerning the resurrected body in the work of another near contemporary of St. Chrysostom: St. Gregory of Nyssa. See references in English in Shaw (1998), p. 191. St. Methodios’ concept of death as a divine melting down of a damaged image in order to re-craft it in beauty (*Res.* VI; PG 18.269,272) is taken up by Chrysostom and applied to the soul in baptism in his interpretation of Psalm 2 found in his *Baptismal Instructions. Trois Catéchèses Baptismales*, Cat. I.12.26ff; SC 366, pp. 136ff.

*essence* remains the same in the Resurrection, but the attributes are changed. Human nature remains human nature in the Resurrection.

On the other hand Chrysostom in his teaching on the future resurrected state labored against a *Jewish* conception, which conceived of a sensual heaven and a carnal Resurrection.<sup>56</sup> The next life is not simply a continuation of this life without its unfortunate negatives such as sickness, pain, and sorrow.<sup>57</sup> Instead, Chrysostom suggests, it will encompass another mode of life altogether saying, “In the kingdom there will be no more marriage, no more labor pains, or pleasure or intercourse, or plenty of money, or management of possessions, food or clothing, or agriculture and sailing, or arts

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<sup>56</sup> This concept of the resurrected state has proved very popular over the centuries with various religious groups. From Muslims to modern-day Mormons, the quest for a heaven of unending sensual pleasures has long been at full throttle. Ancient and modern chiliasts embrace this same error of conceiving of the Kingdom in earthly terms. This misconception is promoted by many today by a *literalistic hermeneutic* applied to Old Testament Kingdom prophecies. Not following the hermeneutic modeled by the Apostles in the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, many “Bible teachers” today fail to grasp that the Holy Prophets foretold non-earthly, inconceivable heavenly realities under the guise of earthly images. As human beings contained in this life they had no other choice.

<sup>57</sup> Crystallizing and promoting a Patristic worldview on the nature of the resurrected state and the future transformation of the human body is of great pastoral consequence in the modern west. Here so many are seeking a *perpetual Viagra condition*, and doing all they can do at great expense to avoid the effects of the aging process. As I write this, I have just counseled with an ailing and aging parishioner who is poignantly frustrated at the growing number of impediments he faces as he nears death. When I suggested to him that perhaps these *very bodily impediments* were actually gracious *blessings* bestowed by God to enable him to calm his bodily passions, detach himself from the world, and ready himself for a successful transition from this life to the next (and therefore should be embraced and plumbed whole-heartedly for all the grace inherent in them) his countenance was transformed and his whole perspective on what was happening to his body changed. This Christian perspective on aging is reflected beautifully in *Kontakion 9* of the *Akathist Hymn for the Repose of the Departed*, “Bless swiftly passing time: every hour, every moment bringeth eternity nearer to us. A new sorrow, a new gray hair are heralds of the world to come, they are witnesses of earthly corruption, they proclaim that all passeth away, that the eternal Kingdom draweth nigh, where there are neither tears, nor sighing, but the joyful song: Alleluia!” *Book of Akathists* (1994), p. 387. Chrysostom teaches just this saying, “Not only ought not one to grieve at its [the body's] perishing now in part, but even earnestly to seek for the completion of that destruction, for this most conducts thee to immortality.” *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.466; NPNF, p. 326. Shaw (1998) summarizes it well, “The idealized bodily condition of the distant past and/or future informs both our present sufferings of embodiment and the rules and techniques by which we feed, care for, and model our bodies. Food and diet, gender differentiation and sexual procreation, embodiment and physical effort- all are woven together in the ancient discussion of human origins, nature, and destiny.” p. 218.

and architecture, or cities or houses, but some other condition and way of life. All these things will pass away...”<sup>58</sup>

The continuity of the resurrected body with the earthly body is demonstrated in the Resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ. In these appearances Jesus clearly bears the nail prints from His Crucifixion. This reality served to prove that the resurrected body of Jesus was the very same body that was crucified.<sup>59</sup> Chrysostom points to Job 19:26 as confirming the continuity of the resurrection body. The teaching concerning the rich man and Lazarus also demonstrates the continuity of the resurrection body with this fallen body by the fact that the rich man and Lazarus recognized each other.

Chrysostom notes that this heretical teaching of radical discontinuity between the resurrected body and the fallen earthly body is also untenable since St. Paul says we do not want to “take off the body” but to put on the heavenly body and to have the mortal swallowed up by life (2 Cor. 5:4).<sup>60</sup> If God leaves the original body in the grave, and creates another new body then corruption is not swallowed up by life, but remains with the old body. In this case there would be no victory over death.<sup>61</sup> And again in another place, “...the nature that was cast down must itself also gain the victory.”<sup>62</sup>

### **The Discontinuity of the Resurrected State.**

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<sup>58</sup> *Virg.*, LXXIII.4.63-68; SC 125, p. 354.

<sup>59</sup> *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.356.

<sup>60</sup> Tertullian posits the same, “We maintain that what has been abolished in Christ is not sinful flesh but sin in the flesh- not the material thing, but its condition; not the substance but its flaw.” *De Carne Christi*, XVI.2.12-14; CCSL II, p. 902; ANF, p. 535.

<sup>61</sup> *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.470.

<sup>62</sup> *Hom. XXXIX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.336. In emphasizing the continuity of the resurrection body Tertullian goes so far as to suggest that the ages of the deceased will continue in the Kingdom, “Let our own people, moreover, bear this in mind, that souls are to receive back at the Resurrection the self-same bodies in which they died. Therefore our bodies must be expected to resume the same conditions and the same ages, for it

While St. John labors the importance of the continuity of the resurrected body with our present fallen bodies, he does not fail to elucidate the great transformation that shall take place. Our future bodies are *the same* and *not the same* (καὶ γὰρ αὐτός ἐστι, καὶ οὐχ αὐτός).<sup>63</sup> Commenting on 1 Cor. 15:37-38 Chrysostom teaches that the sameness is a sameness of essence, but that essence will be more glorious, beautiful, and improved.<sup>64</sup> God would not destroy and raise our bodies if He did not intend to raise them better and more glorious.<sup>65</sup> The future body possesses a great superiority to our present one. This future superiority is as much greater as the heavenly is than the earthly, and as a permanent house is than a temporary tabernacle.<sup>66</sup> The “habitation which is from heaven” is the incorruptible body. At the heart of this discontinuity and greater glory is the body’s reception of imperishability and immortality.

In this glorified condition resurrected man will throw off earthly gifts such as prophecy and tongues, gifts given by God for earthly effect, and the atmosphere of mankind in the next life will be one of intense love comparable to nothing on this earth. “For here there are many things that weaken our love; wealth, business, passions of the body, disorders of the soul; but there none of these.”<sup>67</sup> Again commenting on the next life, St. John states that grief, concern, desire, stumbling, anger, lust for possessions, poverty, wealth, and dishonor will not exist, but “everything will be joy, everything

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is these particulars which impart to bodies their especial modes.” *De Anima*, LVI.5.37-6.41; CCSL II, p. 864; ANF, p. 232. Chrysostom does not teach such.

