

# **THE THEOLOGY OF EROS**

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*This book is dedicated to my godson James and his bride Katarina,  
on the occasion of their wedding in the Orthodox Church.*

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## FOREWORD

This book owes its origin to a recent debate in the Russian Orthodox theological literature and internet web-forums on the nature of eros and the status of married Christians and sexual love within marriage.<sup>1</sup> This debate shows no sign of dying out, and I have felt the need to present what I have learned from it in a more systematic form in English and for English-speaking readers. The result is the present work, which attempts to expound the nature of eros, marriage and monasticism from the perspective of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church.

My main debt, of course, is to the Holy Fathers, especially the Greek Fathers from the fourth to the fourteenth century, from St. John Chrysostom to St. Gregory Palamas. I have also made use of Russian Fathers, such as St. Demetrius of Rostov, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, St. Theophan the Recluse, St. John of Kronstadt, Archbishop Theophan of Poltava and New Hieromartyr Gregory (Lebedev).

Also cited have been some more recent Orthodox philosophers and theologians such as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, Vladimir Soloviev, S.L. Frank, S.V. Troitsky, Vladimir Lossky, I.A. Ilyin, John Romanides, Panagiotis Trembelas, Panagiotis Nellas, Georgios Mantzaridis, Anestis Keselopoulos and Philip Sherrard. Among non-Orthodox authors who have helped me I should like to mention C.S. Lewis, the contemporary English philosopher Roger Scruton, as well as the great bard, William Shakespeare, whose struggles with the concept of sexual love first aroused my interest in the subject... I should point out that the fact that I quote from an author does not necessarily imply that I agree with all his teachings.

In addition, I wish to thank my friend, Anton Ter-Grigorian, for his stimulating discussion of the issues raised in this book.

After writing the first draft of this book, I read the following words by Fr. Seraphim Rose: "All of this [the true nature of sexuality, and of human nature before the fall, from a patristic point of view] should one day be written out and printed, with abundant illustrations from the Holy Fathers and Lives of the Saints - together with the whole question of sexuality - abortion, natural and unnatural sins, pornography, homosexuality, etc. With Scriptural and patristic sources, this could be done carefully and without offensiveness, but clearly..."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Hieromonk Gregory Lourié, *Prizovanie Avraama* (The Calling of Abraham), St. Petersburg, 2000; Protopriest Michael Makeev, V. Moss, A. Ter-Grigorian, I. Grigoriev, *Supruzhestvo, Zakon i Blagodat'* (Marriage, the Law and Grace), Moscow, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Rose, *Letter 174*, in Hieromonk Damascene (Christensen), *Father Seraphim Rose: His Life and Works*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2003, p. 804.

This is precisely what I have tried to do in this book. It is up to the reader to judge the extent to which I have succeeded or failed. Although I have tried to remain as closely as possible to the teachings of the Orthodox Church, it goes without saying that I, and I alone, am responsible for any errors that may have crept into this book, for which I ask forgiveness.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us! Amen.

*August 11/24, 2016.  
East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, England.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Are you not yet married in the flesh? Fear not this consecration; you are pure even after marriage. I will take the risk of that. I will join you in marriage. I will lead in the bride. We do not dishonour marriage because we give a higher honour to virginity. I will imitate Christ, the pure Bridegroom and Leader of the Bride, as He both worked a miracle at a wedding, and honours marriage with His Presence.*

St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration on Holy :Baptism, 18.

*I want to purify our wedding celebrations: to restore marriage to its due nobility and to silence those heretics who call it evil.*

St. John Chrysostom, Homily 12 on Colossians.

*“The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together. Men will take up arms and even sacrifice their lives for the sake of this love. St. Paul would not speak so earnestly about this subject without serious reason; why else would he say, ‘Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord’? Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is kept in order, and neighbours, friends, and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both of families and states, are thus produced. When it is otherwise, however, everything is thrown into confusion and turned upside-down.”*

St. John Chrysostom

### The Problem Stated

Is there such a thing as sexual love – that is, a love that is sexual, but which is none the less love for being sexual, and which is not devalued or defiled by its sexuality?

To this question there are broadly three kinds of answer:-

1. No. There is no such thing as sexual love because what goes under that name is in essence not love, but sex, a purely biological phenomenon not different fundamentally from the courtship and mating of animals.
2. No. There is such a thing as sexuality, and there is such a thing as love, and they can coexist; but only in the way that an ass’s head can fit onto a human body – the two things are of a different nature and serve different purposes that inevitably contend against each other to the detriment, invariably, of love.
3. Yes. There is a specific kind of love, called sexual love, which in origin and essence and aim cannot be divided into the separate components of “sex” and “love”, but which in the conditions of the fall and the loss of grace has undergone a fissure that sets its originally harmoniously united elements against each other, resulting in the fallen passion of lust.

The first answer is that of the *naturalist pagan* or *atheist*. It leads to a permissive morality and the more or less rapid destruction of civilized society. The second answer is that of the *Manichaeon*, and it leads to a rigorist morality – and the undermining of the institution of marriage and the family. The third answer is that of the *Orthodox Christian*, and it leads to the harmonious concord of the Orthodox Christian family in the Orthodox Church of Christ.

The first two answers are clearly related, in spite of the atheist and liberal character of the one and the theist and rigorist character of the other. Both are pessimistic about what I have called sexual love, but which they would identify as such only in inverted commas. However, the pessimism of the naturalist remains such only so long as he retains what he must consider to be his illusions about the existence of a non-animalian kind of “sexual love”. Once he has shed these, he is free to do “what comes naturally”, with no guilt or shame – or real joy. The pessimism of the Manichaeon, on the other hand, is real and tragic. He knows that love does exist, but is forced to the conclusion that it cannot coexist with sexuality while remaining love, which means that sexuality must be forcibly expelled from his life in all its forms if the ideal of love is to be preserved. For the naturalist sexuality is neither good nor evil, just a neutral fact of life, like eating and drinking: for the Manichaeon it is evil.

For the Orthodox Christian, however, sexual love – as opposed to lust – must be *good*, since it was created in the beginning by God, Who is all-good, even if it has fallen from its original status and is frequently perverted to evil uses: in this he is opposed in principle to the position of the Manichaeon. On the other hand, he believes that it is a characteristically *human*, and not animalian, phenomenon, and therefore subject to the categories of moral evaluation at all times: in this he is opposed in principle to the naturalist. This book is devoted to a justification of this position.

## *Pagan Philosophies of Love (1) Manichaeism*

A few words need to be said by way of introduction on the pagan cultural and philosophical milieu in which the Christian doctrine of eros was developed in the early centuries of the Christian era.

We need say little about naturalism, because it is the “philosophy” of all secular people in all ages, the natural justification of the fallen impulses of unredeemed human nature. The position of the naturalist is the position adopted, consciously or unconsciously, by the great majority of people of a secular cast of mind, and also by very many people who would call themselves believers. It is also relatively easy to refute for anyone who is honest about his own humanity, who recognizes, as we shall see later, that the human elements of reason, freedom and responsibility are ineradicable constituents of human sexual relations, which cannot possibly be derived from the life of the animals.

The perception of this inalienably rational and moral element in sexual relations carries with it the perception that certain kinds of sexual relations are unlawful and degrade the man who indulges in them. It is this perception which the naturalist refuses to recognize. “For the sinner praiseth himself in the lusts of his soul, and the unrighteous man likewise blesseth himself therein” (Psalm 9.23).

The position of the Manichaeian is more rarely found, but remains a temptation at times when there is a decline in morals in the Christian world, or when the Christian understanding of morality is felt to be particularly under threat. Thus we find it resurrected in the Bogomils and Cathari of the Middle Ages, and traces, if not of strictly Manichaeian thinking, at least of thinking inclined in a Manichaeian direction, can be found in St. Augustine in the fifth century, in pre-modern Roman Catholicism, in certain Protestant sects, and in certain theological circles in Russia and Greece today. If naturalism would seem to be the most immediate and obvious contemporary threat to Christian morality, the subtler and more “spiritual” threat of Manichaeism and neo-Manichaeism must also be understood and refuted.

In Christian countries, naturalism appears especially when the doctrine of original sin is undermined. Thus we read of the 19th century proto-socialist sect of the Saint-Simonists: “Rejection of the dichotomies stemming from the doctrine of original sin led...to the affirmation of all instincts and urges as good and deserving fulfilment. The rehabilitation of woman, the senses and the flesh assumed the character of a test of faith...”<sup>3</sup>

Where naturalism passes over into occultism, this emphasis becomes not only a test of faith, but the entrance into some higher mystery of life. Then sex becomes, in the words of Malcolm Muggeridge, “the mysticism of the materialists”.

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<sup>3</sup> J.L. Talmon, *Romanticism and Revolt, Europe 1815-1848*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1967, p. 66.

Manichaeism, is named as such after the Persian teacher Mani or Manes, who was born in Ctesiphon in Babylonia in about 216 and was killed by the Persian King Bahram I in about 277.

“Often classified as a Christian heresy, it was really a completely independent religion embodying Christian, but also Buddhist and Zoroastrian, elements. Indeed, it claimed to be the only universal religion, giving in its fullness the revelation which prophets prior to Mani had only communicated fragmentarily. The elaborate, dramatic myths in which this revelation came to be clothed, hardly concern us here. In essence Manichaeism was gnosis, akin in some respects to... Gnosticism..., and as such offered men salvation through knowledge. It was founded on a radical dualism, and taught that reality consists of two great forces eternally opposed to each other, Good (that is, God, Truth, Light) and Evil, or Darkness, the latter being identified with matter. As he exists, man is tragically involved in the material order; he is fallen and lost. Actually, however, he is a particle of Light, belonging to, though exiled from, the transcendent world. He is of the same essence as God, and human souls are fragments of the divine substance. His salvation lies in grasping this truth by an interior illumination which may be spontaneous, but usually comes in response to initiation into the Manichaean fellowship; and in the process of salvation, paradoxically, God is at once redeemer and redeemed. The all-important thing was to withdraw oneself from the contamination of the flesh, matter being the fundamental evil.”<sup>4</sup>

According to the Manichaeans, “matter... was composed partly of good and partly of evil, both being present in a given substance in a great or smaller degree. Good and evil were permanently in conflict because the captive particles of good or light were always struggling to escape from the evil or darkness which enveloped them. In flesh of all sorts very few traces of the light-element were present, and for this reason meat was not to be eaten by a good Manichaean. Light was present in greater quantities in vegetable matter, which could therefore be eaten. The light-particles were freed from imprisonment when the elect, or higher order of Manichaeans, ate these foods, but it was wrong for a member of the sect to cut down a tree or even pluck fruit, or to commit any other act of violence harmful to the good elements in plants. These operations were to be performed by the wicked on behalf of the Manichaeans, that is, by those who were considered lost souls and belonged to neither the higher nor the lower order of the sect. The elect were supposed to be particularly scrupulous and to avoid either doing violence to the good elements or taking any action which might assist the powers of darkness. They were forbidden to marry, because the act of procreation was construed as collusion with these powers. For the lower order of the sect, called ‘hearers’ or ‘aspirants’, the rules were less strict, but they were expected to serve the elect and to give food to no one but them, since to do so would be to deliver the good elements into the hands of the devil.”<sup>5</sup>

It is this Manichaean teaching, according to St. John Chrysostom, that was the target of

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<sup>4</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1977, pp. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> R.S. Pine-Coffin, introduction to his translation of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, London: Penguin Books, 1961, pp. 13-14.

St. Paul's prophecy: "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; *forbidding to marry*, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving" (I Timothy 4.1-4).

Manichaeism is demonic, explains St. John, because it condemns as evil those things, such as marriage and certain foods, which are not evil in themselves, but only if taken in excess. For "good things are created to be received... But if it is good, why is it 'sanctified by the word of God and prayers'? For it must be unclean, if it is to be sanctified? Not so, here he is speaking to those who thought that some of these things were common; therefore he lays down two positions: first, that no creature of God is unclean; and secondly, that if it has become so, you have a remedy: seal it [with the sign of the cross], give thanks, and glorify God, and all the uncleanness passes away."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 12 on I Timothy*.

## *Pagan Philosophies of Love (2) Platonism*

Manichaeism in its cruder forms was clearly exposed and condemned by the Holy Fathers of the Church. However, in a more subtle form it managed to penetrate the Christian milieu - through the older but still very influential philosophy of Plato. For Platonism, though deeper and subtler than Manichaeism, nevertheless has definite affinities with it in its dualism, its emphasis on intellectual gnosis as the way of salvation, and its rejection of matter.

“The key to Plato’s (c. 429-347 B.C.) philosophy is his theory of knowledge. Being convinced that knowledge in the strict sense is possible, but that it cannot be obtained from anything so variable and evanescent as sense-perception, he was led to posit a transcendent, non-sensible world of Forms or Ideas (εἶδη) which are apprehended by the intellect alone. His point was that, while sensation presents us with great numbers of particular objects which are constantly changing, the mind seizes on certain characteristics which groups of them possess in common and which are stable. For example, it fastens on the characteristic of beauty common to certain objects and of similarity common to others, and so reaches the Forms of beauty-in-itself and likeness-in-itself. The Forms thus resemble the universals of which modern philosophers speak, but we should notice that for Plato they had objective existence. It is an open question whether he believed there were Forms corresponding to every class of sensible things, but we do know that he regarded them as arranged in a hierarchy crowned by the most universal Form of all, the Form of the Good (later he called it the One), which is the cause of all the other Forms and of our knowledge of them. Being unchanging and eternal, the Forms alone are truly real. They transcend, and are wholly independent of, the world of particular sensible things. In fact, the latter, the world of Becoming, is modeled on the world of Forms, and particulars only are what they are in so far as the Forms are participated in, or copied, by them.

“The transition to Plato’s psychology... is easy. In his view the soul is an immaterial entity, immortal by nature; it exists prior to the body in which it is immured, and is destined to go on existing after the latter’s extinction. So far from having anything to do with the world of Becoming, it properly belongs to the world of Forms (that is, of Being), and it is in virtue of the knowledge it had of them in its pre-mundane existence that it can recognize (he calls this ἀνάμνησις, or recollection) them here. It is, moreover, a tripartite structure, consisting of a higher or ‘rational’ element [νοῦς] which apprehends truth and by rights should direct the man’s whole life, a ‘spirited’ element [θυμὸς] which is the seat of the nobler emotions, and an ‘appetitive’ element [ἐπιθυμία] which covers the carnal desires.”<sup>7</sup>

In spite of his very low opinion of carnal desire, Plato does allow that it can strive towards objects not found in the material world. Sexual love, or eros, is the love of that which is beautiful in a man or woman, but identifies that beauty with nobility of soul rather

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<sup>7</sup> Kelly, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

than beauty of body. However, although the body can be said to “bear the same stamp of beauty” as the soul, it must not become the main object of attraction, and must not lead to specifically sexual activity.<sup>8</sup>

Plato develops his concept of “Platonic love” especially in *The Symposium*. Here the prophetess Diotima defines love (eros, ἔρως) as a spirit “intermediate between the divine and the mortal” and “the love of the everlasting possession of the good”. The key word here is “everlasting”; for “love is of the immortal”.

But how can sexual love (eros) be love of the immortal? Only if it is seen to be love of the soul, rather than the body, a desire to beget, not perishable children through a physical union, but imperishable objects through the spiritual union of the lover with like-minded persons – for example, the creations of poets and artists, of laws and constitutions.

“And after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, and not be like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, slavish, mean, and petty, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and lofty thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom until on that shore he grows great and strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere.”

This ascent of the soul through what we may call heavenly, as opposed to vulgar eros leads finally to the contemplation of the Idea of Beauty Itself: “He who has been instructed so far in the mystery of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful correctly and in due order, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils). It is eternal, uncreated, indestructible, subject neither to increase or decay; not like other things partly beautiful, partly ugly; not beautiful at one time or in one relation or in one place, and deformed in other times, other relations, other places; not beautiful in the opinion of some and ugly in the opinion of others. It is not to be imagined as a beautiful face or form or any part of the body, or in the likeness of speech or knowledge: it does not have its being in any living thing or in the sky or the earth or any other place. It is Beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution, and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. If a man ascends from these under the influence of the right love of a friend, and begins to perceive that beauty, he may reach his goal. And the true order of approaching the mystery of love is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all beautiful forms, and from beautiful forms to beauty of conduct, and from beauty of conduct to beauty of knowledge, until from this

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<sup>8</sup> Thus in Plato’s ideal state there would be a law “to the effect that a lover may seek the company of his beloved and, with his consent, kiss and embrace him like a son, with honourable intent, but must never be suspected of any further familiarity, on pain of being thought ill-bred and without any delicacy of feeling” (*The Republic*, III, 402. Translated by F.M. Cornford, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941, pp. 89-90).

we arrive at the knowledge of absolute beauty, and at last know what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates,' said the stranger of Mantinea, 'is the life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; a beauty which if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold, and dress, and fair boys and youths, whose sight now entrances you (and you and many others would be content to live seeing them only and talking with them without food or drink, if that were possible – you only want to look at them and to be with them). But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty – the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life – gazing on it, in communion with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be able to bring forth, not shadows of beauty, but its truth, because it is no shadow that he grasps, but the truth; and he will give birth to true virtue and nourish it and become the friend of God and be immortal as far as mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?'"<sup>9</sup>

This famous passage, representing perhaps the summit of pre-Christian religious philosophy, clearly contains much that is compatible with the Christian faith. For, as the title of the most famous work of Christian asceticism, the *Philokalia*, indicates, Christianity can also be described as "the love of Beauty", "simple and divine". However there is also much that is clearly inadequate or mistaken from a Christian, or even from a simply logical, point of view.

Thus, leaving aside the mythical elements of his theory and the obvious criticism that "Platonic love" appears to be homosexual by nature, Plato does not tell us who or what is this ultimate, immortal and absolute Beauty that is the end of love (beyond calling it "God"), and how it relates to the material world; nor, if Beauty itself is an eternal, supersensible Form, how that which is sensible and passing can still be called beautiful; nor how that which is sensible can have any purpose or value if it simply "clogs up" the vision of immortal Beauty "with the pollutions of mortality".

Another problem, as C.S. Lewis points out, is that according to Plato "'falling in love' is the mutual recognition on earth of souls which have been singled out for one another in a previous and celestial existence. To meet the Beloved is to realize 'We loved before we were born'. As a myth to express what lovers feel this is admirable. But if one accepted it literally one would be faced by an embarrassing consequence. We should have to conclude that in that heavenly and forgotten life affairs were no better managed than here. For Eros may unite the most unsuitable yoke-fellows; many unhappy, and predictably unhappy, marriages were love-matches..."<sup>10</sup>

Dualism is always threatening to blow apart Plato's system into two mutually exclusive sub-systems, one real, good and static, and the other chimerical, evil and

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<sup>9</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, 189 f. Translated by Sir R.W. Livingstone, *Plato: Selected Passages*, Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 67-71.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, *The Four Loves*, London: Collins, 1960, 2012, p. 132.

dynamic. On the one hand, there are the Forms and the immortal mind of man, which are linked by a purely intellectual kind of contemplation. On the other hand, there are material objects and man's carnal desire for them.

Eros serves as a link between these two sub-systems. But eros itself appears to be a dualistic element. If it can pierce the veil of sense and penetrate to the eternal Forms, then it must surely belong to the mind. But then why does it appear to have its seat in the body and lust after other material bodies? Perhaps there are in fact two eroses, one "vulgar" and the other "heavenly". But in that case what is the relationship between them?

I believe that Christianity, and Christianity alone, has solved this problem first posed by Platonism, as I shall try to demonstrate in detail in this book.

However, elements of Platonic dualism continued to plague Christian writers influenced by Platonism, leading in some cases to outright heresy, and in others to deviation from the consensus of the Holy Fathers - if not on the most fundamental issues, at any rate on that of sexuality.

Thus the contemporary English philosopher, Roger Scruton, writes: "Remnants of the Platonic view can be found in many subsequent thinkers - in the neo-Platonists, in St. Augustine, in Aquinas and in the Roman philosopher-poet Boethius, whose philosophy of love was to have such a profound effect on the literature of medieval Europe... It survives in the popular idea - itself founded in the most dubious of metaphysical distinctions - that sexual desire is primarily 'physical', while love always has a 'spiritual' side. It survives, too, in the theory of Kant, despite the enormous moral and emotional distance that separates Kant from Plato..."<sup>11</sup>

Among the Holy Fathers, it is not only in St. Augustine and the many Western writers influenced by him that we find remnants of the Platonic view of eros.<sup>12</sup> In the East we find it also in, for example, Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa. However, as I shall seek to show, on the essential points the "Platonism" of St. Gregory is completely subordinated to his Christian world-view.

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<sup>11</sup> Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, London: Phoenix, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to say, as many now do, that St. Augustine was not an Orthodox thinker. He was both Orthodox and holy, having been proclaimed as such at the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

### *Pagan Philosophies of Love (3) Stoicism*

One more pagan philosophy needs to be briefly considered here – Stoicism. “Founded by Zeno of Citium c. 300 B.C., it was a closely knit system of logic, metaphysics and ethics. Its lofty, if somewhat impersonal, moral ideal won it countless adherents; it taught conquest of self, life in accordance with nature (i.e. the rational principle within us), and the brotherhood of man. From the theological point of view, however, what was most remarkable about it was its pantheistic materialism. The Stoics reacted vigorously against the Platonic differentiation of a transcendent, intelligible world not perceptible by the senses from the ordinary world of sensible experience. Whatever exists, they argued, must be body, and the universe as a whole must be through and through material. Yet within reality they drew a distinction between a passive and an active principle. There is crude, unformed matter, without character or quality; and there is the dynamic reason or plan (λογος) which forms and organizes it. This latter they envisaged as spirit (πνευμα) or fiery vapour; it was from this all-pervading fire that the cruder, passive matter emerged, and in the end it would be reabsorbed into it in a universal conflagration.... This active principle or Logos permeates reality as mind or consciousness pervades the body, and they described it as God, Providence, Nature, the soul of the universe (anima mundi). Their conception that everything that happens has been ordered by Providence to man’s best advantage was the basis of their ethical doctrine of submission to fate.

“Thus Stoicism was a monism teaching that God or Logos is a finer matter immanent in the material universe. But it also taught that particular things are microcosms of the whole, each containing within its unbroken unity an active and a passive principle. The former, the principle which organizes and forms it, is its logos, and the Stoics spoke of ‘seminal logoi’ (λογοι σπερματικοι), seeds, as it were, through the activity of which individual things come into existence as the world develops. All these ‘seminal logoi’ are contained within the supreme, universal Logos; they are so many particles of the divine Fire which permeates reality. This leads to the Stoic doctrine of human nature. The soul in man is a portion of, or an emanation from, the divine Fire which is the Logos. It is a spirit or warm breath pervading the body and giving it form, character, organization. Material itself, it survives the body, but is itself mortal, persisting at longest until the world conflagration. Its parts are, first, the five senses; then the power of speech or self-expression; then the reproductive capacity; and, finally, the ruling element (ηγεμονικον), which is reason.”<sup>13</sup>

Stoicism taught that there are four main passions: pleasure (ηδονη), sorrow or depression (λυπη), desire (επιθυμια) and fear (φοβος). These “are irrational and unnatural; and so it is not so much a question of moderating and regulating them as of getting rid of them and inducing a state of Apathy [απαθεια]. At least when the passions or affections become habits (νοσοι ψυχης) they have to be eliminated. Hence the Stoic ethic is in practice largely a fight against the ‘affections’, and endeavour to attain to a state of moral freedom and sovereignty.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kelly, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1962, vol. I, part II, p. 142.

However, as Copleston goes on to note, “the Stoics tended to moderate somewhat this extreme position, and we find some admitting rational emotions - ευπαθειαι - in the wise man.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus Diogenes Laertius taught that there are three primary rational emotions: “joy” (Χαρα) as opposed to “pleasure” (ηδονη); “cautiousness” (ευλαβεια) as opposed to “fear” (φοβος); and “wish” (βουλησις) as opposed to “desire” (επιθυμια). This concept of the “good passion” was taken up by the Holy Fathers,<sup>16</sup> who rejected the Stoic ideal of passionlessness, *απαθεια*, in the sense of the complete extinction of all desire and passion, but accepted it in the sense of the control, transmutation and redirection of the passions from bad objects to good objects.<sup>17</sup>

As with Platonism, there are clearly elements in Stoicism that are compatible with Christianity. And, again as with Platonism, there are insoluble logical paradoxes within it. Both suffer from the false presupposition, common to the whole of Greek philosophy, that reality must be only one kind of “thing”. For the Platonists, reality is immaterial; so matter must be unreal. For the Stoics, reality is matter; so the immaterial must be a refined kind of matter.

Christianity has solved these dilemmas by teaching that the immaterial God *created* the material universe out of nothing, which both preserves the reality and the goodness of that universe, and distinguishes it from the reality of God Himself. As a result of the fall, created reality tore itself away from union with uncreated reality, God, and corrupted itself; but through the Incarnation of the Word the different realities of the Creator and His creation were reunited without division or confusion in the Person of Jesus Christ. And at the end of time all men who have received and retained Christ in themselves will be united in the whole of their transfigured natures, including their bodies, with the immaterial God.

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<sup>15</sup> Copleston, *op. cit.*, p. 142. The idea of the “rational emotion” was taught by Zeno and Chrysippus, for whom the passions were not to classified as exclusively bodily in origin, being infused with a rational element, while rational judgements contained a dynamic, desiring element. See Paul M. Blowers, “Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of the Human Passions”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4:1, 1996, pp. 58-59.

<sup>16</sup> Blowers, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-85.

<sup>17</sup> The only Father who seems to support the Stoic idea is Clement of Alexandria, who writes: “The fruit that comes from complete elimination of desire is *apatheia*” (*Miscellanies* 6.9.71, 74). But at least from the time of Lactantius (early fourth century), this idea was rejected. Thus Robert L. Wilken writes: “Drawing on Aristotle’s explanation of human action [who wrote: “the proximate reason for movement is desire” On the Motion of Animals, 701a35], Lactantius argued that the Stoics ‘deprive human beings of all the affections by whose instigation the soul is moved, namely desire, delight, fear, grief’. These affections, he continues, have been implanted in us by God for a reason: without them it is impossible to have a moral life. His statement, ‘without anger there can be no virtue’ [On the Divine Institutions, 6.15], though not the most felicitous, makes the point: anger, when properly used, can contribute to the virtuous life. If there is no movement toward the good (or away from evil), there can be no virtue” (“Maximus the Confessor on the Affections”, in Vincent L. Wimbush, Richard Valantasis (eds.), *Asceticism*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 413).

This means that eros can be regarded as a created reality which is good in essence, but has become bad in the fall, and which through Christ can be restored to its original goodness... Nietzsche wrote: "Christianity gave eros poison to drink: it did not die of it but degenerated – into a vice."<sup>18</sup> This is the precise opposite of the truth. The truth is that Christianity found eros already poisoned by the fall and ready to die: it gave it the antidote, the food of immortality, and it revived. Far from being a vice, eros is part of human nature as it was originally created: it fell with the rest of human nature; but purified, redirected and resurrected through the grace of God, it can become the motive power of all true virtue...<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Epigrams and Interludes*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, New York: Random House, 2000, p. 282.

<sup>19</sup> Lev Shestov was, however, going too far when he wrote: "Does Eros need to justify itself before anyone, when it itself justifies everything?" (*Na Vesakh Iova* (On the Scales of Job)), Paris: YMCA Press, 1975, p. 221).

## The “Realistic” and “Idealistic” Views of Eros

The Russian canonist S.V. Troitsky has contrasted two views of eros and marriage: the dualistic or “Platonic Christian”, which he calls the “realistic” view, and the Orthodox Christian, which he calls the “idealistic” view.<sup>20</sup> The latter is represented above all in the text of the Orthodox marriage service, and in the later writings of St. John Chrysostom. This pair of words is, I believe, ill-chosen, because the “idealistic” view is ultimately more realistic than the “realistic” one. Nevertheless, for lack of a better terminology, I shall continue to use it.

The “idealistic” view which I shall be trying to defend can be summarised in the following axioms:

1. Man was created in the beginning, before the fall, as a sexual being, whose sexuality and physicality were not “added” to his nature in prevision of the fall and the need to procreate in the conditions of the fall. Some secondary sexual characteristics may have been “added” with a view to procreation (the genital organs). But “primary” sexuality, as it were, is a fundamental, ineradicable element of human nature whose primary purpose is not procreation.
2. The primary purpose of sexuality and marriage is to provide an image of the love between Christ and the Church and an innate, inner intuition of the mystery of the incarnation. For this mystery is in essence a marital mystery, a mystery of the Divine, uncreated Eros to which the human, created eros is called to respond. By making us male and female from the beginning, God granted us the means of understanding, by reflection on our own human nature, the supra-human mystery of His Divine economy.
3. This being so, the path out of the fall to a restoration of human nature in its original purity and union with God lies, not in a rejection of eros, but in its redirection, transmutation and “sublimation” from unlawful objects of desire to lawful ones, and from lower objects of desire to higher ones. Both marriage and virginity (monasticism), if undertaken for the sake of Christ and with the blessing of the Church, are paths towards this end, the end of *chastity*; but virginity is the higher path and has a greater reward. Neither marriage nor virginity involves a radical rejection of sexuality, but rather the reintegration of sexuality with love that prevailed before the fall.

I shall quote St. John Chrysostom more than anyone in my development of this view. However, the theoretical basis for this view leading to a broader understanding of eros I owe to three later Byzantine Fathers: St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory of Sinai and St. Gregory Palamas, as well as to more recent Russian writers.

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<sup>20</sup> Troitsky, *Philosophia khristianskogo braka* (The Philosophy of Christian Marriage), Paris: YMCA Press, 1930s.

These insights are as follows:

1. The major powers of the soul, including eros, are powers *both of the soul and of the body* – more precisely, of the psychosomatic unity that is man.
2. Eros in its original, unfallen form proceeds from the soul to the body, and not vice-versa; its origin is in the highest faculty of the soul, the mind (νοῦς). It is the fall that has reversed this flow, turning it against its source, and creating the conflict between “flesh” and “spirit” that we are all too familiar with.
3. Sexual love in its unfallen form is only one manifestation of created eros, which in its fullness embraces all the manifestations of man’s love for God and His creation. As such it is not necessarily the highest or the most important manifestation.

Eros is a subject of Christian psychology or anthropology; marriage – of sacramental theology; and monasticism – of ascetic theology. Of course, the three subjects are closely interrelated, and benefit, I think, from being treated together. I have chosen to do so within a framework roughly dictated by the sequence of Scriptural history, from the creation to the fall to the restoration of all things in Christ. Thus in the first chapter I describe the origins of eros in the creation of man and woman in Paradise; in the second - the effects on eros of the fall; in the third – the redemption of eros brought about by Christ; in the fourth, the consequences of Christ’s redemption of eros for marriage and monasticism; and in the fifth – the nature of eros in general.

In recent years there has been a reaction in Orthodox theological literature against the naturalist glorification of fallen sexuality in the New Age movement and in liberal Orthodox circles influenced by that movement.<sup>21</sup> This reaction is understandable and necessary, and the correct points it makes must not be ignored. At the same time, there is a danger of over-reaction in a Neo-Manichaeian direction, and of over-simplifying a highly complex subject. This book aims to redress the balance, to encompass eros’s potential for good as well as for evil (which is why it must be clearly distinguished from the pejorative concept of “lust”), to show what it was in the beginning as well as what it became in the fall, and what it can be in Christ. And in so doing it hopes to show how central the study of eros is to Orthodox theology as a whole, being at the crossroads, as it were, of dogmatics, pastoral theology and canon law, of soteriology, ecclesiology and anthropology...

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<sup>21</sup> Archimandrite Luke, “New Age Philosophy, Orthodox Thought, and Marriage”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 47, № 3, May-June, 1997, pp. 21-37.

## 1. EROS IN THE BEGINNING

*Then God said, Let Us make man according to Our image and according to Our likeness, and let them have dominion... over all the earth... So God created man; according to the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.*  
Genesis: 1.26-27.

*Neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord.*  
I Corinthians 11.11.

### Introduction: The Limitations of our Knowledge

“According to the eastern tradition,” writes Philip Sherrard, “what is regarded as man's natural life, and so as the norm providing the basis for the moral law, is that of the original creation.”<sup>22</sup> So the clue to the understanding of eros, and the moral norms governing its expression, is to be found in the first chapters of the book of Genesis. For it is there that we find a description – the only description available to us – of the relationship between the first man and woman in their original creation, before the fall.

However, this immediately raises an important methodological problem, the problem of understanding the nature of the world *before* the fall from the point of view of someone living *after* the fall. For, as Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: “The state of Adam and the first-created world has been placed forever beyond the knowledge of science by the barrier of Adam’s transgression, which changed the very nature of Adam and the creation, and indeed the very nature of knowledge itself. Modern science knows only what it observes and what can be reasonably inferred from observation... The true knowledge of Adam and the first-created world – as much as is useful for us to know – is accessible only in God’s revelation and in the Divine vision of the saints.”<sup>23</sup>

In order to illustrate the problem, let us consider the important question of the nature of the body of Adam before the fall. According to the great God-seer, St. Seraphim of Sarov, it “was created to such an extent immune to the action of every one of the elements created by God, that neither could water drown him, nor fire burn him, nor could the earth swallow him up in its abysses, nor could the air harm him by its action in any way whatsoever. Everything was subject to him...”<sup>24</sup> Again, St. Gregory of Sinai writes: “The incorruptible body will be earthly, but without moisture and coarseness, having been unutterably changed from animate to spiritual, so that it will be both dust and heavenly. Just as it was created in the beginning, so also will it arise, that it may be conformable to

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<sup>22</sup> Sherrard, *Christianity and Eros*, London: SPCK, 1976, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Rose, in Hieromonk Damascene, *op. cit.*, pp. 542-543.

<sup>24</sup> St. Seraphim of Sarov, Conversation with Motovilov, in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 442.

the image of the Son of Man by entire participation in deification."<sup>25</sup>

But how are we to understand the nature of a body that is "both dust and heavenly", which is made of real matter, real flesh, but which, like Christ's resurrected Body, can go through walls? The truth is that our fallen imaginative faculty can only go so far, and no further, in understanding this mystery.

But does that mean that we should not examine this question? Not at all. For our understanding of our human nature *now* depends critically on our understanding of it as it was *in the beginning*. And God would not have given us the account of the creation of human nature in the first chapters of Genesis if we were not meant to *try* and understand the mysteries contained therein.

For, as St. Cyril of Alexandria writes, "our Lord Jesus Christ requires those who love Him to be accurate investigators of whatsoever is written concerning Him; for He said, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field.' For the mystery of Christ is deposited, so to speak, at a great depth, nor is it plain to the many; but he who uncovers it by means of an accurate knowledge, finds the riches which are therein."<sup>26</sup> Again, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes: "None of the mysteries of the most secret wisdom of God ought to appear alien or altogether transcendent to us, but in all humility we must apply our spirit to the contemplation of Divine things."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> St. Gregory of Sinai, *137 Texts on Commandments and Doctrines*, 46; in Rose, *op. cit.* p. 443.

<sup>26</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Luke*, Sermon 146.

<sup>27</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *Sermons and Addresses of the Metropolitan Philaret*, Moscow, 1844, part II, p. 87; quoted in Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London: James Clarke, 1957, p. 8.

## Male and Female

How primordial is eros? Is it to be found in the original constitution of man? Can we speak of eros in Paradise? Of course, there were two sexes already in Paradise. But does this fact necessarily entail that they had sexual feelings for each other?

The realistic view gives a negative answer to the last question. Adam and Eve may have been created as man and woman, the argument goes; but it is not recorded that they had sexual relations in Paradise. We are first told that "Adam knew his wife" in a sexual sense only after the fall (Genesis 4.1). Thus St. John of the Ladder writes that if Adam had not been overcome by gluttony, he would not have known what a wife was - that is, he would have lived with her as with a sister.<sup>28</sup> The capacity and desire for sexual relations were given by God to man only as a result of the fall, and for the sake of the survival of the race in the fall. Correspondingly, human sexual differentiation was created by God in anticipation of the fall, for the sake of the reproduction of the species. As St. John of Damascus writes: "God, having foreknowledge, and knowing that [the man] would commit the crime and be subject to corruption, created out him the woman, who would be his helper and like him (Genesis 2.18): a helper so that after the crime the race should be preserved by means of birth, one generation replacing another."<sup>29</sup>

There can be no question that sexual relations *as we know them* were unknown to Adam and Eve in Paradise. However, this does not resolve the question whether sexual feeling in an *unfallen* form existed already before the fall. Some of the Fathers have no doubt that some such unfallen sexuality *did* exist before the fall.

Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria writes of Adam's body *before* the fall that it "was not entirely free from concupiscence of the flesh".<sup>30</sup> For "while it was beyond corruption, it had indeed innate appetites, appetites for food and procreation. But the amazing thing was that his mind was not tyrannized by these tendencies. For he did freely what he wanted to do, seeing that his flesh was not yet subject to the passions consequent upon corruption."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 15. Again, St. John Chrysostom writes: "When he was created, Adam remained in Paradise, and there was no question of marriage. He needed a helper and a helper was provided for him. But even then marriage did not seem to be necessary... Desire for sexual intercourse and conception and pangs and childbirth and every form of corruption were alien to their soul" (*On Virginity*, 14; P.G. 48:543). And again: "After their disobedience, after their loss of the garden, then it was that the practice of intercourse began. You see, before their disobedience they followed a life like that of the angels, and there was no mention of intercourse. How could there be when they were not subject to the needs of the body? So at the outset and from the beginning the practice of virginity was in force, but when through indifference disobedience came on the scene and the ways of sin were opened, virginity 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 for the future." (*Homily 18 on Genesis*, 12).

<sup>29</sup> St. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 30.

<sup>30</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On I Corinthians 7*; quoted in Walter Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria*, Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College Press, 1957, p. 98.

<sup>31</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian*, 3, P.G. 76, 637; quoted in Burghardt, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

So just as Eve found the fruit “pleasant to eat”, but this was not accounted to her as a sin until she allowed the attractiveness of the fruit to overcome her mind and lead her to disobey God, so we may presume that Adam and Eve had a natural, unfallen attraction for each other which was not sinful as long as it remained completely subject to the mind and to the will of God. It was in this failure to subject the desiring faculty to the mind, rather than any supposed viciousness in the desiring faculty itself, that the fall consisted.

We shall return to the question of the feelings of our first parents for each other later. But first let us examine in somewhat more detail the purpose for which God created the sexes in the first place... By contrast with the animals, whose sexual differentiation is not mentioned, man is described from the beginning as being male and female: *male and female created He them*. It would seem, therefore, that the sexual differentiation of man is of the first importance. The question, then, arises: is the sacred text here referring to one person who is both male and female, or to man and woman as separate individuals constituting one species?

The former answer is not as unlikely as it may sound. After all, before Adam was placed in Paradise and Eve was taken out of his side, he had no mate, no “help like unto him”<sup>32</sup>; the species was not yet differentiated into complementary sexes. Moreover, if Eve was taken out of Adam, does this not imply that formerly Adam had everything that Eve had? And does this not suggest that the creation of Eve and the differentiation of the sexes was in fact the creation of a male being and a female being from a being that was both male and female in the beginning – an androgyne? By “androgyne” here we do not mean hermaphroditism, that is, a curious hybrid being having secondary characteristics of both the sexes<sup>33</sup>, but rather a human being that was complete sexually in a way that no other man before Christ was complete, having the full complement of both masculine and feminine qualities.

We shall return to the creation of Eve in more detail later. At this point let us note that the idea that Eve pre-existed, as it were, in Adam, allowing us to speak of Adam before the creation of Eve as being both male and female, has some support in the Holy Fathers. Thus St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: “Moses said, *male and female created He them*, to make known that Eve was already inside Adam, in the rib that was drawn out from him. Although she was not in his mind, she was in his body, and she was not only in his body with him, but also in soul and spirit with him, for God added nothing to that rib that He took out except the structure and the adornment. If everything that was suitable for Eve, who came to be

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<sup>32</sup> St. Ambrose notes that only the woman was created in Paradise, while Adam was created before the planting of Paradise, in Eden (*On Paradise*, 4.25; cited in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 26).

<sup>33</sup> Plato describes a still stranger idea of the androgyne in his *Symposium*: “The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and a combination of the two. The primeval man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond...Each of us when separated has one side only, like a flat fish, and is but the indenture of a man, and he is always looking for his other half.”

It should also be noted that a word for “married couple” in modern Greek is “androgyne”.

from the rib, was complete in and from that rib, it is rightly said that *male and female created He them*.<sup>34</sup> “Adam,” concludes St. Ephraim, “was both one and two, one in that he was man<sup>35</sup>, two in that he was created male and female”.<sup>36</sup> Again: “He honoured [Eve]”, writes St. John Chrysostom, “and made them one, even before her creation”.<sup>37</sup> But “the wise counsel of God at the beginning divided the one into two; and wanting to show that even after division it still remains one, He did not allow that procreation should be possible through one person only....”<sup>38</sup> And so, concludes the holy Father, “one may see that they are one, for she was made from his side, and they are, as it were, two halves.”<sup>39</sup>

The conclusion drawn by the two Antiochene Fathers is confirmed by the fact that, according to science, men and women are complementary, not only physically, for the purposes of sexual reproduction, but also psychologically. The intellectual and emotional differences between men and women may be related to hormonal differences and to different patterns of activity in the right and left hemispheres of the brain, which themselves complement each other rather like male and female.<sup>40</sup> It is indeed as if each individual man and woman were one half of a single bisexual organism, so that each man appears to be “missing” certain feminine qualities that would make him more whole, while each woman appears to be missing certain masculine qualities that would make her more whole.<sup>41</sup>

Thus we may look at the “angelic” state of Adam in Paradise, of the true monk or nun,

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<sup>34</sup> St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1.29.