<sup>63</sup> *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.357.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, XLI; PG 61.356.

<sup>65</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa argues along the same lines – that the Resurrection will be far more than the restoration of our pristine condition in Paradise but will be an elevation and transfer to something far higher, better, and perfect. *Anim. et Res.*; PG 46.157.

<sup>66</sup> *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.467.

peace, everything love, everything happiness, everything that is true, unalloyed and stable.”<sup>68</sup>

Chrysostom speaks of resurrected man in a manner reminiscent of Adam in the Garden when he speaks about man’s *knowledge*. Commenting upon the teaching of St. Paul that when the perfect comes “knowledge will be done away”<sup>69</sup> St. John explains,

“What then? Are we to live in ignorance? Far from it. Nay, then specially it is probable that our knowledge is made intense. Wherefore also he said, ‘Then shall I know, even as I also am known’<sup>70</sup> ...It is not therefore knowledge that is done away, but the circumstance that our knowledge is in part. For we shall not only know as much but even a great deal more.”<sup>71</sup>

Contrary to the teaching of the Anomoean heretics,<sup>72</sup> who filled Chrysostom’s church when he began his public preaching as a priest, this passage does not teach that man can or will ever see and know God’s *essence*.

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<sup>67</sup> *Hom. XXXIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.287.

<sup>68</sup> *Exp. in Ps. CXIV*; PG 55.319; Hill (1998), p. 87.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Cor. 13:8. “He speaks of passing away as an advance to something better when, by passing away, the partial knowledge is no longer partial but complete and perfect.” *Incomprehens.*, 1.93-95; SC 28, p. 104; Harkins (1982), p. 55.

<sup>70</sup> Chrysostom, aware of the interpretive difficulty of this phrase and of its misuse by contemporary heretics such as the Anomeans, against whom he preached his homilies *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, offers the following explanation, “Wherefore, even as now He first knew me, and Himself hastened towards me, so shall I hasten towards Him then much more than now. For so he that sits in darkness, as long as he sees not the sun doth not of himself hasten to meet the beauty of its beam, which indeed shows itself as soon as it hath begun to shine: but when he perceives its brightness, then also himself at length follows after its light. This then is the meaning of the expression, ‘even as I also have been known.’ Not that we shall so know him as He is, but that even as He hastened toward us now, so also shall we cleave unto Him then, and shall know many of the things which are now secret, and shall enjoy that most blessed society and wisdom.” *Hom. XXXIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.287; NPNF, p. 202.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIV; PG 61.287; NPNF, p. 202. Chrysostom expands upon this increase of knowledge further, saying, “Now we know that God is everywhere, but how, we know not. That He made out of things that are not the things that are we know; but of the manner we are ignorant. That He was born of a virgin, we know; but how, we know not yet. But then shall we know somewhat more and clearer concerning these things” *Ibid.*, XXXIV; PG 61.287; NPNF, p. 202.

<sup>72</sup> The Anomoeans maintained the *actual dissimilarity* (τὸ ἀνόμοιον) of natures between the Father and the Son, which was a further expansion of Arianism. Combined with this, they taught that man is able to know the whole nature of God. These heretics interpreted St. Paul’s profession to know “in part” to mean that he

“Where are those who say they have attained and possess the fullness of knowledge? The fact is that they have really fallen into the deepest ignorance...I urge you, then, to flee from the madness of these men. They are obstinately striving to know what God is in his essence...the prophets know neither his essence nor his wisdom and his wisdom comes from his essence...Let us, therefore, listen to the angels so that you may know- and know abundantly- that, not even in heaven, does any created power know God in his essence.”<sup>73</sup>

Glorified man will perceive God as do the angels, who have to cover their eyes and behold not the essence of God itself but a fitting condescension (*συγκατάβασις*).<sup>74</sup> When St. John the Theologian writes that “no one has ever seen God,”<sup>75</sup> this means that no one has ever had or ever will have an exact grasp (*ἀκριβῆ κατάληψιν*) or perfect comprehension (*τετρανωμένην γνώσιν*)<sup>76</sup> of God. To illustrate the fundamental *ontological distance*<sup>77</sup> between God and man Chrysostom puts before his listeners this question, “For what distance dost thou suppose to be between God and man? As great as between men and worms? Or as great as between Angels and worms? But when I have mentioned a

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was ignorant not of God’s substance but of his dispensations. One of Chrysostom’s tasks as a young priest and preacher was to reconcile the Anomoean party to the Church. See Harkins (1984), pp. 3-47. St. John’s opinion of the heinousness of this heresy is expressed in classic Chrysostomian turn of phrase found in many places in his corpus, “What about you Anomoeans? Do you not think that you deserve to be seared with ten thousand thunderbolts?” *Incomprehens.*, II.371-373; SC 28, p. 172; Harkins (1982), p. 84. The Anomoeans were also referred to as Eunomians after their teacher Eunomius (consecrated Bishop of Cyzicus in AD 360, the same year Meletios was elected Patriarch of Antioch and banished for his Orthodoxy).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, I.188-190, 192-195, 306, 309-310; SC 28, pp. 116, 126, 128; Harkins (1982), pp. 58-59, 65.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, III.160-166; SC 28, p. 200. Chrysostom elaborates this theme by noting that God dwells in “unapproachable light.” Applying this reality in a *qal vahomer*/ *πολλῶ μάλλον* method Chrysostom suggests that if the dwelling itself is unapproachable *how much more* He who dwells within it!

<sup>75</sup> St. John 1:14.

<sup>76</sup> *Incomprehens.*, IV.182-3; SC 28, pp. 242, 244.

<sup>77</sup> Man’s inability to perceive the essence of God derives from the fact that man and God are not of the “same substance.” Though the Scriptures use the image of the potter and the clay to describe God’s relationship to man, in reality, the “distance” between God and man is greater than that between the potter and the clay because the latter are of the same substance. “The distance between the essence of God and the essence of man is so great that no words can express it, nor is the mind capable of measuring it.” *Ibid.*, II.348-350; SC 28, p. 170; Harkins (1982), p. 85.



distance even thus great, I have not at all expressed it.”<sup>78</sup> To express the real distance between God and man is, in fact, impossible.<sup>79</sup> Driving home his point Chrysostom asks his hearers if they would be at all interested in having a great reputation amongst worms! If humans, who love glory in their pride, are not interested in the praise of worms, how much less is God, Who is far above the passion of pride, in need of or interested in any human praise. Only in His great condescension toward man does God say that He desires man’s praise, and this solely to promote man’s salvation.<sup>80</sup> This teaching on the *unknowability* of God’s essence should not disturb any reasonable person, for it is clear that we humans do not even know *our own essences* let alone God’s!<sup>81</sup>

Though not seeing God’s essence, resurrected man will perceive all things with greater clarity (*σαφέστερον*) and perspicuity (*τρανότερον*).<sup>82</sup> So great will be the advancement and transformation of human perception that it can only be compared to the difference between a child and an adult, or between seeing darkly through a glass versus seeing face to face. To illustrate the nature of this *increasing clarity*, St. John uses the development of sacred rites in redemptive history. Examining the Holy Passover Chrysostom shows that the Jews celebrated their rite “as in a mirror and darkly” (*ὡς ἐν*

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<sup>78</sup> *Hom. VIII in Rom.*; PG 60.462; NPNF, p. 392.