<sup>35</sup> “Adam” – the name of the species is the same as the name of the individual man in Hebrew. St. Peter of Damascus says: “The name ‘Adam’ is composed of four letters, each letter (A-D-A-M) the initial letter of the Greek words for East (*Anatole*), West (*Dysis*), North (*Arktos*) and South (*Mesembrinos*)...For the whole human race is descended from one man, just as from a single lamp one can light as many others as one wishes without suffering any loss” (*The Philokalia*, London: Faber & Faber, 1995, vol. 3, p. 276; in Fr. Michael Azkoul, *The Teachings of the Orthodox Church*, Buena Vista, 1986, vol. 1, p. 95).

<sup>36</sup> St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2.12; quoted in Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 302.

<sup>37</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 31 on I Corinthians*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 12 on Colossians*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 12 on Colossians*, 5. Cf. John Donne’s poem, “The Canonization”:

*The phoenix riddle hath more wit  
By us; we too being one, are it.  
So to one neutral thing both sexes fit.  
We die and rise the same, and prove  
Mysterious by this love.*

<sup>40</sup> Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Intriguing, in this connection, is the following remark of Clement of Alexandria: “This, then, is the mark of the man, the beard, by which he is seen to be a man, is older than Eve, and is the token of the superior nature. In this God deemed it right that he should excel, and dispersed hair over man’s whole body. Whatever smoothness and softness was in him He abstracted from his side when He formed the woman Eve,... while he (for he had parted with all his smoothness) remained a man, and shows himself a man.” (*The Instructor*, III, 3) The inference is that Adam was of the male sex before, as after, the creation of Eve. However, Clement also seems to be implying that he lost certain of his more feminine attributes (here, his smoothness) and so was more masculine after than before her creation.

and of all the saved after the general resurrection, when “they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven” (Matthew 22.30) as not much a *sexless* state as a *sexually integrated* state, a state in which each person has the full complement of both the masculine and the feminine qualities without any strain or longing for a partner to complement him or her. Such a view would be in accord with the most ancient of the apocryphal sayings attributed to Christ, that the Kingdom of heaven will come “when you have trampled on the garment of shame, and when the two become one and the male with the female is neither male nor female”.<sup>42</sup> For in the sexually integrated human being “the two become one” and “the male is with the female” in such harmony and lack of tension that he (she) “is neither male nor female” in the usual, bi-polar understanding of “male” and “female”. Such a state is “angelic” and virginal in that in it there is no sexual *intercourse between* different people, but full sexual *integration within* each individual person.

Thus the words *male and female created He them* can be taken to mean not only that mankind was created from the beginning in two sexes, each of which is in the image of God, so that the woman is as fully human, and as fully godlike, as the man, but also that man in the beginning was created with the full complement of qualities that we associate with the two sexes at their unfallen best, having the rationality and strength of the male and the sensitivity and warmth of the female. Perhaps we can go further. Perhaps we can say that man as the image of God is man in the fullness of his male and female qualities, such as we find in Christ, not in the unbalanced one-sidedness introduced by the fall.

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<sup>42</sup> *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, quoted in Pseudo-Clement, *Homily 12, 2*, and by Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, III, 13.

## *Dominion through Love*

Immediately after saying that God created man in His image and likeness, the sacred narrative continues: *let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.* Why should *dominion* be mentioned in connection with the image of God in man? And what connection does this theme have, if any, with the differentiation of the sexes?

The first chapter of Genesis presents us, above all, with God the *Ruler* of all, the Pantocrator. But God has delegated some of His dominion to one of His creatures – man. Therefore the most salient characteristic of man at this stage of the Biblical narrative is that he is a king in the image of the King, “the impress of the supreme glory, and the image upon earth of Divine power”.<sup>43</sup> Man is the master of all visible creation as God is the Master of all creation, visible and invisible. This mastery is no ordinary, exploitative mastery, such as we find in the fallen world, but mastery *in the image of God’s Mastery*. That is, it is in essence *loving*; it looks after the creatures and leads them to happiness and fulfillment. And it is *wise*; for, as Nicetas Stethatos writes, God made man “king of creation”, enabling him “to possess within himself the inward essences, the natures and the knowledge of all beings”.<sup>44</sup>

However, man’s mastery over external creation is strictly proportional to his mastery over internal creation, his own human nature. As St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: “Man was like God. Accordingly, he was free and master of *himself* (ΑΥΤΕΞΟΥΣΙΟΣ), having been made by God in this way in order that he should rule over everything upon earth.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1; P.G. 69: 20. Cf. St. John Chrysostom: “‘Image’ refers to the matter of control, not anything else. In other words, God created man as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than man, under whose authority everything falls.” (*Homily 8 on Genesis*, 8. 10). And St. Gregory of Nyssa: “The best Artificer made our nature as it were a formation fit for the exercise of royalty...: for the soul immediately shows its royal and exalted character...in that it owns no lord, and is self-governed, swayed autocratically by its own will; for to whom else does this belong than to a king?...If the Deity is the fullness of good, and this is His image, then the image finds its resemblance to the Archetype in being filled with all good. Thus there is in us the principle of all excellence, all virtue and wisdom, and every higher thing that we conceive: but pre-eminent among all is the fact that we are free from necessity, and not in bondage to any natural power, but have decision in our own power as we please.” (*On the Making of Man*). And Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow: “Man was created after all the visible creatures. For: (a) the general order of the visible creation consisted in a constant ascent to what was most perfect. (b) Man is a microcosm, the summary and as it were the purest extract from all the natures of the visible world. (c) All the other earthly creatures were created to serve him: and for that reason he is introduced into the world as a master into his house, as a priest into his church, perfectly constructed and adorned.” (*Zapiski rukovodstvuiuschaia k osnovatel’nomu razumeniu Knigi Bytia* (Notes Leading to a Basic Understanding of the Book of Genesis), Moscow, 1817, 1867, p. 20).

<sup>44</sup> Nicetas Stethatos, *Century 3*, 10; P.G. 120, 957D-980A; quoted in P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987, p. 85. Cf. St. Ambrose of Milan: “God granted us the power of being able to discern by the application of sober logic the species of each and every object, in order that [we] may be induced to form a judgement on all of them” (*On Paradise*, 11).

<sup>45</sup> St. Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 11.

Again, St. Basil the Great writes: “You have dominion over every kind of savage beast. But, you will say, do I have savage beasts within me? Yes, many of them. It is even an immense crowd of savage beasts that you carry within yourself. Do not take this as an insult. Is not anger a small wild beast when it barks in your heart?... You were created to have dominion, you are the master of the passions, the master of savage beasts... Be master of the thoughts within you in order to be master of all beings. Thus, the power which was given us through living beings prepares us to exercise dominion over ourselves.”<sup>46</sup>

St. Theophan the Recluse asks: “What dominion is this, and why is it desirable above all? Let us recall the construction of human nature. God breathed the breath of His Divine life into the face of him who had been built out of the dust of the earth. This is the spirit of man, the higher part of our nature, where there live consciousness, freedom, rationality, the fear of God, conscience and dissatisfaction with everything created. The goal of the spirit is to be in God and to raise everything to God, everything that is in man and around him. For this he has been given authority over the lower powers of his nature. Receiving strength from God, in Whom the spirit lives, the latter draws into the same life the soul with its reasoning and its sciences, with its will and its manifestations, with its taste and its arts – the works of his hands, and also its lower capacities – imagination and memory. And it draws the body, too, with its needs. And on all external orders it casts the reflection of the same life. When this is in man, he is a real man, corresponding to his idea. And he clearly is his own spirit, the master over himself and everything that is in him and around him. But it is also evident that he can receive such a power of dominion for his own spirit only from God, after devoting himself to Him and to life in Him. If you separate the spirit from God, this power will be taken from him. Then he will no longer be able to deal either with the strivings of his soul or with the needs of his body or with anything external. In the first construction of life man lived entirely within himself (in the spirit) before God, in the second – completely outside himself and forgetful of God. Into this latter construction there penetrate passions from self-love, which give to the whole of his life an evil direction contrary to the spirit and the fear of God, a direction that does not build up, but destroys. Such is the fallen man. But God did not will to leave fallen man in destruction and made for him a means of rising from the fall. The Son of God by His death on the cross, His resurrection, ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father, opened a path for fallen man to the Holy Spirit, Who re-establishes the spirit of man and arouses him to his former strength. In what way? At first the grace of the Holy Spirit works on the spirit as it were from outside, arousing the conscience and the fear of God. But when determination and a readiness to live according to God is formed in the spirit, the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments enters into the spirit, and from this time man’s inner life begins before God; his psychosomatic needs not only cease to rule him, on the contrary, he himself begins to rule them, following the indications of the Spirit. In this way our spirit, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, again becomes autocratic, both within and without.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On the Origin of Man*, 1.19; in Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>47</sup> St. Theophan, *Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla*, St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 446-447.

Woman is equal to man by nature.<sup>48</sup> For, as St. Cosmas of Aitolia says, “God created woman equal with man, not inferior. My Christian, you must love your wife as your companion, not consider her as your slave, for she is a creature of God, just as you are. God was crucified for her as much as for you. You call God Father, she calls Him Father, too. Both of you have the same Faith, the same Baptism, the same Book of the Gospels, the same Holy Communion, the same Paradise to enjoy. God does not regard her as inferior to you.”<sup>49</sup>

Being equal to the man, the woman, too, has dominion over the animal and material kingdoms. For “the words ‘Gain dominion and have control’,” says St. John Chrysostom, “are directed to the man *and* the woman. See the Lord’s loving kindness: even before creating her He makes her sharer in this control”.<sup>50</sup> And again: “Why, tell me, does he now say, ‘Let *them* have control’? Evidently he is already revealing to us at this point some mystery lying hidden. Who are to have control? Quite clearly he has spoken this way to hint at the formation of woman.”<sup>51</sup>

However, the woman is “a secondary authority”, writes the same saint, in the sense that while possessing “real authority and equality of dignity”, it is her husband who “retains the role of headship”.<sup>52</sup> Even before the fall, says St. Basil, the man was “the more authoritative part”<sup>53</sup>, because, as St. Paul says, “the man is not from the woman, but the woman from the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man (I Corinthians 11.8-9).”

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<sup>48</sup> St. Basil the Great writes: “The virtue of man and woman is the same, since creation is equally honoured in both; therefore, there is the same reward for both. Listen to Genesis: ‘God created man,’ it says, ‘in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them’. They whose nature is alike have the same reward. Why, then [since their nature is alike], when Scripture made mention of man, did it leave women unnoticed? Because it was sufficient, since their nature is alike, to indicate the whole through the more authoritative part.” (*Homily 10 on Psalm 1*; quoted in Patrick Mitchell, *The Scandal of Gender*, Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1998, p. 34).

<sup>49</sup> Again, St. Cosmas (+1779) writes: God created woman equal with man, not inferior. My Christian, you must love your wife as your companion, and not consider her as your slave, for she is a creature of God, just as you are. God was crucified for her as much as for you. You call God Father, she calls Him Father, too. Both of you have the same Faith, the same Baptism, the same Book of the Gospels, the same Holy Communion, the same Paradise to enjoy. God does not regard her as inferior to you.”

It was in order to indicate their equality of nature, writes Professor Panagiotes Trembelas, that Eve was created out of Adam’s side: “He wanted by this to show that the help He was giving was of equal honour with him. Neither was it fitting to put her at his head, nor that she should sit below his feet. She was to remain at his side, at precisely the spot where the rib was from which she had been created.” (*Adam kai Eva* (Adam and Eve), Athens: Sotir, 1979, p. 32).

<sup>50</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 10 on Genesis*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 10 on Genesis*, 7.

<sup>52</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*. And again: “In the rank of monarch – the husband; in the rank of lieutenant and general – the wife” (*Homily 24 on I Corinthians*, 5).

<sup>53</sup> St. Basil, *Homily 10 on Psalm 1*. Cf. St. Augustine: “We must believe that even before her sin woman had been made to be ruled by her husband and to be submissive and subject to him.” (*On Genesis according to the letter*; quoted in Mitchell, op. cit., p. 35).

Now if the image of God in man can be said to be *dominion* – dominion over his own nature, and over the woman who is of the same nature as himself, - it is nevertheless a dominion which exercises itself through *love*. This brings us naturally to the conclusion that in a still deeper sense the image of God in man *is* love. For “God is love” (I John 4.1), and “love, by its nature,” writes St. John Climacus, “is a resemblance to God, insofar as that is humanly possible. In its activity it is the inebriation of the soul”.<sup>54</sup> “Love alone,” writes St. Maximus the Confessor, “properly speaking, represents true humanity in the image of the Creator... for it persuades the will to advance in accordance with nature, in no way rebelling against the inward principle of its nature.”<sup>55</sup>

Love is not opposed to dominion, for love is that glue which holds the hierarchy of being together; for, as Thalassios the Libyan writes, “love alone harmoniously joins all created things with God and with each other”.<sup>56</sup> Thus the lover on the higher rung of the hierarchy desires only the union of the beloved with himself, not dominion over her, while the beloved on the lower rung in no way desires a change in their relative positions, but only that their love may continue unchanged forever.

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<sup>54</sup> St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 30, 7.

<sup>55</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, 61, P.G. 90: 628B; quoted in Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>56</sup> Thalassios, *On love, self-control and life in accordance with the intellect*, I, 5; in G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware (translators), *The Philokalia*, London: Faber & Faber, 1995, vol. II, p. 307.

### *“It is not Good that Man should be Alone”*

But love presupposes the existence of another person to love; being in the image of the Divine Trinity of Persons, it must itself be a multiple image, as it were. For “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2.18). But this immediately raises the question: how could a sinless being who was in direct and even *visible* communion with God and His holy angels<sup>57</sup>, be in need of anything in Paradise?

One possibility is that it is not Adam as an individual that is referred to here, but humanity as a whole, which would have great need of the female sex in the future, and in particular of the Most Holy Virgin Mary.<sup>58</sup> A stronger possibility is that Adam, though sinless, was not yet fully mature and established in virtue, as his subsequent fall demonstrated. Several of the Fathers point out that he was still a child, spiritually speaking.<sup>59</sup> And children have need of help – a help immediately supplied by God. In the New Testament Church, when mankind will have achieved maturity in Christ, we shall hear a different note: “It is good for man not to touch a woman” (I Corinthians 7.1). But such a condition, the condition of the monad or monk, will not be possible for all, but only “to those to whom it hath been given” (Matthew 19.11) – that is, to whom has been given a special grace, the grace of perpetual virginity...

But perhaps we are going too far, and Adam was in need, not of help in the form of a wife and sexual partner, but of something else? In order to answer this question, let us turn back and ask: why is Adam described as naming of the animals at this point?

God brought the animals to Adam to be named by him, writes St. John Chrysostom, in order to demonstrate his wisdom, and as a sign of dominion.<sup>60</sup> But in the very act of naming the animals, he expressed his knowledge of their nature, including the fact that they were *not like* him: “there was not found a help like him”.

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<sup>57</sup> St. John of Damascus: “Living bodily in a sensible paradise on earth, in soul he communicated with the angels, cultivating Divine thoughts and being nourished by them” (*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 30).

<sup>58</sup> Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 2.4.

<sup>59</sup> St. Theophilus of Antioch: “God transferred him from the earth, out of which he had been made, into Paradise, giving him the means for advancement in order that, maturing and becoming perfect, and even being declared a god, he might thus ascend to heaven in possession of immortality. For man had been made a middle nature, neither wholly mortal nor altogether immortal but capable of either” (*To Autolytus* 2.24). St. Irenaeus: “It was proper, first of all, that man should be created, and having been created, should grow; and having grown, should mature; and having matured, should increase; and having increased, should gain dominion; and having gained dominion, should be glorified; and having been glorified, should see his Master” (*Refutation* 4, XXXVIII, 3). Both quotations from J. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, 1957, pp. 125, 126-127.

<sup>60</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 14 on Genesis*, 19; *Homily 9 on Genesis*, 8. Cf. St. John of Damascus: “[Adam] prophetically, like a master, produced the naming of the living beings who were given to him as servants. For the universal Creator and Master naturally entrusted to him who had arisen as rational, thinking and autocratic in the image of God, authority over that which was on earth” (*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 30).

“He added ‘like him’,” writes Chrysostom, because “even if many of the brute beasts helped him in his labours, there was still nothing equivalent to a woman, possessed as she was of reason.”<sup>61</sup> The woman had freedom and rationality; that is, she was *like* him in being a *person*, made in the image of God. Therefore the man could love her, not as he loved the animals, not simply as a creature of God, but as one who could love him as he loved her, in a fully *mutual* love, a love in the image of the love of the Holy Trinity. Personhood is that which distinguishes man from the animals. Man, unlike the animals, can in a mysterious way first transcend his own nature, and then orient it towards God. This ability is what we call “being a person”. Personhood, the image of God in man, is not something added to nature as a part of it, but rather the capacity of man to stand “opposite” his nature, as it were, to say yes or no to its impulses, to justify it or to criticize it, to keep it egoistically to himself or to devote it in love to others.<sup>62</sup>

God is Three Persons in one nature. Therefore to say that man is created in the image of God is to say that man, like God, is a multiplicity of persons in a single nature. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that when God speaks of the duality of persons in man He for the first time speaks about Himself, too, *in the plural*: “Let *Us* make man according to *Our* image”. In other words, man is the image of God in that in his relationships with other men he reflects the relationship between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, which is characterized above all by *love*. God is personal because His nature is love, and His nature is love because He is supremely personal; for His nature is to give Himself to other persons – both the other uncreated Persons of the Holy Trinity and the created persons of men and angels. And man made in the image of God is similarly personal. Giving himself freely in love, he transcends nature and becomes one spirit with his Creator and his fellow creatures (I Corinthians 6.17, 12.13).

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<sup>61</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 14 on Genesis*, 17. And not only of reason, but of every other perfection. “How great was the power of God, the master craftsman, making a likeness of those limbs from that tiny part [the rib of Adam], creating such wonderful senses and preparing a creature complete, entire and perfect, capable both of speaking and of providing much comfort to man by a sharing of her being. For it was for the consolation of this man that this woman was created. Hence Paul also said, ‘Man was not created for the woman, but woman for the man’ (I Corinthians 11.9).” (*Homily 15 on Genesis*, 11).

<sup>62</sup> Vladimir Lossky writes: “The image cannot be objectified, ‘naturalized’ we might say, by being attributed to some part or other of the human being. To be in the image of God, the Fathers affirm, in the last analysis is to be a personal being, that is to say, a free, responsible being. Why, one might ask, did God make man free and responsible? Precisely because He wanted to call him to a supreme vocation: deification; that is to say, to become by grace, in a movement as boundless as God, that which God is by nature. And this call demands a free response; God wishes that this movement be a movement of love...”

“A personal being is capable of loving someone more than his own nature, more than his own life. The person, that is to say, the image of God in man, is then man’s freedom with regard to his nature, ‘the fact of being freed from necessity and not being subject to the dominion of nature, but able to determine oneself freely’ (St. Gregory of Nyssa).” (*In the Image and Likeness of God*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Theological Seminary, 1989, pp. 71-72). Cf. Vasily Zenkovsky, “Printsipy Pravoslavnoj Antropologii” (“The Principles of Orthodox Anthropology”), *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia* (Messenger of the Russian Christian Movement), 1988, II-III.

But we return to the question: why must the loneliness of man be relieved precisely by a *woman*? Why can only a woman help him? Why not another man? Or an angel? After all, a multiplicity of persons loving each other in the image of the Love of the Holy Trinity does not have to be a multiplicity of *sexually differentiated* persons...

The obvious answer is that only a woman could help in sexual reproduction, which fulfilled the plan of God more perfectly than asexual reproduction in the conditions of the fall. Moreover, the animality of sexual reproduction reminded men of how far they had fallen from their original condition. As St. Symeon of Thessalonica put it: "God did not wish that our origin should be irrational and from seed and filth. But since we voluntarily became mortal, He allowed the reproduction of the race to take place as with the animals, so that we should know from where we have fallen."<sup>63</sup>

However, this was not the *only*, or even the most important reason for sexual differentiation...

The Latin Fathers, and some of the Greek, write that Eve helped Adam primarily in the procreation of children.<sup>64</sup> The Greek and Syrian Fathers, on the other hand, tend to emphasize other aspects, including spiritual support. Thus Clement of Alexandria writes that Eve was Adam's "help in generation and household management", but that if the man has "some annoying faults that affect the harmony of the marriage, the wife should try to remedy these annoyances by using good sense and persuasion".<sup>65</sup> St. Basil the Great writes that the help which a wife gives her husband is the general support that she gives him in passing through life, which, of course, includes moral support.<sup>66</sup> Again, St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "Inside Paradise, the woman was very diligent; she was also attentive to the sheep and cattle, the herds and droves that were in the fields. She would also help the man with the buildings, pens, and with any other task that she was capable of doing. The animals, even though they were subservient, were not able to help him with these things. For this reason God made for the man a helper who would be concerned for everything for which God Himself would be concerned. She would indeed help him in many things."<sup>67</sup> Blessed Theodoretus writes: "He commanded her to satisfy the man's desire, not a passion for pleasure, but by showing him the rational need for her company."<sup>68</sup> St. John Chrysostom goes further: "[The spouses] share the toil so as to share the crown also. Everything in marriage is in common. Let that which pertains to virtue be in common also. I have taken you as a helper. Be a helper to me also in the higher things."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> St. Symeon, *On the sacraments*, 38, P.G. 155:381; quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Paradise*, 10.48; St. Augustine, *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, IX, 5, 9; St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 30.

<sup>65</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, III, 3; *Miscellanies*, in *The One Who Knows God*, Tyler, Texas: Scroll Publishing, 1990, pp. 108, 106.

<sup>66</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On Virginity*.

<sup>67</sup> St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2.11.

<sup>68</sup> Blessed Theodoretus, *Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 21.13.

<sup>69</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On Psalm 68*, 5; P.G. 55:506.

“A woman,” writes St. John Chrysostom, “undertakes no small share of the administration, being the keeper of the house. And without her not even political affairs could be properly conducted. For if their domestic concerns were in a state of confusion and disorder, those who are engaged in public affairs would be kept at home, and political business would be ill managed. So that neither in those matters, nor in spiritual, is she inferior. For she is able, if so inclined, to endure a thousand deaths. Accordingly many women have suffered martyrdom. She is able to practise chastity even more than men, no such strong flame disturbing her; and to show forth modesty and gravity, and ‘holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord’ (Hebrews 12.14), and contempt of wealth, if she will, and in short all other virtues.”<sup>70</sup> Finally, St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain writes: “Woman is a teacher of every virtue by word and deed within her own province at home.”<sup>71</sup>

Professor Panagiotis Trembelas puts it thus: man and woman help each other by "exercising mutual forbearance, encouraging one another, so as to bring their different characters into harmony, so as to love and serve one another, experiencing together the same joys and sorrows, supporting one another in their weaknesses, giving a helping hand in time of need, spending themselves wholly for one another, together carrying the burden of life and the responsibility of a family."<sup>72</sup>

Again, Lady Namier writes: "In the East marriage and the whole of family life are seen as a discipline often likened to that of monasticism. Both rub away the sharp edginess of personality, as pebbles tossed together by sea-waves rub each other smooth in the long run."<sup>73</sup>

St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, emphasizes the moral support provided by the woman: “Without a helpmate [that is, a help *like* him] the very bliss of paradise was not perfect for Adam: endowed with the gift of thought, speech, and love, the first man seeks with his thought another thinking being; his speech sounds lonely and the dead echo alone answers him; his heart, full of love, seeks another heart that would be close and equal to him; all his being longs for another being analogous to him, but there is none; the creatures of the visible world around him are below him and are not fit to be his mates; and as to the beings of the invisible spiritual world they are above. Then the bountiful God, anxious for the happiness of man, satisfies his wants and creates a mate for him - a wife. But if a mate was necessary for man in paradise, in the region of bliss, the mate became much more necessary for him after the fall, in the vale of tears and sorrow. The wise man of antiquity spoke justly: 'two are better than one, for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up' (Sirach 4.9-10).

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<sup>70</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 10 on I Timothy*.

<sup>71</sup> St. Nicodemus, *Commentary on Canon 70 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council*; quoted in Patrick Mitchell, *The Scandal of Gender*, Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1998, pp. 75-76.

<sup>72</sup> Trembelas, *Dogmatique de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Catholique* (Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church), Chevetogne, vol. III, p. 351.

<sup>73</sup> Napier, *The Listener*, 12 December, 1957.

But few people are capable of enduring the strain of moral loneliness, it can be accomplished only by effort, and truly 'all men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given' (Matthew 19.11), and as for the rest - 'it is not good for a man to be alone', without a mate."<sup>74</sup>

Again, Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: "Why is it 'not good' for man to be alone? The answer is quite clear: because God, 'in the image' of Whom man is created is a Trinity!... His nature experiences a natural need for this, that is, he is oppressed, as it were, within the bounds of one person, or, in any case, he potentially contains within himself the capability and striving to belong to some *multiplicity* of persons, but without dividing (for division and schism is contrary to nature). From this point of view it becomes clear why a 'help' for Adam is created not from the earth again (and not from water and not from someone else), but from Adam himself!"<sup>75</sup>

Now in the beginning the only person of the same nature as himself to whom Adam could exercise his personhood through love was Eve. Therefore if he was to show in himself the image and likeness of God as a multiplicity of Persons united in love, he could do so *only in his relationship with Eve*. We come to the conclusion, therefore, that the image of God in man was revealed in the beginning not only in Adam and Eve as individuals, but also in Adam and Eve *in their relationship with each other*, more specifically in their *love* for each other.<sup>76</sup> Thus the love between man and woman is in the image of the love between the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. And if some would say that while human love is indeed in the image of God, this cannot be said of the love between man and woman, since this is supposedly tainted by the sexual element in it, it should be remembered that the love between Adam and Eve was *the very first* human love. In Paradise there was no other love between human beings; in this sense it was primordial, the first and the strongest, love par excellence. All other human loves, between parents and children, between friends, etc., came later chronologically, and were dependent on this first, primordial love between man and woman.

So if the two great commandments were carried out by Adam and Eve before the fall, *they were carried out in relation first to God and then to each other*. And if this second love is "like" the first, as the Lord says (Matthew 22.39), it is because the second, the love of Adam and Eve for each other, was indeed made in the likeness of the love of God.

As St. John Chrysostom writes: "A certain wise man, when enumerating which

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<sup>74</sup> "An Address of the Right Reverend Tikhon", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 37, № 4, July-August, 1987, pp. 3-4.

<sup>75</sup> Lebedev, "O Edinstve Chelovechestva" ("On the Unity of Mankind"), *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), 1983, № 5.

<sup>76</sup> As Vladimir Soloviev writes: "It is not to some separate part of human nature that the mysterious image of God, in accordance with which man is made, relates from the beginning, but to the true unity of his two main sides, male and female." ("Smysl' liubvi" ("The Meaning of Love"), *Sochinenia* (Works), Moscow, 1994, p. 287). However, this does not entail the heretical ideas about the "feminine side of God" that Soloviev expounds in his later writings.

blessings are most important included 'a wife and husband who live in harmony' (Sirach 25.1). In another place he emphasized this: 'A friend or a companion never meets one amiss, but a wife with her husband is better than both' (Sirach 40.23). From the beginning God in His providence has planned this union of man and woman, and has spoken of the two as one: 'male and female created He them' (Genesis 1.27) and 'there is neither male nor female, for ye are alone in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3.28). There is no relationship between human beings so close as that of husband and wife, if they are united as they ought to be. When blessed David was mourning for Jonathan, who was of one soul with him, what comparison did he use to describe the loftiness of their love? 'Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women' (II Kings 1.26). The power of this love is truly stronger than any passion; other desires may be strong, but this one alone never fades. This love (eros) is deeply planted within our inmost being. Unnoticed by us, it attracts the bodies of men and women to each other, because in the beginning woman came forth from man, and from man and woman other men and women proceed..."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, 1; in Roth, C.P. and Anderson, D., *St. John Chrysostom: On Marriage and Family Life*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986, pp. 43-44.

## The Creation of Eve

Let us continue with the sacred narrative: *So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman, and brought her to the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be in one flesh.* (2.21-24)

Why from the rib? The surgeon J.E. Shelley explains: "The account in Genesis 2.18-25 is as factual as words can make it. It reads like the account which a surgeon writes for the records of the operating theatre! God performs a surgical operation under general anaesthesia, a rib re-section in this case. Note the detail: 'He closed up the flesh instead thereof'. In just such a manner would a surgeon describe his closing up of an incision. Remarkably enough, provided that the surgeon is careful to leave the periosteum (the membrane which envelops the bones) of the removed rib, the rib will reform in a non-septic case, and the operation performed upon Adam was truly aseptic. So far as I remember, the rib is the only bone in the body of man which will do this. God gave it this property, which is why He chose it. With the vast reservoir of living cells contained in this rib, 'He built up Eve'."<sup>78</sup>

"It is not without significance," writes St. Ambrose, "that the woman was made out of Adam's rib. She was not made of the same earth as he, in order to show that the physical nature of man and woman is identical and that together they were the one source for the propagation of the human race. Thus neither was man created together with a woman, nor were two men nor two women created at the beginning, but first a man and then a woman, God willing that human nature be established as one. Therefore from the very beginning of our race He eliminated the possibility that different natures could arise."<sup>79</sup>

It is said that Adam fell into a deep sleep. Now the Hebrew word tardema, here translated as "deep sleep", is translated into the Greek of the Septuagint as "ecstasy". So it means, on the one hand, lack of feeling, anaesthesia (in the Hebrew), and on the other hand, heightened feeling, ecstasy (in the Greek). According to Tertullian, "ecstasy" is the power of dreaming. And according to St. Ephraim the Syrian, Adam experienced a kind of prophetic dream: "The man, awake, anointed with splendour, and who did not yet know sleep, fell on the earth naked and slept. It is likely that Adam saw in his dream what was done to him as if he were awake."<sup>80</sup>

Again, Serge Verkhovskoy writes: "The sleep which God brought upon Adam is in Hebrew called tardemah. This word refers to a deep sleep, particularly a sleep in which one sees visions (cf. Genesis 15.12). In Greek this sleep is called ecstasis and in Russian

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<sup>78</sup> Shelley, *How God created Man*, a Bible Christian Unity Fellowship Study, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Paradise*, IX, 48.

<sup>80</sup> St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2.12.

istuplenie. Thus Adam's state in this sleep may be understood not as a state of complete insensibility (for, according to St. Irenaeus, what we know as sleep did not exist in Paradise<sup>81</sup>), but rather as a state of inner, supra-conscious tension, in which he was turned, so to speak, to face his future wife. Does this not explain how he was able to recognize her when he first saw her?"<sup>82</sup>

And so Adam's "ecstatic sleep" is a form of prophetic trance (St. Jerome also calls Adam a "prophet" (vates)) in which he stood out of himself (for "ec-stasy" (εκ-στασις) literally means "standing out" in Greek) in order to perceive reality from a greater height and in an incomparably greater depth...<sup>83</sup> We find the notion of a waking sleep that takes one to a higher state of awareness in the Song of Songs: "I sleep, but my heart watcheth" (5.2).

St. Ambrose puts it as follows: "In the beginning, sleep was preceded by ecstasy, as we read: 'God sent an ecstasy upon Adam, and he slept'. Sleep brought rest to the body, but ecstasy came over the soul and prevented it from resting, and from that time this combination constitutes the natural and normal form of the dream" <sup>84</sup>

St. Gregory of Nyssa discusses this relationship in his commentary on this verse. As Jean Daniélou writes, interpreting St. Gregory's thought: "The notion of sleep is admirably suited to express the experience of ecstasy. For sleep is, in the strict sense, a kind of pathos, a passive experience, in which the mind goes out of itself and is under the control of the imagination. From this point of view the spiritual life is seen as an awakening, a watching, that withdraws the soul from the illusory dreams of sensual pleasure. But in the sleep of ecstasy the soul is swept out of itself and the limitations of its understanding, not by illusory dreams but by the sovereign reality of the presence of God. This sort of sleep is far superior to being awake..."<sup>85</sup>

Another possibility is that since the words "sleep" and "ecstasy" are both used in the context of the sexual act, we can see in this primeval act of sexual *differentiation* the first act, paradoxically, of sexual *union*, and the ecstasy that accompanied it something akin - in an unfallen mode - to the ecstasy of sexual union. Thus St. Methodius of Olympus writes: "The ecstatic sleep into which God put the first man [was] 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

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<sup>81</sup> St. Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 13.

<sup>82</sup> Verkhovskoy, "The Creation of Man the Establishment of the Family in the Light of the Book of Genesis", *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, 1964, vol. 8, № 1, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> St. Augustine writes: "The ecstasy will be correctly understood as being imposed so that the mind of Adam, with the help of this ecstasy,...should enter into the sanctuary of God and receive knowledge of the future. As a result, having awoken and being as it were filled with prophecy, he saw the bone, that is, his wife, being brought to him, and immediately said (the apostle calls these words a great mystery): 'Behold now...'. Although according to the Holy Scriptures, these words were the words of the first man, nevertheless the Lord in the Gospel declares that they were pronounced by God" (*On Genesis according to the letter*, IX, 19; in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 118). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, I, 135, 3.

<sup>84</sup> St. Ambrose, *On the Soul*, 45.1-).

<sup>85</sup> Daniélou, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa*, London: John Murry, 1962, pp. 39-40.

of procreation, in order that a new person, as I have said, might be formed in turn from the material that is drawn from his flesh and bone.... Hence rightly is it said that 'therefore a man leave his father and his mother': for man made one with woman in the embrace of love is overcome by a desire for children 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>86</sup>

Here "the embrace of love" is re-described as the man "offering his rib to the Creator", as if the creation of Eve from Adam was indeed a kind of sexual act. Moreover, the "man's enchantment in love" is described as a "thirst for children", in which he "is overcome by a desire for children", as if the sexual act were at the same time a giving birth – which in a certain sense it was in the case of the creation of Eve, insofar as Eve was both the wife and the child of Adam.<sup>87</sup> Thus this new creation through parthenogenesis has at the same time certain characteristics of what we may call "parthenocoitus". Adam gives rise to Eve as a separate being out of himself, and at the same time recognizes her to be his wife, "flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones"; in her "standing out" (*ec-stasis*) from him, he recognizes that she is most intimately united *with* him. Thus the primal differentiation of the sexes is at the same time their first, and most perfect, union, a union without sin and so with joy, even "ecstasy".

St. Methodius "is speaking about the positive meaning of sexual love in itself rather than about it being necessary for procreation. God the Creator is in fact regarded as participating in the sexual intercourse between man and woman. When men 'are brought to deposit their seed in the woman's channels', St. Methodius continues, 'the seed shares, so to say, the divine creative function'. All elements of sexual life, such as 'enchantment', 'pleasures', 'embrace of love', 'desire' and 'ecstasy', receive a positive and poetic interpretation in St. Methodius. There is no suggestion that sexual union is something unclean or unholy. On the contrary, the whole story of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib is taken as symbolizing sexual intercourse."<sup>88</sup>

That there is a marital mystery involved here is also indicated by the fact that God *brought her to the man* – God as it were "gives away" the bride to her bridegroom. For, as Troitsky writes: "It is not by chance that the Slavonic translation uses the word privede ['brought']. The privedenie ['bringing'] of the wife was the form of religious marriage among the ancient Slavs, corresponding to the Roman form confarreatio."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> St. Methodius, *The Symposium*, Logos 2. 2. According to St. Augustine, Adam and Eve may have known some form of sexual union, but without fallen lust, in Paradise (*The City of God*, XIV, 26).

<sup>87</sup> At this point we have to be cautious, because the Fathers prefer not to speak of Eve's creation out of Adam as a "giving birth" or "begetting" or "generation", using these words only for the procreation that takes place in the fall (St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 31*, 11; St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 30). However, as we shall see later, they acknowledge the likeness between the creation of Eve out of Adam and the birth of the New Adam, Christ, from the New Eve, Mary.

<sup>88</sup> Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev), *The Mystery of Faith*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002, p. 151.

<sup>89</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 48, footnote.

Again, when Adam says of Eve: "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called woman [isha in Hebrew] because she was taken out of man [ish]"<sup>90</sup>, he is acknowledging that they are of one flesh – in other words, that they are *married – physically* married. These words, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes, are "the foundation of, and the reason for, the mysterious attraction and union between man and woman".<sup>91</sup> They "have become," writes St. Asterius of Amasea, "a common admission, spoken in the name of all men to all women, to the whole female sex. These words bind all the rest. For that which took place in the beginning in these first-created ones passed into the nature of their descendants."<sup>92</sup> "This is the origin," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "of the irresistible attraction of a man to his 'wife' (the woman) as to the most necessary complement of his own nature. Union in love with the woman can be replaced only by union in love with God, which is immeasurably more profound. It is on such a union with God that monasticism is founded, which is why it does not lead to psychological complexes. But monasticism is not for everyone, it is the lot of special people, 'who can accommodate' this condition (Matthew 19.11-12). But for the majority. the woman remains one of the most necessary conditions of a normal existence."<sup>93</sup>

Adam continues with the famous words which the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul saw as the founding document of marriage: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be in one flesh.* Why "therefore"? Because Adam sees in Eve his own flesh and bones, his own bride. St. John Chrysostom writes: "'A man shall leave his father and his mother', he says; but he does not say, 'he shall dwell with', but instead, 'he shall cling' to his wife, thus demonstrating the closeness of the union, and the sincerity of the love. And Paul is not satisfied with this, but goes further, explaining the subjection of the wife in the context of the two being no longer two. He does not say 'one spirit' or 'one soul' (union like this is possible for anyone), but he says 'one flesh' ... The word 'flesh' and the phrase 'shall cling' both refer to love..."<sup>94</sup>

The difference between this primordial sexuality and the sexuality of the fall is that whereas in the fall man and woman come to know each other through union "*into one flesh*", in Paradise they came to know each other through "*standing out*" *from one flesh*.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The Hebrew words "ish" and "isha" (like the English "man" and "woman") emphasize the unity of the sexes in a single human nature. For "this name," as St. John Chrysostom says, "should reveal their common creation and become the foundation of a durable love and the cement of their union" (*Homily 6 on Genesis*, 5).

<sup>91</sup> Velimirovich, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, volume IV, p. 241, November 25.

<sup>92</sup> St. Asterius, *Sermon on Matthew 19.3*, P.G. 40:228; in S.V. Troitsky, "Brak i Tserkov'" ("Marriage and the Church"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986 (III), № 35, pp. 25-26.

<sup>93</sup> Lebedev, "O masterakh i margaritakh" ("On Masters and Margaritas"), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 53, № 5 (640), May, 2003, p. 31

<sup>94</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*; translated in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 57.

<sup>95</sup> This "paradisial 'eros'", as Vladimir Lossky calls it, "would have been as different from our fallen and devouring sexuality as the sacerdotal royalty of man over created being should be from our actual devouring of each other... The narrative of creation, let us not forget, is expressed in the categories of the fallen world. But the Fall has changed the very meaning of the words. Sexuality, this 'multiplying' that God orders and

In Paradise man and woman recognize that they are one at the very moment of their coming into individual existence; and in that knowledge is joy. In the fall, they desperately seek to recreate that unity, having come to know isolation and loneliness; and in that knowledge is sorrow. Every true marriage begins with the aim of reliving, as far as it is possible in the conditions of the fallen world, that original paradise of delight, in which there was no lust but there was joy, and not even a shadow of division...

Both unity and otherness are essential to the experience of true love. For the lover delights both in the otherness of the beloved and in his overcoming of that otherness through his union with her. But this otherness is neither isolation nor unlikeness; for as St. Gregory Palamas says, "all love culminates in union and begins in likeness".<sup>96</sup>

The recognition of otherness is rather the recognition of the *uniqueness* of the other. If, however, this uniqueness is *not* acutely felt, then the act is merely self-love and self-gratification, which is lust. And if that otherness is not felt to be overcome in a unity that includes and embraces without destroying it, then the act only engenders estrangement and jealousy. The otherness of persons is then felt to be an otherness of *nature*, an absolute otherness which precludes love; which is why love achieved is "strong as death", but love lost is "cruel as the grave, her shafts are shafts of fire, even the flames thereof" (Song of Songs 8.6).<sup>97</sup>

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blessed, appears in our universe as irremediably linked to separation and death. This is because the condition of man has known, at least in his biological reality, a catastrophic mutation. But human love would not be pregnant with such a paradisiacal nostalgia if there did not remain painfully within it the memory of a first condition where the other and the world were known from the inside..." ("Creation: Cosmic Order", *Orthodox Theology*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, 1978, p. 67).

<sup>96</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 56, 6.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. the Chinese philosopher Gi-ming Shien: The love between husband and wife "excludes the love of others if respect does not underlie affection. Desire makes one approach, respect keeps them apart; the union of the two is affection or love which abides. Respect is the regulating force of love" (in Hieromonk Damascene, *op. cit.*, p. 74).

### *Neither Male nor Female*

We come to the conclusion that the differentiation of the sexes has a much greater significance and purpose in God's plan than merely providing a means of reproduction in the fall. As we shall explain in more detail later, the love of man and woman as seen in its original purity in the marriage of Adam and Eve, was designed *from the beginning* as a mystery of love and life mirroring the still greater mystery of love and life that is the Incarnation of Christ and his salvation of mankind. The holiness of the marriage of man and woman is derived from the holiness of its archetype, the marriage of God and man...

However, let us now examine the opposing view, according to which the words: "In Christ there is neither male nor female" (Galatians 3.28) imply that there was no sexuality in the original creation, and that there will be none in the new heaven and the new earth, when, as the Lord Himself says, there will be no marrying and the elect will be like the angels in heaven (Matthew 22.30).

This teaching finds support in the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor: "He became perfect man, from us, for us, and in conformity with us, possessing everything that is ours without omitting anything except sin, and in no way needing the addition of anything that is naturally connected with marriage. At the same time and by the same token He revealed, in my opinion, that there also happened to be another method of increasing the human race, a method foreknown to God, which would have prevailed if the first man had kept the commandment and had not descended to the level of the beasts by abusing his own faculties, thus bringing about the distinction between male and female and the division of nature. Man, as I have said, had no need at all of this division to come into being, and it is possible for him to be without it in the future, there being no need for these things to endure permanently. For in Christ Jesus, says the divine Apostle, there is 'neither male nor female'."<sup>98</sup>

Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa comments on the phrase, *male and female created He them* as follows: "I presume that everyone knows that this is a departure from the Prototype: for 'in Christ Jesus,' as the Apostle says, 'there is neither male nor female'. Yet the phrase declares that man is thus divided. Thus the creation of our nature is in a sense twofold: one made like to God, one divided according to this distinction: for something like this the passage darkly conveys by its arrangement, where it first says, 'God created man, in the image of God created He him', and then, adding to that which has been said, 'male and female created He them,' - a thing which is alien from our conception of God.

"I think that by these words Holy Scripture conveys to us a great and lofty doctrine; and the doctrine is this. While two natures - the Divine and incorporeal nature, and the irrational life of brutes - are separated from each other as extremes, human nature is the mean between them: for in the compound nature of man we may behold a part of each of

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<sup>98</sup> St. Maximus, *Ambigua*, P.G. 91; quoted in Nellas, op. cit., p. 214.

the natures I mentioned – of the Divine, the rational and intelligent element, which does not admit the distinction of male and female; of the irrational, our bodily form and structure, divided into male and female: for each of these elements is certainly to be found in all that partakes of human life. That the intellectual element, however, precedes the other [irrational, bodily element], we learn as from one who gives in order an account of the making of man; and we learn also that his community and kindred with the irrational is for man a provision for reproduction...

“He Who brought all things into being and fashioned man as a whole by His own will to the Divine image... saw beforehand by His all-seeing power the failure of their will to keep a direct course to what is good, and its consequent declension from the angelic life, in order that the multitude of human souls might not be cut short by its fall... He formed for our nature that contrivance for increase which befits those who had fallen into sin, implanting in mankind, instead of the angelic majesty of nature, that animal and irrational mode by which they now succeed each other.”<sup>99</sup>

Let us examine this passage more closely.

First, St. Gregory says that the sexuality of man is “a departure from the Prototype: for ‘in Christ Jesus,’ as the Apostle says, ‘there is neither male nor female’”. However, these words of St. Paul refer, not to what is and what is not in the Prototype or the image of God, but to who is entitled to receive baptism and the gifts of grace that it bestows. The Apostle is saying that all human beings, regardless of nationality, social status or sex, can receive this gift; all - Greeks as well as Jews, women as well as men, - can become one in Christ.<sup>100</sup>

Besides, Christ was born as a man of the male sex. Are we to say that His maleness was

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<sup>99</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 16-17; in Rose, *Genesis*, *op. cit.* According to Constantine Tsirplanis, “the so called ‘double creation’ doctrine of St. Gregory of Nyssa should be understood as man’s essential and simultaneous composite nature, from the very beginning, in which the brutal passions existed, but were inactive, neutral and powerless, and they would remain so if the reason had not abused its freedom...There was no second act of creation” (*The Concept of Universal Salvation in Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Thessalonica, 1980, p. 24).

<sup>100</sup> As St. Theophan the Recluse writes: “When all Christians are through the grace of the Holy Spirit are created inwardly in accordance with one image – the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is clear that they are all in spirit identical, they are all one in Jesus Christ, they are all as one, or both the one and the other: what is given to one is also given to the other. Nobody is deprived, because of external differences, of that which is necessary to him as a Christian. That which is external has no significance in Christianity; in it everything depends on strength of faith, devotion to Christ the Lord and readiness to make all kinds of sacrifices to please Him. Therefore in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek. ‘Neither is the Jew better because he is circumcised, nor is the Greek worse because he is uncircumcised; but both the one and the other are better or worse solely in accordance with the quality of their faith. In the same way the slave and the freeman can be different in Christianity, but not in status, only in faith. Equally, the man and the woman differ in the strength and weakness of the body, but faith is defined by the disposition of the heart, and it often happens both that the wife saves the husband, and that the husband precedes the wife in faith’ (Jerome).” (*Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla* (Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), Moscow, 2002, p. 90).

not part of the Prototype? Or has He now ceased to be male? Is it possible to think of Christ as not male? It may be that since, as the Lord said, there will be no marrying in the resurrection, but we shall be like the angels in heaven, there will be no secondary sexual characteristics in heaven. However, it runs counter to the intuition of Christians to argue that we will cease to be men and women in *any* significant sense.

Still more counter-intuitive is it to assert that Christ will cease (or rather, since He is already risen, has already ceased) to be a man, and that the Mother of God will cease (or rather, since she is already risen, has already ceased) to be a woman. For we see in Christ and the Virgin Mary, the new Adam and Eve, a real man and a real woman with no tendency towards “unisex”. There is therefore no reason to believe that such primary sexual differences will disappear in the resurrection.

Thus St. Jerome, in spite of his highly rigorist attitude to sexuality in general, insists that sexual differentiation will remain after the resurrection: “When it is said that they neither marry nor are given in marriage, the distinction of sex is shown to persist. For no one says of things which have no capacity for marriage, such as a stick or a stone, that they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but this may well be said of those who, while they can marry, yet abstain from doing so by their own virtue and by the grace of Christ. But if you will cavil at this and say, how shall we in that case be like the angels with whom there is neither male nor female, hear my answer in brief as follows. What the Lord promises is not the nature of angels, but their mode of life and their bliss. And therefore John the Baptist was called an angel even before he was beheaded, and all God’s holy men and virgins manifest in themselves, even in this world, the life of angels. When it is said: ‘Ye shall be like the angels’, likeness only is promised and not a change of nature.”<sup>101</sup>

Now science has established that the intellectual and emotional differences between men and women may be related to hormonal differences and to different patterns of activity in the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Indeed, these hemispherical differences appear to complement each other rather like male and female.<sup>102</sup> It is as if each individual man and woman were one half of a single bisexual organism, so that each man appears to be “missing” certain feminine qualities that would make him more whole, while each woman appears to be missing certain masculine qualities that would make her more whole.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> St. Jerome, *Letter 108*, 23.

<sup>102</sup> Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2003.

<sup>103</sup> Intriguing, in this connection, is the following remark of Clement of Alexandria: “This, then, is the mark of the man, the beard, by which he is seen to be a man, is older than Eve, and is the token of the superior nature. In this God deemed it right that he should excel, and dispersed hair over man’s whole body. Whatever smoothness and softness was in him He abstracted from his side when He formed the woman Eve,... while he (for he had parted with all his smoothness) remained a man, and shows himself a man.” (*The Instructor*, III, 3) The inference is that Adam was of the male sex before, as after, the creation of Eve. However, Clement also seems to be implying that he lost certain of his more feminine attributes (here, his smoothness) and so was more masculine after than before her creation.

Be that as it may, and whether or not such differences existed before the fall, the fall has accentuated and corrupted the differences between the sexes. Thus men tend to be crude, insensitive and boastful, and women – weak-willed, vain and easily led by all kinds of influences. But these fallen differences do not entail that in the beginning, before the fall, there was never meant to be *any* real and important difference. The restoration of the image of God in man involves, not the abolition of all sexual differences, but their return to their unfallen condition, not the abolition of sexuality but sexual *integration*. Thus men return to real masculinity together with those feminine qualities which fallen masculinity drives out; and vice-versa for women.

Again, modern medicine claims to be able to change men into women, and women into men. But sex-change operations appear to be far less successful than is commonly claimed.<sup>104</sup> And the reason for that seems to be that while you can change a man's (or a woman's) *secondary, external* secondary characteristics, you cannot change his *primary, internal* sexuality.<sup>105</sup> For sexuality is not as superficial and “negotiable” as the modernists would like us to believe. There is more to sexuality than meets the eye...

The deeper aspects of sexuality, even on the purely physical plane, appear to be immutable.<sup>106</sup> Thus the male has an X and a Y chromosome, while the female has two X chromosomes – a fact of our sexual nature that can in no way be changed. As a scientific journalist writes: “Although men and women sometimes act like separate species, scientists have long assumed that – in terms of their DNA – they are more or less the same. But a new study has shown that the sexes really are quite different, reports *Nature* magazine, and it all comes down to the X chromosome. Women carry two X chromosomes; men, by contrast, have one X, inherited from their mothers, and one Y. The Y is an ‘eroded’ version of the X chromosome with fewer than 100 working genes. The X, by contrast, has more than 1000, and is able to deploy them more intricately. “Because women have two X chromosomes, one is inactive. But that doesn’t mean it’s entirely silent. The new research has revealed that up to 25 % of genes in the so-called inactive chromosome are actually switched on. In other words, women are getting ‘double doses’ of some genes. ‘The effect of these genes from the inactive X chromosome could explain some of the differences between men and women that are not attributable to sex hormones,’ said Laura Carrel of Pennsylvania State University. These could include emotional, behavioural and physical differences, including susceptibility to disease. Although the X contains only 4% of all human genes, it accounts for almost 10% of those inherited diseases that are caused by a single gene. These ‘X-lined’ disorders include colour blindness, haemophilia, various

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<sup>104</sup> Walt Heyer, “‘Sex change’ Surgery: What Bruce Jenner, Diane Sawyer, and you should Know”, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/78949.htm>, April 27, 2015.

<sup>105</sup> See Jazz Shaw, “Shocking new DNA study reveals that human beings are divided into two genders!” *Hot Air*, May 10, 2017, <http://hotair.com/archives/2017/05/10/shocking-new-dna-study-reveals-human-beings-divided-two-genders/>

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Dorothy Kimura, “Sex Differences in the Brain”, *Scientific American*, vol. 267, September, 1992, pp. 80-87.

forms of mental retardation and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. With no 'spare' X to make up for genetic deficiencies, men are more vulnerable to 'X-linked' conditions."<sup>107</sup>

Thus the scientific evidence, taken as a whole, gives some support to St. Gregory's view that secondary sexual characteristics were "added" to the original man after the fall. And since there will be no marriage in the resurrection, it follows, as St. Gregory writes, that these secondary characteristics will not exist in the Kingdom: "If the organs of marriage exist for the sake of marriage, when that function does not exist we shall need none of the organs for that function".<sup>108</sup> *But* the evidence also supports the position that there appears to be a deeper, primary level of sexuality that is "wired into" the brain and cannot be removed or changed, from which it follows that the attempt to remove or reverse or "renegotiate" sexuality is unnatural and perverse...

St. Gregory goes on to argue that part of our nature is made like God, and another part not like him - that is, the irrational, animal-like part, including our sexuality, which is "alien from our conception of God". In one sense, this is obviously true. God is far above all created being, and He is even further above the visible and irrational elements of creation than He is above its invisible and rational elements. It follows that insofar as man is a mixture of visible and invisible, rational and irrational, he is for that very reason "a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8.5) with their unmixed, purely noetic nature.

However, St. Gregory himself asserts that "the image is not in part of our nature, nor is the grace in any one of the things found in that nature".<sup>109</sup> Moreover, if, as St. Maximus the Confessor says, the soul and the body constitute "one form", being "simultaneously created and joined together, as is the realization of the form created by their joining together"<sup>110</sup>, then it would seem quite logical to see the image of God as residing in the soul and body *together*. "For neither could the soul ever appear by itself without the body nor the body arise without the soul. Man is not, as the squawking philosophers decree, merely a rational animal capable of understanding and receiving knowledge."<sup>111</sup> "It was not merely a part of man," writes St. Irenaeus, "that was made in the image and likeness of God. Of course the soul and the Spirit are *part* of man but not *the* man. For the whole man consists of the commingling and union of the soul that receives the Spirit of the Father, with the fleshly nature, which (commingling and union) was formed according to the

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<sup>107</sup> "The Difference between Men and Women", *This Week*, March 26, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>108</sup> St. Gregory, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 10. However, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose writes that "Adam and Eve were created, like the whole of the first creation, in the bloom of youth and beauty, and already possessing the sexual distinction that would be needed in their fallen nature" (*Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 187)

<sup>109</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 16. Cf. St. Epiphanius of Cyprus: "Church doctrine believes that man was created according to the image of God, but does not define precisely in what part of his essence the image of God exists...There is no need at all to define or affirm in what part of us that which is in the divine image is effectuated" (*Against Heresies*, 70, 2; P.G. 42:341).

<sup>110</sup> St. Maximus, *Letter 15*; P.G. 91: 552, D6-13; quoted in M.-H. Congourdeau, "L'animation de l'embryon humain chez Maxime le Confesseur" ("The Animation of the Human Embryo in Maximus the Confessor"), *Nouvelle Revue de Théologie* (New Review of Theology), 1989, pp. 707-708.

<sup>111</sup> Tatian, *To the Greeks*, in Romanides, op. cit., p. 148.

image of God.”<sup>112</sup> And so, as St. Gregory Palamas writes, “The name ‘man’ is not applied separately to the soul or the body, but to both together, for together they were made in the image of God”.<sup>113</sup>

Again, Christ God took on the whole of human nature in His incarnation, including a material body, and raised it to the right hand of the Father, Who has “raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2.6). That is why the Mother of God, who is not only a member of His Body, but gave Him His Body, being glorified in and through His Body, is “more honourable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim”. If man is made in the image of God, and Christ is God, then, as Tertullian points out, man’s flesh is made in the image of Christ’s flesh, Who raised it far above its original lowliness, “granting [it] to be nobler than its origin, and to have its happiness increased by the change wrought in it.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Refutation*, 5, VI, 1; in Romanides, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>113</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Prosopopeia*, P.G. 150: 1361C.

<sup>114</sup> Tertullian, *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, 6.

## *The Image of God and Sexuality*

But if man's flesh is made in the image of Christ's flesh, does this give credence to the feminist idea that there is sexuality in God? In no way... None of the Persons of the Holy Trinity is male or female in His Divine nature. Christ is male only in His assumed *human* nature. So when we say that man's original, unfallen sexuality was created in the image of Christ's sexuality, we are speaking of Christ in His *human* nature. There is no analogy or likeness between human sexuality and the *Divine* nature. In fact, since the nature of God is unknowable and infinitely far above all created being, it is, strictly speaking, inaccurate to speak of *anything at all* in common or similar between the Divine and the human natures. For even such an attribute as the immortality of the human soul, which plays such an important part in philosophical and theological systems of a Platonic kind, cannot really be said to be in the image or likeness of the immortal nature of God for the simple reason that the human soul is not immortal *by nature*, but only *by grace*. By *grace*, however, we *are* immortal; so that if God's grace dwells in us, we can indeed speak about a Divine likeness and godlike immortality. The same applies to the other attributes of human nature that are said to be in God's image and likeness. For example, man's rationality can be said to be in the likeness of God's Reason, but only if it is informed by the grace of God: otherwise it descends to mere cogitation or rationalism.

Thus *likeness to God* is possible only through *participation in Him*: without that participation the likeness disappears, and man "is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them" (Psalm 48.21). Man is not in the likeness of God by virtue of some special spiritual part of his soul in the Platonic sense, but by virtue of possessing the Spirit of God to such a degree that the Spirit becomes, as it were, a part of him, or is so thoroughly mixed with the whole of him that he can be said to be, not just soul and body, but *Spirit*, soul and body (I Thessalonians 5.23). As Romanides writes, following St. Irenaeus: "the spiritual man for Paul is not one who does not have flesh but one who has the Spirit of God. A man who does not have the Divine Spirit is called 'carnal', 'animal' and 'flesh and blood'. Without the Spirit's energy to render him incorruptible, man cannot participate in true immortality and the kingdom of God... Paul's spiritual man who has the Holy Spirit is exactly identical to the man made in the image and likeness of God as taught by the early Christian theologians."<sup>115</sup>

Many of the Fathers distinguish between the image and the likeness of God in man, asserting that the image is retained even by the carnal man who has lost the Holy Spirit insofar as it is the potential to receive back the Spirit, that is, the likeness of God, through repentance rather than a specific Godlike quality. Thus a portrait that has been completely blackened by dirt is no longer an image or likeness of anyone in the strict sense: it can be called an image only in the sense that if the dirt were removed, a likeness would then reappear. To use a different analogy: if a jewel is removed from its setting, the setting will still bear the imprint of the jewel, although it will possess nothing jewel-like in a substantial

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<sup>115</sup> Romanides, op. cit., pp. 145, 146.

sense. Similarly, the soul that was made for God and in the image of God will still bear the imprint of God in his soul, and will long for God even when God has abandoned him. For, as St. Augustine writes, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee".<sup>116</sup>

Thus the image may be said to include sexuality only if it can be shown that sexual relations are not incompatible with the presence of the Spirit of God. In other words, the critical question is: are sexual relations "carnal" not only in the sense that they involve the flesh or the body, but in the Pauline sense that they drive out the Spirit?

Now we have already established that before the fall Adam and Eve did not have sexual relations in the sense of sexual intercourse. But they did have a relationship which can be called sexual insofar as it was coloured by their differentiated sexuality, by their sexual attraction to each other. And insofar as this attraction did not constitute a fall into sin, and did not lead to the departure of the Spirit of which we read only much later: "My Spirit shall not always remain with man, since he is carnal" (Genesis 6.3), we must conclude that the basic fact of sexual attraction does not drive out the Spirit and therefore does not disfigure the image of God in man.

We can go further. There is a likeness between the relationships between Adam and Eve, on the one hand, and the Father and the Spirit, on the other. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "Adam, not having a created cause and being unbegotten, is an example and image of the uncaused God the Father, the Almighty and Cause of all things; while Eve, who proceeded from Adam (but is not born from him) signifies the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit proceeding."<sup>117</sup> Again, St. Anastasius of Sinai writes: "Adam is the type and image of the Unoriginate Almighty God, the Cause of all; the son born of him manifests the image of the Begotten Son and Word of God; and Eve, who proceeded from Adam, signifies the proceeding Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit. This is why God did not breathe in her the breath of life: she was already the type of the breathing and life of the Holy Spirit."<sup>118</sup>

As Vladimir Lossky puts it: "*And God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.* Thus the mystery of the singular and plural in man reflects the mystery of the singular and plural in God: in the same way that the personal principle in God demands that the one nature express itself in the diversity of persons, likewise in man, created in the image of God. Human nature cannot be the possession of a monad. It demands not solitude but communion, the wholesome diversity of love... The Fathers relate the procession of the Holy Spirit to what they call the 'procession' of Eve, different from Adam yet of the same nature as him: unity of nature and plurality of persons which evoke for us the mysteries of the New Testament. Just as

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<sup>116</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*.

<sup>117</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, in Archimandrite Cyprian (Kern), *Antropologia sv. Grigoria Palamy* (The Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas), Paris, 1950, p. 157

<sup>118</sup> St. Anastasius, *On the Image and Likeness*, P.G. 89:1145BC; in John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983, pp. 24-25.

the Spirit is not inferior to Him from Whom It proceeds, just so woman is not inferior to man: for love demands equality and love alone wished this primordial polarization, source of all the diversity of the human species."<sup>119</sup>

The analogy between Adam and Eve, on the one hand, and the Father and the Holy Spirit, on the other, is not the only relational likeness that the Fathers discern here. There is also the analogy between Adam and Eve, on the one hand, and the Father and the Son, on the other. And this analogy takes us still further into the deepest mysteries of the New Testament. Its basis is to be found in the words of St. Paul: "I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God" (I Corinthians 11.3). Thus the man-woman relationship is a head-body relationship in the likeness of the Father-Son relationship.

In fact, there are three such relationships here: Father-Son, Son (Christ)-man, and man-woman. Two of these are between beings that are equal in nature: the Father-Son and man-woman relationships. The middle relationship, that between the Son (Christ) and man, is not between two beings that are equal in nature. However, the Incarnation of the Son and the Descent of the Holy Spirit has effected an "interchange of qualities", whereby God the Son has acquired human nature, and humanity has "become a partaker of the Divine nature" (II Peter 1.4). As the Holy Fathers put it, "God became man so that men could become gods". Therefore the originally unequal relationship between God and man has been to a certain degree leveled out, as it were, by its transformation into the new relationship between Christ and the Church. This relationship can, like that between the Father and the Son, be described in the image of the relationship between head and body, and is explicitly compared to the relationship between husband and wife in Ephesians 5.22-32.

The symbol of this hierarchical, head-body relationship is the veil. The apostle continues: "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman

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<sup>119</sup> Lossky, "Creation: Cosmic Order", *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 69-70. Archpriest Lev Lebedev develops this theme: "Man was created not only as 'I', but simultaneously as 'we'. At first the Lord created Adam, then brought his wife Eve out from his body and commanded them to multiply, so that each child born to them would be at the top of a particular triangle: husband, wife and child, all of them with one uniform nature, Adam's nature, but all three, Adam, Eve and child, individual in being, freely rational persons. And nowadays all of the many millions of people have as their basis a tertiary structure, husband, wife and child, and thus conform to the image of the Holy Trinity. "But God's image and likeness are not only in the structural makeup. These principally reflect love and agreement. The Father is the source of all holiness common to every godly nature. This is His hypostatic property. The Son is 'born' before eternity from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds before eternity from the Father. These are their hypostatic properties, their specific nature and thus the Persons of God behave accordingly, but in such a way that with a perfect love for each other, they are always in perfect and voluntary agreement. "To just such an image of existence was man called, first of all in personally life, in family relations, and then also with regard to all mankind..." (*What is Truth?* St. Vladimir's Russian Orthodox Information Center, 1996, pp. 9-10).

ought to have a veil on her head" (I Corinthians 11.7-10). As St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "The husband, as the image and glory of God amongst creatures, must not cover his head in church, while the wife was taken from the husband later, created, as it were, in accordance with his image, and is therefore the image of the image, or the reflection of the glory of the husband, and must therefore cover herself in church as a sign of subjection to her husband".<sup>120</sup>

Thus the relationships between the Father and the Son, Christ and the Church and man and woman mirror each other, and are in turn be mirrored by the relationship between the head and the body. For just as "the head of Christ is God", so Christ is the Head of the Church and "the head of the woman is the man". And just as the Son is "the effulgence of the glory" of the Father and "the impress of His Hypostasis" (Hebrews 1.3; Colossians 1.15), so the woman is "the glory of the man", "the image of the image", and yet of the same nature as him.

Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "Because the woman is the likeness of the man and the image of the image, and the glory of the glory, he admonishes her to nourish the hair on her head on account of her nature. And yet why would the former begrudge grace to the latter, especially as the woman herself displays the image and likeness of God? But nevertheless she does so in a sense through the man, because the nature of the woman differs in some small way."<sup>121</sup> And Blessed Theodoretus writes: "He is called the image of God on account of being entrusted with dominion over all things on earth. The woman, on the other hand, being placed under the authority of the man, is the glory of the man, just as she is also the image of the image. Now she herself also rules other things, but is justly subjected to the man."<sup>122</sup>

It follows that the relationship between man and woman has the capacity to illumine for us the relationship between Christ and the Church, and that the structure of the human body is an icon, a likeness of the most spiritual and ineffable mysteries. For just as the head (the man) is lifted above the body (the woman) and rules her, but in love for her and desiring her salvation, so does Christ love and save the Church, His Body – all in obedience to *His* Head, the Father, Who "so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16).

From this perspective we can see that the differences between man and woman reflect the differences in spiritual function between Christ and the Church, and that these differences were implanted in human nature from the beginning precisely in order to mirror the spiritual relationships. The man is physically stronger, more aggressive and more inclined to lead because he, like Christ, must wage war on the devil and rescue the

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<sup>120</sup> St. Theophan, op. cit., p. 179. "The covering of their heads brings upon their husband glory and constitutes reverence and honor to the Angels who protect them" (St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Christian morality*, Discourse V, Concerning the Fact that Christians should not Beautify Themselves, p. 126).

<sup>121</sup> St. Cyril, *P.G.* 74, pp. 881-884; quoted in Mitchell, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>122</sup> Bl. Theodoretus, *Commentary on I Corinthians 11*, *P.G.* 82, pp. 309-314; quoted in Mitchell, op. cit., p. 29.

woman from his clutches. The woman is more intuitive, compassionate and submissive because she must be sensitive to the will of the man and submit to him in order to make their common struggle easier.<sup>123</sup>

If, in the fall, the man must take the lead, this is not because he is less fallen than the woman, but because obedience to the hierarchical principle at all levels is the only way out of the fall. For only if the woman obeys the man, and the man obeys Christ, as Christ obeyed the Father, can grace work to heal fallen nature and restore “glory” to the fallen lower levels of the hierarchy. Only if the man disobeys Christ, and demands that the woman follow him in his disobedience, must she disobey him out of obedience to Christ. In this case the hierarchical principle has been violated at one level (the level of the man), but remains intact at another (the level of the woman). And so although the woman is placed at the bottom of this hierarchy, she can be united with the top. For, as St. Paulinus of Nola says: “We might say that she is placed at the base to support that body’s chain which is linked to God by the head of Christ, to Christ by the head of man, and to man by the head of woman. But Christ makes woman also belong to the head at the top by making her part of the body and of the structure of the limbs, for in Christ we are neither male nor female...”<sup>124</sup> Thus there is neither male nor female in Christ not in the sense that sexual differences cease to exist in Christ, but that if each sex carries out his or her differentiated role in love in accordance with the will of God, there will be complete harmony and unity throughout the hierarchy, and an “interchange of qualities” will take place, not only between God and man, but also between man and woman, with the result that God will be “all in all” (I Corinthians 15.28).

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<sup>123</sup> The psychologist Professor Simon Baron-Cohen (op. cit.) has argued in detail for a difference between a “systemising” male brain and an “empathising” female brain.

<sup>124</sup> St. Paulinus of Nola, *Letter 23: To Severus*, 24, 25.

## Angelic and Sexual Modes of Procreation

Let us consider God's command to Adam and Eve that they *multiply*. What kind of procreation is being spoken of here? Some of the Fathers interpreted the command to procreate in a purely spiritual sense, as meaning the multiplication of spiritual children and good works. Among these was St. Basil the Great, who, as we have seen, interpreted man's dominion over the wild beasts in a similarly allegorical manner.<sup>125</sup> Again, St. Augustine writes: "One is completely right to ask in what sense we should understand the union of male and female before sin, as well as the blessing that said *Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*. Should we understand it in a physical manner or spiritually? We are permitted to understand it spiritually and to believe that it was changed into sexual fecundity after sin. For there was first the chaste union of male and female, of the former to rule, of the latter to obey, and there was the spiritual offspring of intelligible and immortal joys filling the earth."<sup>126</sup>

However, the patristic consensus is that the command should be understood in the first place to refer to the procreation of physical children. Thus St. Methodius of Olympus writes: "God's statement, the commandment to beget children, is just as valid today, because He is always an artist who is fashioning humankind. It is certainly true that God is working even now on the world like a painter on his picture. The Lord taught us this too by saying: 'My Father is working still' (John 5.17). When the rivers no longer flow and no longer pour on to the great sea-bed, when the light has been separated in a perfect way from the darkness (though for the present this has yet to happen), when the good earth has ceased to produce fruit, when reptiles and quadrupeds have stopped reproducing and when the pre-arranged number of men and women has been reached, only then will there be a need to refrain from begetting children. As things are, it is necessary for humanity to collaborate in bringing into the world beings in the likeness of God, because the world is already in existence, or rather it is being created. *Be fruitful and multiply* is the word."<sup>127</sup> Again, St. Bede writes: "This multiplication of men and filling of the earth was not to be accomplished except by the union of male and female... Blameless, therefore, are the marriages which God has instituted for the propagation of the human race and the filling of the earth with the blessing from above."<sup>128</sup> And St. John of Damascus writes: "God, Who knows all things before they have existence, knowing in His foreknowledge that they would fall into more transgressions in the future and be condemned to death, anticipated this and made *male and female*, and bade them *be fruitful and multiply*."<sup>129</sup>

It should be noted that human beings "collaborate" with God in bringing children into

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<sup>125</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On the Six Days*, X, 5, and *Second Homily on the Creation of Man*, 5.

<sup>126</sup> St. Augustine, *Two Books on Genesis against the Manichaeans*, I, 19, 30.

<sup>127</sup> St. Methodius of Olympus, *The Symposium*, 2, 1. St. Methodius believed that the words "he shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh" referred to the situation before the fall (*On the Resurrection of the Dead*, I, 38).

<sup>128</sup> St. Bede the Venerable, *On Genesis*, I, 1.28.

<sup>129</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 24.

the world, but it is God alone who creates them; it is He Who “opens the womb” (I Kings 1.6). As the Church chants on the feast of the Conception of the Mother of God: “Today the whole world doth celebrate Anna’s conceiving, *which was brought about by God*”.<sup>130</sup> Clement of Alexandria writes that God is the cause of childbirth, while the parents are only “servants of birth”.<sup>131</sup> Again, Blessed Theodoretus writes of Hannah's infertility: “This teaches readers not to place their hope [of conception] on marriage, but on calling on the Creator for help. For just as it belongs to the cultivator to cast seeds into the earth, but to God to bring that which is sown to perfection, so union is the work of marriage, but helping nature and forming a living being - to God.”<sup>132</sup> And St. John Chrysostom writes: “It is not the power of marriage that multiplies our species”.<sup>133</sup> “We must ascribe the birth of children, not to the intercourse of spouses, or to anything other than the Creator of all”.<sup>134</sup> Again, St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes: “It is God Who fashions every infant in the womb. As Job says: ‘Like clay Thou hast moulded me, like milk Thou hast poured me out, like cheese Thou hast curdled me. Thou hast clothed me in flesh and blood, knit me together with bones and sinews’ (Job 10.9-11).”<sup>135</sup>

The question arises: since the command to *be fruitful and multiply* was given before the fall, are we to suppose that sexual intercourse took place in Paradise?

As noted above, the Holy Fathers give a negative reply to this question: “The clear and unanimous teaching of the Fathers [is] that before the fall there was no use of marriage, as we understand it today, for the purpose of reproduction.”<sup>136</sup> For sexual intercourse as we know it presupposes the “garments of skin”, that is, opaque bodies and animal-like desires, that were given to us only after the fall, for the survival of the human race in the conditions of universal corruption and death. The fact that the command was given before the fall indicates, as St. Bede says, that marriage and procreation are blessed by God. But it does not indicate that sexual intercourse as we know it was the only possible method of procreation.

The Fathers teach that if man had not sinned, and had kept his incorruptible body, he

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<sup>130</sup> The Conception of the Most Holy Mother of God, *Menaion*, December 9, Mattins, kontakion. In the same service the conception is called “holy” (Mattins, canon, Ode 3, sedalen). Again, in the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, *Menaion*, September 8, the conception is called “ineffable” (Mattins, Canticle 5, second canon).

<sup>131</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, III, 12, P.G. 8:1189; Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>132</sup> Blessed Theodoretus, *On I Kings*, 3.

<sup>133</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 10 on Genesis*, 4-5, P.G. 53:86; in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>134</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On Virginity*, 15, P.G. 48:544; in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>135</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 12.26, P.G. 33:757; cf. 9.15, P.G. 33:653.

<sup>136</sup> Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 72. I have in fact found one exception to this rule - the teaching of St. Augustine: “Although it was after the expulsion of the man and the woman from Paradise that they came together in sexual intercourse and begat children, nevertheless I do not see what could have prohibited them from honourable marital union and ‘the bed undefiled’ even in Paradise. God could have granted them this if they had lived in a faithful and just manner in obedient and holy service to him, so that without the tumultuous ardour of passion and without any labour and pain of childbirth, offspring would be born from their seed” (*On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, 9,3,5; *The City of God*, XIV, 26).

could have reproduced in a virginal, quasi-angelic way. Thus St. Athanasius the Great writes: "God's original intention was that we give birth not through marriage and corruption; the violation of the commandment introduced marriage as a result of Adam's transgression."<sup>137</sup> And St. John Chrysostom writes: "Marriage was not necessary to God in order to multiply men on earth."<sup>138</sup> Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes that if we had not sinned, we would not have needed marriage to multiply. For "whatever the mode of increase in the angelic nature..., it would have operated also in the case of men, who were 'made a little lower than the angels', to increase mankind to the measure determined by its Maker".<sup>139</sup> Again, St. John of Damascus writes: "The commandment 'go forth and multiply' does not necessarily mean through conjugal union. For God could increase the human race by another means, if people had preserved the commandment inviolable to the end."<sup>140</sup>

This hypothesis finds confirmation in the fact that the first multiplication of man was indeed quasi-angelic and virginal. For it was the birth, *not of Cain, but of Eve*. As St. John Chrysostom says: "How, you will say, would so many thousands have been born [except through sexual intercourse]? If this thought strikes you so strongly, I will ask you in turn: How was Adam born? How was Eve - without the mediation of marriage?"<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> St. Athanasius, *Commentary on Psalm 50*.

<sup>138</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On Virginity*, 17.

<sup>139</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 17, 2.

<sup>140</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 24; P.G. 94: 1208D.

<sup>141</sup> St. John Chrysostom, quoted in Metropolitan Philaret, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

### *Impure Means to a Pure End?*

The words *Be fruitful and multiply* are repeated after the account of the fall (Genesis 5.2), which clearly indicates that the blessing is not only on parthenogenesis, but also on sexual reproduction in the fall. Thus the blessing on reproduction has not been removed, but continues even in the conditions of the fall when Adam knows Eve in a different, non-virginal way, and when he sees that it gives birth not only to life in the form of Eve, but also death in the form of Abel's murder at the hands of Cain.<sup>142</sup>

However, there are some, even among the Fathers (e.g. St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Augustine), who argue that the blessing is on procreation, but not on sexual relations as such. The problem with this view is that it seems to contradict the apostolic word that "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed (i.e. sexual relations) undefiled" (Hebrews 13.4); for sexual relations are physiologically impossible without desire. Again, if sexual relations within marriage are considered impure, there is a danger of falling under the anathemas of the Council of Gangra (c. 343): "9. If anyone shall remain virgin, or observe continence, abstaining from marriage because he abhors it, and not on account of the beauty and holiness of virginity itself, let him be anathema. 10. If anyone of those who are living a virginal life for the Lord's sake shall treat arrogantly the married, let him be anathema. 14. If any woman shall forsake her husband, and resolve to depart from him because she abhors marriage, let her be anathema."

V.M. Lourié attempts to minimize the significance of these canons, writing: "Who is going to define where 'abhorrence' and 'arrogance' begin? No-one could have had any doubt that both the one and the other are sinful passions, but the conciliar canons are a juridical document, and so it is always dangerous to allow too much leeway for their interpretation. From the literal meaning of the canons one could form the impression that marriage and virginity were equal in honour (we are talking about the *principles* of the one and the other, which is not to be confused with the equality in honour of all Christians in general) and even that it was impermissible to dissolve a marriage for the sake of abstinence."<sup>143</sup>

Now it is not always easy to discern where a preference for virginity, which is laudable, passes into an abhorrence of marriage, which is not. However, there is no hint in these canons that marriage and virginity are to be considered equal in honour, only that marriage should not be *dishonoured* by being considered to be sinful.

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<sup>142</sup> Moreover, the blessing is repeated after the destruction of the world by the Flood and Noah's emergence from the ark (Genesis 9.1); for Noah and his family after the Flood are like Adam and Eve after the fall - on them depends the survival of the human race. "See how marriage was again permitted for the sake of increase," comments St. John of Damascus (*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 24).

<sup>143</sup> Lourié, *Prizvanie Avraama*, p. 21. See also his commentary on Fr. John Meyendorff, *Zhizn' i trudy svyatitelia Grigoria Palamy* (The Life and Works of the Holy Hierarch Gregory Palamas), St. Petersburg: Vizantinorossika, 1997, pp. 378-379.

As for the idea that marriage should not be broken for the sake of abstinence, unless it be with the mutual consent of the partners, this is nothing more nor less than the teaching of the Church! Thus the holy canons specifically forbid clergy to put away their wives “under pretext of religion”<sup>144</sup> (this was the sin of the Roman Church), “lest we should affect injuriously marriage constituted by God and blessed by His presence, as the Gospel saith: ‘What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder’; and the Apostle saith, ‘Marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled’; and again, ‘Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed’”.<sup>145</sup>

The chastity of clerical marriage was confirmed by the First Ecumenical Council through St. Paphnutius the Confessor, as the Socrates relates: “Paphnutius then was bishop of one of the cities in Upper Thebes: he was a man so favoured divinely that extraordinary miracles were done by him. In the time of the persecution he had been deprived of one of his eyes. The emperor honoured this man exceedingly, and often sent for him to the palace, and kissed the place where the eye had been torn out.

“It seemed fit to the bishops to introduce a new law into the Church, that those who were in holy orders, I speak of bishops, presbyters and deacons, should have no conjugal intercourse with the wives whom they had married when they were still laymen. Now when discussion on this matter was impending, Paphnutius having arisen in the midst of the assembly of bishops, earnestly entreated them not to impose so heavy a yoke on the ministers of religion: asserting that ‘marriage itself is honourable, and the bed undefiled’; urging before God that they ought not to injure the Church by too stringent restrictions. ‘For all men,’ he said, ‘cannot bear the practice of rigid continence; neither perhaps would the chastity of the wife of each be preserved’; and he termed the intercourse of a man with his lawful wife chastity.

“It would be sufficient, he thought, that such as had previously entered on their sacred calling should abjure matrimony, according to the ancient tradition of the Church: but that none should be separated from her to whom, while yet unordained, he had been united. And these sentiments he expressed, though himself without experience of marriage and, to speak plainly, without ever having known a woman: for from a boy he had been brought up in a monastery, and was specially renowned above all men for his chastity.

“The whole assembly of the clergy assented to the reasoning of Paphnutius; wherefore they silenced all further debate on this point...”<sup>146</sup>

This point is well illustrated by the *Life* of the British saint, Monk-Martyr Nectan of Hartland (+c. 500). St. Nectan’s father, Brychan, was a local prince who left his wife to practise the ascetic life in Ireland. After several years of asceticism, he returned to his native land, and there, finding his wife still alive, “although he had not proposed any such thing

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<sup>144</sup> *Apostolic Canon* 5.

<sup>145</sup> *Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon* 13.

<sup>146</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 11.

himself”, he had relations with her and begat several sons and daughters – one for each year of his unlawful abstinence. Brychan recognised his fault, saying: “Now has God punished me for vainly intending to act contrary to His will.”<sup>147</sup>

Brychan and his children, all of whom became monastic missionaries in south-west England, are counted among the saints of the British Orthodox Church – a happy ending which would not have come to pass if he had continued his unlawful asceticism – unlawful because contrary to the laws of marriage as instituted by God – to the end of his life...

Again, we read of St. Seraphim of Sarov that “those who were married [he] would not allow to separate, however hard it might be, even under the pretext of a subsequent life of virginity. 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!’”<sup>148</sup>

Lourié continues this theme in the critical section of his work entitled “From the law of marriage to the grace of virginity – in one individual life”, which consists of a detailed analysis of a story concerning a married layman, Theonas, who, under the influence of the teaching of Abba John, began to try and persuade his wife that they should henceforth abandon sexual relations.

“But in vain. We cannot say that the wife found no arguments at all in favour of the opposite point of view. She ‘... said that she could never abstain from conjugal relations in the flower of her life, and that if she were abandoned by him and committed some sin it would have to be imputed to him instead for having broken the bonds of marriage...”<sup>149</sup>

But Theonas said that he would continue to live with his wife only if they “escaped the punishment of Gehenna” by abstaining from sexual relations.<sup>150</sup> And eventually he left her and became a distinguished monk, much admired by St. John Cassian.

However, Theonas’ argument is condemned by the holy canons: “If anyone shall condemn marriage, or abominate and condemn a woman who is a believer and devout, and sleeps with her own husband, *as though she could not enter the Kingdom* [of heaven], let him be anathema...”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Gilbert Noble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, Oxford: Holywell Press, volume V, 1970, pp. 65-66.

<sup>148</sup> Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, *St. Seraphim of Sarov; A Spiritual Biography*, Blanco, TX: New Sarov Press, 1994, p. 293.

<sup>149</sup> St. John Cassian, *Conference 21*, IX, 1; Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 111. The wife’s argument is supported by, among others, Origen, who writes, commenting on the Gospel phrase “maketh her an adulteress” (*Matthew* 14.23), that a husband can, by omitting to satisfy the physical desires of his wife, “under the appearance of greater gravity and self-control”, place her in serious temptation, for which he himself is responsible (*Commentary on Matthew*. 14.24; quoted in Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 82, note 4).

<sup>150</sup> St. John Cassian, *Conference 21*, IX, 1; Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>151</sup> Council of Gangra, *Canon 1*.