<sup>79</sup> Besides his homilies on the ultimate unknowability of God in His essence entitled *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God* Chrysostom produced a treatise at the end of his life from exile entitled, *On the Providence of God*. He wrote the treatise to St. Olympias, but intended it for the entirety of his flock in Constantinople. In the manuscript tradition it has sometimes been appended to his work *On the Incomprehensible Nature* since he deals in it with the similar theme of God’s unknowability. However, in this latter work he goes to far greater lengths to *apply* this doctrine, especially to the reality of human suffering. He warns repeatedly of the dangers of an overly curious mind (especially Chs. 3 and 9). *Sources Chrétiennes* has produced a critical edition of this text, but it awaits an English translation.

<sup>80</sup> *Hom. VIII in Rom.*; PG 60.462.

<sup>81</sup> To prove his point Chrysostom points out to his congregation that while we know we have a soul we have no idea how it dwells in our body, *Incomprehens.*, V.268-270; SC 28, p. 294. St. Athanasios had argued in the same vein. “Being men and unable to find out how to describe even what is on the earth...But why do I say, ‘what is on the earth?’ let them tell us their own nature, if they can discover how to investigate their own nature?” *Hom. in Mt. 11:27.*, 6; PG 25.217; NPNF, p. 90.

<sup>82</sup> *Hom. XXXVII in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.287.

ἐσόπτρῳ καὶ ἐν αἰνίγματι).<sup>83</sup> They could not see Christ clearly in the slaughtered lamb, in the sprinkled blood, and in the door posts. These Old Testament sacramental types became clear when the antitype appeared. The same will occur at the Resurrection. In this light the future state of man, as radical an alteration as it is, is nevertheless a *natural process* of increasing clarity.<sup>84</sup> Not being capable of beholding the essence of God does not mean that glorified man will not see God. Glorified man will not only see God, but he will “gaze”<sup>85</sup> intently upon Him and in perfect silence will “continually commune” (διὰ παντός δὲ τῷ Θεῷ διαλεγομένην) with Him.<sup>86</sup> These realities, in fact, are what constitute the unspeakable pleasure of heaven.

### **Eschatological Man as an Angel.**

The restoration in man of an *angelic mode of being* is taken up by Chrysostom in his commentary upon the Lord’s interaction with the sect of the Sadducees on the question of a future resurrection. Being “of a grosser sort, and eager after the things of the body”<sup>87</sup> the Sadducees were ignorant of the Resurrection. In answer to the apparent

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXVII; PG 61.288.

<sup>84</sup> The transition from this life to the next is further shown to be a *natural process* in the life of virginity. By embracing a life lived without “jealousy, strife, and slavery” the virgin passes to the next life naturally. The “envy, worry, and fear” associated with marriage hinder the transition to the next life which knows no such existence. *Virg.*, LIX.10-1; LX.1.3-15; SC 125, p. 320.

<sup>85</sup> St. Basil the Great explains that the virgin restores in this life the gaze upon the divine face which existed originally in the Garden. *Ascet.* 1-2; PG 31.873. That which virgins recover in this life will be recovered by all in the next.

<sup>86</sup> This deep gazing and unceasing communion between God and man is what sets apart the virginal life from the life in the world. By pursuing these things the virgin experiences heaven on earth. *Virg.*, LXVIII.1.6-8; SC 125, p. 338. So intense is this intimate personal communion and spiritual gazing that the virgin finds this temporal life oppressive and longs for death when she will see her bridegroom face to face and enjoy unspeakable glory. *Ibid.*, LIX.10-12; SC 125, p. 320. Chrysostom does not utilize the later Patristic terminology of “essence and energies” to describe this theological and communal reality of seeing God, but the concepts are all quite clearly there.

<sup>87</sup> *Hom. LXX in Mt.*; PG 58.657; NPNF, p. 428.

dilemma set forth by the Sadducees, Christ immediately points out the *discontinuity* between the future resurrected state and the present earthly state. There will be a radical difference, so radical in fact, that the very existence of marriage will be done away.<sup>88</sup> Why will marriage be done away? Chrysostom answers that the abolition of marriage is due to the transformation of man into an angelic condition.<sup>89</sup> It is a new *nature of existence* that necessitates a change of outward life. This radical change in *mode of being* is what St. Paul is referring to when he writes that, “the form of this world is passing away.”<sup>90</sup>

As in the Garden of delights, man will find himself sharing the angelic freedom from bodily necessities. Commenting upon St. Paul’s words recorded in 1 Cor. 6:13, “Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them,” Chrysostom says, “But some say that the words are a prophecy, declaring the state which shall be in the life to come, and that there is no eating or drinking there.”<sup>91</sup> Now if that which is moderate shall have an end, much more ought we to abstain from excess.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Thus nullifying the question of the Sadducees, “Whose wife will she be?” (St. Matt. 22:28).

<sup>89</sup> “But not because they do not marry, therefore are they angels, but because they are as angels, therefore they do not marry.” *Hom. LXX in Mt.*; PG 58.658; NPNF, p. 428. Cf. St. Methodios, *Res.*, XII; PG 18.281. Tertullian illustrates the same theme thus, “As by not marrying, because of not dying, so, of course, by not having to yield to any like necessity of our bodily state; even as the angels, too, sometimes were equal unto men, by eating and drinking, and submitting their feet to the washing of the bath- having clothed themselves in human guise, without the loss of their own intrinsic nature...why shall not men in like manner, when they become equal to the angels, undergo in their unchanged substance of flesh the treatment of spiritual beings, no more exposed to the usual solicitations of the flesh in their angelic garb, than were the angels once to those of the spirit when encompassed in human form? We shall not therefore cease to continue in the flesh, because we cease to be importuned by the usual wants of the flesh; just as the angels ceased not therefore to remain in their spiritual substance, because of the suspension of their spiritual incidents.” *Res. Mort.*, LXII.1.2-7, 2.7-3.15; CCSL II, p. 1011; ANF, p. 593.