Moreover, Lourié omits to tell us that St. John Cassian did not commit himself to Theonas' point of view: "No one should think that we have made all this up in order to encourage spouses to divorce. We not only do not condemn marriage but we even say in accordance with the words of the Apostle: 'Marriage is honorable among all, and the marriage bed is undefiled'... I ask the reader kindly 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..."<sup>152</sup>

Lourié follows Abba Theonas in considering that the words of the Gospel: "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" (Luke 14.26) provide sufficient justification for his action. However, the Christian does not cease to love his relatives. It is rather that he loves them "with a more outside love", to use St. Macarius' expression.<sup>153</sup>

To put it another way: he hates his relatives only if they prevent him from carrying out the commandments. As Blessed Theophylact writes: "See to it that you are not seized or carried away by this saying, interpreting it literally and without understanding. The Lover of man does not teach hatred for man, nor does He counsel us to take our own lives. But He desires that His true disciple *hate* his own kin when they prevent him from giving reverence to God and when he is hindered from doing good by his relationship to them. If they do not hinder us in these things, then He teaches us to honor them until our last breath."<sup>154</sup>

Of course, every rule has its exceptions, and it may be that in this particular case the breaking of the rule that the agreement of both partners to abstain is necessary was blessed by God. But it is very dangerous to build any kind of theological argument on exceptions to the rule, otherwise the rule itself is seen to be despised and will be abandoned. We do not know what happened to the woman in this case. Perhaps she bore her forced separation from her husband with fortitude, and remained chaste for the rest of her life. But if she did not, then it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, as she said, the responsibility for her fall fell, at least in part, on her husband – and it was precisely to prevent such falls that the rule that spouses should separate only by mutual agreement was established.<sup>155</sup>

As Lourié admits, the extremist viewpoint expressed by Abba Theonas was rejected by

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<sup>152</sup> St. John Cassian, *Conference 21*, X, 1,2.

<sup>153</sup> St. Macarius the Great, *Homily 4*, 15.

<sup>154</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke*, 14.26; House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1997, p. 187.

<sup>155</sup> Another exception to this rule can be found in the Life of Holy New Hieroconfessor Alexander of Omsk (+1977); for it was on reading this Gospel passage that he decided to leave his wife and family. However, he did this because staying with his family in the conditions of Soviet life would have endangered his soul and his honorable service as a priest under Soviet power and his conscience did not allow him to become a traitor. ("Holy Hieroconfessor Alexander of Omsk", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XVIII, № 2, March-April, 1997, p. 5)

two of the greatest Fathers of the Church - St. John Chrysostom and St. Barsanuphius the Great.<sup>156</sup> But Lourié shrugs off this fact on the grounds that the question of leaving one's wife without her consent is only a "pastoral" problem, about which it is possible to disagree "without falling away from the Church". With regard to the wider questions of the role of sexual relations in marriage, Lourié claims that St. Chrysostom shared "the general patristic conviction" - which, without detailed argumentation, he identifies with the position of the Egyptian monks just cited. Where there appears to be a divergence, he argues, this is either because St. Chrysostom was talking to a significantly less pious and monastically oriented audience (the laity of Antioch and Constantinople, as opposed to the laity of Egypt), or because the holy hierarch "sugared the pill" of his harder statements, hiding them in the sub-text of his sermons... More likely, in the present writer's opinion, is that the views of the great hierarch simply developed with time, from the "realistic" position of the early *On Virginity* to the idealistic position of almost all his later writings.<sup>157</sup>

The attempt to justify marriage and procreation while condemning, however obliquely, sexual relations within marriage appears to involve an internal contradiction: it blesses procreation while "cursing" the God-given means to it, sexual relations. Is it likely that God would have blessed human procreation while cursing the only means towards it?

Sexuality can be only *theoretically* distinguished from procreation. Thus according to Troitsky, multiplication is the main theme of Genesis 1, and is an act of the species, as it were, which is why chapter 1 speaks of "male" and "female" rather than "man" and "woman". It is "the continuation of the creation of the animal world, having no relation to marriage and in general to anything that distinguishes it from the animals".<sup>158</sup> Marriage, on the other hand, which is the theme of Genesis 2, is personal and not necessarily linked to the continuation of the species. As such it is not found in the animals. It is therefore represented in chapter 2 as involving Adam and Eve as individual persons rather than "Adam" as the representative of the whole species collectively.

However, while sexuality and reproduction can in this way be distinguished in thought, in concrete reality they are inseparable. So we repeat: if the mixing of sexual pleasure with the propagation of the species is offensive to God, it is difficult to understand how the marital bed can be undefiled. When God blessed the end of procreation, He also blessed the means to that end, the marriage bed.

The heretics try to divorce the means from the end; they approve of the latter while disapproving of the former. But in this they blaspheme against the goodness of God. For they are implying that He "trapped" those who want children, and forced them to sin in order to become parents.

The Fathers are quite clear about the purity of sexual relations within marriage. Thus

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<sup>156</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>157</sup> This is also the view of Troitsky (*op. cit.*, p. 18, footnote 37).

<sup>158</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the words, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13.4), writes: "Marriage is pure".<sup>159</sup> Again, Blessed Theophylact comments on the same verse: "By 'in all' he means 'in every way' and 'in every season'".<sup>160</sup> And St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "The marriage bed does not contradict chastity if it will be holy and undefiled", that is, "every vice of unfaithfulness, open or secret (in the disposition of the heart) must be foreign to Christian marriage".<sup>161</sup> And St. John of Kronstadt says: "God... marries people and makes marriage honorable and the nuptial bed pure."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 30 on Hebrews*, P.G. 63:281 (col. 210).

<sup>160</sup> Bl. Theophylact, P.G. 125:756B (col. 389).

<sup>161</sup> St. Theophan, *op. cit.*, p. 618.

<sup>162</sup> St. John of Kronstadt, in Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, Pennsylvania State university Press, 2000, p. 46. The Church sings to St. Sergius of Radonezh: "Thy mother's womb was sanctified by thine honoured conception" (*Menaion*, July 5, Uncovering of the Relics of St. Sergius, Mattins, Canon, Ode V, troparion).

## Natural and Unnatural Modes of Procreation

There are further evil consequences of this Manichaeian doctrine. For if sexuality is evil even in marriage, the difference between sexual relations inside and outside marriage is abolished (we shall discuss this in greater detail later). Again, if the natural method of procreation is considered sinful, then the path is open to unnatural, but “purer” (from a Platonic-Manichaeian point of view) methods, such as in vitro fertilization, surrogate motherhood, stem cell research, or cloning. Which in turn opens the door to the creation of hybrid, half-human<sup>163</sup>, or “superhuman” species.

Modern man’s refusal seriously to discuss the moral consequences of these developments is illustrated by the remark of the Oxford Professor of Applied Ethics, Julian Savulescu, on the mass destruction of embryos through stem cell research: “We have voted with our feet on the moral status of the embryo. There are 100,000 abortions every year [in Britain], nearly all for social reasons. IVF, IUDs, the morning after pill and even some forms of oral contraception destroy embryos. The deaths of a handful [!] of embryos for life-saving research is not morally relevant in this context, in our society.”<sup>164</sup>

If the first half of the twentieth century was distinguished by an amazing increase in our knowledge of the physical world, the second half was distinguished by an even more amazing increase in our knowledge of the biological world, and especially the world of human genetics and human reproduction.

The vital break-through here was the discovery of DNA in 1953. Then came the introduction of the contraceptive pill, in vitro fertilization and surrogate motherhood. As one journalist put it: “First, contraception severed the connection between sex and reproduction. It became possible to have sex without having babies. Then modern technology severed the connection between reproduction and sex. It became possible to have babies without having sex.”<sup>165</sup>

The most alarming developments have been genetic manipulation and cloning. As early as 1976, the director of the Institute of Genetics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Academician N.P. Dubinin, was predicting the scale of this revolution: “The achievements of human genetics, and of general and molecular genetics, will push forward the problem of interference in human heredity. The coming revolution in genetics will demand a decisive overturning of the previously dominant view concerning the primacy of nature in its natural form. Genetics will turn out to be capable of overcoming the natural story of life and creating organic forms inconceivable in the light of the laws of natural evolution... For the molecular genetics and the molecular biology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there lies in store

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<sup>163</sup> See J. Bottom, “The Pig-Man Cometh”, *The Weekly Standard*, October 23, 2000; in *Orthodox Christian Witness*, June 5/18, 2000, pp. 2-4.

<sup>164</sup> Savulescu, in Michael Gross, “New cells for old?”, *Oxford Today*, vol. 17, 31, Michaelmas, 2004, p. 30.

<sup>165</sup> Anthony Daniels, “How far has humanity sunk when we treat the creation of life just like ordering a new car?”, *Daily Mail* (London), August 13, 2001, p. 12.

the prospect of creating cells as the only self-regulating open living system, which will be bound up with the understanding of the essence of life. An exchange of living forms will take place between the earth and other worlds... The aim of genetic engineering is the creation of organisms according to a given model, whose hereditary program is formed by means of introducing the recipient of new genetic information. This information can be artificially synthesized or separated in the form of natural genetic structures from various organisms. In this way a new single genetic system which cannot arise by means of natural evolution will be created experimentally... Various manipulations with DNA molecules can lead to the unforeseen creation of biologically dangerous hybrid forms... ”<sup>166</sup>

“We have to admit,” concludes Fr. Vladislav Sveshnikov, “that contemporary science is preparing the ground for the coming of the Antichrist”<sup>167</sup> by the manipulation of genes in order to produce the “superman” or “man-god” of Nietzsche’s imagination, who will be at the same time the “devil-man” or “Antichrist” of Christian patristic teaching.

As regards cloning, Fr. Michael Nedelsky has written: “Cloning is the technique of producing a genetically identical duplicate of an organism. In the case of human cloning, the nucleus of an adult cell is injected into an enucleated egg – meaning that the donor DNA replaces that in the egg – and then cell division is electronically. The result becomes a human embryo genetically identical to the donor. In the case of so-called ‘reproductive cloning’ (what kind of cloning is not reproductive?) the egg is implanted into a woman’s uterus to grow. Done successfully, it would result in the birth of an infant. In the case of the benign-sounding ‘therapeutic cloning’, the embryo is never implanted into the uterus. Instead, it is allowed to develop for a few days before a part is removed to provide stem cells – which have the unique potential to become almost any human cell and thus have potential for disease treatment – before the embryo is destroyed or, more accurately, killed. Reproductive cloning is currently opposed by nearly all responsible scientists – Clonaid not included – but therapeutic cloning has widespread support, based on the claim that it may provide a means to treatment and tissue replacement for a series of incurable ailments.

“Both techniques are sinister. Both produce life artificially. As Father Demetrius Demopoulos, who holds a Ph.D. in genetics, writes: ‘As an Orthodox Christian, I speak out in opposition to any attempt to clone a human being because humans are supposed to be created in acts of love between two people, not through the manipulation of cells in acts that are ultimately about self-love. Our actions should bring us together in Christ, not separate us into new and different classification.’ This manipulation of cells opens the door to ‘genetic enhancement’, an increased control over traits deemed desirable and the

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<sup>166</sup> Dubinin, *Obschaia Genetika* (General Genetics), Moscow: Nauka, 1976; quoted by Protopriest Vladislav Sveshnikov, “Rabota adova delaetsa uzhe” (“The Work of Hell is already being Done”), *Kontinent*, 71, 1992, pp. 270-271. Cf. Sergius Bufejev, “Pochemu pravoslavnij ne mozhet byt’ evoliutionistom” (“Why an Orthodox Christian cannot be an Evolutionist”), in Deacon Daniel Sysoev, *Shestodnev protiv evoliutsii* (The Six Days against Evolution), Moscow: “Palomnik”, 2000, pp. 267-269.

<sup>167</sup> Sveshnikov, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

elimination of those which are not. In other words, eugenics. This genetic manipulation is ultimately an act of cruelty, subjecting the embryo to the whims of scientists and, when resulting in birth, to unforeseen illness and danger. As Professor Leon Kass of the University of Chicago testified before Congress, cloning 'constitutes unethical experimentation on the child-to-be, subjecting him or her to enormous risks of bodily and developmental abnormalities. It threatens individuality... It confuses identity... It represents a giant step toward turning procreation into manufacture... And it is a radical form of parental despotism and child abuse'. So-called 'therapeutic cloning' is equally, if not more, inhuman. In the name of dubious medical evidence for miracle cures, it produces life only to destroy it. Legalizing it would in fact result in the first category of life which legally had to be killed. As Charles Krauthammer put it, it represents 'the most ghoulish and dangerous enterprise in modern scientific history: the creation of nascent cloned human life for the sole purpose of its exploitation and destruction'....

"Many of the moral consequences of cloning have already been suggested: the threat to the uniqueness of each life; the compromise of human identity; the violation of human dignity; even the potential for eugenic manipulation resulting in a tyrannical social structure of a genetically enhanced super class ruling a lower class of genetically 'inferior' men. Reproductive cloning opens the way for eugenics and designer babies, making children manufactured objects. The practical consequences lead to unheard of absurdities: the whole structure of the family is confused and overturned, with the potential of genetically identical parents and children. In fact, male cells are not needed in reproductive cloning, though the female ovum is paving the way for a world in which women can reproduced without men, of fatherless children. The act of consummating love which produces children could be made obsolete, making child-bearing completely asexual."<sup>168</sup>

It follows that any attempt to separate marriage from sexuality, or sexuality from reproduction, so that marriage is good only without sexuality, or that reproduction is permissible in a non-sexual way, must be condemned. This is not to *identify* sexuality with reproduction, nor is it to see the purpose of sexuality in reproduction alone. But it is to recognize the profound relationship between sexuality and fertility, and the wrongness of any attempt to separate the two.

It would be easier to draw the conclusion that the sole purpose of sexuality and marriage is the propagation of the race in the case of animals than of men. For, as St. Neilos the Ascetic writes, animals "become conscious of the difference between male and female only during one season of the year ordained by the law of nature for them to mate in, so as to propagate and continue their species. The rest of the year they keep away from one another as if they had altogether forgotten any such appetite. In men, on the other hand, as a result of the richness of their food, an insatiable desire for sexual pleasure has grown up, producing in them frenzied appetites which never allow this passion to be still."<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Nedelsky, "An Orthodox Christian Perspective on Human Cloning", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 52, № 6, November-December, 2002, pp. 19-20, 21.

<sup>169</sup> St. Neilos the Ascetic, "Ascetic Discourses," *The Philokalia*, vol. I, p. 247.

Sexuality understood in a broad sense to include what Scruton calls “gender”, that is, our perception of a whole range of phenomena in terms of masculinity and femininity, has a far wider influence on human life than animal sexuality has on animal life.<sup>170</sup>

This is partly because sexual passion in man is as much, if not more, a property of the soul as of the body. Thus Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) writes: “If purely physical sensations and needs are closely connected with the desires and moods of a person’s soul, then sexual life is far more closely connected with them. Why is it that desire, apparently so strong, will desert even the healthiest and youngest men when they are in deep grief or extremely worried or preoccupied by something? Thus it is not so much in the body, as in the soul.”<sup>171</sup>

Sexual passion is far less dependent on the state of the body in man than it is in animals. Although women have menstrual cycles, this is less significant in predicting sexual desire than in predicting reproductive fertility; and in general human beings do not “go on heat” in the way animals do. Sexual passion can lie dormant for long periods, then flare up at unexpected times, even at a time of life when the body may be considered to be “dead” to this kind of passion.

This would appear to indicate that while procreation is clearly one of the purposes of sexuality in man, it is not the only one. As Vladimir Soloviev writes: “Usually the meaning of sexual love is supposed to reside in the multiplication of the race, which it serves as a means. I consider this view wrong – not on the basis of any idealistic considerations, but first of all on the basis of natural historical factors. That the multiplication of living beings can take place without sexual love is clear already from the fact that it can take place without sexual differentiation. A significant part of the organisms both of the vegetable and of the animal kingdoms reproduce asexually: by division, by budding, by the

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<sup>170</sup> Thus Scruton quotes the anthropologist Margaret Mead: “In every known society, mankind has elaborated the biological division of labour into forms often very remotely related to the original biological differences that provided the original clues. Upon the contrast in bodily form and function men have built analogies between sun and moon, night and day, goodness and evil, strength and tenderness, steadfastness and fickleness, endurance and vulnerability...we know of no culture that has said, articulately, that there is no difference between men and women except in the way they contribute to the next generation.” And then he goes on: “Men and women develop separate characters, separate virtues, separate vices and separate roles.” And if this is somewhat exaggerated from a Christian point of view, we can nevertheless fully agree with the following: “The result of gender construction is that we perceive the Lebenswelt as subject to a great ontological divide. Not only is there an intentional distinction between person and thing, there is another between the masculine and the feminine, which is initially a distinction among persons. But this second ontological divide, while it takes its sense from our understanding of persons, is not confined to the personal realm. On the contrary, it reaches through all nature, presenting us with a masculine and a feminine in everything. A willow, a Corinthian column, a Chopin nocturne, a Gothic spire – in all these one may receive the embodied intimation of femininity, and someone who could not understand the possibility of this is someone with impoverished perceptions.” (*op. cit.*, pp. 266-267, 273)

<sup>171</sup> Khrapovitsky, *On Confession*, Jordanville, N.Y., 1996, p. 66.

spreading of spores, by grafting. True, the higher forms of both organic kingdoms multiply in a sexual way. But first of all, those organisms that multiply in this way, both plants, and partly also animals, *can* also multiply in an asexual way (grafting in plants, parthenogenesis in higher insects), and secondly, leave these examples to one side and accepting as a general rule that higher organisms multiply by means of sexual union, we must conclude that this sexual factor is linked, not with multiplication in general (which can take place without it), but with the multiplication of *higher* organisms. Consequently, we must seek for the meaning of sexual differentiation (and sexual love) not in the idea of the life of species and their multiplication, but only in the idea of the higher organism.

“We find a striking confirmation of this in the following great fact. In the boundaries of living beings that multiply exclusively in a sexual way (the vertebrates), the higher we climb on the ladder of organisms, the less the power of multiplication becomes, while the power of sexual attraction, on the contrary, becomes greater. In the lowest class of this section – in fish – multiplication takes place on a huge scale: the embryos begotten each year by each female are counted in the millions: these embryos are fertilized by the female outside her body, and the means by which this is done does not permit us to suppose a powerful sexual attraction. Of all the vertebrates this cold-blooded class undoubtedly multiplies more than all the rest and displays passionate love less than all the rest. On the next step – that of the amphibians and reptiles – multiplication is much less significant than with the fish...; but although they multiply less we find among these animals more frequent sexual relations... In birds the power of multiplication is much less not only by comparison with the fish, but by comparison, for example, with the frogs, while the sexual attraction and mutual attachment between the male and female reaches unheard of proportions in the two lower classes of development. In mammals multiplication is significantly weaker than in the birds, while sexual attraction, although less constant in the majority, is much more intensive. Finally, in man by comparison with the whole of the animal kingdom multiplication takes place to a small degree, while sexual love attains its greatest significance and highest power, uniting to an exceptional degree constancy of relations (as in the birds) with intensity of passion (as in the mammals). And so sexual love and the multiplication of the race are *inversely* related to each other: the stronger the one, the weaker the other.

“In general the whole animal kingdom develops in this respect as follows. At the bottom, a huge power of multiplication with a complete absence of anything similar to sexual love (with the absence of sexual differentiation itself); further up the ladder, in the more perfect organisms, there appears sexual differentiation and, corresponding to it, a certain sexual attraction – at the beginning extremely weak, then constantly increasing in the later stages of organic development in proportion as the power of multiplication decreases (that is, in direct proportion to the perfection of the organization and in inverse proportion to the power of multiplication), until finally, at the very top, in man, there is the strongest possible sexual love combined, even, with complete absence of multiplication. But if in this way, at the two ends of animal life, we find, on the one hand, multiplication without any sexual love, and on the other hand, sexual love without

multiplication, then it is absolutely clear that these two phenomena cannot be placed in inseparable connection with each other. It is clear that each of them has its own independent significance and that the meaning of the one cannot consist in being a means for the other.

“We get the same result if we examine sexual love exclusively in the world of man, where it acquires, to an incomparably greater degree than in the animal world, that individual character by dint of which *precisely this* person of the other sex has for the lover an absolute significance as the only and irreplaceable one, an end in and of herself.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Soloviev, “Smysl liubvi” (The Meaning of Love), *Sochinenia* (Works), Moscow, 1994, pp. 252-254.

## *The Bonds of the Family*

The sexual method of procreation has another important advantage over the asexual method: it strengthens the bonds uniting the human race. For the necessity of finding a mate in order to reproduce reinforces the interdependence of human beings, making them stronger (cf. Sirach 4.9-10). And the necessity of finding that mate outside the immediate family circle reinforces the wider unity of the human race, under circumstances in which all the fallen forces of human nature tend towards isolation and disunity.

For “in this way”, writes St. John Chrysostom, “God from the beginning contrived ten thousand ways of implanting [love] in us. Thus, first, He granted one head to all, Adam. For why do we not all spring out of the earth? Why not full grown, as he was? In order that both the birth and the bringing up of children, and the being born of another, might bind us mutually together. It was for this reason that He did not make woman out of the earth. And since the fact of our being of the same substance would not have been sufficient to shame us into unanimity, unless we had also the same progenitor, He provided also for us. For if now, being only separated by place, we consider ourselves alien from one another; much more would this have happened if our race had had two originals. For this reason, therefore, He bound together the whole body of the human race as it were from a single head. And since from the beginning they seemed to be two, see how He binds them together again, and gathers them into one by marriage. For ‘therefore’, saith He, ‘shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.’”

“Do you see how many bonds of love God has created? And these He has placed in us as pledges of concord by force of nature. For we are led to this both by our being of the same substance (for every animal loves its like), and by the fact that the woman is made from the man, and again by the fact that children are made from both. From this also many kinds of affection arise. For one we love as a father, another as a grandfather; one as a mother, another as a nurse; one as a son or great-grandson, and another as a daughter or grand-daughter; one as a brother, and another as a nephew; and one as a sister, and another as a niece. Why do we need to recount all the forms of consanguinity?

“And He devised another foundation of affection. For having forbidden the marriage of relations, He led us out to strangers and drew them again to us. For since it was not possible for them to be connected with us through natural kinship, He connected us again by marriage, uniting together whole families through the single person of the bride, and mingling entire races with races...”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on I Corinthians*, 5. And again: “Can you see now how close this union is, and how God providentially created it from a single nature? He permitted Adam to marry Eve, who was more than sister or daughter; she was his own flesh! God caused the entire human race to proceed from this one point of origin. He did not, on the one hand, fashion woman independently from the man; otherwise man would think of her as essentially different from himself. Nor did He enable woman to bear children without man; if this were the case she would be self-sufficient. Instead, just as the branches of a tree proceed

In another passage, boldly using explicit language without false shame, the same saint emphasizes again how the sexual origins of the family reinforce the interdependence of each member of it on every other, and how a child, coming into being only through the union of the father and mother, reinforces that original unity: "They come to be made into one body. See the mystery of love! If the two do not become one, they cannot increase; they can increase only by decreasing! How great is the strength of unity! God's ingenuity in the beginning divided one flesh into two; but he wanted to show that it remained one even after its division, so He made it impossible for either half to procreate without the other. Now do you see how great a mystery marriage is! From one man, Adam, He made Eve, then He reunited these two into one, so that their children would be produced from a single source. Likewise, husband and wife are not two, but one; if he is the head and she is the body, how can they be two? She was made from his side; so they are two halves of one organism. God calls her a 'helper' to demonstrate their unity, and He honors the unity of husband and wife above that of child and parents. A father rejoices to see his son or daughter marry; it is as if his child's body is becoming complete. Even though he spends so much money for his daughter's wedding, he would rather do that than see her remain unmarried, since then she would seem to be deprived of her own flesh. We are not sufficient unto ourselves in this life. How do they become one flesh? As if she were gold receiving the purest of gold, the woman receives the man's seed with rich pleasure, and within her it is nourished, cherished, and refined. It is mingled with her own substance and she then returns it as a child! The child is a bridge connecting mother to father, so the three become one flesh... That is why the Scripture does not say, 'They shall be one flesh', but that they shall be joined together 'into one flesh', namely the child. But supposing there is no child, do they then remain two and not one? No, their intercourse effects the joining of their bodies and they are made one, just as when perfume is mixed with ointment.

"I know that my words embarrass many of you, and the reason for your shame is your own wanton licentiousness. 'Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled' (Hebrews 13.4), yet you give marriage a bad name with your depraved celebrations. Why else would you be ashamed at what is honorable, or blush at what is undefiled? That is why I want to purify our wedding celebrations: to restore marriage to its due nobility and to silence those heretics who call it evil. God's gift is insulted. It is the

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from a single trunk, He made the one man Adam to be the origin of all mankind, both male and female, and made it impossible for men and women to be self-sufficient. Later, He forbade men to marry their sisters or daughters, so that our love would not be limited to members of our families, and withdrawn from the rest of the human race. All of this is implied in Christ's words: 'He Who made them from the beginning made them male and female' (Matthew 19.4)" (*Homily 20 on Ephesians*, 1; in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 44). Cf. St. Augustine: "Since each man is a part of the human race, and human nature is sociable, and also has friendship as a great and natural good, for this reason God willed to create all men out of one, in order that they might be held in their society not only by likeness of kind, but also by bond of kindred. Therefore the first natural bond of human society is man and wife. Nor did God create these each by himself, and join them together as alien by birth: but He created the one out of the other." (*On the Good of Marriage*, 1).

root of our very existence, and we smother it with dung and filth. So listen to me a little while longer. Remember that you can't cling to filth without picking up the stench. Some of you call my words immodest, because I speak of the nature of marriage, which is honorable... By calling my words immodest, you condemn God Who is the author of marriage..."<sup>174</sup>

And again he writes: "A man leaves his parents, who gave him life, and is joined to his wife, and one flesh – father, mother, and child – results from the commingling of the two. The child is born from the union of their seed, so the three become one flesh."<sup>175</sup>

"The family," writes the Russian religious philosopher Ivan Alexandrovich Ilyin, "is the first union, at once natural and sacred, into which man of necessity enters. He is called to build up this union on a foundation of love, faith, and freedom, to learn the first conscious movements of his heart in it; and to rise from it to those other forms of man's spiritual unity, the nation and the state.

"The family begins with marriage and is joined together in it. Man begins his life, however, in a family which he did not create, the family established by his father and mother, into which he enters just by being born, long before he becomes fully aware of himself and the world around him. He receives this family as a gift from fate. Marriage, by its very nature, is based on a choice and a decision, whereas a child does not get to choose or decide; its father and mother shape for their child, as it were, its foreordained fate, which the child cannot refuse or change; it can only accept what it is given and bear it for life. What will become of a man later in life is determined in childhood and by that very childhood. There are, of course, inclinations and gifts with which one is born, but early childhood determines the fate of these inclinations and gifts – whether they will be developed in time or will fade away, or, if they are to blossom, exactly how.

"For this reason the family is the primary nurturer of man's culture. All of us are formed in this medium, with all our possibilities, feelings, and desires; each of us remains a lifelong spiritual representative of his paternal-maternal family, a kind of living symbol of its familial spirit....

"Every true family arises out of love and brings man happiness. When marriage is entered into without love, there is only the external appearance of a family. When marriage does not bring man happiness, it does not fulfil its first function. Parents can teach their children love only if they themselves have known love in their marriage. Parents can give their children happiness only to the extent that they themselves have found happiness in marriage. A family which is held together by spiritual bonds of love and happiness is a school of emotional, healthy, balanced personality and creative initiative....

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<sup>174</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 12 on Colossians*; in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>175</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*; in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

“The chief condition for such family life is the capacity of parents for mutual spiritual love. Happiness comes only with deep and long-lasting love. This love is possible only in and through the spirit...”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ilyin, “On the Family”, *Orthodox Life*, November-December, 1996, pp. 7-8, 10, 11.

## 2. EROS IN THE FALL

*I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me.*  
Psalm 50.5.

*Our forefather Adam used his freedom to turn toward what was worse, and to direct his desire away from what had been permitted to what was forbidden. It was in his power to be united to the Lord and become one spirit with God or to join himself to a prostitute and become one body with her.*

St. Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua 7, P.G. 91: 1092C-D.

### Idealism and Realism

As we have seen, marriage originated in Paradise with Adam and Eve. Both the Old Testament (Genesis 2; Tobit 8.6-7) and the New ascribe the origins of marriage to God's word in Paradise. Particularly significant are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who in His teaching on marriage refers directly to the account of the creation of Adam and Eve in the first and second chapters of Genesis: "Ye have read, have ye not, that the One Who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'On account of this a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be into one flesh'? Therefore they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath yoked together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19.4-6; Mark 10.2-12). These words were confirmed as constituting the basis of marriage by the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 5.20-32). And they were confirmed again in the earliest Christian sources. Thus Clement of Alexandria speaks of "the grace of marriage" in Paradise<sup>177</sup>, and Tertullian writes: "Adam was the one husband of Eve, and Eve his one wife".<sup>178</sup> Among the later Fathers, St. John Chrysostom speaks especially eloquently and at length in confirmation of this teaching. And it is sealed by the Orthodox marriage service in several places.

Not only did marriage originate in Paradise: it was God Himself Who brought the bride and bridegroom together. For true marriages are, literally, made in heaven and accomplished by God. For "the wife is prepared for the husband (by God) from the ages" (Tobit 6.18), and "it is by the Lord that a man is matched with a woman" (Proverbs 19.14). St. John Chrysostom comments on this passage: "He means that God made marriage, and not that it is He that joins together *every* man that comes to be with a woman. For we see many that come to be with one another for evil, even by the law of marriage, and this we should not ascribe to God."<sup>179</sup>

According to this viewpoint, which, as we have seen, has been called by Troitsky the

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<sup>177</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, III, 4; P.G. 8, 1096

<sup>178</sup> Tertullian, *To his Wife*, 2.

<sup>179</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 23 on Romans*, 1.

*idealistic* approach to marriage, it is possible for the love between man and woman to be sexual and yet pure; the words “sexual” and “love” are not mutually exclusive, nor is “sexual love” to be equated with “lust”. Moreover, it is precisely the possibility of a pure sexual love that forms the basis for the comparison frequently made in Holy Scripture between the love of God for man, and of Christ for the Church, on the one hand, and the love of a husband for his wife, on the other. It affirms that since eros originated, not in the fall, but in Paradise, it is not a force that must be extirpated, but rather purified, redirected or “sublimated” (in a patristic, not Freudian sense), and that such a purification of the sexual impulse is possible in and through both marriage and monasticism.

The fall introduced important changes into marriage. But it is important to emphasize that the institution continued to be good. There is not the slightest hint in the Old Testament that any kind of stigma attached to the marriages of Noah or Job, Abraham or Moses, Isaiah or Ezekiel or Hosea. Rather, the blessed marriages of the Old Testament righteous, such as those between Isaac and Rebecca, and Boaz and Ruth, shine out like points of purity and joy amid the surrounding darkness. In them was the Scripture fulfilled: “In three things was I [Wisdom] beautified, and stood up beautiful before God and man: the unity of brethren, the love of neighbours, and a man and his wife ravished with each other” (Sirach 25.1).

We see this especially in the beautiful story of the wedding of Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 24). The initiative here came not from the spouses themselves, but from Isaac’s father Abraham, who was concerned that Isaac’s bride should not be from the unbelieving Canaanites, but from the chosen race, and from the servant of Abraham, who tested the virtue of Rebecca at the well. According to the spiritual interpretation, Abraham here represents God the Father, Who sends out the Holy Spirit to search for a fitting bride for His Son, the Church of Christ, while the jewels that the servant gives Rebecca after his choice of her represent the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the Church. But the story is also an allegory of how every true marriage is prepared. It is prepared by God Himself, Who brings the spouses together at exactly the time and place ordained by His Providence.

Moses recounts the (clearly sexual) “playing” of Isaac and Rebecca without disapproval (Genesis 26.8). Moreover, the Mosaic law enjoined upon a husband the *duty* of making his wife happy: “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife” (Deuteronomy 24.5). And Solomon says: “Let thy fountain of water be truly thine own, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let thy loving hart and thy graceful colt gambol with thee...; for, ravished with her love, thou shalt be greatly increased” (Proverbs 5.18-19).

On the latter verse St. Gregory the Theologian comments: “For man and wife the union of wedlock is a bolted door securing chastity and restraining desire. And it is a seal of natural affection. They possess the loving colt which cheers the heart by gambolling, and a single drink from their private fountain untasted by strangers, which neither flows

outwards, nor gathers its waters from without. Wholly united in the flesh, concordant in spirit, by love they sharpen in one another a like spur to piety..."<sup>180</sup>

Similarly, the whole of The Song of Songs is a paean to married love, and is filled with the most sensual erotic imagery. This eroticism, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, is a symbol of the love between God and the soul, between the Divine Bridegroom and the human bride. The same applies to several other passages in the Old and New Testaments (Hosea 2.19-20; Isaiah 54.5, 61.10; Ezekiel 16.8; Matthew 22.1-4, 25.1-13; John 3.29; Ephesians 5.32; II Corinthians 11.2; Revelation 19.7, 21.2). Thus Protopresbyter Michael Polsky writes: "In the book of The Song of Songs the love of God and the soul is portrayed with exceptional clarity in images of the king and the gardener, the master and the servant, the rich man and the poor woman, the white man and the black woman who, although beautiful, rises from the hut to the royal bridal chamber of her beloved. What is essentially valuable in The Song of Songs is the description of the most perfect, ideal and highest love for God of which the soul, the bride of God, is capable."<sup>181</sup>

Now the fact that these erotic passages are interpreted allegorically, to refer to the purely spiritual love between God and the soul, in no way annuls the more literal reading, but rather depends on it, in that something sinful could not be the image of the highest spiritual mystery. "After all," writes Serge Verkhovskoy, "no evil or superficial phenomenon could so clearly illustrated the perfect love God has for man. If to be a husband or wife is an obscene and degrading thing, then how can God and Christ be compared with the husband..., or the soul that is turned to God (and even the entire Church) be compared with the wife?"<sup>182</sup>

However, there is another powerful tradition in the patristic writings, which asserts that marriage was created in and for the fall, its aim being exclusively the procreation of children and the control of lust.

We have touched upon this tradition in the last chapter; it is called by Troitsky the *realistic* approach to marriage, and is represented by such Saints as Gregory of Nyssa in the East and Augustine of Hippo in the West. Neither the eastern nor the western forms of realism deny the goodness of marriage as such; but both see sexual desire and sexual pleasure, even in marriage, as inescapably involving some measure of sin.

The most influential variant of the realistic approach is to be found in St. Augustine, who teaches that matrimony is good, but only insofar as it fulfils munus matris, the duty of a mother, the duty of child-bearing. Sexual pleasure is a sin, albeit a venial one, which

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<sup>180</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *In Praise of Virginit*y, 11.263-75, translated in *Orthodox Life*, November-December, 1981.

<sup>181</sup> Polsky, "Kniga Pesn' Pesnej Solomona" (The Book of the Song of Songs of Solomon), *Pravoslavnij Put'* (The Orthodox Way), 1953, p. 93.

<sup>182</sup> Verkhovskoy, op. cit.

is “covered” by the good of child-bearing.<sup>183</sup> This view became increasingly dominant in the West<sup>184</sup>, and was probably the reason for the decisions of many Western councils to forbid the marriages of the clergy.<sup>185</sup> These decisions remained a dead letter throughout the Orthodox period<sup>186</sup>, but were savagely enforced after the fall of Orthodoxy in the West, especially by Pope Gregory VII and his successors.<sup>187</sup>

The Eastern Church, however, condemned the Roman practice at the Council in Trullo in 692: “Since we know it to be handed down as a rule of the Roman Church that those who are deemed worthy to be advanced to the diaconate or the priesthood should promise no longer to live with their wives, we, preserving the ancient and apostolic perfection and order, will that lawful marriages of men who are in holy orders be from this time forward firm, by no means dissolving their union with their wives, nor depriving them of their mutual intercourse at a convenient time... lest we should affect injuriously marriage constituted by God and blessed by His presence, as the Gospel saith: ‘What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder’; and the Apostle saith, ‘Marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled’; and again, ‘Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed’”.<sup>188</sup>

Protected by these conciliar decisions, Eastern realism avoided the extremes of the Western, papist variant. And if we consider only Eastern idealism and realism, we may ask: cannot these two approaches be reconciled, bearing in mind the possibly quite different definitions of marriage and different pastoral concerns of their proponents? The short answer to this is: yes, and a major purpose of this book is to show how such a

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<sup>183</sup> St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, 6.

<sup>184</sup> Thus towards the end of the sixth century St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, wrote to St. Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury: “Desire itself is not blameless. For David, who said: ‘behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me’, was not himself born of any illicit union, but in lawful wedlock. But knowing himself to have been conceived in iniquity, he grieved that he had been born in sin, like a tree bearing in its branches the sap of evil drawn up from the root. In saying this, he does not term the bodily union of married people iniquity, but the desire of such union. When lust takes the place of desire for children, the mere act of union becomes something that the pair have cause to regret.” (Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, London: Penguin, 1990, pp. 85-86).

<sup>185</sup> The earliest during the time of Pope Siricius, in the later fourth century.

<sup>186</sup> They were also rejected by some of the Popes, as for example, the last Greek Pope Zachariah (+752), in a letter to St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany (R. Emerson, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, New York: Octagon Books, 1973, p. 84).

<sup>187</sup> Thus we read of Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester (+1095) that “the sin of incontinence he abhorred, and approved continence in all men, and especially in clerks in holy orders. If he found one wholly given to chastity he took him to himself and loved him as a son. Wedded priests he brought under one edict, commanding them to renounce their fleshly desires or their churches. If they loved chastity, they would remain and be welcome: if they were the servants of bodily pleasures, they must go forth in disgrace. Some there were who chose rather to go without their churches than their women: and of these some wandered about till they starved; others sought and at last found some other provision...” (William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*).

<sup>188</sup> *Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 13*. Also, *Apostolic Canon 5* forbids clergy from abandoning their wives “under pretext of religion” and the Council of Gangra (c. 343) anathematizes (no less!) anyone who abstains from receiving Communion from a priest because he is married (Canon 4). The idea of forbidding the marriage of the clergy was first brought up at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, but was abandoned, as we have seen, after a speech in defence of married clergy by the (virgin) confessor Paphnutius.

reconciliation is possible. At the same time, it is necessary to state at the outset that in my opinion the deepest and truest approach to the mystery of marriage, and of Eros in general, is an idealistic one that includes the undoubted insights of the realists within its own broader perspective, showing that *it is in fact perfectly realistic to be idealistic* about marriage, because the idealistic tradition is not romanticism or hedonism, but truth.

One of the strongest arguments in favour of the realist position proceeds from the fact that Adam and Eve began ordinary sexual relations and the procreation of children only *after* the fall. Since marriage is defined as the one-flesh relationship established by sexual union (Matthew 19.6), it would seem to follow that marriage itself began only after the fall. However, this is true only if marriage is defined as union in one flesh *as we understand that union now*, in the conditions of the fall. But, as we have seen, Adam and Eve were *already* one flesh *before* the fall (albeit not as the result of sexual intercourse), and the act of sexual differentiation that is described in Genesis 2 was *already*, according to the sacred text, the foundation for the attraction between the sexes and the institution of marriage itself. As for procreation, that also took place already in Paradise, if the parthenogenesis of Eve is understood as a kind of giving birth.

So in a deeper sense Adam and Eve were already husband and wife before the fall, as the Orthodox marriage service and the general understanding of all mankind affirms. And their relationship after the fall was essentially a continuation of their relationship before the fall, but in the different conditions of the fallen world. As Troitsky writes: "The paradisaical church was not destroyed by sin, but continued to exist, and the family was precisely that island that was not finally overwhelmed by the waves of sin."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Troitsky, op. cit., p. 54.

## *Dominion in the Fall*

Satan approached Eve rather than Adam in Paradise, according to St. Augustine, because she was less intelligent and more credulous. But Adam was not deceived. So why did he succumb with her? Because of the “social bond” between them; “he did not want to be drawn away from their single life together (ab unico consortio).<sup>190</sup> As the poet John Milton put it in *Paradise Lost*: “How can I live without thee, how forgoe they sweet Converse and Love so dearly joyn’ d?”<sup>191</sup>

Eve’s fall consisted in disobedience to God’s command not to eat of the fruit. Since this command was conveyed to her through her husband, and she went over his head, as it were, in accepting the devil’s suggestion, his dominion over her was increased and sharpened: “Your yearning will be for your husband, and he will be your master” (Genesis 3.16). The woman is therefore subjected to the man in consequence of three facts: (i) that the woman was created after the man and for his sake, (ii) that she was deceived by the devil, while the man was not, and (iii) that her sin consisted, to some degree, in the desire to dominate the man. As St. Ephraim the Syrian writes, “she hastened to eat before her husband that she might become head over her head, that she might become the one to give command to that one by whom she was to be commanded and that she might be older in divinity than the one who was older than she in humanity.”<sup>192</sup>

The Apostle describes the effect of the fall on relations between the sexes as follows: “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (I Timothy 1.11-14). Wives are to be “discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2.5). “Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands,” writes the Apostle Peter; “that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conduct of the wives; while they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear” (I Peter 3.1-2).

“Equality,” says St. John Chrysostom, “is known to produce strife. Therefore God allowed the human race to be a monarchy, not a democracy. But the family is constructed in a similar way to an army, with the husband holding the rank of monarch, the wife as general and the children also given stations of command.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> St. Augustine, *On the City of God*, XIV, 11.

<sup>191</sup> Milton, *P.L.* IX, 908. C.S. Lewis comments: “The sudden transition whereby the Garden of Eden, never hitherto seen in the poem save as our heart’s desire, becomes ‘these wilder Woods forlorn’ is perhaps the finest expression of apprehended parting in any poem” (*A Preface to Paradise Lost*, New Delhi: Atlantic, 2012, p. 65).

<sup>192</sup> St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis*; quoted in Mitchell, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>193</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 34 on I Corinthians*, 7.

The devil tempted Eve in the guise of a serpent, writes St. Gregory Palamas, “in order to deprive the woman of her dignity and thereby subject her to inferior creatures which she, like Adam, had been worthily allotted to rule, honored by God Who created her with His Own hand and word, fashioning her after His Own image”.<sup>194</sup> As a result, writes St. Isidore of Pelusium, the woman’s dominion was “diminished and mutilated”, and she was made subject to the man in a stricter sense than before the fall.<sup>195</sup>

But did not the man sin too? Indeed. And so for his disobedience to *his* Head, Christ, and false obedience to his body, the woman, he is given a responsibility for her that is full of suffering: “And to Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and eaten of the tree concerning which I charged thee of it only not to eat – of that thou hast eaten, cursed is the ground in thy labours. In pain thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread until thou shalt return” (Genesis 3.18-20). Thus for his weakness of will and lack of true love for his wife, - for he could have saved her as well as himself by refusing to eat the fruit, - the man is condemned to work to support her and his family for the rest of his life, groaning not only under the physical burden, but also in anxiety of spirit. For “if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his house, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an infidel” (I Timothy 5.8).

However, in thus having to care for her, he will learn truly to love her: “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them” (Colossians 3.19). “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (I Peter 3.7). As Christopher Ely writes: “Because men have difficulty loving deeply, God gives them the primary responsibility of loving. Because Eve was led by her emotions to be disobedient, women’s chief obligation is to submit. The importance of love, however, to both man and wife, cannot be stressed enough.”<sup>196</sup>

The man has dominion directly, as it were, while the woman has it only indirectly and derivatively, through her union with him, or as being *his* image and likeness.<sup>197</sup> This distinction was implicit in the customs of ancient society, where an unmarried woman had no independent status and ruled nothing: it was only when she married that she entered into the rule of “other things”, as Blessed Theodoretus puts it – that is, her household and her children. Hence the custom in ancient Roman law of calling only a married couple “dominus” and “domina”.<sup>198</sup> In English the equivalents are “master” (Mr.) and “mistress”

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<sup>194</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, P.G. 60:474; in Azkoul, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>195</sup> St. Isidore of Pelusium, *Letters* 3, 95; P.G. 78: 801.

<sup>196</sup> Ely, “God, Man and Woman”, *Living Orthodoxy*, #134, vol. XXIII, no. 2, March-April, 2003, p. 19.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria: “The woman is made in the image and likeness of the man (that is, Adam), not alien to him, but rather of the same nature and form; and this our ancestor Adam himself clearly acknowledges, saying, ‘This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh’, and so forth.” (*Commentary on I Corinthians* 11, P.G. 74, pp. 879-882; quoted in Mitchell, op. cit., p. 29)

<sup>198</sup> Troitsky, op. cit., p. 174.

(Mrs.); and in Greek - "kyrios" and "kyria".<sup>199</sup>

However, there was an exception to this rule - when a woman became ruler of the empire in her own, and not her husband's right. But the exception proved the rule, for when the Empress Irene, for example, entered into possession of the empire, the Byzantine documents gave her the title *basileus*, "emperor", rather than *basilissa*, "empress". They thereby demonstrated that they could not conceive of the master of the inhabited world being a woman. It was the same in Georgia. When St. Tamara was declared co-ruler of Georgia at the age of 12, "the Georgian Church and chronicles commemorate her as a king - 'King Tamara'".<sup>200</sup> Moreover, "for certain western contemporaries [notably, Charlemagne]," as Judith Herrin writes, "it was the absence of a male ruler in Constantinople which meant that the imperial title could legitimately be claimed by another. For these writers, the title in question was the one previously held by Constantine VI [the son of Irene], whose blinding disqualified him. They refused to consider the imperial claims of Irene as *basileus*, for how could a woman be emperor?"<sup>201</sup>

A still greater exception is the Holy Virgin, who is called "Lady" (Δεσποίνα), according to St. Gregory Palamas, "because she has the mastery of all things, having divinely conceived and borne in virginity the Master of all by nature. Yet she is the Lady not just because she is free from servitude and a partaker of the divine power, but because she is the fount and root of the freedom of the human race, especially after the ineffable and joyful Birth. A married woman is ruled over rather than being a lady, especially after her sorrowful and painful childbirth, in accordance with the curse on Eve: 'In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee' (Genesis 3.16). Freeing the human race, the Virgin Mother received through the angel joy and blessing instead of this curse."<sup>202</sup>

The Mother of God is called "Sovereign Lady" in all the litanies of the Church. As St. John of Kronstadt writes: "The Virgin Mary is the most merciful sovereign of all the sons and daughters of men". And yet, of course, the Holy Virgin is mistress of the whole of creation only through her perfect submission to her Master, Christ God; so the pattern of man's dominion over woman remains intact, although in her case it is a dominion of completely free submission without a hint of compulsion, of *domination*.

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<sup>199</sup> The same meaning is implicit in the use of crowns in the Christian marriage service. As Fr. Valery Lukianov writes, "the crowns - token of royal power - are bestowed upon the bridal pair as a blessing when they are to become masters, so to speak, of a new generation." ("The Symbolism of Holy Matrimony", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 21, № 2, March-April, 1971, p. 35). He goes on: "The crowns also recall the crowns with which the 'martyrs', or witnesses of Christ, are crowned in heaven. As in ancient times they adorned the heads of conquerors, so now the crowns are placed on the heads of the bridal pair as a reward for their chastity prior to marriage".

<sup>200</sup> "Holy Righteous Queen Tamara of Georgia", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 53, № 2, March-April, 2003, p. 8.

<sup>201</sup> Herrin, *Women in Purple*, London: Phoenix, 2001, p. 121.

<sup>202</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 14 on the Annunciation*, 8.

In fact the only real exception to this pattern of the man's dominion over the woman is in sexual relations: "the wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one another..." (I Corinthians 7.4-5). In other words, the husband is the master of his wife in all things *except* sexual relations. The husband cannot refuse his wife sexual relations because his body is hers, and vice-versa. In this sphere there is complete equality. For sexual relations between husband and wife are the expression of their essential unity of nature, of the fact that the woman came from the man and is now returning to unity with him as it was in the beginning, before the differentiation of the sexes, not only spiritually but also physically.

While love does not abolish dominion and hierarchy entirely, it nevertheless puts them in the shade, as it were, making them secondary aspects of the relationship. When the fall dominates in the relations between men and women, so does the domination of man over woman (or the reverse). But when the fall is reversed, - and a true, Christian marriage is, at least in part, a reversal of the fall, - then love, "the bond of perfection", takes the place of domination, and humility - of humiliation. Or we could say that they both become lords. For, as St. Basil the Great says, addressing the woman: "Look, you have become like God in your kindness, patience, obedience and love for your brother and neighbour. You hate evil and suppress your sinful passions, so as to acquire the right to dominion..."<sup>203</sup>

The man is the lord of the woman (I Peter 3.6), and she is "the weaker vessel" (I Peter 3.7); but he is meant to "give honour" to her, and not "lord it" over her. For love "does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up" (I Corinthians 13.4). In this the great example, as always, is Christ, Who "thought it not robbery to be equal to God," but for love's sake cast aside His hierarchical dominion, "made Himself of no repute, and took upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man" (Philippians 2.6,7).

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<sup>203</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron*, 10.18.

## *The Garments of Skin*

The challenge for the theologian of eros in the fall is to explain both the good and the evil, avoiding both the Scylla of denying the good (the Platonist-Manichaean tradition) and the Charybdis of underestimating the evil (the naturalist-hedonist tradition).

To this end it is necessary first of all to study the effects of the fall on human sexuality in a very down-to-earth manner.

The first consequence of the fall was the feeling of *shame*. We read in Genesis: *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons* (3.7-8). Adam and Eve felt shame because the garment of grace that had enwrapped them before the fall had been removed. This garment of grace was “that glory from above”, in St. John Chrysostom’s words, “which caused them no shame. But after the breaking of the law, there came upon the scene both shame and awareness of their nakedness.”<sup>204</sup>

Now the original sin was not sexual, but spiritual. It consisted in Eve’s proud disregard of the commandment of God and adherence to the lying word of the serpent. For “the beginning of sin is pride” (Sirach 10.13), not lust. As St. John Chrysostom says, “[Pride is] the root and the source and the mother of sin”.<sup>205</sup>

Nevertheless, together with pride there was a sensual element in the original sin – Eve’s failure to restrain her desire for the fruit. And this sensual element, the element of gluttony, passed over immediately into sexual lust. The causal relationship between gluttony (and drunkenness) and lust is mentioned by the Apostle Paul: “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (I Corinthians 10.7). It is also often noted in secular literature.<sup>206</sup>

As St. Diadochus of Photike writes: “So long as she [Eve] did not look with longing at the forbidden tree, she was able to keep God’s commandment carefully in mind; she was still covered by the wings of divine love and thus was ignorant of her own nakedness. But after she had looked at the tree with longing, touched it with ardent desire and then tasted

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<sup>204</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 15 on Genesis*, 14. We are baptized naked to remind us of our former innocence and because through baptism we return to the condition before the fall. As he same Holy Father writes: “[The priest] reminds you of your former nakedness, when you were in Paradise and you were not ashamed. For Holy Scripture says, ‘Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed,’ until they took up the garment of sin, a garment heavy with abundant shame” (*Baptismal Instructions*, 11, 28).

<sup>205</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 9 on John*, 2. Again, St. Augustine writes: “the first fall of man was self-love” (*Sermon 96*, II, 2). As St. Gregory the Wonderworker writes: “Eve, dancing alone in Paradise, with her intellect in a state of indolence, feebleness and stupor” accepted the words of the devil without much attention, and thus “the wisdom of the intellect was corrupted”. The devil introduced death into the world through the intellect” (*Homily 1*, *Bepes* 17, 351, in Nikolaos Vassiliadis, *The Mystery of Death*, Athens: Sotir, 1997, p. 89).

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 803:

*Love surfeits not: Lust like a glutton dies.  
Love is all truth: Lust full of forged lies.*

its fruit with active sensuality, she at once felt drawn to physical intercourse and, being naked, she gave way to her passion.”<sup>207</sup>

Again, according to St. Augustine, it was when Adam and Eve realized that they were naked that they first experienced lust. For “the rational soul blushed at the bestial movement in the members of the flesh with shame, not only because it felt that where it had never before sensed anything similar, but also because that shameful movement came from the transgression of the commandment. For it then realized with what grace it had previously been clothed when it suffered nothing indecent in its nakedness. Finally, with that disturbance they ran to the fig-leaves. For since they had forgotten things to be gloried in (*glorianda*), they now covered things meet to be ashamed of (*puđenda*).”<sup>208</sup>

However, God soon replaced the fig-leaves with *the garments of skin*. (3.22). Now skin is *dead*, and garments of skin can only be obtained by the killing of an animal. Therefore “by a garment of this kind,” writes the Venerable Bede, “the Lord signifies that they had now been made mortal – the skins contain a figure of death because they cannot be drawn off without the death of the animal”.<sup>209</sup> And why, asks St. Ephraim, “would animals have been killed in their presence? Perhaps this happened so that by the animal’s flesh Adam and Eve might nourish their own bodies and that with the skins they might cover their nakedness, but also that by the death of the animals Adam and Eve might see the death of their own bodies.”<sup>210</sup>

Thus the spiritual death of man through sin led to the killing of an animal, the first physical death in creation. This dead animality, in the form of animal skins, is then placed on man like an outer garment. But not simply placed *on* him: it enters *into* him, corrupting and coarsening his whole psycho-physical nature. It takes hold of his natural faculties and turns them into something different, what we call *the passions*. Thus St. Gregory Palamas writes: “Through this sin we have put on the garments of skin... and changed our abode to this transient and perishable world, and we have condemned ourselves to live a life full of passions and many misfortunes”.<sup>211</sup>

There are three kinds of death: (i) spiritual death, the separation of the Holy Spirit from the soul (and hence, as we have seen, the loss of the likeness of God), (ii) physical death, the separation of the soul from the body, which comes later than spiritual death, but is an

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<sup>207</sup> St. Diadochus, “On Spiritual Knowledge”, 56; in *The Philokalia*, vol. I, London: Faber, 1983, p. 269. Another translation of this passage: “When she found the tree appealing and was touched with a great desire for it, and subsequently tasted its fruits with such active delight, she immediately realized that she was naked, because of a fleshly disposition towards bodily intercourse. Her desire being wholly given over to passion, she surrendered herself to the enjoyment of the present world, entangling Adam in her fall to the appealing taste and look of the fruit” (*The Evergetinos*, Book I, Hypothesis XIII, Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2009, volume 1, p. 110).

<sup>208</sup> St. Augustine, *On Genesis according to the letter*, XI, 32.

<sup>209</sup> The Venerable Bede, *On Genesis*, I, 3.22.

<sup>210</sup> St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2.33.1.

<sup>211</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 31*, P.G. 151:388C; quoted in Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

ineluctable consequence of it, and (iii) eternal death, the fixed and unchangeable abiding of a man in spiritual death after the resurrection of the body to damnation (John 5.29).<sup>212</sup>

St. Gregory of Nyssa compares this fallen life, or spiritual death, to “animals turning the mill”: “With our eyes blindfolded we walk round the mill of life, always treading the same circular path and returning to the same things. Let me spell out this circular path: appetite, satiety, sleep, waking up, emptiness, fullness. From the former of each pair we constantly pass to the latter, and back again to the former, and then back again to the latter, and we never cease to go round in a circle.... Solomon well describes this life as a leaking pitcher and an alien house (Ecclesiastes 12.6)... Do you see how men draw up for themselves honors, power, fame and all such things? But what is put in flows out again below and does not remain in the container. We are always consumed with anxious concern for fame and power and honor, but the pitcher of desire remains unfilled.”<sup>213</sup>

Sexual desire, like hunger, sleepiness and all the other passions are fallen because they all belong to “the pitcher of desire” that “remains forever unfilled”. For fallen man, like the prodigal son, is forced to try and satisfy his hunger from the husks of the constantly changing and delusive world of fallen nature – a diet that only seems to nourish, but ends by making him hungrier than ever. It was not like that in Paradise, where man’s unfallen nature did not need corruptible food, but was constantly feasting on the incorruptible food provided by God Himself.

Thus St. Gregory writes: “When we have put off that dead and ugly garment which was made for us from irrational skins (when I hear ‘skins’ I interpret it as the form of the irrational nature that we have put on from our association with passion), we throw off every part of our irrational skin along with the removal of the garment. These are the things which we have received from the irrational skin: sexual intercourse, conception, childbearing, dirt, lactation, nourishment, evacuation, gradual growth to maturity, the prime of life, old age, disease and death.”<sup>214</sup>

According to St. Gregory, the garments of skin, though the consequence of sin, are intended to turn us away from sin in two ways. The first way was delineated originally by Origen. Jean Daniélou writes: “In his work *On the Dead* [St. Gregory] explains that ‘the

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<sup>212</sup> For this distinction, see Chrestos Androustos, *Dogmatiki tis orthodoxou anatolikis Ekklesias* (The Dogmatics of the Orthodox Eastern Church), Athens, 1907, p. 164.

<sup>213</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Funeral Oration on Placilla*, P.G. 46:888D-889A; quoted in Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>214</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection*, chapter 10; translated by Catherine Roth, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, p. 114. It may be surprising to think of “gradual growth” as a consequence of the fall. But St. Ephraim the Syrian writes that in Paradise “just as the trees, the vegetation, the animals, the birds and even humankind were old, so also were they young. They were old according to the appearance of their limbs and their substances, yet they were young because of the hour and moment of their creation. Likewise, the moon was both old and young. It was young, for it was but a moment old, but was also old, for it was full as it is on the fifteenth day” (*Commentary on Genesis*, 1.24.1). Thus while there might be moral development in Paradise, there was no physical development or ageing. That came only as a result of the fall.

garment of skin' allows man to turn back again freely to God: since man had despised the life of the spirit for carnal pleasure, God did not wish man 'to withdraw from sin unwillingly and be forced by necessity towards the good', for this would have destroyed man's freedom and the image of God within him. Hence He made use of man's very tendency by giving him the 'garment of skin'. This would cause man to experience a disgust with the things of the world, and thus 'he would willingly desire to return to his former blessedness'.

"In the *Great Catechetical Discourse* Gregory puts forward the second reason for the 'garment of skin', which derives not from Origen but from St. Athanasius. The idea is that the 'garment of skin', our present state of mortality, permits the bodily part of man to be destroyed; but since evil is so closely bound up with the body, evil too is destroyed, and thus man can be restored to his original innocence. Man's body returns to earth like a vase of baked clay; thus the evil that was mingled with his body is now released, and the divine Potter can raise him up once more to his original beauty. Thus the 'garment of skin', though really foreign to human nature, was only given to man by a solicitous providence, as by a doctor giving us a medicine to cure our inclination to evil without its being intended to last forever.

"In answer to the question whether man was created without the 'garment of skin' (that is, without mortality and all the things that sex implies), Gregory gives one answer in his work *On the Creation of Man*: 'The grace of the resurrection is the restoration of fallen man to his primitive state'. But in another passage in *On the Creation of Man* he puts forward another hypothesis, 'as a kind of exercise'. Here he suggests that God in His foreknowledge knew that man would abuse his freedom and would fall; and hence 'seeing that man by his sin had fallen from his blessed angelic state, God established a way by which the human race could be propagated in accordance with our nature; thus the total number of human souls would not be deficient, even though man had now lost the method of propagation by which the angelic hosts had multiplied.' On this view (which is the one most important to us), God would have created man from the beginning with a mortal body through His foreknowledge of man's sin.

"It is against the background of this doctrine that Gregory explains the two accounts in Genesis of the creation of man. Philo had already detected in Genesis two stages in man's creation: in the first account, man, the first-born, is created in God's image as the pre-existent archetype of the intelligible world; in the second, man, created as man and female, is man as he actually appears on earth... In man created in God's image he sees the pre-existence of human nature in the perfection of the divine foreknowledge - such as it will be only at the end of time. Thus for Gregory, man created as male and female though first in the order of time is only second in the order of intention..."<sup>215</sup>

St. Maximus the Confessor develops some of St. Gregory's ideas. Thus he describes this

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<sup>215</sup> Daniélou, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-14.

cyclical alteration of desire and fear, pleasure and pain as follows: “When God created human nature, he did not create sensible pleasure and pain along with it; rather, he furnished it with a certain spiritual capacity for pleasure, a pleasure whereby human beings would be able to enjoy God ineffably.<sup>216</sup> But at the instant he was created, the first man, by the use of his senses, squandered this spiritual capacity – the natural desire of the mind for God – on sensible things. In this, his very first movement, he activated an unnatural pleasure through the medium of the senses. Being, in His providence, concerned for our salvation, God therefore affixed pain (οδυνη) alongside this sensible pleasure (ηδονη) as a kind of punitive faculty, whereby the law of death was wisely planted in our corporeal nature to curb the foolish mind in its desire to incline unnaturally toward sensible things.<sup>217</sup>

“Henceforth, because irrational pleasure entered human nature, pain entered our nature opposite this pleasure in accordance with reason, and, through the many sufferings (παθηματα) in which and from which death occurs, pain uproots unnatural pleasure, but does not completely destroy it, whereby, then, the grace of the divine pleasure of the mind is naturally exalted. For every suffering (πονος), effectively having pleasure as its primary cause, is quite naturally, in view of its cause, a penalty exacted from all who share in human nature. Indeed, such suffering invariably accompanies unnatural pleasure in everyone for whom the law of pleasure, itself having no prior cause, has preconditioned their birth. By that I mean that the pleasure stemming from the original transgression was ‘uncaused’ insofar as it quite obviously did not follow upon an antecedent suffering.

“After the transgression pleasure naturally preconditioned the births of all human beings, and no one at all was by nature free from birth subject to the passion associated with this pleasure; rather, everyone was requited with sufferings, and subsequent death, as the natural punishment. The way to freedom is hard for all who were tyrannized by unrighteous pleasure and naturally subject to just sufferings and to the thoroughly just death accompanying them.”<sup>218</sup>

In spite of this, some of the passions – what are called the innocent passions – are necessary for survival in life after the fall. For, as St. John Chrysostom says, after the fall God “refashioned” the human body, which was “originally superior to what it is not”, so that it would be useful to us in our new situation.<sup>219</sup> This is most obvious with hunger and sleep. If man did not feel hunger or weariness, he would not eat or rest and would waste away; for death, the first result of the fall, constantly erodes the strength of man from

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<sup>216</sup> Since, according to St. Maximus, pleasure is defined as “that for which we naturally strive” (*Ambigua* 7, P.G. 91: 1088D), some kind of pleasure was present in us even before the fall. But this was a spiritual pleasure, a pleasure in God rather than in sensible things. (V.M.)

<sup>217</sup> There is a pun here on the words “pain” and “pleasure”, οδυνη and ηδονη, which sound similar in Greek. (V.M.)

<sup>218</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, 61; translated by Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: St. Maximus the Confessor*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003, pp. 131-133.

<sup>219</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On the Statues*, 11, 4; P.G. 49:125; in Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

within, necessitating his restoration through food and sleep. It is also obvious in the case of sexual desire, which, while not necessary for the life of the individual, is necessary for the survival of the species as a whole. As St. Symeon of Thessalonica writes, marriage “is permitted because of the death that follows the disobedience, in order that, until the life [ζωη] and immortality that is through Christ should come, this present corrupt life [βιος] should remain.”<sup>220</sup>

Moreover, sexual desire not only stimulates the act that propagates the species. It is also an important factor in cementing the bond between the father and mother far beyond the duration of the sexual act (in human beings desire lasts longer, and fluctuates less, than in animals). The family unit in turn is the building block of the State (and the Church), which provides other essential survival functions.

It is not only these “crude” passions that have this dual character, both positive and negative, in the fall. Thus Nellas writes, interpreting Saints Gregory the Theologian and Maximus the Confessor: “Learning and work, in particular, constitute a coarsening, so to speak, of the original natural properties of wisdom and lordship over nature which man possessed as an image of God. They constitute an expression and function of these properties in material dress. Their aim when properly used was to lead man, and with him the world, towards God. But with sin they became imprisoned in the corrupt biological cycle, and they were coarsened and transformed into ‘garments of skin’.

“The same is true, to mention one more example, with regard to the deep and natural communion between persons which existed before the fall. (We have seen that a fundamental dimension of man’s being ‘in the image’ is that he constitutes at the same time both person and nature.) With the decline of man into individuality this communion was corrupted and shattered, and consequently in order to survive socially human beings needed some external organization, that is to say, they needed the city and, by extension, political life.

“The laborious cultivation of the soil, then, the professions, the sciences, the arts, politics, all the operations and functions by which man lives in this world, make up the content of the ‘garments of skin’ and bear the two-fold character which we have discussed above. On the one hand they are a consequence of sin and constitute a misuse of various aspects of our creation ‘in the image’. On the other they are a result of the wise and compassionate intervention of God and constitute the new clothing thanks to which human beings are able to live under the new conditions created by the fall.”<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Περί του τιμου νομιμου γαμου* (On Honourable and Lawful Marriage), P.G. 155:504C. As a modern novelist has written: “Those burning Romantic poets weren’t wrong. Sex and death belong together, joined in our imaginations as they are in our DNA. Sex and death are our original parents. For some of us, the only family we’ll ever have.” (Jeanette Winterson, *The Power Book*, London: Vintage, 2001, p. 176).

<sup>221</sup> Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

Thus, as St. Isaac the Syrian writes: "All existing passions are given for the support of each of the natures to which they belong naturally and for whose growth they were given by God. The bodily passions are placed in the body by God for its support and growth; the passions of the soul, that is, the soul's powers, [are placed there] for the growth and support of the soul." But the fall has made each set of passions, though natural in themselves, opposed to each other. And so "when the body is constrained to go out from its passibility by abstaining from the passions in favour of the soul it is injured. Likewise, when the soul leaves what is its own and cleaves to that which is of the body it is injured."<sup>222</sup>

So even in the fall, even in the act of clothing us with the garment of the fallen passions, God in His Providence mixed mercy with punishment, life with death. Just as He mixed the pain of childbirth for Eve with the promise that she would give birth to the Redeemer Who would crush the head of the serpent...

Moreover, even death for the individual is a good, in that it cuts off sin, and by dissolving the body into its constituent elements gives the hope of their eventual reassembling, free of any admixture of evil, at the general resurrection. Thus St. Theophilus of Antioch writes: "God showed great beneficence to man because He did not leave him in sin unto the ages... For just as a vessel that has been made with a flaw is melted down or remolded to become new and whole, the same thing happens to man by death. For he is broken into pieces that he may rise whole in the resurrection; I mean spotless and righteous and immortal."<sup>223</sup>

In other words, physical death gives us a chance to be remade, and avoid eternal death.

Thus in the longer term physical death is a good; but in the shorter term, during the course of our earthly life, it is both evil in itself and one of the causes of our committing further evil, both because it impairs the good working of the brain and its ability to resist the machinations of the demons, and because it engenders the fear of death and the love of pleasure, the supposed antidote to death, in the soul.

As Fr. John Romanides writes: "In the first place, the deprivation of divine grace impairs the mental powers of the newborn infant; thus, the mind of man has a tendency toward evil from the beginning. This tendency grows strong when the ruling force of corruption becomes perceptible in the body. Through the power of death and the devil, sin that reigns in man gives rise to fear and anxiety and to the general instinct of self-preservation or survival. Thus, Satan manipulates man's fear and his desire for self-satisfaction, raising up

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<sup>222</sup> St. Isaac the Syrian, *On the Ascetical Life*, III, 8.

<sup>223</sup> St. Theophilus, *To Autolytus*, 2, 26. And St. Irenaeus writes: "He set a boundary to the sin of man, interposing death, and thus causing the end of sin, putting an end to it by the dissolution of the flesh in the earth so that man, ceasing to live unto sin and dying to it, might begin to live unto God" (*Refutation*, 3, XXVII, 6). Quoted in Romanides, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100. See also St. Ambrose's discourse, *On the Good of Death*.

sin in him, in other words, transgression against the divine will regarding unselfish love, and provoking man to stray from his original destiny. Since weakness is cause in the flesh by death, Satan moves man to countless passions and leads him to devious thoughts, actions, and selfish relations with God as well as with his fellow man. Sin reigns both in death (Romans 5.21) and in the mortal body (Romans 6.20) because 'the sting of death is sin' (I Corinthians 15.56).

"Because of death, man must first attend to the necessities of life in order to stay alive. In this struggle, self-interests are unavoidable. Thus, man is unable to live in accordance with his original destiny of unselfish love. This state of subjection under the reign of death is the root of man's weaknesses in which he becomes entangled in sin at the urging of the demons and by his own consent. Resting in the hands of the devil, the power of the fear of death is the root from which self-aggrandizement, egotism, hatred, envy, and other similar passions spring up. In addition to the fact that man 'subjects himself to anything in order to avoid dying' [St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary 4 on Hebrews*, 6; P.G. 43:61], he constantly fears that his life is without meaning. Thus, he strives to demonstrate to himself and to others that it has worth. He loves flatterers and hates his detractors. He seeks his own and hates those who hate him. He seeks security and happiness in wealth, glory, bodily pleasures, and he may even imagine that his destiny is a self-seeking eudaemonistic and passionless enjoyment of the presence of God regardless of whether or not he has true, active, unselfish love for others. Fear and anxiety render man an individualist. And when he identifies himself with a communal or social ideology it, too, is out of individualistic, self-seeking motives because he perceives his self-satisfaction and *eudaemonia* as his destiny. Indeed, it is possible for him to be moved by ideological principles of vague love for mankind despite the fact that mortal hatred for his neighbor rests in his heart. These are the works of the 'flesh', under the sway of death and Satan."<sup>224</sup>

St. Methodius of Olympus raises the question whether the "garments of skin" are bodies as such. He replies in the negative, referring to the verses in which Adam calls Eve "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh". For here, "before the preparation of these coats of skin, the first man himself acknowledges that he has both bones and flesh".<sup>225</sup> The "garments of skin", therefore, are not the body as such, but "the body of this death", to use St. Paul's phrase (Romans 7.24).

"By which he does not mean," writes St. Photius the Great, interpreting St. Methodius' thought, "that the body is death, but the law of sin which is in his members, lying hidden in his members, lying hidden in us through the transgression, and ever deluding the soul to the death of unrighteousness.... [The apostle] says not that this body was death, but the sin which dwells in the body through lust..."<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Romanides, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-164. The fact that I have quoted Romanides in no way implies approval of his heretical system of thought. See [https://www.academia.edu/10182823/AGAINST\\_ROMANIDES](https://www.academia.edu/10182823/AGAINST_ROMANIDES).

<sup>225</sup> St. Methodius of Olympus, *Discourse on the Resurrection*, 2.

<sup>226</sup> St. Photius the Great, *A Synopsis of some Apostolic Words from the same Discourse* [on the Resurrection by St. Methodius of Olympus], 3.

But if the garments of skin do not signify the body as such, they do signify a new state of the body, its mortality and its grossness. "Man," writes St. John of Damascus, "was ensnared by the assault of the arch-fiend, and broke his Creator's command, and was stripped of grace and put off his confidence with God, and covered himself with the asperities of a toilsome life (for this is the meaning of the fig-leaves), and was clothed about with death, that is, mortality and the grossness of the flesh (for that is what the garment of skins signifies)." <sup>227</sup>

Again, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov writes, "the garments of skin signify our coarse flesh, which changed after the Fall, losing its subtlety and spirituality and receiving its present grossness." <sup>228</sup>

Since the fall, bodies have acquired a mutual impenetrability, and so can harm and destroy each other. Vladimir Soloviev defines the main characteristic of our fallen world as "a dual impenetrability: 1) impenetrability *in time*, by dint of which every succeeding moment of existence does not preserve the preceding one in existence, but excludes or squeezes it out by itself, so that every new thing in the world of matter takes place at the cost of the preceding one or by harming it, and 2) impenetrability *in space*, by dint of which two parts of matter (two bodies) cannot occupy one and the same place, that is, one and the same part of space, at the same time, but the one necessarily squeezes out the other. Thus that which lies at the base of our world is existence in a condition of *disintegration*, existence divided up into parts and moments that mutually exclude each other." <sup>229</sup>

Impenetrability in time is expressed in aging, disease, failure of memory and death, impenetrability in space - in the fact that bodies can no longer intermingle as they did before the fall. Thus if marriage, the union in one flesh, is to continue after the fall, it has to take on a different character owing to the changed nature of human bodies. Since the bodies of Adam and Eve cannot now interpenetrate effortlessly as before, union is possible only through a specific physiological mechanism and with specific physical consequences - the loss of seed, on the one side, and the loss of virginity, on the other. And penetration has to be powered, as it were, by a specific new force - sexual desire. "The garments of skin", therefore, signify the new condition of man's body, its impenetrability in time and space, and all the consequences for his life that flow from that. These have been superimposed, as it were, on the original, sinless nature of man.

For, as St. Ignaty Brianchaninov writes: "In our human nature good is mixed with evil. The evil that was introduced into man was so mixed up and merged with man's native

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<sup>227</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, III, 1.

<sup>228</sup> St. Ignaty, "Slovo o chuvstvennom i o dukhovnom videnii dukhov" ("A Word on the Sensual and Spiritual Vision of Spirits"), *Sochinenia Episkopa Ignatia Brianchaninova* (The Works of Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov), St. Petersburg, 1905, vol. 3, pp. 10-11

<sup>229</sup> Soloviev, "Smysl liubvi" (The Meaning of Love), in *Sochinenia* (Works), Moscow, 1994, p. 298.

good that the native good can never act separately, without the evil also acting together with it. Man has been poisoned by tasting of sin, that is, the experiential knowledge of evil. The poison has penetrated into all the members of the body, into all the powers and properties of the soul: both the body and the heart and the mind have been afflicted by a sinful infirmity. Fallen men, flattering and deceiving themselves to their destruction, call and recognize their reasoning to be healthy. The reason was healthy before the fall; after the fall, in all men without exception, it has become falsely so called, and for salvation must be rejected. 'The light of mine eyes is no longer with me', says Scripture about the reasoning of fallen nature (Psalm 37.11). Flattering and deceiving themselves to their destruction, fallen men call and recognize their heart to be good; it was good before the fall; after the fall its good has been mixed with evil, and for salvation it must be rejected as defiled. God the Knower of hearts has called all men evil (Luke 11.13). From the infection of sin everything in man has fallen into disarray, everything works incorrectly, everything works under the influence of lies and self-deception. That is how his will works, that is how all the feelings of his heart work, that is how all his thoughts work. In vain and falsely does blinded humanity call them good, elegant, elevated! Profound is our fall, and very few are the men who are conscious of themselves as fallen, in need of the Saviour; the majority look upon their fallen condition as a condition of complete triumph, and apply all their efforts to strengthen and develop their fallen condition.

"It has become impossible for man to separate the evil that has been introduced from the native good by his own efforts: man is conceived in iniquities and is born in sin (Psalm 50.5). From his very birth man has not one deed, not one word, not one thought, not one feeling, even for the shortest minute, in which good would not be mixed with a greater or lesser admixture of evil. This is witnessed by Holy Scripture, which says about fallen men that among them 'a righteous man there is no more; for truths have diminished from the sons of men. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one' (Romans 3.10,12). Indicating his fallen nature, the holy Apostle Paul says: 'In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing' (Romans 7.18). Here by 'flesh' the apostle means not the human body as such, but the carnal condition of the whole man: his mind, heart and body. And in the Old Testament the whole man is called 'flesh': 'My Spirit shall not abide in man for ever,' said God, 'for he is flesh' (Genesis 6.3). In this fleshly condition, as if in its own body, lives sin and eternal death. The apostle calls the fleshly condition 'the body of death' (Romans 7.14), 'the body of sin' (Romans 6.6). This condition is called flesh, body, body of death and body of sin because in it thought and heart, which should strive towards the spiritual and the holy, are aimed and nailed to the material and sinful, they live in matter and sin."<sup>230</sup>

This condition gets worse with time. As Nicholas Cabasilas writes: "Because our nature was extended and our race increased as it proceeded from the first body, so wickedness too, like any other natural characteristic, was transmitted to the bodies which proceeded from that body. The body, then, not merely shares in the experiences of the soul but also

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<sup>230</sup> St. Ignaty, "Slovo o razlichnykh sostoianiakh estestva chelovecheskogo" ("A Word on the Various Conditions of Human Nature"), *Tvorenia* (Works), Moscow, 2001, vol. II, pp. 343-344.

imparts its own experiences to the soul. The soul is subject to joy or vexation, is restrained or unrestrained, depending on the disposition of the body. It therefore followed that each man's soul inherited the wickedness of the first Adam. It spread from his soul to his body, and from his body to the bodies which derived from his, and from those bodies to the souls. This, then, is the old man whom we have received as a seed of evil from our ancestors as we came into existence. We have no seen even one day pure from sin, nor have we ever breathed apart from wickedness, but, as the psalmist says, 'we have gone astray from the womb, we err from our birth' (Psalm 58.4). We did not even stand still in this unhappy lot of the sin of our ancestors, nor were we content with the evils which we had inherited. So greatly have we added to this wickedness and increased the abundance of evil that the primal sin has been covered over by that which came later and the imitators have shown themselves to be worse by far than the examples..."<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, II, 7; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, p. 77.

## Innocent and Guilty Passion

Some have argued that “the law of sin” is primarily sexual, a war of the body against the soul; so that it is necessary to abstain from every expression of eros in order to avoid sin. But this, too, is a mistaken opinion. As we have seen, according to St. Ignaty, *every* faculty of human nature is fallen. If it were sinful to abstain from *any* expression of *every* fallen faculty, then it would be necessary to abstain also from every form of thinking, because the mind is fallen, and from every expression of anger, because the incensive faculty is fallen. This nirvana-like state of complete insensibility may be the ideal of Buddhism, but it is emphatically not the ideal of Christianity! As Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: “Sexual union, while blessed by the Church and fulfilling a commandment of the Creator, is, in fallen humanity, inevitably *bound up* with sin. This should not shock us if we stop to think that such a necessary thing as eating is *also* almost invariably bound up with sin – who of us is perfectly continent in food and drink, the thorough master of his belly? Sin is not a category of specific acts such that, if we refrain from them, we become ‘sinless’ – but rather a kind of web which ensnares us and from which we can never really get free in this life.”<sup>232</sup>

Although pleasure and pain, fear and desire in their present form are all “unnatural” according to St. Maximus’ definition, in that none of them were present in this form in human nature before the fall, the Fathers nevertheless make a distinction between “natural” and “unnatural”, “innocent” and “culpable” desires and passions *after* the fall. The natural and innocent passions are in all men, and remain natural and innocent as long as they are kept within certain bounds. Culpable passions feed on natural ones like parasites: the culpable passion of gluttony - on the natural passion to satisfy hunger, the culpable passion of indolence - on the natural desire to rest weary limbs, the culpable passion of lust - on the natural passion of sexual desire.

The expression of natural passions (such as sexual desire) is sinful in some circumstances but not in others, while unnatural passions (such as avarice) are sinful at all times. Thus St. John Chrysostom writes: “Of desires some are necessary, some natural, some neither the one nor the other. For example, those which, if not gratified, destroy the creature are both natural and necessary, as the desire of food and drink and sleep; carnal desire is natural indeed but not necessary, for many have got the better of it, and have not died. But the desire of wealth is neither natural nor necessary, but superfluous; and if we choose we need not admit its beginning.”<sup>233</sup> And again: “If a man were once for all deprived of money, he would no longer be tormented with the desire of it, for nothing so much causes the desire of wealth, as the possession of it. But it is not so with respect to sexual desire, but many who have been made eunuchs have not been freed from the flame that burned within them, for the desire resides in other organs, being seated inwardly in our nature. To what purpose then is this said? Because the covetous is more intemperate than the fornicator, inasmuch as the former gives way to a weaker passion. Indeed it

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<sup>232</sup> Rose, in Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 804.

<sup>233</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 74 on John*, 3.

proceeds less from passion than from baseness of mind. But desire is natural, so that if a man does not approach a woman, nature performs her part and operation. But there is nothing of this sort in the case of avarice."<sup>234</sup>

That the natural passions are indeed natural, and not something for which we are to be held personally responsible, is shown by the fact that they exist even in children. Thus St. John Cassian writes: "Movement occurs in the sexual organs not only of young children who cannot yet distinguish between good and evil, but also of the smallest infants still at their mother's breast. The latter, although quite ignorant of sensual pleasure, nevertheless manifest such natural movements in the flesh. Similarly, the incensive power exists in infants, as we can see when they are roused against anyone hurting them. I say this not to accuse nature of being the cause of sin – God forbid! – but to show that the incensive power and desire, even if implanted in man by the Creator for a good purpose, appear to change through neglect from being natural in the body into something that is unnatural."<sup>235</sup> Again, St. Gregory Palamas writes that "the natural motions related to the begetting of children can be detected in infants that are still at the breast... The passions to which it [carnal desire] gives birth belong to us by nature, and natural things are not indictable; for they were created by God Who is good, so that through them we can act in ways that are also good. Hence in themselves they do not indicate sickness of soul, but they become evidence of such sickness when we misuse them. When we coddle the flesh in order to foster its desires, then the passion becomes evil and self-indulgence gives rise to the carnal passions and renders the soul diseased."<sup>236</sup>

The natural passions are those that can clearly trace their origin to some faculty of human nature that was existent before the fall. This is the case both with hunger, since Eve was attracted to the fruit of the tree as being "pleasant to eat", and with sexual desire, since Adam and Eve, as explained in the last chapter, had a natural, unfallen attraction for each other. Let us remind ourselves of the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria (quoted in chapter 1) that Adam's body *before* the fall "was not entirely free from concupiscence of the flesh".<sup>237</sup> For "while it was beyond corruption, it had indeed innate appetites, appetites for food and procreation. But the amazing thing was that his mind was not tyrannized by these tendencies; for he did freely what he wanted to do, seeing that his flesh was not yet subject to the passions consequent upon corruption".<sup>238</sup>

It is this fact of not being *tyrannized* by the passions that constitutes the essential difference in their mode of operation before and after the fall. Original sin gave to the natural passions a certain autonomy and rebelliousness that they did not have before. The perfect integration of mind, soul and body that we see in Adam and Eve before the fall was replaced by a conflict between the faculties which issued in their descendants regularly

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<sup>234</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Titus*, V, 2.

<sup>235</sup> St. John Cassian, *On the Eight Vices*, "On Avarice"; *The Philokalia*, vol. I, p. 78.

<sup>236</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia*, 41; *The Philokalia*, volume IV, p. 309.

<sup>237</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On I Corinthians* 7; quoted in Burghardt, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>238</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian*, 3, P.G. 76, 637; quoted in Burghardt, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

breaking the bonds of what is lawful.

Thus St. John Chrysostom writes: "When the body had become mortal, it was henceforth a necessary thing for it to receive concupiscence, and anger, and pain, and all the other passions, which required a great deal of wisdom to prevent their flooding us, and sinking reason in the depth of sin. For in themselves they were not sin, but, when their extravagancy was unbridled, it wrought this effect. Thus (that I may take one of them and examine it as a specimen) desire is not sin: but when it has run into extravagance, being not minded to keep within the laws of marriage, but springing even upon other men's wives; then the thing henceforward becomes adultery, yet not by reason of the desire, but by reason of its excessiveness."<sup>239</sup>

And again he writes: "Blame not natural desire. Natural desire was bestowed with a view to marriage; it was given with a view to the procreation of children, not with a view to adultery and corruption."<sup>240</sup>

It follows that when the holy apostles speak of "lust" or "the flesh" in a negative sense, they are blaming, not the body or the natural desires of the body, but the depraved will that allows them to dominate the soul. Thus St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the verse: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall in no wise fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5.16), writes: "By 'the flesh' he does not mean the body... The body moves not, but is moved; it is not an agent, but is acted upon. Lust belongs to the soul, not to the body... He is wont to call the flesh, not the natural body but the depraved will... So then what is his meaning? It is the earthly mind, slothful and negligent, that he here calls the flesh, and this is not an accusation of the body, but a charge against the slothful soul. The flesh is an instrument... Thus when he says, 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit', he means two thoughts. For those are opposed to each other, namely virtue and vice, not the soul and the

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<sup>239</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 13 on Roman*, 1.