<sup>90</sup> 1 Cor. 7:31. “By these words He declared how great a thing the resurrection is.” *Hom. LXX in Mt.*; PG 58.658; NPNF, p. 428.

<sup>91</sup> Here Chrysostom reflects the teaching of St. Athanasios the Great as he describes the mode of angelic nourishment. “The contemplation of God, and the word which is from Him, suffice to nourish those who hear, and stand to them in place of all food. For the angels are no otherwise sustained than by beholding at all times the face of the Father, and of the Savior who is in heaven.” *Ep. Fest 1,6*; PG 26.1364; NPNF p.

## Spiritual Body.

The key to understanding the nature of the resurrected body is to understand that the body becomes *spiritualized*. “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44). Explaining the *spiritual body* Chrysostom writes,

“What sayest thou? Is not ‘this’ body spiritual? It is indeed spiritual, but that will be much more so. For now oftentimes both the abundant grace of the Holy Ghost flies away on men’s committing great sins; and again, the Spirit continuing present, the life of the flesh depends on the soul: and the result in such a case is a void, without the Spirit. But in that day not so: rather He abides continually in the flesh of the righteous (*διηνεκῶς παραμένει τῇ σαρκὶ τῶν δικαίων*), and the victory shall be His, the natural soul also being present.”<sup>93</sup>

In addition to this description of the *spiritual body* St. John writes that this resurrected body will be “lighter and more subtle and such as even to be wafted upon air” (*κουφότερον ἔσται καὶ λεπτότερον, καὶ οἶον καὶ ἐπ’ ἀέρος ὀχεῖσθαι*).<sup>94</sup> This definition of *spiritual body* enables Chrysostom to successfully wind his way between the *Gnostic* and *Jewish* extremes concerning the future resurrected state, and to promote a vigorous spirituality in which the goal is neither *escape from the body* nor *satisfaction of the body*,

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508. Chrysostom elsewhere teaches that food itself shall be done away with in the Kingdom. *Virg.*, LXXIII.4.65; SC 125, p. 354.

<sup>92</sup> *Hom. XVII in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.140; NPNF, p. 97. One of the *some* who teach the abolition of eating and drinking in the next life is St. John Chrysostom himself! In his treatise *On Virginit*y he taught that, among other things, there would be no “food and drink” in the Kingdom.

<sup>93</sup> *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.359.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, XLI; PG 61.359. This comment naturally leads to the contemplation of another Pauline text where the Apostle writes, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds

but *spiritualization of the body*. “Even if we have put off the body, we shall not be presented there without a body, but even with the same one made incorruptible.”<sup>95</sup> Expounding on the Christian hope Chrysostom states that our hope is not escape from the body but transformation. “We do not therefore groan that we may be delivered from the body: for of this we do not wish to be unclothed; but we hasten to be delivered from the corruption that is in it.”<sup>96</sup> In accord with this St. John interprets St. Paul’s words that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”<sup>97</sup> to refer to human sin which shall not enter heaven. “Here he calls wicked deeds ‘flesh’” (*σάρκα ἐνταῦθα τὰς πονηρὰς πράξεις καλεῖ*).<sup>98</sup> According to Chrysostom, St. Paul is not here referring to the body.<sup>99</sup> The spiritualization of the body which will definitively take place in the eschaton should actually *begin* in this earthly life. Using the familiar Patristic imagery of iron in the fire, St. John teaches that as the iron when placed in fire becomes fire without losing its own nature so the flesh of believers, who have been given the Spirit, “goeth over into that

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to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17). Besides the power of God, the transfigured nature of the human body itself enables such a *catching up* to take place at the Second Coming of Christ to the earth.

<sup>95</sup> *Hom. X in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.467.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid, X*; PG 61.468. Again St. John writes, “For it is in this respect that we are burdened by the body; not because it is a body, but because we are encompassed with a corruptible body and liable to suffering.” *Ibid, X*; PG 61.468.

<sup>97</sup> 1 Cor. 15:50.

<sup>98</sup> *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.I*; PG 61.363. In this interpretation St. John diverges from his mentor St. Methodios, who interprets this passage in quite another way. *Res., XIII*; PG 18.283. St. John follows instead the interpretation of Tertullian. “‘Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’ He means the works of flesh and blood, which, in his Epistle to the Galatians, deprive men of the Kingdom of God. In other passages also he is accustomed to put the natural condition instead of the works that are done therein, as when he says that ‘they who are in the flesh cannot please God.’ Now, when shall we be able to please God except whilst we are in this flesh? There is, I imagine, no other time wherein a man can work. If, however, whilst we are even naturally living in the flesh, we yet eschew the deeds of the flesh, then we shall not be in the flesh; since, although we are not absent from the substance of the flesh, we are notwithstanding stranger to the sin thereof. Now, since in the word flesh we are enjoined to put off, not the substance, but the works of the flesh, therefore in the use of the same word the Kingdom of God is denied to the works of the flesh, not to the substance thereof. For not that is condemned in which evil is done, but only the evil which is done in it.” *Adversus Marcionem V.X.11.17-13.2*; CCSL I, p. 694; ANF, p. 451. St. John Cassian puts forward the same interpretation as his spiritual father. *Conlatio III.X.2.9-13*; CSEL XIII, p. 104; Ramsey (1997), p. 160.

manner of working, and becometh wholly spiritual, crucified in all parts, and flying with the same wings as the soul.”<sup>100</sup>

If the spiritualization of the body can begin in this earthly life but *primarily awaits the coming Resurrection*,<sup>101</sup> St. John is just as clear that the spiritualization of the soul takes place in this life *in holy baptism*. Human transformation into the image of Christ “from glory to glory”<sup>102</sup> begins in the font.

“For as soon as we are baptized, the soul beameth ever more than the sun, being cleansed by the Spirit; and not only do we behold the glory of God, but from it also receive a sort of splendor (*ἀγλαήν*). Just as if pure silver be turned towards the sun’s rays, it will itself also shoot forth rays, not from its own natural property merely but also from the solar lustre; so also doth the soul being cleansed and made brighter than silver, receive a ray from the glory of the Spirit and send it back.”<sup>103</sup>

### **Diversity in the Resurrection of the Righteous.**

Expanding on St. Paul’s words Chrysostom establishes a fundamental divide: those righteous who are raised *celestial bodies* and those wicked who are raised *terrestrial bodies*. Even within these two basic ranks multiple divides and degrees

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<sup>99</sup> “Now if he were speaking of the body and not of evil doing, he would not have said ‘corruption,’ since neither is it corruption, but a thing corruptible. *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor. I*; PG 61.363; NPNF, p. 256.

<sup>100</sup> *Hom. XIII in Rom.*; PG 60.518; NPNF, p. 435. Chrysostom then describes St. Paul’s body as the very model of this spiritualization.

<sup>101</sup> St. John Cassian, “This body, which is now animal, will rise spiritual, and the flesh will begin no longer to desire against the spirit.” *Conlatio I.X.2.26-28*; CSEL XIII, p. 16; Ramsey (1997), p. 48.

<sup>102</sup> 2 Cor. 3:18.

<sup>103</sup> *Hom. VII in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.448; NPNF, p. 314. This is part of what St. Paul means when he says that we with unveiled faces “reflect as in a mirror” (2 Cor. 3:18) the glory of the Lord. St. John naturally expands these themes in much greater detail in his catechetical homilies delivered to those preparing for the glorification of the soul in baptism. See Harkins (1963).

exist.<sup>104</sup> Every human being will be raised *incorruptible* at the Universal Resurrection, but not all will be raised to glory. Some will be rise incorruptible *unto punishment* (εἰς κόλασιν), and some will rise incorruptible *unto glory* (εἰς δόξαν).<sup>105</sup> Chrysostom sees St. Paul dividing the ranks of resurrected sinners (terrestrial bodies) into various types of flesh: one of fish, another of birds, another of beasts. All are terrestrial bodies, but are different degrees of “vileness” based upon their manner of living. In the resurrected state there will be a wide divergence in honor awarded to each of the righteous depending upon their works done in the body. “For do not, because thou hearest of a resurrection, imagine that all enjoy the same benefits.”<sup>106</sup> In the Resurrection of the just *there is no equality of honor*. The faithful do not all enjoy the same reward. Though there is but one Resurrection (εἰ καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις μία) there will be a great difference in *degree of glory* (πολλὴ τῆς δόξης ἢ διαφορὰ).<sup>107</sup> The differing ranks of the resurrected righteous are posited as St. Paul turns to a contemplation of various celestial bodies for there is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another of stars. All are in heaven, but they have differing shares of glory.<sup>108</sup> From this we learn that though all the righteous are in God’s Kingdom

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<sup>104</sup> “And having made two ranks, of the righteous and of sinners, these same two he subdivides again into many parts, signifying that neither righteous nor sinners shall obtain the same; neither righteous men, all of them, alike with other righteous, nor sinners with other sinners.” *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.358; NPNF, p. 251. In another place Chrysostom describes this as differing “shares of vengeance.” *Hom. V in Rom.*; PG 60.426.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid, V*; PG 60.425. “Though resurrection will be common to all... resurrection in glory belongs to those who have lived an observant life.” *Exp. in Ps. XLVIII*; PG 55.230; Hill (1998), p. 331.

<sup>106</sup> *Hom. XXXIX in 1 Cor.* PG 61.337; NPNF, p. 236.

<sup>107</sup> *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.358. Chrysostom’s interpretation of 1 Cor. 15 reflects the interpretation of Tertullian. “One star differs from another star in glory although not in substance... it is in this sense that he says, ‘All flesh is not the same flesh’ meaning not to deny a community of substance, but a parity of prerogative.” In no other way than as differing in glory only is the resurrection of the dead. *Res. Mort.*, LII.11.41-43; CCSL II, p. 997; ANF, p. 585-6. Cf. Tertullian in *Scorpiace*, VI.7.17-20; CCSL II, p. 1080.

<sup>108</sup> St. Athanasios writes, “Even if one star differs from another star in glory, it is nevertheless the same sky in which the stars are and which contain them.” Brakke (1985), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 280.

“all shall not enjoy the same reward; and though all sinners be in hell, all shall not endure the same punishment.”<sup>109</sup>

Amongst the resurrected righteous the virgins will shine most brilliantly.<sup>110</sup> In fact, the heavens and its many graces are the true “wedding gifts” (τὰ ἔδνα) of virgin brides.<sup>111</sup> However, even bodies of the married will be invested with such glory as no human eyes can gaze upon, shining not with the corporeal beauty that they possessed while on earth but with a radiance more dazzling than the rays of the sun.<sup>112</sup>

### Marriage and Virginitly in the Eschaton.

Chrysostom very clearly teaches that no marriage will exist in the Kingdom of God.<sup>113</sup> Marriage is the offspring of death. Once death is abolished, so will marriage be. St. John writes, “For where death is, there is marriage. When one does not exist, the

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<sup>109</sup> *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.358; NPNF, p. 251.

<sup>110</sup> Virgins will appear “much brighter” than married persons in the Kingdom. *Virg.*, XLIX.2.28-29; SC 125, p. 276. Cf. St. Athanasios, “Now if a man choose the way of the world, namely marriage, he is not indeed to blame; yet he will not receive such great gifts as the other. For he will receive, since he too bring forth fruit, namely thirtyfold. But if a man embrace the holy and unearthly way, even though, as compared to the former, it be rugged and hard to accomplish, yet it has the more wonderful gifts: for it grows the perfect fruit, namely a hundredfold.” *Ep. Amun.*; PG 26.1173; NPNF, p. 557.

<sup>111</sup> *Virg.*, LIX.7; SC 125, p. 318. “How many virgins will Mary meet! And how she will embrace them and lead them to the Lord! How much joy there will be among the angels when they see the image of their purity in the bodies of the virgins...just like the time when Mariam walked before the women with a timbrel, so it will be in the Kingdom of heaven. Virginitly leads and walks in front, as she is accustomed, with great boldness.” St. Athanasios the Great, Brakke (1995), *First Letter to Virgins*, p. 282.

<sup>112</sup> *Vid.*, III.212-214; SC 138, p. 130. This language demonstrates that resurrected man will recover the very robe that he *lost* in Paradise. See Ch. 2. St. Ephrem the Syrian in his *Hymn 5 on the Nativity* argued that this re-clothing of man in a robe of glory began when Christ clothed Himself in swaddling clothes. McVey (1989), p. 106. He posits that Christ put the original robe of glory into the Jordan river at His baptism in order that it could be placed upon His people in their baptisms. Brock (1998), *Hymns on Paradise*, p. 67. He argues that this re-clothing takes place in the Church and is a recovery of the very robe Adam lost, “Among the saints none is naked, for they have put on glory, nor is any clad in those leaves or standing in shame, for they have found, through our Lord, the robe that belongs to Adam and Eve. As the Church purges her ears of the serpent’s poison, those who had lost their garments, having listened to it and become diseased, have now been renewed and whitened.” *Ibid.*, *Hymn 6*, p 112.