<sup>240</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 2 on Ephesians*, 3; P.G. 62:20. And again he writes, distinguishing between the natural desires and their unnatural expression: "Nothing that is natural is evil. Why then does he call carnal affections sins? Because whenever the flesh exalts herself, and gets the mastery over her charioteer, she produces ten thousand mischiefs. The virtue of the flesh is her subjection to the soul. It is her vice to govern the soul. As the horse then may be good and nimble, and yet this is not shown without a rider; so also the flesh will then show her goodness, when we cut off her prancings... The virtue therefore of the body consists in this, in its submission to the soul, since of itself the flesh is neither good nor evil. For what could the body ever do of itself? It is then by its connection that the body is good, good because of its subjection, but of itself neither good nor evil, with capacity, however, both for one and for the other, and having an equal tendency either way. The body has a natural desire, not however of fornication, nor of adultery, but of pleasure; the body has a desire not of feasting, but of food; not of drunkenness, but of drink. For in proof that it is not drunkenness that is the natural desire of the body, mark how, whenever you exceed the measure, when you go beyond the boundary-lines, it cannot hold out a moment longer. Up to this point it is of the body, but all the rest of the excesses, as e.g., when she is hurried away into sensualities, when she becomes stupefied, these are of the soul. For though the body be good, still it is vastly inferior to the soul, as lead is less of value than gold, and yet gold needs lead to solder it, and just so has the soul need also of the body. Or in the same way as a noble child requires a conductor, so again does the soul stand in need of the body. For, as we speak of childish things, not to the disparagement of childhood, but only of those acts which are done during childhood; so also are we now speaking of the body." (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 5 on Galatians*, 3).

body.”<sup>241</sup>

The distinction between natural, but not culpable sexual desire, and unnatural, or culpable desire, may be analogous to the distinction between “the will of the flesh” and “the will of man” in John 1.13. Thus Blessed Theophylact writes: “It often happens that one has a more fervent disposition and is more easily moved to intercourse: this the Evangelist calls *the will of the flesh*. Intercourse of the flesh also occurs as a result of evil inclinations and dissolute appetites, when the urge for intercourse is uncontrollable. The Evangelist calls this *the will of man*, when intercourse does not result from physical nature, but from depravity.”<sup>242</sup>

What has been said about the passions applies also to the pleasures: some are innocent, others - culpable. Thus St. John of Damascus divides them into three categories: “Some pleasures are true, others false. And the exclusively intellectual pleasures consist in knowledge and contemplation, while the pleasures of the body depend upon sensation. Further, of bodily pleasures, some are both natural and necessary, in the absence of which life is impossible, for example the pleasures of food which replenishes waste, and the pleasures of necessary clothing. Others are natural but not necessary, as the pleasures of natural and lawful intercourse. For though the function that these perform is to secure the permanence of the race as a whole, it is still possible to live a virgin life apart from them. Others, however, are neither natural nor necessary, such as drunkenness, lust (*λαγνεία*) and surfeiting to excess. For these contribute neither to the maintenance of our own lives nor to the succession of the race, but on the contrary, are rather even a hindrance. He therefore that would live a life acceptable to God must follow after those pleasures which are both natural and necessary: and must give a secondary place to those which are natural but not necessary, and enjoy them only in fitting season, and manner, and measure; while the others must be altogether renounced. Those then are to be considered good (*καλές*) pleasures which are not bound up with pain, and bring no cause for repentance, and result in no other harm and keep within the bounds of moderation, and do not draw us far away from serious occupations, nor make slaves of us.”<sup>243</sup>

Important here is the last phrase: “nor make slaves of us”. For, as the Apostle Paul writes: “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, *but I will not brought under the power of any*” (I Corinthians 6.12). If we do not become slaves of pleasure, then, as almost all the Holy Fathers agree, there is no sin in it. And so, St. Maximus the Confessor writes, “we avoid pleasures, not because they are evil, but because the sinful man is easily captivated by pleasures and becomes their slave.”<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 5 on Galatians*, P.G. 61:720, cols. 671, 672.

<sup>242</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to John*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2007, p. 20. Theophylact then goes on to give another explanation of the difference: “Perhaps by the will of a man he means the burning desire of the man, and by the will of the flesh, the desire of the woman.”

<sup>243</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 13.

<sup>244</sup> St. Maximus, quoted by “Ixe” at <http://www.livejournal.com/users/abbatus-mozdok>, November 28, 2003. I have not been able to find the original reference. St. Maximus also said that the desire for pleasure in the fall is

St. Photius the Great states that sexual pleasure in marriage is “lawful”, while explaining why there could be no pleasure in the conception of Christ: “It was needful that a mother should be prepared down below for the Creator, for the recreation of shattered humanity, and she a virgin, in order that, just as the first man had been formed of virgin earth, so the re-creation, too, should be carried out through a virgin womb, and that no transitory pleasure, even lawful, should be so much as imagined in the Creator's birth: since a captive of pleasure was he, for whose deliverance the Lord suffered to be born.”<sup>245</sup>

St. Gregory Palamas, too, speaks of “permissible pleasures”: “We, whose bodies have become the temple of God through the Spirit, and in whom the Spirit dwells, must be clean, or at least cleansed, and remain always undefiled, contenting ourselves with permissible pleasures.”<sup>246</sup> Sexual pleasure within marriage is neither praised nor condemned by St. Gregory. It is a “neutral” “gift of nature” analogous to the knowledge that comes from secular education: “Just as in legal marriage, the pleasure derived from procreation cannot exactly be called a gift of God, because it is carnal and constitutes a gift of nature and not of grace (even though that nature has been created by God); even so the knowledge that comes from profane education, even if well used, is a gift of nature, and not of grace – a gift which God accords to all without exception through nature”.<sup>247</sup>

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the corruption of the original “potentiality for pleasure, namely the natural desire of the intellect for God” (*Questions to Thalassius*, 61; P.G. 90:628A; quoted in Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 91, footnote).

<sup>245</sup> St. Photius, *Homily on the Birth of the Virgin*, 9; in Cyril Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, Harvard University Press, 1958. Cf. St. Gregory Palamas: “If the conception of God had been from seed, He would not have been a new man, nor the Author of new life which will never grow old. If He were from the old stock and inherited its sin, He would not have been able to bear within Himself the fullness of the incorruptible Godhead or to make His Flesh an inexhaustible Source of sanctification, able to wash away even the defilement of our First Parents by its abundant power, and sufficient to sanctify all who came after them.” (*Homily 14, on the Annunciation*, 5).

<sup>246</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 5, On the Meeting of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

<sup>247</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads I*, 22.

## Original Sin

I have spoken about “the original sin” of Adam and Eve, by which I have meant the personal transgression committed by them in Paradise. However, the term “original sin” usually refers, not to *the* original, that is, the *first* sin, but to the *condition* of sin, or “law of sin” in which every man since Adam (with the exception of the Last Adam, Christ) is born, and which takes its origin from Adam’s sin. This ambiguity in the meaning of “original sin”, coupled with divergent translations of a critical passage on original sin, Romans 5.12, has led to much confusion and controversy; so some clarification is necessary at this stage.

The paradox of the doctrine of original sin consists in the fact that it appears to hold the whole human race accountable for a sin committed only by Adam and Eve. This paradox was expressed by St. Ignaty Brianchaninov: “What is this mystery – the birth of a man in sin? How is it that one who has not yet lived has already died? That one who has not yet walked has already fallen? That one who has done nothing has already sinned? How are our forefather’s children, still in their wombs, separated from him by thousands of years, participants in his sin? My mind reverently gazes upon the judgements of God; it does not comprehend them...”<sup>248</sup>

Let us begin by attempting to make the distinction, adumbrated earlier, between the two meanings of original sin clearer.

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: “What has Adam’s guilt to do with us? Why are we held responsible for his sin when we were not even born when he committed it? Did not God say: ‘The parents will not die for the children, nor the children for the parents, but the soul which has sinned, it shall die’ (Deuteronomy 24.16). How then shall we defend this doctrine? The soul, I say, which has sinned, it shall die. We have become sinners because of Adam’s disobedience in the following manner... After he fell into sin and surrendered to corruption, impure lusts invaded the nature of his flesh, and at the same time the evil law of our members was born. For our nature contracted the disease of sin because of the disobedience of one man, that is, Adam, and thus many became sinners. This was not because they sinned along with Adam, because they did not then exist, but because they had the same nature as Adam, which fell under the law of sin. Thus, just as human nature acquired the weakness of corruption in Adam because of disobedience, and evil desires invaded it, so the same nature was later set free by Christ, Who was obedient to God the Father and did not commit sin.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> St. Ignaty, “My Lamentation”, *The Orthodox Word*, № 222, January-February, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>249</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Romans*, 5.18, P.G. 74: 788-789. Again, St. John Chrysostom writes: “‘Through the wrong-doing of one man many became sinners’. There is nothing improbable about the proposition that when Adam sinned and became mortal, those who were descended from him should become mortal also. But how should it follow that from his disobedience anyone else should become a sinner? For unless a man becomes a sinner on his own responsibility, he will not be found to merit punishment. Then what does ‘sinner’ mean here? I think it means liable to punishment, that is, condemned to death” (*Homily 10 on Romans*).

The critical words here are: “not because they sinned along with Adam,... but because they had the same nature as Adam, which fell under the law of sin”. Implicit here is a distinction between “nature” and “person”. We are not sinners because we *personally* committed Adam’s sin along with him, but because we are of the same *nature* as him and receive its corruption from him by inheritance. As St. Anastasius of Sinai writes: “Since Adam fathered children only after his fall, we became heirs of his corruption. We are not punished for his disobedience to Divine Law. Rather, since Adam was mortal, sin entered into his very seed. We receive mortality from him.”<sup>250</sup>

The distinction between sin as an individual transgression of the *person* and sin as a common condition or state of human *nature* was in fact made by St. Paul in Romans 5.12, as Archbishop Theophan of Poltava points out: “The holy apostle clearly distinguishes in his teaching on original sin between two things: παραπτωμα, or transgression, and αμαρτια, or sin. By the first he understood the personal transgression by our forefathers of the will of God that they should not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, by the second – the law of sinful disorder that entered human nature as the consequence of this transgression. When he is talking about the inheritance of the original sin, he has in mind not παραπτωμα, or transgression, for which only they are responsible, but αμαρτια, that is, the law of sinful disorder which afflicted human nature as a consequence of the fall into sin of our forefathers. And ημαρτον, ‘sinned’ in 5.12 must therefore be understood not in the active voice, in the sense: they committed sin, but in the middle-passive voice, in the sense of: αμαρτωλοι κατασταθησονται of 5.19, that is, became sinners or turned out to be sinners, since human nature fell in Adam.”<sup>251</sup>

Thus the original sin of Adam, in the sense of his personal transgression, *the* original sin which no other person shares, has engendered in consequence sinful, corrupt, diseased, mortal human nature, the law of sin, which we all share because we have all inherited it, but for which we cannot be held personally responsible. And if this seems to introduce two original sins, this is in fact not far from the thinking of the Holy Fathers. Thus St. Maximus the Confessor writes: “There then arose sin, the first and worthy of reproach, that is, the falling away of the will from good to evil. Through the first there arose the second – the change in nature from incorruption to corruption, which cannot elicit reproach. For two sins arise in [our] forefather as a consequence of the transgression of the Divine commandment: one worthy of reproach, and the second having as its cause the first and unable to elicit reproach”.<sup>252</sup>

So there is a sin attaching to *persons*, for which they are *personally* responsible, and there is a sin attaching to *natures*, for which the persons who possess that nature are not responsible, but which nevertheless makes them sinners. Adam’s *personal* sin opened the way for the defilement of his *nature* by the disease of sin. And since we inherit his nature,

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<sup>250</sup> St. Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers on Various Chapters*, 143; P.G. 89:796.

<sup>251</sup> Archbishop Theophan, *Sviatootecheskoe Uchenie o Pervorodnom Grekhe* (The Patristic Teaching on Original Sin).

<sup>252</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, 42.

we, too, become sinners.

Let us pursue the disease analogy a little further. St. Cyril again: “Because death had overrun Adam, he is like a plant that has been injured at its roots, and the whole race that sprang from him is like the shoots that sprout from it but must all wither.”<sup>253</sup> Again, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes: “As infected water naturally flows from an infected source, in the same way from the founder of our race, infected by sin and therefore mortal, there come descendants who are infected by sin and therefore mortal”.<sup>254</sup> Consider St. Paul’s argument that Levi, a great-grandson of Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek when his great-grandfather paid them, “for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him” (Hebrews 7.10). If we follow the implication through with regard to ourselves, then we were literally *in* our forefather Adam even during his lifetime, and therefore participated in his sin.

The idea that we sinned *in* Adam is suggested both by the ancient Western translations of Romans 5.12, and by the Slavonic translation made by Saints Cyril and Methodius, which translate the conjunction “ὅτι” as “in whom”, i.e. in Adam, so that the phrase reads: “in whom we all sinned”. Now many believe that this translation is inaccurate, and that “ὅτι” in fact means “because”, so that the whole sentence reads: “Death came upon all men *because* all men have sinned.” However, St. Theophan the Recluse argued that although “because” is the more literal translation<sup>255</sup>, the old Western and Slavonic translations in fact convey the real sense more accurately. His argument was as follows. First he quoted Romans 5.13-14: “Until the law sin was in the world, but sin not reckoned where there is no law. But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam’s transgression...” On this he comments: “Sin reigned in the world also before the giving of the Law through Moses. But it was evidently not sin from transgression of the Law, which did not exist at the time. ‘Sin is then reckoned when there is Law, and people transgressing the Law and of necessity called sinners’ (Blessed

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<sup>253</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Romans*, P.G. 74: 785; quoted in Romanides, *op. cit.*, p. 162, footnote. St. Gregory Palamas also uses the root metaphor: “Before Christ we all shared the same ancestral curse and condemnation poured out on all of us from our single Forefather, as if it had sprung from the root of the human race and was the common lot of our nature. Each person’s individual action attracted either reproof or praise from God, but no one could do anything about the shared curse and condemnation, or the evil inheritance that had been passed down to him and through him would pass to his descendants.” (*Homily 5: On the Meeting of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ*, in Christopher Veniamin, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2002, vol. I, p. 52).

<sup>254</sup> Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, *Extended Christian Catechism of the Orthodox Catholic Eastern Church*, 1823.

<sup>255</sup> However, if we open Joseph Thayer’s authoritative *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1901, pp. 232, 233) and look at the various usages of the preposition ἐπι with the dative case, we find *both* usages in the New Testament. Thus ἐφ’ ὧ is sometimes equivalent to ἐπι τούτῳ, ὅτι, meaning “on the ground of this, because”, and is used in this sense in II Corinthians 5.4 and Philippians 3.12. On the other hand, in other places – for example, Mark 2.4, Mark 13.2, Matthew 9.16, Luke 5.36, Mark 2.21, Matthew 14, 8, 11, Mark 6.25, Mark 6.55, Mark 6.39, John 11.38, Acts 8.16 and Revelation 19.14 – ἐπι with the dative case is equivalent to the Latin *in* with the ablative case, indicating the place where or in which something takes place or is situated. This place can also be a person, as in the famous passage: “Thou art Peter, and on this rock (ἐπι ταυτη τη πετρα) I will build My Church” (Matthew 16.18; cf. Ephesians 2.20).

Theodoreitus). But *death reigned even before Moses*, that is, before the issuing of the Law. That means that there was a sin through which death reigned: if it had not existed there would have been no reign of death. But if it is proved there was no sin in the sense of transgression of the Law, then it remains that the sin was Adam's, through which death reigned even over those who had not sinned like Adam, but had been made participants of his sin."<sup>256</sup>

As St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes: "Paul's meaning is that, although Moses was a righteous and admirable man, the death sentence promulgated upon Adam reached him as well, and also those who came after, even though neither he nor they copied the sin of Adam in disobediently eating of the tree".<sup>257</sup> Again, Ambrosiaster writes: "How is it then that sin was not imputed, when there was no law? Was it all right to sin, if the law was absent? There had always been a natural law, and it was not unknown, but at that time it was thought to be the only law, and it did not make men guilty before God. For it was not then known that God would judge the human race, and for that reason sin was not imputed, almost as if it did not exist in God's sight and that God did not care about it. But when the law was given through Moses, it became clear that God did care about human affairs and that in the future wrongdoers would not escape without punishment, as they had done up to them."<sup>258</sup> Again, St. Augustine writes: "He says not that there was no sin but only that it was not counted. Once the law was given, sin was not taken away, but it began to be counted".<sup>259</sup> Thus before Moses the personal sins of men were not imputed to them, and they were not counted as having committed them. *And yet they died*. But death is "the wages of sin" (Romans 6.23). So of what sin was their death the wages? There can only be one answer: *Adam's*.

Does this destroy the distinction elaborated earlier between the two meanings of "original sin"? No; but it does demonstrate a closer bond between the two kinds of sin – the προπατορικον αμαρτημα or "ancestral sin" attaching to Adam alone, and the προγονικη αμαρτια or "ancestral sin" attaching to Adam alone, and the or "original sin", attaching to the whole human race<sup>260</sup> – than the critics of the so-called "Augustinian theory of original sin" usually allow. Although we are not responsible for Adam's personal sin, there is a real sense in which Adam lives in us, as we in him. For the word "Adam" in Hebrew denotes both the *person* Adam and the human *nature* that we receive from him. So in receiving Adam's human nature we also, in a sense, receive *him*. Thus St. Basil the Great writes that what we inherit from Adam "is not the personal sin of Adam, but *the original human being himself*", who "exists in us by necessity".<sup>261</sup> Again, St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "[All men] have been condemned to death by the transgression of Adam. For the whole of human nature has suffered this *in him*, who was the beginning of the human

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<sup>256</sup> St. Theophan, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

<sup>257</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 15.31.

<sup>258</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*, CSEL 81:165, 167, 169.

<sup>259</sup> St. Augustine, *On Romans*, 27-28.

<sup>260</sup> Fr. Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Platina: St. Herman Brotherhood, 1983, pp. 165-166.

<sup>261</sup> St. Basil, in Demetrios Tzami, *I Protologia tou M. Vasileiou*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 135

race.”<sup>262</sup> And St. Maximus the Greek: “Adam, in whose fall our whole race fell”.<sup>263</sup> It follows that, while we have not sinned as Adam sinned, his sin lives on in us.

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<sup>262</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Romans* 5.15, P.G. 74:785C.

<sup>263</sup> St. Maximus the Greek, *Canon to the Holy Spirit*, Ode 6, irmos.

## Sexual Sin

Some, especially in the West, have seen original sin as residing especially in sexual sin. This is supposedly proved by the words: "I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me" (Psalm 50.5). For sexual intercourse is inescapably linked with lust; and "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (I John 2.16) are of the essence of the fall. So original sin was transmitted to us through the practice of sexual lust. Hence, concludes the argument, sexual lust is the root of original sin.

However, David's words refer not only to conception but also to childbirth – in which no pleasure is involved, but only pain. Moreover, St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the same verse, says that David here "does not condemn marriage, as some have thoughtlessly supposed".<sup>264</sup> How could it, since, as the Apostle Paul says, "the [marriage] bed is undefiled" (Hebrews 13.4)? And again he says: "If you marry, you do not sin" (I Corinthians 7.28).

The distinction worked out in the last section is useful here. We are conceived in sin, not in the sense that the act which brought us into being was a sinful act for which our parents will be held responsible, but in the sense that sexual relations (like all relations) have been affected by the fall, by the tendency to passion which is ingrained in our common human nature. Sexual relations in marriage are sinful only in the sense that they are tainted by original sin and its consequences, that is, determined by the coarseness of the matter of the fallen body and the fallen, reflexive mechanism of sexual arousal which opens the path for conception in such a body. As St. Gregory Palamas writes: "The flesh's impulse to reproduce is not subject to our minds, which God has appointed to govern us, and is not altogether without sin. That is why David said, 'I was conceived in iniquities'."<sup>265</sup>

On the other hand, there is no *personal* sin involved in sexual relations carried out in lawful marriage. For, as we have seen, God blessed the multiplication of the race through

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<sup>264</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On Psalm 50*, M.P.G. 55:583. Cf. Blessed Theodoretus: "Sin, having prevailed over our primogenitors, made itself a kind of road and pathway in our nature. Blessed Paul speaks of this: 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...for all have sinned' (Romans 5.12)... This teaches us that the power of sin is not a natural power (for were it actually that way, then we would be free from punishment) and that our nature, troubled by the passions, is inclined to fall. Therefore by understanding in precisely that way these words – 'I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me' – it is not marriage that the Prophet indicts, as some have suggested, and it is not marital relations that are called iniquitous, as others have foolishly suggested. On the contrary, he has in mind that iniquity, which the primogenitors of humanity made bold to commit, and he says that it became the spring of these streams. That is, if they would not have sinned, then they would not have been subjected to the punishment of death for their sin: along with not being subject to decay, without a doubt, would be combined passionlessness; and when passionlessness would be present, sin would have no place. But inasmuch as our primogenitors sinned, they became subject to decay; having become subject to decay, they gave birth to children of the same ilk; and so now desires and fear, pleasures and sorrows, anger and envy attend them." (*Commentary on Psalm 50*; translated in *Orthodox Life*, vol. 53, no. 1, January-February, 2003, pp. 44-45).

<sup>265</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 14, on the Annunciation*, 5.

the natural mechanism of sexual intercourse, and He would not bless an act that involved personal sin. St. Augustine invokes a similar distinction when speaking of lust: "It is not however called sin in the sense of making one guilty [i.e. *personally* guilty of *personal* sin], but in that it is caused by the guilt of the first man [*the original sin, engendering original sin in us*], and in that it rebels, and strives to draw us into guilt if grace did not help us."<sup>266</sup>

Thus lust exists in our bodies as part of our fallen human nature. But if we control this tendency from expressing itself in sinful fantasies or actions, we are not accounted guilty. For, as David says: "From my secret sins cleanse me, and from those of others spare Thy servant. *If they have not dominion over me, then blameless shall I be, and I shall be cleansed from great sin*" (Psalm 18.12-13).

Although fallen eros exists in our bodies, it is not, as we have seen, a purely bodily phenomenon: its origin in the original, unfallen nature of man was not in the body, but in the mind, proceeding from the mind to the body. As St. Gregory Palamas writes: "The spirit of man that quickens the body is a noetic longing (eros), a longing that issues from the intellect..."<sup>267</sup>

As such, eros is not a purely instinctual faculty: it employs all the faculties of the soul, being "the offspring," as St. Maximus says, "of the gathering together of the soul's faculties in relation to divine realities, and the union of those faculties – rational, irascible and concupiscent."<sup>268</sup> That is why the word used for sexual union in the Scriptures, including the union of Adam and Eve (Genesis 4.1), is "to know" (γινώσκειν), a word that has both dynamic and static, both rational and appetitive connotations in the Holy Scriptures.<sup>269</sup>

The fall has impeded the flow of eros from mind to body, allowing the body to develop its own, "autonomous eros", and turning it against the mind, creating the conflict of "flesh" and "spirit" of which St. Paul speaks in Romans 7. This disjunction between the psychic and bodily elements of eros in the *subject*, the lover, is reflected in a disjunction in his perception of the psychic and bodily components of the *object*, the beloved. Thus the

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<sup>266</sup> St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, i. 2, §32.

<sup>267</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Topics of Natural and Theological Science*, 38; *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, p. 362. Cf. Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, p. 19.

<sup>268</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, 49.

<sup>269</sup> Wilkens (op. cit., p. 418) writes: "In his Commentary on the Gospel of John Origen explained how the term 'knowledge' is used in the Bible. He is commenting on John 8.19: 'You know neither Me nor My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also'. 'One should take note,' he says, 'that the Scripture says that those who are united to something or participate in something are said to know that to which they are united or in which they participate. Before such union and fellowship, even if they understand the reasons given for something, they do not know it.' As illustrations, he mentions the union between Adam and Eve, which the Bible describes as 'Adam knew his wife Eve', and I Corinthians 6.16-17, the reference to union with a prostitute. This shows, he says, that knowing means being joined to or united to..."

"For Maximus [the Confessor] knowledge of God does not simply mean knowing something but knowledge that fashions the knower by that which is known. Such knowledge is not possible from a distance; it entails a relation. Hence, it cannot be attained without the affections, that is love that binds the knower to the object of love..."

disjunction in the *intra*-personal flow of eros results in a disjunction in its *inter*-personal flow, turning erotic love into lust. This means that the erotic attention of the lover is concentrated on the body of the beloved independently of her soul, whereas rightly functioning eros is directed to the soul and body *together* – not to a soul which just happens to have a body, nor to a body to which a soul just happens to be attached, but to an *embodied soul*, that is, a *human being*, whose existence is composite, but essentially indivisible.

Thus the fall has produced a war between the spirit and the flesh, dividing the originally undivided eros into two. “The multitude,” in St. Dionysius’ words, “not seeing the unitary nature of the Divine Name of Love (Eros), fell back, according to their natural tendencies, to the divided and corporeal and separated love which is not the real love, but an image of it, or rather is defection from the real love.”<sup>270</sup> Again, St. Gregory Palamas writes: “Our mind itself stretches out in longing towards the One God Who Is, the only Good, the only Desire, the only Bestower of pleasure unmixed with pain. But once the mind has been enfeebled, the soul's ability for real love falls away from what is truly desired, and, scattered among various longings for sensual pleasures, is dispersed, pulled this way and that by desires for superfluous foods, dishonourable bodies, useless objects, and empty, inglorious glory.”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, IV.

<sup>271</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 3*, 15.

## Sexual Shame

Let us return to the subject of sexual shame. The reaction of the healthy mind to the sundering of flesh and spirit in lust is *shame*. The presence of sexual shame in all but the most perverted of men tells us something very important about sexuality that strikes at the heart of both the naturalist and the Manichaeon views.

Shame witnesses to the fall – indeed, it is the very first consequence of the fall. But a close examination of its psychology shows that it also witnesses to the fact that sexuality is no merely animal phenomenon. For if it were, there would be no reason to feel sexual shame. After all, animals feel no shame. If it were a purely biological need, then a man would feel no more shame at feeling desire for a woman than he would at feeling hunger or thirst. The feeling of shame at nakedness is the sign of a soul that has *not* lost all virtue, but senses that there is something wrong, abnormal in being naked.<sup>272</sup> It is the virtue of modesty, whose opposite is the vice of shamelessness. Neither shamefulness nor shamelessness would be displayed by a person who had nothing to be ashamed of.<sup>273</sup>

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes: “*Nakedness*, understood in a moral sense, and foreign to *shame*, is a sign of inner and outer purity. Shame is a feeling of real or imagined, but noticeable lack of perfection or beauty: shame can follow on nakedness when it reveals in fact, or leads to the thought of, some imperfection or ugliness, which, since it cannot be the work of God, is undoubtedly the consequence of moral corruption. The usual action of shame is a desire to hide oneself: but this desire is proper to the works of darkness, and not the works of light. From this it is evident that the nakedness of the first men was a condition in which they, walking in light and truth, had nothing to hide from God and their conscience; and that our clothing is a memorial of the fall; shamefulness is a form of repentance, and shamelessness – of impenitence and incorrigibility.”<sup>274</sup>

It follows that shame is absent only in children, who feel no shame since they commit no sin, and in saints, who have mastered the passions, conquered sin and reacquired the garment of grace of the first-fashioned man. For example, St. Joseph the Fair, the son of Jacob, fled from the attentions of the Egyptian woman, leaving his garment behind him. But, chants the Church, “like the first man before his disobedience, though naked *he was not ashamed*.”<sup>275</sup>

Again, St. Symeon, the elder of St. Symeon the New Theologian, in the words of the

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<sup>272</sup> According to C.S. Lewis, “the word *naked* was originally a past participle; the naked man was the man who had undergone the process of *naking*, that is, of stripping or peeling (you used the verb of nuts and fruit). Time out of mind the naked man has seemed to our ancestors not the natural but the abnormal man; not the man who has abstained from dressing but the man who has been for some reason undressed” (*The Four Loves*, London: Collins, 1960, 2012, pp. 126-127).

<sup>273</sup> “Give me not up to a shameless soul” (Prayer of St. Antioch).

<sup>274</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *Zapiski rukovodstvuiuschia k osnovatel'nomu razumeniu Knigi Bytia* (Notes leading to a basic understanding of the Book of Genesis), Moscow, 1867, p. 50

<sup>275</sup> *Triodion*, Holy Monday, Mattins, Aposticha, Glory... Both now...

latter “did not blush before the members of anyone, neither to see other men naked, nor to show himself naked, for he possessed Christ completely, and he was completely Christ, and all his own members and everybody else’s members, all and each one were always like Christ in his eyes; he remained motionless, unhurt and impassive; he was all Christ himself and as Christ he considered all the baptized, clothed with the whole Christ. While you, if you are naked and your flesh touches flesh, there you are in heat like a donkey or a horse...”<sup>276</sup>

Shame is not necessarily linked with sexuality. However, it is an undeniable fact that there is a specific kind of shame associated with sexuality which leads us to cover up specific parts of the body and which leads even honourably married people to hide their sexual activity. Indeed, one might argue that this shows the inescapably sinful character of sexual relations, even in marriage. For if there were truly nothing in them to be ashamed of, in the sense of nothing sinful, why hide them? And why should exhibitionism, on the one hand, and voyeurism, on the other, be labelled as sinful acts?

But sexual shame, far from being a sign of the inherent baseness of sexuality, is actually a sign of its opposite. As Roger Scruton writes, “moral shame is the peculiarly social form of guilt, but *sexual* shame is something else – the sign not of sexual guilt, but of sexual innocence... The normal occasions of shame are those of the prurient glance, the obscene gesture or the lewd utterance. These provoke shame because they dirty what is in itself not dirty. The thought of the subject is something like ‘I am defiled by his glances’. The subject is *made to feel* shame, because he feels ‘degraded’ by the other’s interest, by the tone of his conversation or by the implications of his gesture. It is not the other’s disgust at my body which provokes this response, but, on the contrary, his pleasure in it. The woman who supposes that she is being undressed in the imagination of the man who watches here, feels, not that he is thinking of what is in itself dirty, but that he is thinking of her body in a way that dirties it.”<sup>277</sup>

It is in this context that we are to understand St. Paul’s words: “those parts of the body which we think less honourable we invest with the greater honour, and our unrepresentable parts we invest with the greater modesty, which are more presentable parts do not require” (I Corinthians 12.23-24).

Shame is justly felt (for sometimes it is unjustly felt, being simply the product of the inculcation of false social attitudes) if its object is lewd, animal-like behaviour which depersonalizes love, concentrating attention, not on persons, but on bodies, or on something which, while not lewd in itself, is likely to elicit such behaviour in observers.

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<sup>276</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns of Divine Love*, 16; Denville, N.J.: Dimension books, p. 56. Some of the Desert Fathers were also naked and were not ashamed – St. Onuphrius, for example. And there is a story of St. Serapion of Egypt, who challenged a virgin of Rome to follow him in walking naked through the streets. When she declined, he said that this showed that she had not, as she claimed, completely conquered the passions.

<sup>277</sup> Scruton, op. cit., pp. 141-142, 143.

That is why even honourably married couples prefer to make love in private - the violation of privacy makes what is in itself without shame into something shameful in the eyes of the spectator. Of its nature sexual love is an intense concentration, even obsession, on just one person of the other sex, who is seen as quite uniquely beautiful and irreplaceable. But precisely because of the intensely personal and individual nature of this love, *outsiders cannot share in it*. A couple making love see each other's souls and bodies in a very special light which it is only given to them to see and which they are *not* trying to convey to others. For outsiders, who do not share their passion, the sight of the lovers making love may be ridiculous, or ugly, or titillating: in any case, it is quite different from that of the lovers to each other. This inevitable and sharp incongruity between the attitude of the lovers to each other and of the spectators to them creates the feeling of shame and embarrassment. It is shameful for the spectators, whose emotion on watching the lovers is the sin of voyeurism. But it is especially embarrassing for the lovers themselves, in that they are forced to look at their own bodies now not through each other's eyes, but through those of the spectator - through the eyes, that is, not of love, but of lust and/or disgust. The shame of fallen eros witnesses to the fact that there is an unfallen eros of which we should not be ashamed. The perversion of lust witnesses to the fact that there is a rightly directed erotic love.

## Sinful Thoughts

Shame should be felt not only at unlawful sexual acts, but also at unlawful thoughts and feelings: “Every man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5.28)... There are some who consider, on the basis of this verse, that a lustful thought is as serious a sin as committing fornication in the flesh. However, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov considers this “an unjust interpretation! This statement was made to complete the Old Testament commandment. This statement was said to those who recognized only *physical* lust as sin, and did not understand that ‘evil thoughts’ (which include thoughts about fornication) ‘come forth from the heart, and they defile the man’ (Matthew 15.18-19), and separate one from God (Wisdom of Solomon 1.3), and remove that purity which is the precondition to behold God (Matthew 5.8). To delight in lustful thoughts and their sensations is fornication of the heart and the defilement of a person, rendering him incapable of fellowship with God. But lust of the body is the unfaithfulness of an entire human being, through mingling with another body (I Corinthians 6.16), and is complete alienation from God. It is death. It is annihilation. To escape the first condition, one must be vigilant; to escape the second, there must be resurrection – one must be reborn through repentance.”<sup>278</sup>

In order to struggle successfully against sinful thoughts, one must keep away from situations and things that elicit them. For, as St. Isaac the Syrian says, “He who does not consciously choose to distance oneself from a cause for sin, will be drawn to sin, even against his will.”<sup>279</sup> This means keeping away from reading or watching pornography (“pornography” in Greek literally means “the description of fornication”).

As Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: “A poll carried out by the FBI among sexual murderers showed that they all had sexual murder in their *fantasies* for a long time. These were for them just as real as the murders themselves, while their own real murders, in their turn ‘*could not be distinguished from fantasy*’ by the condemned men. All the murderers confessed that they had used *pornography*. There it is, the ‘tail’ by which one can take hold of the clever snake – pornography! Erotic *pictures* in journals, books, the cinema, television, on postcards and in works of art excite sensuality, lustful *imaginings*, which for many take the place of *reality*, since this reality becomes either completely *unnecessary*, or they take it as a *continuation of their imaginings*, where it must be no less, but even more exotic than the experiences *they have already had* in their fantasies... ‘Pictures’ bring many youths to the very unhealthy passion of solitary self-satisfaction. And this is yet again deliberately encouraged. According to the data of the journal *Communication Research* (December, 1998), the exceptional degree of sexual fantasizing of the students in the two universities under investigation was linked with the reading of a pornographic journal well-known in America, which seeks ways of *increasing* its production...”

“The harm of erotica and pornography, between which there is in fact no boundary

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<sup>278</sup> St. Ignaty, “On Purity”, *Orthodox Life*, July-August, 1983, pp. 30-31.

<sup>279</sup> St. Isaac, *Word* 57.

(difference), is not exhausted by what we have said. According to the data of the same Americans, even 'soft pornography' (without illustrations of cruelty) brings with it an interest in the 'cruel' type, sharply reduces respect for women, lessens 'satisfaction with one's own sexual partner', leads to 'a reduction in the valuing of faithfulness, and also a reduction in the valuing of love in sex', makes easier betrayal and the falling apart of the family and, finally, sexual murders and rapes, including *of children!* Well, in this respect we do not now have to look at America; we now have *more* of all this [in Russia], including the 'experiments' such as that of Chikotillo, than in the U.S.A."<sup>280</sup>

As Hieromonk Seraphim Rose writes: "In the 'free world' a great exploitative force is that of 'sex'. It seems to be today a vast, impersonal power that holds men in its jaws, leading them on not only to reproduce their kind but - thanks to the many devices for 'exploiting' this power more efficiently - to indulge this impersonal force for its own sake. Some may object that 'sex' is indeed a very 'personal' thing, but nothing could be further from the truth. Like all other human impulses, the sexual instinct may be subordinated to the power of personality and attain its proper place as an expression of married, chaste love; but only the most naïve romanticist could affirm that such is the 'sex' that is exalted today. Sex as pleasure, as an expression of man's freedom to do what he pleases: this is what it means to contemporary man. Marriage, banished from the Church, has become a mere license for sexual activity; sex has become the basis of marriage, another case of the 'lower' usurping the place of the higher. The easy divorce laws make of marriage as practiced by most moderns merely a kind of legalized promiscuity."<sup>281</sup>

Even sexual behaviour inside lawful marriage which does not serve to build up that marriage in the image of Christ's marriage with His Church, such as the forcing of unnatural sexual acts by one partner on the other, or the withholding of sexual relations by one partner from the other, must also be considered to be sinful. By the same token, lawful marriages concluded, as in so many novels of bourgeois life, for money or status, and not for love, are no less *shameful* than marriages whose sole purpose is the satisfaction of animal desires. There is therefore some truth (although untruth as well - see the section on "romantic passion" in chapter IV) in the romantic idea of marriage propounded in so many novels, in which the hero or heroine faces a choice between marrying for love or money. For a marriage that is lawful canonically, and to which the grace of God has been communicated in the sacrament, may nevertheless trample on the grace that has been given it and fail to imitate the love of Christ and the Church, and will therefore be found wanting in the balance of God's justice.

### [Fornication and Adultery](#)

St. Anastasius of Sinai was asked: "Since in the law it often happened that men had two

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<sup>280</sup> Lebedev, "Seksual'noe obrazovanie'" ("Sexual Education"), ("Sexual Education from the School Bench?"), *Russkij Pastyr'* (Russian Pastor), № 24, I-1996, pp. 85-86.

<sup>281</sup> Rose, in Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

wives and were not condemned for it, is this allowed for Christians?" And the saint replied: "The Apostle says that the wife does not have power over her own body, but her husband; and similarly the husband does not have power over his own body, but his wife (I Corinthians 7.2). It is then evident that if a man were allowed to take another woman together with her [his wife], it would similarly be permitted to the woman to take another man together with him. And then they would not be two into one flesh, but into two or three or four. But those who wish to live according to the law fall away from the grace of Christ. For since those living under the law were extremely impious, and sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons, God did not ask any more from them than the worship of God and righteous judgement, as is known from all the Scriptures of the law. But we, who have been bought by the Blood of Christ, must display all chastity and philosophy. For the type of the whole of humanity were Adam and Eve; but to desire different women comes from wantonness and lack of the fear of God."<sup>282</sup>

Although polygamy was allowed in the Old Testament, adultery was not. "Under the Old Testament," writes St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, "it was a sin to commit adultery. It was a sin because it disgraced nature, it was a misuse of an important property of nature, it was an infraction of the natural law. This transgression was considered so grave, that those guilty of it were punished with the sentence of death.

"In the New Testament, this sin gained further gravity, since the human body had gained a new dignity. Humanity had become members of the body of Christ; therefore, those who destroyed purity heaped dishonour upon Christ and broke union with Him: 'the members of Christ' were transformed into 'members of a prostitute' (I Corinthians 6.15). Now, the adulterer is punished with death of the soul. The Holy Spirit leaves the person who has fallen into adultery; the person who has sinned in this way is considered to have fallen into *mortal* sin, into a sin that takes away salvation, into a sin whose wage is imminent perdition and eternal languishing in hell – if the sin is not healed in due season by repentance."<sup>283</sup>

"But why can't I sleep with her, if she agrees, and I love her?" Very many Orthodox Christian parents must have heard these or similar words from their children. It is easy to give a correct, albeit rather short, answer, "Because God says you can't", much harder to give an answer that will *convince* a young person exposed to the full blast of today's permissive society.

It is a truism to say that the temptation to commit fornication is more powerful than ever today. The very word "fornication" has almost disappeared from contemporary English, and not many people below a certain age now talk about "chastity". Adultery is still considered a sin by most – but for reasons that have nothing specifically to do with Christianity. Adultery is considered wrong because, if discovered, it causes mental anguish to the deceived third person – and pain is, of course, a negative value – in fact, *the*

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<sup>282</sup> St. Anastasius of Sinai, *Odigos* (Guide), Mount Athos, 1970, Question and Answer 99, p. 169.

<sup>283</sup> St. Ignaty, "On Purity", p. 30.

*only* negative value – in a strictly utilitarian morality. Even if not discovered, adultery is usually disapproved of because it is “cheating” – and some value is still attached to honesty and the keeping of promises. But there are signs that “cheating”, too, is no longer abhorred as much as it used to be...

However, if some opprobrium still attaches to adultery and divorce in more conservative circles, none at all, it would appear, attaches to straightforward fornication. Fornication is now healthy and normal at all times and for all people...

If we are to help our children acquire the strength to withstand the temptation of fornication, it is not sufficient to tell them that God disapproves, nor even that fornicators go to hell according to the Apostle (I Corinthians 6.9). They must be given at least some indication *why* God disapproves of it, and *why* it is such a serious sin that it leads to hell. There are two basic approaches to this problem: the approach from the point of view of sacramental theology, and the approach from the point of view of conventional morality.

Fr. Demetrius Kaplun gives a clear example of the moral approach: “There is an idea,” he writes, “that marriage and fornication are in no way different from each other. ‘Why go to church’, ‘why put a stamp in the passport’ – that is how some irresponsible people reason. But even if we ignore the mystical aspect of the Church’s sacrament of marriage, even a marriage recognized by society, marriage ‘with a stamp’, is different from fornication in exactly the same way as a serious and strong friendship is distinguished from companionship in some enterprise – by the degree of mutual obligations. When companions begin some enterprise, they act together only to the degree that they are useful to each other, but friendship presupposes moral obligations in addition. Just as bandits who get together only in order to carry out a crime more easily (one slips through the ventilation pane well, while another breaks the safe), so a couple living in fornication are only useful to each other for this or that reason. For example, the woman cooks well, the man has got money, they love each other – but take no responsibility upon themselves. If one ‘companion’ decides tomorrow to find himself another ‘companion’, there is nothing to keep them together and bind them any longer. When a man easily changes friends and retains no obligations, he is called a traitor. It is impossible to rely on such a man. Unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities, they are condemned by God and man.

“And so the first thing that is valued in marriage is faithfulness, holiness of mutual obligations. The bonds of marriage are holy: they truly bind and limit a man, place on him the burden of service. On entering into marriage, a man can demonstrate his worthiness by the fact that he preserves his faithfulness, his honour in a holy manner. Just as for a soldier there is no greater shame than desertion, going under the flag of the other army, so for an honourable spouse there is no greater baseness that to defile the holiness of the marital bond. Spouses are to a definite degree like soldiers; they must preserve and guard the honour of the family for the shame of lust, falling, inconstancy, from the encroachment of sin.

“In ancient Rome brave and faithful soldiers were crowned with the wreath of a conqueror. Therefore the ecclesiastical sacrament of marriage, too, is called the Sacrament of Crowning. The spouses are crowned as a sign of the incorruption of their lives, as a sign of their faithfulness to each other, as a sign of the fact that they are acquiring a royal, masterly dignity in the circle of their descendants. During the Sacrament of Crowning rings are placed on the hands as a sign of their mutual agreement, and those being married are led three times around the anoly with the cross and the Gospel ‘in the form of a circle’, signifying the inviolability and eternity of the marital union, since the circle indicates eternity; the circle has no beginning or end. ‘What God has joined together, let no man put asunder’ (Matthew 19.6).”<sup>284</sup>

Now this approach is certainly valid and useful as far as it goes. But the suspicion remains that it does not go far enough, and fails to take into account the idealism of the emotion of falling in love, especially first love. For no young Romeo and Juliet will disagree with the idea that “unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities”. In fact, they couldn’t agree more, and often swear undying constancy towards each other. Nothing could be further from their minds than the thought that their love might die, and they might move on to other partners. In fact, it is precisely the strength and intensity of their love for each other that leads them, in many cases, to scorn the idea that this profound feeling needs to be bolstered by a mere legal contract, a “scrap of paper”. They feel that love is not love if it needs an external support in the form of an official ceremony.

Even if social, legal or moral considerations lead them to accept the desirability of marriage, these are unlikely to deter them from sleeping together before the marriage date. After all, they consider themselves already married in each other’s eyes. Moreover, the considerations that deterred lovelorn couples in earlier ages - the disapproval of parents and relatives, the shame of the bride going to the altar with a prominent bump in her stomach, the financial and legal disincentives - are all largely irrelevant today when parents are desperate to show that they are not “behind the times”, when brides sometimes go to the altar, not merely with a bump in the stomach, but with a whole bevy of already born children, and when the State goes out of its way, as in Britain today, not only to remove all stigmas attached to single mothers, but even to make the production of children out of wedlock a financially attractive proposition.

There are some who argue that fornicating before marriage is actually a sensible way of testing whether a proposed marriage is likely to be lasting. After all, if a couple are about to commit themselves to lifelong unity and fidelity, it is only prudent to make sure beforehand that they are physically compatible with each other. If the experience proves to be a failure, then they can abort the marriage before it takes place, thereby saving two people a lifetime of misery and probable divorce.

This argument is false: all the evidence indicates that couples who sleep together before

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<sup>284</sup> Kaplun, “Azbuka pravoslavnago khristianina” (The ABC of the Orthodox Christian), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’* (Orthodox Life). May, 2005, pp. 24-25.

marriage are less rather than more likely to be faithful to each other and remain together.

In any case, statistical arguments are a feeble rampart against fallen human nature stirred up by the spirits of evil...

So let us turn to the sacramental argument, as developed by the Holy Apostle Paul, who defines fornication for a Christian as uniting the Body of Christ – for the body of every Christian is a part of the Body of Christ – to a body that is not Christ's. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body [with her]? For two, saith He, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with Him]." (I Corinthians 6. 15-17).

This argument depends on the premise that there is a most intimate connection between two sacramental mysteries: the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and the sacrament of marriage. Both are mysteries of fleshly union, and in this sense both are marital mysteries. The mystery of the marital union of each believer with Christ in the Eucharist is the higher mystery of which the lower mystery of human marriage is the type and the icon.

That is why, when the Apostle Paul is talking of the lower mystery of human marriage, his mind is immediately lifted to its archetype: "but I speak of Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5.32). Even earlier in the chapter he switches easily from the lower mystery – "so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies" (v. 28) – to the higher – "for we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (v. 30).

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich comments on this passage as follows: "It is a great mystery when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. The Apostle himself, who has been raised to the third heaven and beheld many heavenly mysteries, calls the marriage of natural man on earth a great mystery. It is the mystery of love and life... The only mystery that exceeds this [the mystery of human marriage] is the mystery of Christ's bond with His Church. Christ calls Himself the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride. Christ so loves the Church that He left His heavenly Father for her - though remaining equal with Him in unity of essence and divinity - and came down to earth and clave to his Church. He suffered for her sake that He might, by His Blood, cleanse her from sin and from all impurity and make her worthy to be called His Bride. He warms the Church with His love, feeds her with His Blood, and enlivens, enlightens and adorns her with His Holy Spirit."<sup>285</sup>

So, combining the teaching of I Corinthians and Ephesians, we can reconstruct his argument as follows: (1) Every act of sexual intercourse, whether inside or outside

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<sup>285</sup> Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue of Ochrid*, vol. II, p. 238, May 29.

marriage, effects an ontological change, making two people one in the flesh.<sup>286</sup> (2) Every Christian who has received the Body and Blood of Christ is united to Christ in a marital bond, becoming one with Him in flesh and in spirit. Therefore (3) every Christian who has sexual relations with a woman is uniting, not only his flesh with hers, but also hers with Christ's. But (4) Christ does not want to be united in the flesh with a person with whom He is not united in the spirit, through faith. Therefore (5) a Christian cannot be united in the flesh with a person who is not herself also united with Christ, and whose union with the Christian has not been sanctified and raised to a true iconic resemblance to the marriage between Christ and the Church through the sacrament of marriage.

All fornication is adultery from God insofar as the soul and the body is married to God through the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. We shall have more to say on this in a later chapter. In the meantime let us consider the question: if fornication consists in uniting the Body of Christ with a body that is not Christ's, can there be fornication between Christians who both belong to the Body of Christ?

There can indeed, because while all acts of sexual intercourse create "one flesh", not all "one flesh" unions, even between Christians, are lawful unless they have first been sanctified by the prayers of the Church in the sacrament of marriage. Marriage is not simply the public recognition of an already accomplished fact, but involves the bestowal of grace by God. And if a couple, even a Christian couple, seeks to unite without the grace of God, the grace of God will withdraw from that one-flesh union, making it a union not within, but outside the Body of Christ. So for a Christian the only permissible form of sexual union is that sanctified by grace in the sacrament of marriage.

In his last published words, the famous Anglican apologist C.S. Lewis made two important observations about adultery. First, "a society in which conjugal infidelity is tolerated must always be in the long run a society adverse to women. Women, whatever a few male songs and satires may say to the contrary, are more naturally monogamous than men: it is a biological necessity. Where promiscuity prevails, they will therefore always be more often the victims than the culprits. Also, domestic happiness is more necessary to them than to us. And the quality by which they most easily hold a man, their beauty, decreases every year after they have come to maturity, but this does not happen to those qualities of personality - women don't really care twopence about our *looks* - by which we hold women. Thus in the ruthless war of promiscuity women are at a double disadvantage.

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<sup>286</sup> C.S. Lewis explains how Satan leads people to forget that fornication truly makes two people "one flesh", with all that that implies as regards a permanent bond. In his imaginary letter of a senior demon to a junior one he writes: "The Enemy [God] described a married couple as 'one flesh'. He did not say 'a happily married couple' or 'a couple who married because they were in love', but you can make the humans ignore that. You can also make them forget that the many they call Paul did not confine it to *married* couples. Mere copulation, for him, makes 'one flesh'. You can thus get the humans to accept as rhetorical eulogies of 'being in love' what were in fact plain descriptions of the real significance of sexual intercourse. The truth is that wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured..." (*The Screwtape Letters*, London: Collins, 1942, pp. 93-94)

They play for higher stakes and are also more likely to lose. I have no sympathy with moralists who frown at the increasing crudity of female provocativeness. These signs of desperate competition fill me with pity.

“Secondly, though the ‘right to happiness’ is chiefly claimed for the sexual impulse, it seems to me impossible that the matter should stay there. The fatal principle, once allowed in that department, must sooner or later seep through our whole lives. We thus advance towards a state of society in which not only each man but every impulse in each man claims *carte blanche*. And then, though our technological skill may help us survive a little longer, our civilization will have died at heart, and will – one dare not even add ‘unfortunately’ – be swept away...”<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Lewis, “We have no ‘right to happiness’, *The Sunday Evening Post*, , 21-28 December, 1963; in *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, London: HarperCollins, 2002, p. 392.

## Contraception and Abortion

In the fall, the fulfillment of the commandments concerning marriage and the family requires considerable asceticism, a mental as well as a physical struggle involving the selfless renunciation of personal desires for the sake of the family. Thus Clement of Alexandria writes of the man's struggle: "The particular characteristic of the married state is that it gives the man who desires a perfect marriage an opportunity to take responsibility for everything in the home which he shares with his wife. The apostle says that one should appoint bishops who by their oversight over their own house have learned to be in charge of the whole church... The prize in the contest of men is won by him who has trained himself by the discharge of the duties of husband and father and by the supervision of a household, regardless of pleasure and pain - by him, I say, who in the midst of his solicitude for his family shows himself inseparable from the love of God and rises superior to every temptation which assails him through children and wife and servants and possessions."<sup>288</sup>

As for the woman, it is not enough for her simply to bear children: she is responsible for bringing them up "in faith and love and holiness" (I Timothy 2.15) - a difficult task at the best of times and extremely difficult in our age of apostasy.

Is, then, the begetting of children an essential element of marriage? No, for there have been many pious childless couples, such as Abraham and Sarah, Joachim and Anna, and Zachariah and Elizabeth, who had children only late in life but were not dishonoured by God for that. As St. John Chrysostom writes: "As for the procreation of children, marriage does not absolutely enjoin it. That responds rather to this word of God in Genesis: 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth'. The proof of this is the large number of marriages which cannot have children. That is why the first reason for marriage is to regulate lust, and especially now that the human race has filled the whole earth."<sup>289</sup>

If, however, the infertility is self-induced through artificial contraception, then the couple is frustrating one of the principal purposes of marriage. It is demonstrating avarice and a lack of faith in the Providence of God, Who, whether He gives children or not, does all for the best and provides all that is necessary for those who believe in Him. As St. John Chrysostom says: "All men know that they who are under the power of this disease [the sin of avarice] are wearied even of their father's old age [wishing him to die so they can inherit]; and that which is sweet, and universally desirable, the having of children, they esteem grievous and unwelcome. Many at least with this view have even paid money to be childless, and have mutilated nature, not only killing the newborn, but even acting to prevent their beginning to live."<sup>290</sup> The same saint condemned contraception as "murder

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<sup>288</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, III. Translated by J.E.L. Oulton and H. Chadwick in *The Library of Christian Classics*, II, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954.

<sup>289</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *First Discourse on Marriage*.

<sup>290</sup> St. Chrysostom, *Homily 28 on Matthew*, 5.

before conception”.<sup>291</sup> The Holy Fathers condemned not only crude methods of contraception, such as onanism, but also all chemical methods.

Dr. Taylor Marshall writes: “Saint Paul condemns contraception by the name of *pharmakeia*, the word from which we derive our term ‘pharmacy.’ Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery {*pharmakeia*}, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God’ (Galatians 5.19-21).

“Surely, Paul does not mean to condemn those who prescribe herbs for those suffering from gout. Looking back to Saint Paul’s list, we see that the sin of *pharmakeia* follows sexual sins and the sin of idolatry. These ancient witchdoctors or pharmacists were especially popular in idolatrous cultures, since pagan fertility rites often involved sexual orgies. Obviously, the women involved in these depraved rituals would not wish to bear children to strangers, and so they sought to become sterile or sought to relieve themselves of the responsibility of a child through abortion. The ancient Greek pharmacists could provide drugs to meet these goals.

The book of Revelation also condemns those who practice *pharmakeia* along with those who practice idolatry, murder, and sexual immorality (Revelation 9.20-21). The grouping of *pharmakeia* with the three sins of idolatry, murder, and sexual immorality further confirms that *pharmakeia* is sin relating to killing and sexual impurity. The second-century physician Soranos of Ephesus, in his book *Gynaecology*, uses the Greek term *pharmakeia* to refer to potions used for both contraception and abortion. In a similar manner, the third-century theologian Hippolytus condemned certain Christian women who employed ‘drugs {*pharmakois*} for producing sterility.’”<sup>292</sup>

Fr. Seraphim Rose warns against two rationalist extremes in the question of contraception. Quoting an abbot discussing contraception, he writes: “It isn’t in the Scriptures or Fathers or canons’—therefore we are free to ‘rationalize’ about it—which means, give way to worldly influences. He rationalizes a ‘middle path’ between Augustinism and license; but why start one’s reasoning from these false poles? Not having read Augustine, I can only say that from this summary of his position (that sexual union is permitted in marriage only when the partners have the conscious intention to have children therefrom) is, again, a rationalistic extreme which does not in the least invalidate what seems to us to be the quite obvious Orthodox teaching. Is such a conscious intention required of couples when the woman is beyond normal child-bearing age? That could hardly be—and yet many holy children have been born to pious couples beyond the normal child-bearing age! Of course there is something more to sexual union than the producing

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<sup>291</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on Romans*. See “Murder before Conception”, December 9, 2013, <https://theorthodoxlife.wordpress.com/2013/12/09/murder-before-conception/>

<sup>292</sup> Marshall, “6 Reasons Why Contraception is Sinful and Contrary to God’s Will”, <http://taylormarshall.com/2012/02/6-reasons-why-contraception-is-sinful.html>.

of children – but Orthodox teaching does not artificially separate different aspects of this question and allow a deliberate interference with the natural process, while preserving (as some Orthodox theologians are now saying) some ‘higher purpose’ in sexual union while using contraceptives. Even R.C. ‘rhythm’ is a rationalistic device and not without sin – though obviously of a lesser degree than ‘artificial’ means.”<sup>293</sup>

That God is in complete control of the reproductive process, opening and shutting the womb in accordance with His will, and not man’s, is demonstrated by many stories from the Holy Scriptures. For example, we read in Genesis: “When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or I shall die!’ Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, ‘Am I in the place of God, Who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?’” (30.1-2). Here Jacob demonstrates his faith that Rachel’s inability to conceive was because God did not want her to conceive, and for no other reason. Later, however, “God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her and opened her womb...” (30.22).

“Childbirth and the raising of children,” writes Fr. John Meyendorff, “are indeed a great joy and God’s blessing. There can be no Christian marriage without an immediate and impatient desire of both parents to receive and share in this joy. A marriage where children are unwelcome is founded upon a defective, egoistic and fleshly form of love. In giving life to others, man imitates God’s creative act and, if he refuses to do so, he not only rejects his Creator, but also distorts his own humanity; for there is no humanity without an ‘image and likeness of God’, i.e., without a conscious, or unconscious desire to be a true imitator of the life-creating Father of all.”<sup>294</sup>

Abortion has always been considered a mortal sin by the Church. Thus the very early *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* forbids the killing of embryos, and St. Basil the Great counts it as murder.<sup>295</sup> And the sixth-century Patriarch of Constantinople, St. John the Faster, lists both abortion and contraception in his list of sins: “desire for sterility, abortion, use of herbs to avoid conception...”<sup>296</sup>

The same Saint goes on to say, contradicting modern attitudes to the nature of the foetus: “We do not have a precise distinction between the foetus which has been formed and that which has not yet been formed”.<sup>297</sup> For, as Nedelsky writes: “The Biblical, patristic, canonical, and liturgical traditions of the Church all point to the beginning of individual human life at the moment of conception. Saint Luke in his Gospel tells of the Mother of God’s visit to Saint Elizabeth, in whose womb Saint John the Baptist leapt for

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<sup>293</sup> Rose, *Letter 174*.

<sup>294</sup> Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>295</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Canon 2*.

<sup>296</sup> St. John the Faster, *Penitential*; in Archimandrite Seraphim Papacostas, *Repentance*, Athens: Zoe, 1970, p. 36, footnote.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.* See Protopresbyter George Grabbe, “Abortion: The Orthodox View”, and Presbytera Valeri Brockman, “Abortion: The Continuing Holocaust”, *The True Vine*, Summer, 1991, № 10.

joy at hearing of the coming of Christ (Luke 1.41-44). Saint Gregory of Nyssa in *On the Soul and Resurrection* writes, 'The beginning of existence is one and the same for body and soul'. The canons condemn abortion *at any stage* of pregnancy, 'whether the fetus be formed or unformed' in the words of Saint Basil the Great (Ep. 188, Canon 3). The Church's liturgical tradition likewise recognizes conception as the beginning of existence, celebrating the Conception of the Mother of God (December 9), Saint John the Baptist (September 23), and Christ Himself in the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25). These examples, which could easily be multiplied, demonstrate that the Church has always regarded conception as the beginning of individual human life, and underscore that embryonic life is fully human and personal."<sup>298</sup>

Not only abortion and contraception, but also the modern techniques of *in vitro* fertilization, drug-induced fertility and surrogate motherhood, are forbidden. For while the aim here is not to avoid the bearing of children, the means used are unnatural and usually murderous (for the producing of one extra embryo requires the killing of those surplus to the one) or adulterous (for surrogate motherhood is adultery). Thus God's purpose is in any case frustrated. For only if He, the Creator, blesses the means and timing of human procreation, will the family thus formed become a true icon of Christ and the Church, or of the Holy Trinity.

"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18.19). The Christian family is one such gathering; it is truly a "little church", as St. John Chrysostom calls it. Two are sufficient to form such a church if each of the spouses carries out the obedience given to them - love from the husband, obedience from the wife. If God wills to increase the two into three, then the unity is still richer and the likeness to the One God in Trinity still closer. But if the two wish to prevent their multiplication into three, or on the contrary create it in an unnatural manner contrary to God's will, then the icon is destroyed...

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<sup>298</sup> Nedelsky, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Cf. M.-H. Congourdeau, *op. cit.*, pp. 693-709 ; Spyros N. Troianos, "L'embryon dans le droit canon byzantine" (The Embryo in Byzantine Canon Law), *Ethique* (Ethics), № 4, Spring, 1992, pp. 44-57.

## Sexual Perversion

Fallen eros has tended to plumb ever deeper depths of evil from generation to generation. For, as Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes, “*there is no limit, no bottom to the abyss of carnal pleasures. Today – this far, tomorrow – further, and so on to loss of consciousness, to self-annihilation.*”<sup>299</sup>

In the sixth chapter of Genesis, we read the extraordinary story of how the “sons of God” (“angels” is the word in the original text of the Alexandrian Bible) seduced the “daughters of men”. From these unlawful unions came “giants”. Then there came the universal Flood which swept away the whole of mankind except Noah and his family.

Much remains unclear about this story. And it is not indicated whether or not there is a direct causal connection between the unlawful unions and the Flood of Noah. But their close proximity is very suggestive...<sup>300</sup>

The Apostle Jude appears refer to this story, linking it with the sexual perversions of Sodom and Gomorrah: “The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgement of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities round about in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 6-7). The Apostle Peter has a very similar passage in his second epistle (2.4-6).

The Lord Himself compared the period before the Flood to the period before His Second Coming. Both periods are marked by a sinister combination of apparent normality with profound abnormality: “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17.26-27). The period we are living through now is very similar. Now, as then, men have begun to multiply on the earth, and now, as then, the condition of mankind, while relatively peaceful, is profoundly sinful, being manifested above all in the spread of *sexual perversions* of all kinds.

Sexual perversion may be defined as the diversion of sexual desire from a *person* of the opposite sex to a *body* of the opposite sex (rape, sadomasochism, paedophilia), or to a person of the *same* sex (homosexuality, paedophilia), or to an *animal* (bestiality), or to an inanimate *thing* (fetishism). Since perversions are unnatural, the penance for them is more severe than for fornication – but the same as for adultery. Thus the penance for adultery, sodomy and bestiality is fifteen years without communion, while for fornication it is seven

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<sup>299</sup> Lebedev, “‘Seksual’noe obrazovanie’ so shkol’noj skam’i?”, p. 86.

<sup>300</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this story, see V. Moss, “Genetics and the Birth of the Antichrist”, [www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com), the “Articles” section.

years.<sup>301</sup>

However, before we discuss perversions as such, let us establish what is natural and what is not natural, perverted and unperverted, in man's sexual nature.

Now the contemporary perverts and their champions argue that the sexual distinctions are not important and therefore can be "renegotiated". However, according to the Holy Scriptures, the distinction - and the attraction - between male and female was there from the very beginning, even before the fall. When Eve was created out of the side of Adam, he said of her: "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called woman [*isha* in Hebrew] because she was taken out of man [*ish*]"<sup>302</sup>. Here he is acknowledging that they are of one flesh - in other words, that they are *married - physically married*. These words, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes, are "the foundation of, and the reason for, the mysterious attraction and union between man and woman".<sup>303</sup> They "have become," writes St. Asterius of Amasea, "a common admission, spoken in the name of all men to all women, to the whole female sex. These words bind all the rest. For that which took place in the beginning in these first-created ones passed into the nature of their descendants."<sup>304</sup> "This is the origin," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "of the irresistible attraction of man to his 'wife' (the woman) as to the most necessary complement of his own nature. Union in love with the woman can be replaced only by union in love with God, which is immeasurably more profound. It is on such a union with God that monasticism is founded, which is why it does not lead to psychological complexes. But monasticism is not for everyone, it is the lot of special people, 'who can accommodate' this condition (*Matthew* 19.11-12). But for the majority the woman remains one of the most necessary conditions of a normal existence."<sup>305</sup> Adam continues with the famous words which the Lord Jesus Christ, followed by the Apostle Paul, saw as the founding document of marriage: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be in one flesh.*

Now it may be true, as St. Gregory of Nyssa argues, that the whole apparatus of sexual anatomical differences and sexual reproduction, being aspects of "the garments of skin" given to Adam and Eve after their fall, only came into being after the fall. If that is so, then sexual intercourse took place, as St. John of the Ladder points out, only after the fall. But

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<sup>301</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Canons* 58, 59, 62, 63.

<sup>302</sup> The Hebrew words "ish" and "isha" (like the English "man" and "woman") emphasize the unity of the sexes in a single human nature. For "this name," as St. John Chrysostom says, "should reveal their common creation and become the foundation of a durable love and the cement of their union" (*Homily 6 on Genesis*, 5).

<sup>303</sup> Velimirovich, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, volume IV, p. 241, November 25.

<sup>304</sup> St. Asterius, *Sermon on Matthew* 19.3, P.G. 40:228; in S.V. Troitsky, "Brak i Tserkov'" ("Marriage and the Church"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986 (III), № 35, pp. 25-26.

<sup>305</sup> Lebedev, "O masterakh i margaritakh" ("On Masters and Margaritas"), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 53, № 5 (640), May, 2003, p. 31.

the fact remains that Adam was a man and Eve a woman already in Paradise, before the fall, that they were married and of one flesh already in Paradise, and that even then they were attracted to each other in a natural, but sinless, unfallen manner. Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria writes of Adam's body *before* the fall that it "was not entirely free from concupiscence of the flesh".<sup>306</sup> For "while it was beyond corruption, it had indeed innate appetites, appetites for food and procreation. But the amazing thing was that his mind was not tyrannized by these tendencies. For he did freely what he wanted to do, seeing that his flesh was not yet subject to the passions consequent upon corruption."<sup>307</sup>

Now science has established that the intellectual and emotional differences between men and women may be related to hormonal differences and to different patterns of activity in the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Indeed, these hemispherical differences appear to complement each other rather like male and female.<sup>308</sup> It is as if each individual man and woman were one half of a single bisexual organism, so that each man appears to be "missing" certain feminine qualities that would make him more whole, while each woman appears to be missing certain masculine qualities that would make her more whole.<sup>309</sup>

Be that as it may, and whether or not such differences existed before the fall, the fall has accentuated and corrupted the differences between the sexes. Thus men tend to be crude, insensitive and boastful, and women – weak-willed, vain and easily led by all kinds of influences. But these fallen differences do not entail that in the beginning, before the fall, there was never meant to be any real and important difference. The restoration of the image of God in man involves, not the abolition of all sexual differences, but their return to their original, unfallen condition, not the abolition of sexuality but sexual *integration*. Thus men return to real masculinity together with those feminine qualities which fallen masculinity drives out; and vice-versa for women. After all, although Christ was the perfect man, with none of the weaknesses of fallen men, nobody would claim that He is anything but supremely masculine. And the Virgin Mary is supremely feminine...

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<sup>306</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On I Corinthians 7*; quoted in Walter Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria*, Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College Press, 1957, p. 98.

<sup>307</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian*, 3, P.G. 76, 637; quoted in Burghardt, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>308</sup> Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2003.

<sup>309</sup> Intriguing, in this connection, is the following remark of Clement of Alexandria: "This, then, is the mark of the man, the beard, by which he is seen to be a man, is older than Eve, and is the token of the superior nature. In this God deemed it right that he should excel, and dispersed hair over man's whole body. Whatever smoothness and softness was in him He abstracted from his side when He formed the woman Eve,... while he (for he had parted with all his smoothness) remained a man, and shows himself a man." (*The Instructor*, III, 3) The inference is that Adam was of the male sex before, as after, the creation of Eve. However, Clement also seems to be implying that he lost certain of his more feminine attributes (here, his smoothness) and so was more masculine after than before her creation.

Again, modern medicine claims to be able to change men into women, and women into men. But sex-change operations appear to be far less successful than is commonly claimed.<sup>310</sup> And Dr. Paul R. McHugh, former psychiatrist-in-chief for John Hopkins Hospital and its current Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry, said that transgenderism is a “mental disorder” that merits treatment, that sex change is “biologically impossible,” and that people who promote sexual reassignment surgery are collaborating with and promoting a mental disorder.<sup>311</sup> And the reason for that seems to be that while you can (up to a point) change a man’s (or a woman’s) *secondary, external* secondary characteristics, you cannot change his *primary, internal* sexuality. For sexuality is not as superficial and “negotiable” as the modernists would like us to believe. There is more to sexuality than meets the eye...

The deeper aspects of sexuality, even on the purely physical plane, appear to be immutable.<sup>312</sup> Thus every man has an X and a Y chromosome, while every woman has two X chromosomes; and there are at least 6,500 genetic differences between men and women which no amount of hormones or surgery can change. As a scientific journalist writes: “Although men and women sometimes act like separate species, scientists have long assumed that – in terms of their DNA – they are more or less the same. But a new study has shown that the sexes really are quite different, reports *Nature* magazine, and it all comes down to the X chromosome. Women carry two X chromosomes; men, by contrast, have one X, inherited from their mothers, and one Y. The Y is an ‘eroded’ version of the X chromosome with fewer than 100 working genes. The X, by contrast, has more than 1000, and is able to deploy them more intricately. “Because women have two X chromosomes, one is inactive. But that doesn’t mean it’s entirely silent. The new research has revealed that up to 25 % of genes in the so-called inactive chromosome are actually switched on. In other words, women are getting ‘double doses’ of some genes. ‘The effect of these genes from the inactive X chromosome could explain some of the differences between men and women that are not attributable to sex hormones,’ said Laura Carrel of Pennsylvania State University. These could include emotional, behavioural and physical differences, including susceptibility to disease. Although the X contains only 4% of all human genes, it accounts for almost 10% of those inherited diseases that are caused by a single gene. These ‘X-lined’ disorders include colour blindness, haemophilia, various forms of mental retardation and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. With no ‘spare’ X to make up for genetic deficiencies, men are more vulnerable to ‘X-linked’ conditions.”<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Walt Heyer, “‘Sex change’ Surgery: What Bruce Jenner, Diane Sawyer, and you should Know”, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/78949.htm>, April 27, 2015.

<sup>311</sup> Michael W. Chapman, “Johns Hopkins Psychiatrist: Transgender is ‘Mental Disorder;’ Sex Change ‘Biologically Impossible’”, *cnsnews.com*, June 2, 2015. Cf. “The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s Next Civil Rights Frontier”, *Time Magazine*, June 9, 2104.

<sup>312</sup> Cf. Dorothy Kimura, “Sex Differences in the Brain”, *Scientific American*, vol. 267, September, 1992, pp. 80-87.

<sup>313</sup> “The Difference between Men and Women”, *This Week*, March 26, 2005, p. 17.

Thus the scientific evidence, taken as a whole, supports *both* the thesis that the sexuality of a man or woman is immutable, *and* St. Gregory's view that certain secondary sexual characteristics were "added" to the original man and woman after the fall. On the one hand, since, as the Lord says, there will be no marriage in the resurrection, it follows, as St. Gregory writes, that these secondary characteristics will not exist in the Kingdom: "If the organs of marriage exist for the sake of marriage, when that function does not exist we shall need none of the organs for that function".<sup>314</sup> On the other hand, "male and female created He them": the evidence also supports the position that there is a deeper, primary level of sexuality that is "wired into" the brain and cannot be removed or changed, from which it follows that the attempt to remove or reverse or "renegotiate" sexuality is unnatural and perverse...

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<sup>314</sup> St. Gregory, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 10. However, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose writes that "Adam and Eve were created, like the whole of the first creation, in the bloom of youth and beauty, and already possessing the sexual distinction that would be needed in their fallen nature" (*Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 187)

## Self-Love

Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: “*Individual* people can hold themselves back at certain levels of this abyss, but as a *tendency* in the life of society it has no end. Just as society’s *permissiveness* or *debauchery* in the present world of various ‘pleasures’ has no limit. If, 40-50 years ago, one had said that male homosexuals or female lesbians would be officially registered as ‘conjugal’ pairs, then the reply would not even have been horror, but rather a friendly laugh. However, that is the reality *now*! In a series of western countries they are officially *registered* and ‘*crowned*’. What next? Perhaps there will follow a *recognition* of bestiality as one of the forms of ‘refined and elegant’ sex? And then?... ‘Progress’ is ‘progress’ because it strives for infinity...

“According to the just formulation of F.M. Dostoyevsky, ‘if God does not exist, then *everything* (!) is permitted’. In fact, if God does not exist, then the holiest ‘holy thing’, the idol of the *highest value* in existence is undoubtedly ‘*pleasure*’. Whatever it may consist of and for whoever it may be. If!

“But if God does exist? Then what? Then it is necessary to know *what* laws He placed in the nature of man and what man is ‘prescribed’ to do, what not, and *why*...

“But who is now trying to ‘free’ men from the commandments of God and ‘allow’ them the cult of ‘pleasure’? The medieval (and *contemporary*!) Templars represent ‘him’ in the form of a *goat with a woman’s torso*, sitting on the earth’s globe, with a five-pointed star on his goat’s forehead, and between his horns a torch, a symbol of ‘enlightenment’, ‘reason’. On one hand is written: ‘free’, and on the other ‘permit’. He is called ‘Baphomet’. He is an idol, one of the representations of the devil (Lucifer). He whispers into the ears of his worshippers the idea that he is ‘god’, but he lies, as always. He is a fallen creature of God and will be punished with eternal torments, where he will with special ‘pleasure’ mock those who, at his suggestion, serve ‘pleasure’ as an idol. But before that before the Second Coming of Christ, he will try to establish his dominion over the whole world with the help of his ‘son’ – the Antichrist. But he, in his turn, in order to gain dominion over men, will, among other methods, particularly strongly use *sex*. For *sex*, which turns people into voluntary animals, makes their manipulation very much easier, that is, it destroys the primordial structure of mankind, the nation and the state – the correct *family*, thereby as it were annihilating the ‘image of God’ in mankind.”<sup>315</sup>

If we try and go deeper into the nature of this self-destructive tendency of modern society we come to concept of *self-love* (Greek: φιλαυτία), which, though spiritual in essence, is closely linked to the carnal sin of lust, in that the latter represents a corruption and redirection of man’s natural erotic feeling from the other to the self. The passionless delight *in* the other becomes a passionate desire *for* the other; “flesh of my flesh” becomes “flesh *for* my flesh”. As such, it is a devouring, egocentric force, the very opposite of love. Self-

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<sup>315</sup> Lebedev, “‘Seksual’noe obrazovanie’” (“Sexual Education”), *Russkij Pastyr’* (Russian Pastor), № 24, I-1996, pp. 86-87, 90-91.

love is at the root, not only of lust, but also of all forms of perversion, insofar as perversion involves the utilization of another, who (or which) is seen as no more than an instrument for one's pleasure (or pain). For perversion rejects a fully mutual personal relationship of love in favour of an impersonal relationship of use (or rather: abuse).

As St. Maximus the Confessor teaches, in Hans Balthasar's interpretation of his thought: "Two elements come together in the concept of *φιλαυτία*, which is the essential fault: egoism and carnal voluptuousness. To sin is to say no to the authority of God, it is 'to wish to be a being-for-oneself', and in consequence, for man it is to slide towards sensual pleasure. But in this double element there also lies hidden an internal contradiction of the sin which manifests itself immediately as its immanent chastisement. In sensual pleasure, the spirit seeks an egoistical substitute for its abandonment of God. But this abandonment itself isolates it egoistically instead of uniting it to the beloved. Voluptuousness 'divides into a thousand pieces the unity of nature, and we who take part in this voluptuousness tear each other apart like ferocious beasts'.

"*Φιλαυτία* has even torn apart the one God into a multitude of idols as it has torn nature, and 'to obtain a little more pleasure, it excites us against each other like animals'. This 'deceiving and pernicious love', this 'cunning and tortuous voluptuousness' ends by pitting our flesh: 'the flesh of every man is a valley pitted and gnawed by the continuous waves of the passions' and ends 'in the disgust which overthrows the whole of this first affection'."<sup>316</sup>

There are many illustrations of the ferocious and deadly power of this fallen sexuality in the Old Testament. Thus we have the story of the Levite's concubine, whose body he cut up in twelve pieces, literally "dividing the unity of nature into pieces" (Judges 19). Again, "the overthrow of the first affection" is illustrated by the story of the incestuous rape of David's daughter by his first-born son Amnon. The sacred writer says that Amnon loved Themar and "was distressed even unto sickness" because of her. And yet, having raped her, "Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her" (II Kings 13.1,2,15).

For, writes St. Maximus, "the torment of suffering is intimately mixed with pleasure, even when it seems to be snuffed out by the violence of the impassioned pleasure of those who are possessed by it". "Nature punishes those who seek to do violence to her to the extent that they deliver themselves to a way of life contrary to nature; they no longer have at their disposal all the forces of nature such as she had given to them originally; so here they are diminished in their integrity and thus chastised." "Wishing to flee the painful sensation of grief, we hurl ourselves towards pleasure... and in forcing ourselves to soothe the wounds of grief by pleasure, we thereby confirm still more the sentence directed

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<sup>316</sup> Balthasar, *Liturgie Cosmique: Maxime le Confesseur* (Cosmic Liturgy: Maximus the Confessor), Paris: Aubier, 1946, pp. 142-143. Cf. St. Maximus: "The more human nature sought to preserve itself through sexual procreation, the more tightly it bound itself to the law of sin, reactivating the transgression connected with the liability to passions" (*Questions to Thalassius* 21).

against themselves. For it is impossible to find a pleasure to which pain and grief are not attached."<sup>317</sup> "Man acquired an impulse to pleasure as a whole and an aversion to pain as a whole. He fought with all his strength to attain the one and struggled with all his might to avoid the other, thinking that in this way he could keep the two apart from each other, and that he could possess only the pleasure that is linked to self-love and be entirely without experience of pain, which was impossible. For he did not realize... that pleasure can never be received without pain; the distress caused by pain is contained within pleasure."<sup>318</sup>

This intimate connection between pleasure and pain means that perhaps the most characteristic of all the sexual perversions is sado-masochism. For here, as the philosopher Roger Scruton points out, "there is frequently an aspect of punishment: the sadist's punishment of the other for failing to return his desire or for failing to play sincerely the role that the sadist has devised for him; the masochist's desire for punishment, which relieves him of the burden of a culpable desire. The masochist may indeed receive the strokes of the whip as a kind of 'permission' – a reassurance that he is paying her and now for his sexual transgression, and that the claims of conscience have been satisfied."<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> St. Maximus, in Balthasar, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-143.

<sup>318</sup> St. Maximus, *Questions to Thalassius*, P.G. 90: 256A.

<sup>319</sup> Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, London: Phoenix, 1994, p. 303. C.S. Lewis writes similarly of "a certain attitude which Venus, in her intensity, evokes from most (I believe, not all) pairs of lovers. This act can invite the man to an extreme, though short-lived, masterfulness, to the dominance of a conqueror or a captor, and the woman to a correspondingly extreme abjection and surrender. Hence the roughness, even fierceness, of some erotic play; the 'lover's pinch which hurts and is desired'. How should a sane couple think of this? Or a Christian couple permit it?" (*The Four Loves*, London: Collins, 1960, 2012, p. 125)

## Homosexuality

If sexual perversion is unnatural, how is it to be explained? Since its cause cannot be found in human nature, it must be sought outside nature, in the realm of the fallen spirits. Let us examine this thesis in the case of homosexual perversion...

Now the prototypical description of homosexuality in the Bible is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose inhabitants were destroyed, writes the Apostle Jude, because they went after “strange flesh” – that is, not flesh of the opposite sex, which would be natural, but flesh of the same sex, which is indeed “strange”.

St. Paul sees the cause of this strangeness, this unnaturalness, in *the worship of the creature instead of the Creator*: “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust (ορεξει) one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet...” (Romans 1.21-26).

St. John Chrysostom comments that if the pleasure had been “according to nature, they would have enjoyed [it] with more sense of security and greater joy, and so have been far removed from shameful deeds. But they would not; which is why they are quite beyond the pale of pardon, and have insulted nature itself. And still more disgraceful than these is the women seeking these couplings, for they ought to have more sense of shame than men.... Then, having reproached the women first, he goes on to the men also, and says, ‘And likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman’ This is clear proof of the ultimate degree of corruption, when both sexes are abandoned. Both he who was called to be the instructor of the woman and she who was told to become a help like the man now behave as enemies to one another. Notice how deliberately Paul measures his words. For he does not say that they loved and desired each other but that ‘they burned in their lust for one another’! You see that the whole of desire comes from an excess which cannot contain itself within its proper limits. For everything which transgresses God’s appointed laws lusts after monstrous things which are not normal. For just as many often abandon the desire for food and come to feed on earth and small stones, and others, possessed by excessive thirst, often long even for mire, so these also charged into this explosion of lawless love. But if you ask, where did this intensity of lust come from? [I answer:] it was from being abandoned by God. And why were they abandoned by God? Because of their

lawlessness in abandoning Him: 'men with men working that which is unseemly'. Do not, he means, because you have heard that they burned, suppose that the evil was only in desire. For the greater part of it came from their luxuriousness, which also kindled their lust into flame.... And he called it not lust, but that which is unseemly, and that rightly. For they both dishonoured nature, and trampled on the laws. And see the great confusion which fell out on both sides....

"It was meet that the two should be one, I mean the woman and the man. For 'the two,' it says, 'shall be one flesh'. But this was effected by the desire for intercourse, which united the sexes to one another. This desire the devil first took away and then, having changed its direction, thereby divided the sexes from one another, and made the one to become two in opposition to the law of God. For it says, 'the two shall be one flesh'; but he divided the one flesh into two: here then is one war. Again, these same two parts he provoked to war both against themselves and against one another. For even women abused women, and not men only. And the men stood against one another, and against the female sex, as happens in a battle by night. So you see a second and third war, and a fourth and fifth. And there is also another, for beside what has been mentioned they also behaved lawlessly against nature itself. For when the devil saw that it is this desire that, principally, draws the sexes together, he was bent on cutting through the tie, so as to destroy the race, not only by their not copulating lawfully, but also by their being stirred up to war, and in sedition against one another."<sup>320</sup>

So the process is as follows. First, the man (or the woman) of his own free will transgresses the commandments of God. Then God abandons him. This allows the devil entry. He then takes a natural desire and perverts it into an unnatural direction.

Fr. Thomas Hopko writes: "An interpretation of this passage [[Romans 1.21-29](#)] that claims the apostle was right in forbidding acts 'contrary to nature', but was ignorant of the fact that many people are 'by nature' homosexual and therefore should act according to their God-given homosexuality, is unacceptable to Orthodox Christian faith. No one in Orthodox Christian tradition has ever interpreted this text in this way, nor can anyone do so, according to Orthodoxy, when they read the Bible as a whole. On the contrary, the biblical teaching is rather this: The fact that many people have sexual feelings and desires for persons of their own sex is among the most powerful proofs that human beings and life have been distorted by sin..."<sup>321</sup>

Clearly, then, there is a difference in kind between natural heterosexual desire, fallen though it is, and unnatural homosexual desire. The one was implanted in nature by God from the beginning (as we have seen, according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, an uncorrupted form of sexual attraction was already present between Adam and Eve in paradise): the other is unnatural, and is incited by demonic forces outside human nature to which sinners give access through their idolatrous worship of creation. Like the demonic lust of "the sons

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<sup>320</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 4 on Romans*.

<sup>321</sup> Hopko, *Christian Faith and Same-Sex Attraction*, Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 2006, p. 57.

of God” for the daughters of men in Genesis 6, homosexuality is a demonically inspired undermining of the natural order.