<sup>113</sup> *Virg.*, LXXIII.4.63; SC 125, p. 354; Cf. *Hom. LXX in Mt.*; PG 58.658.



other is not about.”<sup>114</sup> The Kingdom of God has no need for marriage. It will, in fact, fulfil no practical purpose whatsoever. Since the purpose of earthly marriage is two-fold, to suppress man’s licentiousness and to procreate,<sup>115</sup> and since these two purposes will be irrelevant in the Kingdom, then “marriage is no longer useful or necessary” (*οὐκέτι χρήσιμον τὸ πρᾶγμα οὐδὲ ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν*).<sup>116</sup> The heavenly life is the virginal life of the angels, and the future for all the righteous is a virginal future.<sup>117</sup>

While life in the Kingdom is by definition virginal, it is a type of virginity akin to Paradise, without the necessary gates and imposed boundaries of virginity in the fallen world. Thus, though St. Chrysostom teaches that marriage is earthly and temporal, he also clearly teaches that there is an *eternal aspect* of earthly marriage in Christ, which endures into the Kingdom.<sup>118</sup> Marriage in the eschaton,<sup>119</sup> as it was in Paradise, is virginal and spiritual marriage.<sup>120</sup> The nature of this eternal spiritual union often

<sup>114</sup> *Virg.*, XIV.6.70-71; SC 125, p. 142.

<sup>115</sup> “So marriage was granted for the sake of procreation, but an even greater reason was to quench the fiery passion of our nature.” *Ibid.*, XIX.1.2-3; SC 125, p. 156. Shore (1983). p. 27.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, , XXV.9-10; SC 125, p. 174.

<sup>117</sup> Thus when discussing virginity and monasticism the Church does not so much lead Her spiritual children to the question of “if” but to the question of “when.” All the righteous will one day be weaned from marriage and live the angelic life of virginity. This is certain. It is natural and blessed if some, or even most, of her faithful are able to embrace that future life to some degree *in the present*. This reality is of great pastoral importance for Orthodoxy in the west where monasticism has had such slow going in the face of materialism and opposition *within the Church*. Too often Christians who live in the world relate to the monastic presence with an attitude that demands justification for monasticism’s existence. If anyone needs to justify his existence in light of the Gospel, according to the Patristic vision it is not monastics but *we who dwell in the world*.

<sup>118</sup> St. Ephrem the Syrian, far from arguing that marriage is dissolved in the Kingdom, teaches that, “There the married state finds rest after having been anguished by the pangs of giving birth, brought on by the curse, and by the pain of childbearing; now it sees the children whom it had buried amid laments, pasturing like lambs in Eden; exalted in their ranks, glorious in their splendors, they are like kindred of the spotless angels.” Brock (1998), *Hymn 7 on Paradise*, p. 122.

<sup>119</sup> Meaning “marriage” in the non-earthly sense of the Christian union of two souls in love.

<sup>120</sup> Marriage and virginity possess a distinction of form and purpose in this fallen age, that they do not in Paradise or the Kingdom. Each has an earthly expression which will be done away. For the married these earthly trappings are sexual union, the maintenance of a household, etc. For the virgins these trappings include seclusion from members of the opposite sex necessary to preserve a state of consecration in this life, and bodily asceticism to a degree necessary to maintain the calm of the passions. Commenting upon this very point Chrysostom writes, “For when bodily passions are henceforth undone and tyrannical desire

expressed in earthly marriage is expressed clearly in St. John's *Letter to a Young Widow*.<sup>121</sup> In these counsels to a recently bereaved young woman, St. John teaches the eternity of the union of man and woman in Christ forged in earthly marriage.

Once a spouse has departed this life, the couple may still, according to Chrysostom, maintain the affection and intimacy of the marriage bond.<sup>122</sup> Death is not able to shatter a union based in love in Christ, and death is often permitted in God's providence to call the surviving spouse to a more noble sphere of spiritual battle in practicing continence.<sup>123</sup> Love itself, since it is eternal, is the power that is able to unite those who have been separated by death.<sup>124</sup> How then will this eternal union of two souls express itself in the Kingdom?

The answer Chrysostom gives to this is first negative, that is, how it will *not* express itself. "There will no longer be marriage or birth pains, sexual pleasure or intercourse, an abundance of money or the management of possessions, food or clothing, agriculture or seamanship, crafts or construction, cities or homes, but some other system

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has been quenched, there will be no hindrance *in the next world* [emphasis mine] to prevent man and woman from being together, for every evil suspicion is removed and all who have entered the Kingdom of Heaven can maintain the way of life of those angels and intellectual powers." *Subintr.*; PG 47.514; Shore (1983), p. 204.

<sup>121</sup> *Vid.*, SC 138.

<sup>122</sup> This very bold notion once again demonstrates how *thin* St. John believes the veil to be separating this life from the next. Of course, this marital bond would be free of those elements that are *only* temporal and earthly such as sexual intercourse.

<sup>123</sup> *Hom. XLI in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.362

<sup>124</sup> *Vid.*, III.188-190; SC 138, p. 128. Love itself is the great *eternalizer*.. A beautiful anecdote in the life of St. Columba expresses the perpetuity of the marriage bond in Christ after death.

"When St. Columba was dwelling in Iona, one day he suddenly looked up towards heaven and said: 'Happy woman, happy and virtuous, whose soul the angels of God now take to paradise!' One of the brothers was a devout man called Genereus the Englishman, who was the baker. He was at work in the bakery where he heard St. Columba say this. A year later, on the same day, the saint again spoke to Genereus the Englishman saying, 'I see a marvelous thing. The woman of whom I spoke in your presence a year ago today- look!- she is now meeting in the air the soul of a devout layman, her husband, and is fighting for him together with holy angels against the power

and way of life-the form of this world is passing away.”<sup>125</sup> These earthly trappings aside, a man and woman will behold each other in heaven and “rejoice” in each other’s “holy company.”<sup>126</sup> So bold is Chrysostom and so full of conviction that the veil separating this life from next is made thin by Christ *and* that the married will experience blessed *reunion* in the next life that he goes so far as to suggest that the young widow ought to *rejoice* that her husband has departed this life. Christian spouses will be restored to each other in the next life. This restoration will not be to marriage, but to something even better. Chrysostom’s closing words to the young widow are worthy of quotation in full, as they present clearly his conception of the future hope of the married for eternal union,

“Διὸ τοὺς θρήνους ἀφεῖσα καὶ τὰς οἰμωγὰς ἔχου τῆς αὐτῆς πολιτείας, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἀκριβεστέρας, ἵνα πρὸς τὴν ἴσῃν αὐτῷ φθάσασα ἀρετὴν, τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνῳ κατοικήσης σκηνὴν καὶ συναφθῆναι πάλιν αὐτῷ δυναθῆς εἰς τοὺς ἀθανάτους αἰῶνας ἐκείνους, οὐ ταύτην τὴν τοῦ γάμου συνάφειαν, ἀλλ’ ἑτέραν πολλῶ βελτίονα. Αὕτη μὲν γὰρ σωματίων ἐστὶ συμπλοκὴ μόνον· τότε δὲ ψυχῆς ἔσται πρὸς ψυχὴν ἔνωσις ἀκριβεστέρα καὶ ἡδίων πολλῶ καὶ βελτίων.”<sup>127</sup>

“Wherefore desisting from mourning and lamentation do thou hold on to the same way of life as his, yea even let it be more exact, that having speedily attained an equal standard of virtue with him, you may inhabit the same abode and be united to him again through the everlasting ages, not in this union of marriage but another far better. For this is only a bodily kind of intercourse, but then there will be a union of soul with soul more perfect, and of a far more delightful and far nobler kind.”<sup>128</sup>

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of the Enemy. With their help and because the man himself was always righteous, his soul is rescued from the devils.’

Adomnan of Iona, *The Life of St. Columba*, translated by Richard Sharpe, p. 213.

<sup>125</sup> *Virg.*, LXXIII.4.63-68; SC 125; Shore (1983), p. 110.

<sup>126</sup> *Subintr.*; PG 47.514. Clarke (1979), p. 204. These words were originally addressed to monks who had been “spiritually cohabiting” with virgins (*αδελφαί αγαπηταί & συνεισακτοί*). Chrysostom was encouraging those whose friendships and close acquaintance had been forged over long periods of time that even though the separation necessary for propriety’s sake would be very painful, yet if it was successful then in heaven this type of intimate acquaintance would resume. If this is the case for those not even fully married, how much more for those married truly in Christ?

<sup>127</sup> *Vid.*, 7.521-528; SC 138, p. 158.

<sup>128</sup> St. John’s teaching on the nature of the union of the married in the Kingdom is a close echo of Tertullian’s.

“Tell me sister, have you sent your husband before you to rest in peace?...She prays for his soul, and requests refreshment for him meanwhile, and fellowship with him in the first resurrection; and she offers her sacrifice on the anniversaries of his falling

Here we see that Chrysostom envisions the re-union of spouses in the Kingdom. The married in heaven will not exist as individuals detached from union with their earthly spouses. There will be union (*συμπλοκή*) there (*ψυχῆς πρὸς ψυχὴν*) as there is here (*σώματων συμπλοκή*), but it will not be a restoration of earthly marriage, but a union, which began in marriage, and reaches a far more sublime condition. There the married will be linked in an eternal cohabitation (*συνοικῆσαι τὸν αἰῶνα*).<sup>129</sup> Remarriage would tragically weaken the blessed bond which remains even after the death of one spouse. Thus, the widow ought to keep the same affection for her husband, guard her bed from other men,<sup>130</sup> honor his memory by imitating his virtues, make frequent visits to his grave, and then be prepared for visions in which the departed may converse with her and show her “the face for which you yearn.”<sup>131</sup> This face to face encounter between the departed and the bereaved is designed to take “the place of letters, though indeed it is far more definite than letters.”<sup>132</sup> Finally, the widow will be led to dwell with her beloved for

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asleep...But if we believe the resurrection from the dead, of course we shall be bound to them with whom we are destined to rise, to render an account the one of the other. But if ‘in that age they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be equal to angels,’ is not the fact that there will be no restitution of the conjugal relation a reason why we shall *not* be bound to our departed consorts? Nay, but the more shall we *be* bound to them, because we are destined to a better estate- destined as we are to rise to a spiritual consortship, to recognise as well our own selves as them who are ours...in eternal life God will still less separate them whom He has conjoined, than in this lesser life He forbids them to be separated.”

*Le Mariage Unique / De monogamia*, 10.6.47-48; SC 343, p. 178. ANF, p. 67.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.460-461; SC 138, p. 154.

<sup>130</sup> There are many men who will attempt to steal the young widow’s money and her modesty. *Ibid.*, 2.82-84; SC 138, pp 118, 120.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, III.231-233; SC 138, p. 132; NPNF, p. 124.

<sup>132</sup> How are these visions more “definite” than letters? Chrysostom writes, “For in the latter case [of letters] there are but lines traced with the pen to look upon, but in the former you see the form of his visage, and his gentle smile, his figure and his movements, you hear his speech and recognize the voice which you loved so well.” *Ibid.*, III.233-238; SC 138, p. 132; NPNF, p. 124. This explanation of *letter writing* is applied to redemptive history by Chrysostom in an attempt to explain man’s loss of *face-to-face communion* with God in the Garden. The letters in this case are *Holy Scripture*, which was only written and given to man after man fell into sin. As valuable as Scripture is, its very presence is a reminder that we have stepped *away* from God. For those who not only threw away the “first way of life” but *also* ignore the written words much punishment awaits. *Hom. I in Mt.*; PG 57.13-14.

infinite and endless ages. She will receive her husband back robed in glory. The end of this type of Christian marriage is an eternal union of soul, an intercourse of persons more perfect than anything on earth.

She should recognize also that for every pious woman who has lost her husband God Himself has taken his place. This new and unique bond between the widow and God Himself is fractured if a woman remarries.<sup>133</sup> The tragedy of remarriage does not consist only in the rending of this new union between God and the widow<sup>134</sup>, but also in the striking from the heart of the *marriage memory*.<sup>135</sup>

## Conclusion.

In this chapter we have summarized St. John Chrysostom's *eschatological anthropology*. We have examined what St. John teaches about the future resurrected state of mankind. Chrysostom paints this theological picture while carefully weaving between the very powerful heretical currents of his time. His vision of mankind in the final state is Christocentric. Jesus Christ's Resurrection is the model and pattern for the universal Resurrection of the righteous at the end of the age. This glorified state is a

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<sup>133</sup> *Vid.*, II.144-147; SC 138, p. 124.

<sup>134</sup> Nothing is said about such a new union being formed between God and a divorcee, i.e. where death is not the cause of the marital fracture.

<sup>135</sup> Memory itself is another aspect of the eternity of earthly marriage. While Chrysostom does not develop the eternal quality of memory as some later theologians do, he does comment upon it in several places in the context of marriage-remarriage. "When you see those who have remarried striking so easily from their hearts the memory of their former loving intimacy, their conjugal relations and life together, a numbness comes over you, and it is impossible to approach them in all friendship, since they are inconstant and fickle" *Virg.*, XXXVII.1.11-16; SC 125, p. 218. Cf. *Vid./ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΝΑΝΔΡΙΑΣ*, 2.110-116; SC 138, p. 170; Shore (1983), p. 137. Chrysostom explains that second marriages are hampered because "the twice married neither remembers the first well nor can be entirely devoted to the second since she has some thought of the first." In his own experience Chrysostom was vividly aware of the power of memory to transcend time and place. Upon his return from an extended respite during which he was recuperating from illness and away from his flock he asks his flock if they remembered him while he was away, and then professes that he constantly had their images before his face and in his dreams very vividly which sustained him mightily. *Poenit. I*; PG 49.277.

bodily state continuous with our present existence, but one radically and beautifully transfigured. It is a state in which mankind both regains what he lost when he fell from the Garden of delights, and advances to greater heights of resurrected glory.

The future age is a virginal age in which marriage has no place. There the earthly quest of the virgin to establish and maintain unceasing communion with the Holy Trinity will be fulfilled. Yet this future virginal age is one in which those who have passed this earthly life in the state of marriage will enjoy a union more certain and profound than that experienced bodily on the earth: a union of soul.

As beautiful as these conceptions are we can be sure that they are but dim perceptions of that which can only be truly known via direct personal experience in the age to come.

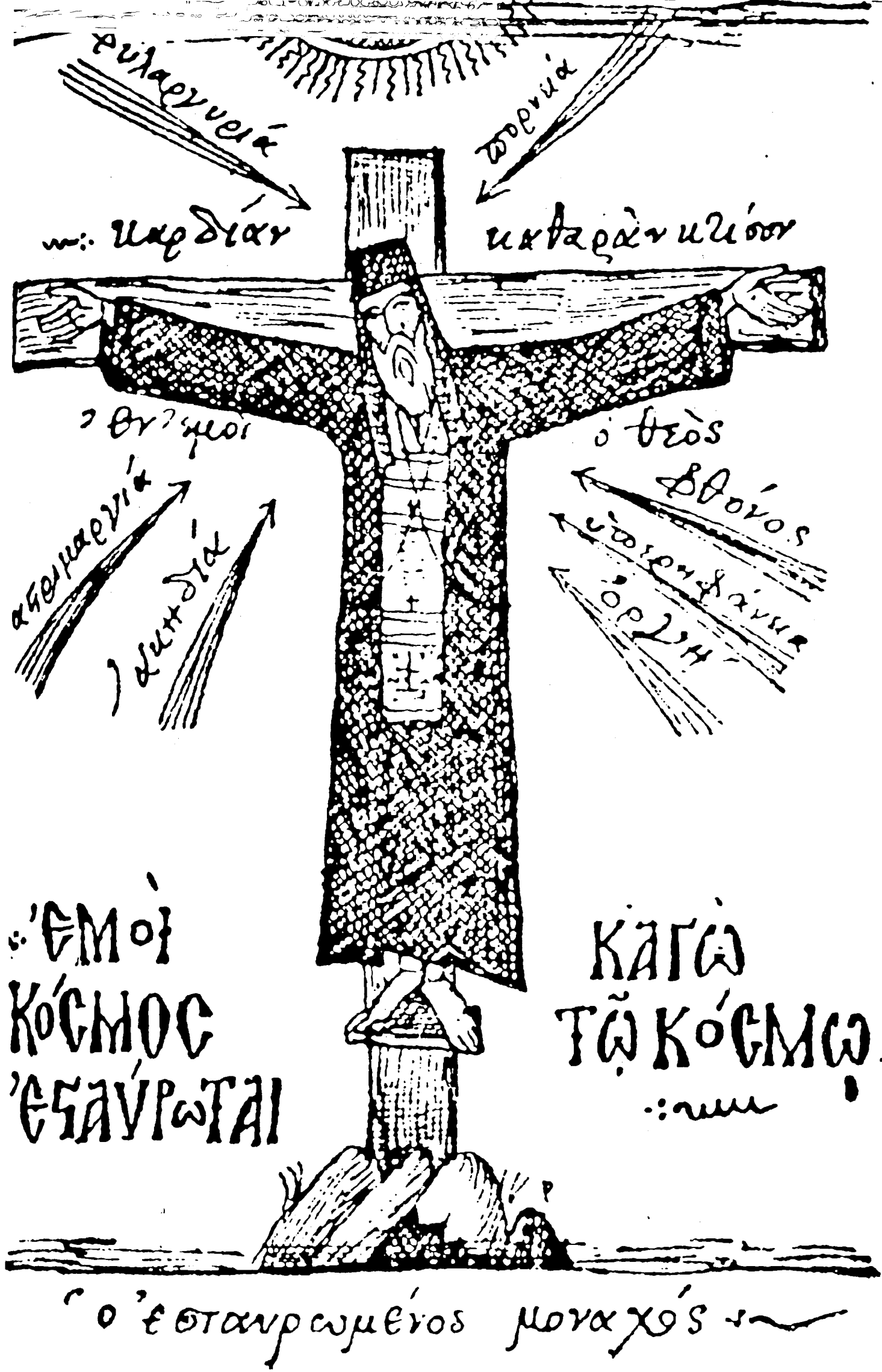
## Conclusion.

St. John Chrysostom lived more than sixteen hundred years ago. What relevance could he possibly have for modern man? The answer to this question is that Chrysostom has immense relevance. The reason that his works have been translated into numberless languages, and that his immense corpus has been preserved throughout these centuries, even providing cover for many less famous or worthy authors, is because the relevance of St. John Chrysostom's teaching transcends fourth century Antioch and Constantinople. His, like His Master Christ's, is an abiding authority, born of experience and illumination. It has long been said in the Church that St. Paul was the mouthpiece of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that St. John Chrysostom was the mouthpiece of St. Paul. In the voice of Chrysostom we hear the Great Apostle, and in hearing the Great Apostle we hear the Lord Christ. This traditional connection is expressed iconographically in the Icon of St. John Chrysostom in which St. Paul is standing behind him whispering in his ear, and Christ is at the top of the icon blessing. It is also born witness to by the miracle of Chrysostom's relics, for the ear into which St. Paul spoke has never experienced corruption and remains affixed to his skull to this day. This precious relic is preserved by the Great and Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi on Mount Athos.

In preparation for beginning this dissertation, I made pilgrimage to this monastery in order to seek the blessing of St. John Chrysostom upon my work. There I venerated his holy head, and placed my hands into that blessed ear. Though he is "dead" he still speaks, today even louder than in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Not all will wish to hear him as not all wished to hear him then, and he has enemies today as he had enemies then. But those who have humility will find in him an able instructor, and will find a place of confidence

in these confusing times. St. John Chrysostom radiates amidst the Holy Fathers of the Church as the great defender and sanctifier of the Christian home and city. Adherence to his teaching has produced innumerable saints in the Church, spiritually born both in the monastery and in the Christian home, and is capable of producing the same today.





Appendix A. Illustration of the Crucified Monk.

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### Abbreviations.

- ANF: *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 Vols. Ed. Schaff.
- CCSL: *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina*.
- CSEL: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*.
- GCS: *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*.
- NPNF: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 28 Vols. Ed. Schaff.
- ODB: *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Ed. Kazhdan.
- ODCC: *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Eds. Cross and Livingstone.
- PG: *Patrologia Graeca*, Migne. (Standard for Greek refs. unless cited below).
- PL: *Patrologia Latina*. Migne.
- PTS: *Patristische Texte Und Studien*.
- SC: *Sources Chrétiennes*.

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