This is proved by the many cases in which people who have been led to think that they are homosexual, but return quickly and joyfully to the natural order once they have been freed from the unnatural power that controlled them. While supporters of homosexuality mock this evidence, it is actually very important in demonstrating that homosexuality is by no means natural.

Thus Robert Epstein writes: “In a landmark study published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in October 2003, [Robert L.] Spitzer interviewed 200 men and women who once considered themselves homosexuals but who had lived their lives as heterosexuals for at least five years. Most of the participants had undergone some form of reorientation therapy. In addition to determining whether such therapy actually worked, Spitzer wanted to know just how dramatically people could alter their orientation. To his surprise, most of his subjects not only reported living long-term (more than 10 years) as heterosexuals, they also declared that they had experienced ‘changes in sexual attraction, fantasy and desire’ consistent with heterosexuality. The changes were clear for both sexes...”<sup>322</sup>

Again, in the course of eight studies on identical twins carried out in the last twenty years by Dr. N. Whitehead in Australia, the US and Scandinavia, it was discovered, not only that homosexuality is not genetic in origin, but also that it very easily turns back to the natural condition.

“In the identical twin studies, Dr. Whitehead has been struck by how fluid and changeable sexual identity can be.

“Neutral academic surveys show there is substantial change. About half of the homosexual/bisexual population (in a non-therapeutic environment) moves towards heterosexuality over a lifetime. About 3% of the present heterosexual population once firmly believed themselves to be homosexual or bisexual.’

“‘Sexual orientation is not set in concrete,’ he notes.

“Even more remarkable, most of the changes occur without counseling or therapy. ‘These changes are not therapeutically induced, but happen ‘naturally’ in life, some very quickly,’ Dr. Whitehead observes. ‘Most changes in sexual orientation are towards exclusive heterosexuality.’”<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Robert Epstein, “Do Gays have a Choice?”, *Scientific American Mind*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2009, pp. 66-67.

<sup>323</sup> <http://www.redflagnews.com/headlines/identical-twin-studies-prove-homosexuality-is-not-genetic>. See also <http://patdollard.com/2014/12/identical-twin-studies-prove-homosexuality-is-not-genetic/#ehmuFWIQgYU9qyFw.99>

This conclusion is confirmed by a study carried out by questionnaire on Indian homosexuals. "It was noted that only about one-fourth of the MSM in our study had prior homosexual orientation, that is, before their first homosexual contact. Therefore a large proportion of subjects did not indulge in such behavior due to a natural orientation. Instead, they indulged due to various other circumstances and/or misconceptions.

"Little more than half of the subjects believed that homosexual behavior carried a lower risk of transmission of STIs as compared to heterosexual contact. This is a grossly significant misconception which can have a considerable adverse impact on the sexual practices and hence the sexual health of adolescents/adults.

"One direct representation of such a misconception is the high percentage of subjects who had unprotected homosexual contact.

"The near doubling of average values for B (sexual behavior) as compared to A (sexual attraction) in the sexual orientation grid suggests the proportion of subjects who lack prior homosexual orientation but indulged in homosexual behavior due to various circumstances which include:

- Lack/fear of having heterosexual contacts
- Misconceptions regarding risk of acquiring STIs
- Peer pressure
- Under influence of alcohol
- Due to situations such as inequalities of age, occupation, and financial power.

"Natural orientation cannot be chosen. But if a significant proportion of MSM did not have a natural homosexual orientation, yet indulged in homosexual behavior under various circumstances (as listed above), then it implies that in these people, homosexuality was an acquired behavior."<sup>324</sup>

So even among practising homosexuals, homosexuality is *not* their natural orientation, and if certain environmental obstacles of a psychological nature are overcome, they will return to heterosexuality. This finding does not contradict the Scriptural and Patristic teaching that homosexuality is caused by demons, but suggest that demonic inspiration is more effective in people with certain psychological problems. Consistent with this thesis is the following story (in which the names of the people have been changed.)

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<sup>324</sup> R. Ramachandran, Sudha Viswanath, P. Elangovan, and N. Saravanan "A study on male homosexual behavior", *Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 2015 July-December, 36(2): 154-157.

“This took place some years after the war, after I had graduated from Amsterdam university, had married and was living in England with my first husband. I had a school friend who was a real macho man, good at sport and so on. He had a younger brother called Pieter who was quite the opposite: tall and slim, with a sensitive nature, studying history in Leiden. Because of the sharp contrast with his brother, many of his student friends started to suggest to Pieter that he was a homosexual. And when he listened to them talking about falling in love, and how their pulses would race, and their heart would beat, at the sight of certain girls, Pieter, who had never experienced what they were describing, thought: ‘Maybe I am a homosexual’. As a result, he made himself vulnerable to the advances of other men, and entered into a relationship.

“He then wrote me a letter from Holland telling me his story, and said: ‘Maybe you don’t want to know me any more.’ I replied: ‘Of course I want to know you. But this is against the Law of God [Pieter was a believer], it is an abomination in His sight, and you must fight against it. We all suffer from various temptations and sins. But we must not give in to them, but must control them. We must not say: “Because I’m made that way, I can act that way.” For example, if we are kleptomaniacs, we cannot just give in to the temptation to steal. And if we have a violent temper, we cannot just give in to our temper and be violent.’ Pieter fell into a depression, and went to his parents’ town to throw himself off a bridge near his parents’ home.

However, by Divine Providence, his father decided to go for a walk in that area, something he never normally did. Approaching the bridge, he recognized his son standing on the edge, as if he was about to throw himself in. He called out: ‘Pieter!’, Pieter stopped, and turning to his father, put his arms around him and sobbed: ‘I was about to commit suicide because I’m a homosexual.’ His father was deeply shocked; he took him home, but didn’t want to speak to his son again. Some time later, Pieter’s father was dying. Pieter was the only one of his three sons who was in Holland. He sat next to his bed in hospital, keeping watch. He fell asleep and had an extraordinary vision. He saw a great and evil angel trying to throw him onto the ground. Pieter struggled to free himself, knowing that it was essential that he did not fall. But this angel was far stronger than him. Suddenly, however, the angel let go. Pieter woke up and felt himself completely cured of his homosexuality. He bent over to his father to tell him the news, but his father had died...

“A little later, Pieter went to Ireland for his Ph.D. studies in history, and met a Spanish student called Pilar who was also working for her Ph.D. They fell in love. Returning to Holland via London airport, Pieter phoned me up at 5 in the morning to tell me excitedly: ‘Olga, Olga, I’ve fallen in love. My pulse is racing, my heart is fluttering. She’s beautiful, has lovely eyes and voice,’ etc., etc. I was very sleepy and could hardly take it all in. But I was very happy for him. A little later Pilar came to Holland – they were going to get engaged there and then get married in Spain. She was going to leave the Roman Catholic

church, and he the Protestant church in order to join the Orthodox Church to which I belong. Then followed the happiest weeks of his life preparing for the engagement and wedding. She came over before Pascha, but unknown to us was carrying the Legionnaires' disease, which she had caught in Spain. He was infected, and fell very ill on Great Friday. 24 hours later he was dead. The death was so rapid that an autopsy was ordered. It revealed that Pieter had been deficient in a certain sexual hormone. Pilar went back to Spain, and Pieter was buried next to his father..."<sup>325</sup>

Although this story constitutes no more than anecdotal evidence, it strongly suggests three things: (1) that a low level of normal libido may make a man vulnerable to homosexuality even when he is in fact heterosexual; (2) that environmental influences – the suggestions of school friends and peers, perhaps a poor relationship with one's father – may also dispose a man to the sin if he does not actively resist them; but that (3) the main agent of homosexuality is *demonic*, the demon of homosexuality.

The idea that homosexuality has a biological base in human nature has been based mainly on the hypothesis that there is a "gay gene". However, Neil and Briar Whitehead have proved that the genetic component in homosexuality is no more than 10%.<sup>326</sup> And "no one has yet identified a particular gay gene," writes Robert Kunzig.<sup>327</sup>

Linda Bowles puts it more bluntly: "The truth is this: There is no 'gay' gene. The scientific search for a biological basis for homosexuality has been a complete failure. Highly touted studies, including the study of the brains of 35 male cadavers by Simon LeVay (1991) and the heralded study of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers by Dean Hamer (1993), have not stood up to rigorous scientific scrutiny.

"The widely respected Dr. Joel Gelertner of Yale University in an article in *Science* made this observation about various studies trying to link genes with complex human behavior. 'All were announced with great fanfare; all were greeted unsceptically in the popular press; all are now in disrepute.'

"Studies of identical twins are especially revealing. Identical twins, unlike fraternal twins, have precisely the same genetic makeup. If same-sex orientation were genetically determined, one could expect identical twins to always have the same sexual orientation. Dozens of studies prove they do not. Almost all scientists who have studied human development agree that environmental influences and life experiences play a significant role in essentially all complex human behaviors, including sexual mindsets.

"The bottom line is this: No child is born to be a homosexual. Homosexuals are made,

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<sup>325</sup> Mrs. Olga Moss, *Glimpses of Another World*, Lulu.com, 2021.

<sup>326</sup> Neil E. Whitehead, Ph.D., *My Genes Made Me Do It! – Homosexuality and the scientific evidence* (Third edition, Oct. 2013).

<sup>327</sup> Kunzig, "Finding the Switch", *Psychology Today*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200804/finding-the-switch>.

and they can be unmade. This is the truth that more psychiatrists and psychologists need to acknowledge. This is the truth that the American people need to know, parents of young children need to heed, and politicians need to understand.”<sup>328</sup>

“By their fruits ye shall know them”: that homosexuality is evil and unnatural is proved by its destructive fruits. Thus it is destructive from a *medical* point of view (because any invasive surgery requiring a lifetime on drugs is destructive), from a *psychological* point of view (because it creates no stable, satisfying familial bonds), from a *demographic* point of view (because it brings down the birth-rate and makes societies older), from a *social* point of view (because it is divisive, dividing “straights” against “gays” and men against women), and from a *political* point of view (because it undermines the foundation of the State, which is the family).

Let us look first at some of the psychological and social effects. “In their book *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop*, David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison found that of the 156 couples they studied, 75 percent of the partners learned within five years that for the relationship to survive, cheating had to be tolerated, as long as one or the other did not become emotionally involved with the other sex partner. In her book *The Mendola Report*, lesbian Mary Mendola conducted a nationwide survey of approximately 400 homosexual couples. She, too, found that homosexuals distinguish between sexual and emotional exclusivity. Indeed, just 26 percent of homosexuals believe commitment is paramount in a marriage-type relationship. This translates to an almost unfathomable degree of sleeping around. A recent Amsterdam study found that men in homosexual relationships cheat with an average of eight partners a year. Others have found that the average homosexual has between 100 and 500 sexual partners over his or her lifetime. One study showed that 28 percent have had 1,000 or more sex partners, with another study placing the percentage between 10 and 16 percent. While adultery is certainly a factor in traditional marriages, it is comparatively rare. In fact, studies on matrimony place the male fidelity rate between 75 and 80 percent and that of females between 85 and 90 percent. The reason is simple: Unlike homosexual relationships, emotional and sexual fidelity within matrimony are inexorably linked and always have been by definition. To extend the concept of marriage to a situation wherein fidelity is not the norm would not only cheapen the institution, but it would have disastrous consequences for children. Simply put, a marriage is not a marriage without total exclusivity.”<sup>329</sup>

Let us also look briefly at the *political* effects of homosexuality. A permissive attitude towards sodomy is incompatible with any understanding of *the State* that is based on the natural order. This is because the State is based on the family, and is designed to protect the family and its continuation and multiplication down the generations, whereas homosexuality, for obvious reasons, cuts short the timespan of the single-sex “family” to one generation. Therefore the State that legalizes homosexuality and discourages or

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<sup>328</sup> Bowles, “New Study Shows Homosexuals can Change”, in *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509).

<sup>329</sup> *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509).

downgrades natural, heterosexual marriage and childbirth will first undergo a process of rapid aging (this is already happening in many western societies), and then will eventually simply die out - unless it adopts unnatural, artificial (and often immoral) methods of acquiring children, such as kidnapping, accelerated immigration, genetic experimentation and surrogate motherhood.

Finally, Michael Hanby explores the *philosophical-anthropological* significance of the legalization of homosexuality and the new sexual technologies: "We must first understand that the sexual revolution is, at bottom, the technological revolution and its perpetual war against natural limits applied externally to the body and internally to our self-understanding. Just as feminism has as its practical outworking, if not its theoretical core, the technological conquest of the female body - 'biology is not destiny,' so the saying goes - so too same-sex marriage has as *its* condition of possibility the technological mastery of procreation, without which it would have remained permanently unimaginable.

"Opponents of same-sex marriage have not always perceived this clearly. They maintain that partisans of 'marriage equality' redefine marriage as an affective union which makes the birth and rearing of children incidental to its meaning, a result of the decoupling of sex and procreation in the aftermath of The Pill. But this is only half true. Since married couples normally can and typically *do* have children, same-sex unions must retain in principle some form of the intrinsic connection between marriage, procreation and childrearing if they are really to be counted as marriage and to be truly 'equal' in the eyes of society and the law. This can only be done by technological means. And so the argument for marriage as an affective union has been buttressed time and again in the courts by the claim that assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), surrogacy, and the like eliminate any relevant difference between a married man and woman and a same-sex couple, from which it is but a short step to the conclusion that the state has an obligation to secure same-sex couples' rights and access to these technologies as a condition of their genuine equality.

"Yet if this is true, it follows that no great weight attaches to natural motherhood and fatherhood and that being born to a father and mother is inessential to what it means to be human, or even to the meaning of childhood and family.

"To accept same-sex unions as 'marriage' is thus to commit officially to the proposition that there is no meaningful difference between a married man and woman conceiving a child naturally, two women conceiving a child with the aid of donor semen and IVF, or two men employing a surrogate to have a child together, though in the latter cases only one of the legally recognized parents can (presently) contribute to the child's hereditary endowment and hope for a family resemblance. By recognizing same-sex 'marriages' the state also determines once and for all that ARTs are not merely a remedy for infertility but a normative form of reproduction equivalent to natural procreation, and indeed it has been suggested in some cases that ARTs are an *improvement* upon nature. Yet if this is true, it follows that no great weight attaches to natural motherhood and fatherhood and that being born to a father and mother is inessential to what it means to be human, or even to the

meaning of childhood and family. These are not fundamentally 'natural' phenomena integral to human identity and social welfare but mere accidents of biology overlaid with social conventions that can be replaced by 'functionally equivalent' roles without loss..."<sup>330</sup>

This leads us, finally, to consider perhaps the profoundest and most frightening aspect of the modern sexual revolution and its legitimization of sexual perversion: the loss of the concepts of fatherhood, motherhood and marriage. In gay pseudo-marriages, a child is brought up with two fathers and no mother, or with two mothers and no father. Apart from any other psychological disturbances, this kind of deprivation - some would say: child molestation - may cause, one must be the loss of the concepts of normal fatherhood, motherhood and marriage.

The Lord taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer to "Our Father", and He called Himself "the Son of God", "the Son of Man" and the Bridegroom of the Church. The whole Gospel is imbued with the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father and for His Bride, the Church. And yet the central dogma of the Holy Trinity, the dogmas of the Incarnation, and the Life and Death of Christ in obedience to His Father, and finally the dogma of the adoption of Christians as sons of the Father in His Only-Begotten Son and of our holy Mother, the Church - all these become incomprehensible, or at least less vivid, less *real* for a person who has been brought up without real, natural family life - that is, with a biological father and a biological mother.

Just as the democratic revolution has weakened the consciousness of kingship and civil obedience in the people, so has the sexual revolution weakened the concept of fatherhood and sonship. Thus the sexual revolution not only destroys morality: it also destroys the Christian dogmatic consciousness... Therefore just as Lot fled from the burning of Sodom, it is time for us to "flee to the mountains", to the saints and to the Kingdom on high. There we will find refuge and strength. For just as the Lord "delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)", so "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgement" (II Peter 2.7-9).

A person's sexuality is not an incidental or mutable aspect of his personality and human nature. It is not only essential to his full participation in family life and in all those many aspects of human life that are tinged by the male/female polarity. It is essential to his understanding of the Fatherhood of God, and of the great mystery of "the mad passion of God for man", whereby He united Himself to human flesh and gave Himself for man's salvation, as a Bridegroom sacrifices Himself for his bride. "For this reason shall a man leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5.31-32).

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<sup>330</sup> Hanby, "The Brave New World of Same-Sex Marriage", *The Federalist*, <http://thefederalist.com/2014/02/19/the-brave-new-world-of-same-sex-marriage>.



### 3. EROS IN CHRIST

*I have betrothed you to one spouse, that I might present you a chaste virgin to Christ.*  
II Corinthians 11.2.

*God desired a harlot... and has intercourse with human nature, [whereby] the harlot herself... is transformed into a maiden.*  
St. John Chrysostom, On Eutropius, II, 2.

*He came to bind to Himself the principle of desire..., that it might take on a procreative disposition fixed and unalterable in the good.*  
St. Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua 42.

#### The Annunciation and the Nativity

Just as the fall corrupted everything, including the relations between man and woman, so the Coming of Christ renewed everything, including the relations between man and woman. The pure streams of Eros, which had been diverted and defiled by the fall, were restored to their former paths. This was done by *Christ Himself entering into marriage with humanity and recreating human eros in the image of His Own Divine Eros*. Divine Eros took upon Himself human eros in order to give it new life to it by uniting it to Himself in a pure and undefiled union. This marriage of God and man takes place in several stages. In the first, the new Adam, Christ, is united with the new Eve, the Ever-Virgin Mary, at the Annunciation and is born from her at the Nativity. In the second, the Heavenly Spouses renew the blessing on all earthly spouses at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. In the third, the marriage of Christ with the Church is prepared through the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ and the Descent of the Holy Spirit. In the fourth, Christ enters into union with each member of the Church through the sacrament of His Body and Blood. In the final, eschatological stage, He enters into union with the fullness of redeemed humanity from every age in the Wedding of the Lamb.

At the Annunciation we see a new and wondrous and unfallen form of sexual reproduction. As St. Hilary of Poitiers describes it: "The Virgin, the birth, the Body, then the Cross, the death, the visit to the lower world; these things are our salvation. For the sake of mankind the Son of God was born of the Virgin and of the Holy Spirit. In this process He ministered to Himself; by His own power - the power of God - which overshadowed her He sowed the beginning of His body, and entered on the first stage of His life in the flesh. He did it that by His incarnation He might take to Himself from the Virgin the fleshly nature, and that through this commingling there might come into being a hallowed Body of all humanity; that so through that Body which He was pleased to assume all mankind might be hid in Him, and He in return, through His unseen existence, be reproduced in all."

How was it possible for the Virgin to become the Bride of God at the Annunciation if she was a daughter of Adam and Eve and therefore an heir of original sin? The Roman Catholics answer this question by supposing that her parents, Joachim and Anna, were conceived “immaculately”, that is, not in the normal manner through sexual intercourse, and without the transmission of original sin to their daughter.

However, the Orthodox Church does not accept this explanation. Thus St. Athanasius the Great says that “Mary is our sister, for we are all of Adam”.<sup>331</sup> And St. John of Damascus writes: “O loins of Joachim most blessed, out of which came blameless seed”.<sup>332</sup> And again: “Thou (O Mother of God) from us hast inherited a corruptible body”.<sup>333</sup>

The Holy Fathers generally accept that Mary, having been born in original sin, had certain imperfections, while struggling more successfully against sin than any other human being. But, even though her sinfulness was small, she had to be purified from it before the Word could take flesh in her, and this purification was accomplished by the Holy Spirit. As St. John of Damascus writes: “After therefore the consent of the Holy Virgin, the Holy Spirit came upon her according to the word of the Lord, which the Angel did say, purifying her and giving her the strength both to receive and to give birth to the Word of God.”<sup>334</sup>

The Bride of God at the Annunciation is usually held by the Fathers to be human nature, or the flesh. Thus St. Augustine writes: “The Bridegroom’s chamber was the Virgin’s womb, where Bridegroom and Bride, Word and flesh, were joined together. It is written: ‘And the two shall be in one flesh’, or, as the Lord says in the Gospel, ‘therefore they are no longer two, but one flesh’ (Genesis 2.24; Matthew 19.6). So finely does Isaiah make the two one, when he speaks in Christ’s Person, ‘He put a band upon My head as a bridegroom, and adorned Me as a bride with her ornaments’ (Isaiah 61.10). The one Speaker makes Himself both Bridegroom and Bride; for they are ‘not two, but one flesh’, since ‘the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1.14). When to that flesh is joined the Church, there is the whole Christ, Head and Body.”<sup>335</sup>

In a more personal sense, Mary herself is the bride. For the parallel between the marriage of Adam and Eve in Paradise and the marriage of Christ and the Virgin in Nazareth is very close. The first Eve was to the first Adam both wife and daughter, and the new Eve was to the new Adam both wife and daughter and mother. For “David the forefather praised thee of old in hymns, O Virgin Bride of God, calling thee Daughter of

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<sup>331</sup> St. Athanasius, *Letter to Epictetus*, P.G. 26, 1061B; quoted in Christopher Veniamin, *The Orthodox Understanding of Salvation*, Dalton, PA: Mount Tabor Publishing, 2014, p. 53.

<sup>332</sup> St. John of Damascus, *On the Nativity of the Theotokos*, P.G. 96, 664B; quoted in Veniamin, *op. cit.*, pp. 52.

<sup>333</sup> St. John of Damascus, *On the Nativity of the Theotokos*, P.G. 96, 773C; quoted in Veniamin, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>334</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, P.G. 94, 985B’ quoted in Veniamin, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>335</sup> St. Augustine, *Homily 1 on I John*, 2.

Christ the King: Him thou has born as Mother and hast fed Him as thy Child".<sup>336</sup>

That Mary is the mother of Christ is obvious. But she is also His daughter as being His creation. Thus the tenth-century Byzantine theologian Ioannis Geometr writes: "The Bridegroom is for Her at the same time both Father and Son; and He Himself is both the Sower and the Seed."<sup>337</sup>

Again, the sixth-century Irish Saint Cuchumneus sings:

*Mary, O most wondrous Mother,  
Gave to her own Father birth,  
By Whom washed are all in water,  
Who believe throughout the earth.*<sup>338</sup>

She is "the daughter of the King" (Psalm 44.12), Christ Himself being the King, as St. Athanasius the Great explains: "Since He knew that He was to be born of the Virgin, He in no way kept it silent, but forthwith gave indication thereof, by saying in the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm: 'Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty'. For this is like what Gabriel said: 'Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee'. For when he spoke of Him as Christ, he at once made known His human generation that was from the Virgin by the words, 'Hearken, O daughter'. And you see Gabriel calls her by her name, 'Mary', because he was of a different nature from her, whilst David with reason calls her 'daughter', since she was to spring from his won seed."<sup>339</sup>

That Mary was also the bride of Christ is clear from the fact that at the age of three she is exhorted to forget her own people and her father's house in order to be united with the King in the innermost sanctuary of the Temple. Then, at the Incarnation they became one flesh, as St. Zeno, bishop of Verona in the fourth century, writes: "O prodigy! *Mary conceives of Him Whom she brings forth!*"<sup>340</sup> Again, St. Proclus of Constantinople writes:

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<sup>336</sup> *Menaion*, November 21, Feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple, Matins, Canon, Ode 1, verse.

<sup>337</sup> Ioannis Geometr, "Sermon on the Annunciation", *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), January, 2009, pp. 8-9

<sup>338</sup> St. Cuchumneus, in Thomas Livius, *The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries*, London: Burns & Oates, 1893, p. 460.

<sup>339</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *Epistle to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*, 1; in Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>340</sup> St. Zeno, *Tractatus*, 9; P.L. 11:416; in Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 127. Cf. St. Peter Chrysologus, commenting on the fact that "Mary was espoused to Joseph" (Matthew 1.18): "Why is it that the secret of heavenly innocence is destined for a spouse and not for a free woman?...No points, no letters, no syllables, not a single word, no names, no persons in the Gospel are without divine meaning. A spouse is wanted, that, even then, Christ's spouse, the Church, may be signified according to the words of the Prophet Hosea: 'I will espouse thee to Me in justice and judgement and mercy and commiserations; and I will espouse thee to Me in faith' (Hosea 2.19, 20). Hence John says, 'He that has the Bride is the Bridegroom' (John 2.29). And the blessed Paul: 'I have espoused thee to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (II Corinthians 11.2). Verily a spouse, who with virginal childbirth brings forth again the infancy of Christ..." God send to the Virgin a

“Mary is that beautiful spouse of the Song of Songs, who put off the old garment, washed her feet, and received the immortal Bridegroom within her own bridal chamber.”<sup>341</sup>

For it was she, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes, who “unreservedly entrusted herself to the desire of the King of kings, and the marriage of the Divine with mankind was consummated.”<sup>342</sup>

St. Symeon the Theologian asks who is the bride that God the Father chose for His Son and for Whom He prepared a marriage feast (Matthew 22.1). And he replies: “the daughter of one who rebelled against Him, one who committed murder and adultery” – that is to say, Mary, the daughter of David, who murdered Uriah and committed adultery with his wife. So “here you see the Master and Lord of all, the Holy of holies, the blessed God and unique Sovereign, the One Who dwells in unapproachable light, so condescending as to take from a rebel the bride of His only-begotten Son – Who Himself is invisible, unknowable, unsearchable, the Creator and Maker of all – and all of this for your sake and for your salvation! So who is the adulterer and murdered whose daughter God has chosen as a bride for Himself? Why, it is David, Jesse’s son, who both slew Uriah and committed adultery with his wife. It is David’s daughter, I mean Mary the all-undefiled and all-pure virgin, who is brought forth as the bride. I call her all-undefiled and all-pure in relation to us and to the men of the past, comparing her with them and with us, her servants. In relation to her Bridegroom and His Father, however, she is simply human – but still holy, all-holy, and pure and immaculate beyond the people of any generation. This is the one whom God chose and led to marriage with His Son. In what manner? Listen carefully.

“God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, send down one of His servants, I mean Gabriel the archangel, from the heights of His holy place, to declare to Mary the salutation. The angel descended from above to present the mystery to the virgin, and said to her: ‘Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ And, together with the word of greeting, the personal, co-essential, and co-eternal Word of God the Father entered wholly into the womb of the maid, and, by the descent and co-operation of His co-essential Spirit, took on flesh endowed with intelligence and soul from her all-pure blood, and became man. Here,

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winged carrier, who in conveying grace, gives the marriage portion and bears the dowry; that is, he brings faith, and delivers the gifts of virtue, being about to arrange the pledging of virginal consent. With haste the angelic agent flies to the bride, to ward off from the spouse of God, and to suspend, any affection to human espousals. Not indeed to take away the Virgin from Joseph, but to restore her to Christ, to Whom she was pledged in the womb, when first she was created. Thus Christ receives His own spouse, He carries not off another’s; nor does He make separation, when He joins to Himself His own entire creature in one body.” (*Sermon 146; P.L. 52, p. 592; in Livius, op. cit., p. 137*).

<sup>341</sup> St. Proclus, *Homily 6, 17*; in Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 98. Cf. Methodius of Olympus: “One may interpret this in another way: the Spouse means the Lord’s spotless flesh [which He took from the Virgin], for the sake of which He left the Father, came down hither and cleaved to it, and becoming man dwelt therein.” (*Symposium, VII, 7; in Livius, op. cit., p. 100*). Vladimir Lossky writes: “In the degree that she represents the Church, she has no other husband than her Son. In this conception without seed, the seed is the Word Himself” (“Original Sin”, *op. cit.*, p. 93).

<sup>342</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in Fr. Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1979, part 1, p. 216.

then, is the inexpressible union, and this the mystical marriage, of God, and thus occurred the exchange of God with men."<sup>343</sup>

In one Church hymn the Virgin says to the Angel, who appeared to her "in the form of a man": "Childbirth comes from mutual love: such is the law that God has given to men... I know not at all the pleasure of marriage: how then dost thou say that I shall bear a child?"<sup>344</sup> Clearly she suspected an attempt at seduction, a proposal of unlawful carnal relations. "Is there not something seductive and inappropriate here, as when a man approaches a virgin?"<sup>345</sup> But the Angel reassured her that while a marriage union was indeed in question, it would not be carnal union; it would not be a mystery of the lower kind between fallen men and women, but a higher mystery analogous to the virginal union of Adam and Eve in Paradise, a virginal union between herself and the Son of God, Who would come down from His Father in heaven to cleave to His Bride, becoming one flesh with her, but keeping her ever-virgin, as the first Adam and Eve remained virgin.

In his *Homily on the Annunciation* St. Demetrius of Rostov describes the mystery as follows: "Having received this glad tidings from the angel, the Most Pure one gave her assent to the will of the Lord and with the deepest humility replied from her heart, filled with love for God: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word' (Luke 1.38). And in the same instant, by the action of the Holy Spirit, the unspeakable conception took place in her holy womb, *without fleshly delight, but not without spiritual delight*. Then the Virgin's heart with particular fervour melted with divine desire, and her spirit burned with flaming seraphic love, and her entire mind, *being as if outside itself*, submerged itself in God, ineffably taking delight in His goodness. In this delight of her spirit in the all-perfect love of God, and her mind in the vision of God, was conceived the Son of God, and 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1.14)."<sup>346</sup>

Thus the Incarnation of the Word from the Virgin is the real archetype of human marriage, including the paradisaical marriage of Adam and Eve. It is the "great" mystery in the image and likeness of which the "small" mystery of ordinary human marriage was created. God became man, Spirit took on flesh, without seed and "without fleshly delight, but not without spiritual delight". As Adam gave "birth" to Eve in an ecstatic sleep, and then recognized in her "bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh", so did the new Eve give birth to the new Adam in a pure and unfallen ecstasy, recognizing in her Child her own flesh and blood – indeed, more her flesh and blood than the child of any previous human mother, in that He was her child alone, having no human father, but being, like the first Adam, "the Son of God" (Luke 3.37).

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<sup>343</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian, *First Ethical Discourse*, 9; in *On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, volume I, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995, pp. 53-54.

<sup>344</sup> *Menaion*, March 25, Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, Mattins, Canon, Ode 8, verse.

<sup>345</sup> Ioannis Geometr, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>346</sup> St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Menaion* for March 25; translated in *Orthodox Life*, March-April, 1969.

For how could the reunion of God and man after so many centuries of separation not be the occasion of the greatest spiritual joy? How could the human race not rejoice that in the person of the Virgin it was pregnant again by the Spirit, and able to bring forth spiritual fruit to its Maker and Husband? All true marriages look back to their archetype in Paradise. But they also look back to, and take their truth and grace from, “the archetype of the archetype”, the marriage of God and man, Christ and the Virgin. And it is through “the archetype of the archetype” that marriage, and human life in general, is restored to its archetype in Paradise.

Since marriage is the type of such great and joyous events, its nature is essentially festal, even in the fall. When a couple marries in the Lord, the marriage service reminds us of the ecstatic marriage of Adam and Eve, of the righteous marriages of the Old Testament, but, above all, of the supernatural marriage of God and man at the Incarnation. That is why the icon of the Incarnation precedes the married couple into the church, and, after the human couple have been crowned and are being led, holding their crowns, three times around the table, the choir chants: “Rejoice, O Isaiah! The Virgin is with child, and has borne a Son, Emmanuel, Who is both God and man; and Orient is His name. Him do we magnify, and call the Virgin blessed...”

### "Genesis" and "Gennisis"

However, one may object, is not the Incarnation an archetype, not so much of marriage in the flesh, as of the virginal life? In fact, is it not a sign of the eschatological abolition of sexuality? After all, did not Christ by His virginal birth from the All-holy Virgin achieve the purpose of marriage, which is procreation, *without* the sexuality that accompanies it in the fallen world?

The short answer to these last two questions is: yes. However, there is no contradiction here with what has been written above, because the Incarnation of the Word is the archetype *both* of the married life *and* of the virginal life. For, as we shall see in more detail later, they are *both* marital mysteries...

St. Maximus draws a distinction between two kinds of birth: "genesis" (γενεσις), or "coming into being" as the direct creation of God without sexual intercourse, and "gennisis" (γεννησις), or "generation" through sexual intercourse. Adam came into being through "genesis", while all his children born in the fall were generated through "gennisis". "Genesis" is the superior form of birth, because it involves no corruption or transmission of sin; and Christ as the New Adam, desiring to recreate human nature in His own Person in the glory of the original, unfallen creation, was born in this superior, sinless way. At the same time, however, He wished to assume the fallen nature of man in order to destroy that fall within himself, to be "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Galatians 4.4-5). And so His birth combined elements of both "genesis" and "gennisis", being on the one hand from a Virgin (the equivalent of the virgin earth from which the first Adam was formed) without the help of man but with the Divine "inbreathing", and on the other bearing all the signs in His body of the fall that is transmitted through sexual intercourse, having corruptible flesh subject to all the innocent passions, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, fear and pain. Christ's "genesis" guaranteed His freedom from original sin, and His "gennisis" - His passibility in the image of our passibility. "For when, in His voluntary abasement, He underwent the human birth punitively instituted after the fall, He assumed the natural liability to passions but not sinfulness. He became the New Adam by assuming a sinless creaturely origin [genesis] and yet submitting to a passible birth [gennisis]. Perfectly combining the two parts in Himself in a reciprocal relation, He effectively rectified the deficiency of the one with the extreme of the other, and vice versa..."<sup>347</sup>

Does this mean that Christ abolished sexuality through His own virginal conception and nativity? If the only purpose of sexuality were to continue the species in the fall, then the answer would be: yes. For Christ's conception and nativity did indeed show, as St. Maximus writes, "that there also happened to be another method of increasing the human race, a method foreknown to God, which would have prevailed if the first man had kept the commandment." And in a sense He did overcome the division between the sexes - but

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<sup>347</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 42, in Blowers and Wilken, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

without abolishing it entirely.<sup>348</sup>

But, as we have seen in the first chapter, there were other purposes. The most important of these was that the lower marital mystery between man and woman should reflect the higher marital mystery between God and His creation, between Christ and the Church. And this greater mystery began to be unfolded precisely here, at the conception and nativity of Christ. For in His union with the Virgin Christ both gave an archetype of virginity, in that it was completely pure and without carnal desire, and of marriage, in that it was truly a union "in one flesh"...

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<sup>348</sup> For the whole passage, see St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, P.G. 91:1304D-1312B (translated in Nellas, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-216), where the saint describes the overcoming of the divisions, not only between the sexes, but between the Creator and creation, Paradise and earth, the intelligible and the sensible, men and angels. Cf. Lossky's paraphrase of this passage in *Orthodox Theology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75: St. Maximus "has described with an incomparable power and fullness the mission devolving upon man. To the successive divisions that constitute creation there must correspond unions or syntheses accomplished by man, thanks to the 'synergy' of freedom and grace.

"The fundamental division in which the very reality of the created being is rooted is that of God and the assemblage of creatures, of the created and the uncreated. Created nature accordingly divides itself into celestial and terrestrial, into intelligible and sensible. In the sensible universe, heaven is separated from earth. On the latter's surface, Paradise is set apart. Finally, the inhabitant of Paradise, man, is himself divided into two sexes, male and female.

"Adam must overcome these divisions by a conscious action to reunite in himself the whole of the created cosmos and to become deified with it. He must first overcome the sexual separation by a chaste life, by a union more total than the external union of the sexes, by an 'integrity' which would be integration. At a second stage, he must reunite Paradise to the rest of the terrestrial cosmos, by a love of God which would at once detach him from everything and allow him to embrace everything; always carrying Paradise in himself, he would have transformed the whole earth into Paradise. In the third place, his spirit, and his body itself, would triumph over space by unifying all of the sensible world, the earth and its firmament. At the next stage, he must penetrate into the celestial cosmos, live like the angels, assimilate their intelligence and reunite in himself the intelligible world to the sensible world. Finally, the cosmic Adam, by giving himself without return to God, would give Him back all His creation, and would receive from Him, by the mutuality of love, that is to say by grace, all that God possesses by virtue of His nature. Thus in the overcoming of the primordial separation of the created and uncreated, there would be accomplished man's deification, and by him, of the whole universe.

"The Fall has rendered man inferior to his vocation. But the divine plan has not changed. The mission of the first Adam accordingly must be fulfilled by the celestial Adam, namely Christ: not that He substitutes Himself for man, for the infinite love of God would not replace the bond of human freedom, but in order to return to man the possibility of accomplishing this task, to reopen for him the path to deification, this supreme synthesis, through man, of God and the created cosmos, wherein rests the meaning of all of Christian anthropology. Thus, because of sin, in order that man might become God, it was necessary that God should become man, and that the second Adam should inaugurate the 'new creation' in surmounting all the divisions of the old one. Indeed by His virginal birth, Christ overcomes the division of the sexes and, for the redemption of 'eros', opens two paths, united only in the person of Mary, at once virgin and mother: the path of Christian marriage and the path of monasticism. On the cross Christ reunited the whole of the terrestrial cosmos to Paradise: for when He allowed death to enter Him to consume it by contact with His Divinity, the darkest place on earth becomes radiant; there is no longer any accursed place. After the Resurrection, the very body of Christ mocks spatial limitations, and in an integration of all that is sensible, unifies earth and heaven. By the Ascension, Christ reunites the celestial and terrestrial worlds, the angelic choirs to the human race. Finally, He Who sits at the right hand of the Father introduces humanity above the angelic orders and into the Trinity Itself..."

## *The Marriage at Cana*

The unfolding of the archetype is accomplished at the same time as the purification of the type. If the marriage of Christ and the Virgin is the first miracle of the Gospel, the second is the miracle at the marriage of Cana in Galilee. For the new Adam and the new Eve, having recreated in their own relationship the true image of God's relationship with man in its original virginal-marital purity and joy, now wish to communicate that purity and joy to the marriages of their children, the children of the Church.

"The history of the Church in Paradise begins with a marriage," notes Troitsky, "and the history of the New Testament Church begins with a marriage".<sup>349</sup> Of course, there is a difference. In Paradise, it was God Himself Who celebrated the sacrament and created the one-flesh union. Here, in Cana of Galilee, He is not the celebrant; He is only a guest. And yet He is a guest Who by His presence changes the marriage; it becomes "a mystery of the presence of Christ".<sup>350</sup> As the 13<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council says, "marriage was instituted by God and blessed by His presence".

The nature of the blessing can be inferred from the miracle He wrought: the changing of the water into wine. By this miracle, Christ showed that He came not only to approve of marriage, but to *change* it, to raise it to a higher level, to rescue it from the fall. As St. Andrew of Crete says: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the marriage-bed undefiled. For on both Christ has given His blessing, eating in the flesh at the wedding in Cana, turning the water into wine and revealing His first miracle, to bring, thee, my soul, to a change of life."<sup>351</sup>

Christ came that we "might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10.10). And here He comes to give an ordinary human marriage more abundant life, to transform the water of their fallen love into "the new wine of the birth of Divine joy of the Kingdom of Christ".<sup>352</sup> As St. John Chrysostom says: "If you want, He will even now work miracles as He did then; He will make even now the water wine; and what is much more wonderful, He will convert this unstable and dissolving pleasure, this cold desire, and change it into the spiritual. This is to make water wine."<sup>353</sup> St. Nikolai Velimirovich ponders "how my soul, if wedded to the living Lord, changes its earthly wateriness into a divine draught."<sup>354</sup>

*And the Mother of Jesus was there* (John 2.1). Of no other miracle in the Gospel is it recorded that "the Mother of Jesus was there", and in no other miracle of Christ is such an important intercessory role ascribed to another human agent.

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<sup>349</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>350</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *P.G.* 62:387,390.

<sup>351</sup> St. Andrew of Crete, *Triodion*, Thursday of Fourth Week, Canon, Ode 9, troparion.

<sup>352</sup> *Pentecostarion*, Mattins of Pascha, Canon, Canticle 8, troparion.

<sup>353</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 12 on Colossians*, 7.

<sup>354</sup> Velimirovich, *Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, part III, July 1, p. 7.

The reason is clear: the miracle accomplished here is the restoration of the relationship between man and woman to its original purity and joy, as it was with Adam and Eve in Paradise. And how was that to be done without the participation of both the new Adam and the new Eve, in whose own relationship that restoration had already been accomplished, and in whose image marriage was originally established? Again, if the original rupture in the relationship was caused by the sinful approach of the first Eve to the devil, how was that to be reversed if not by the innocent approach of the new Eve to God?

But Christ replies in an unexpected manner: *Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come* (2.4). Many have interpreted this as a rebuke to the Virgin, as if it was wrong for her to put herself forward and intercede at this time. However, the Virgin does not then act as if she had been rebuked. On the contrary, she acts as if she has received some kind of assurance from Him, and tells the servants: *Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it* (2.5). Moreover, Christ does not refuse her request, but performs the miracle.

One possibility is that Christ did not want to perform a miracle without being asked to do it by the hosts. He was not refusing to do a miracle, but everything had to be done at the right time and in the right manner. So the Mother speaks to the servants, according to Blessed Theophylact, "in order that her request should be strengthened through the approach and petition of them themselves, so it should be clear that the refusal was not as a result of powerlessness, but with the aim of averting the opinion that he was resorting to the working of a miracle out of boastfulness and empty pomposity".<sup>355</sup>

However, there is more to it than that. The Lord's use of the word *Woman* recalls the prophecy that was given to the first Eve in the garden concerning the Woman whose Seed, it was promised, would crush the head of the serpent (*Genesis* 3.15). Now the Virgin is indeed the Woman of that prophecy, as Christ is the Seed Who will crush the power of satan - only the time for that victory is not yet come.

So it is as if He is saying: "What is my relationship with you? Am I the Seed that is to crush the head of the serpent and you the Woman who gives birth to Him? Yes indeed: but do not think that I have yet achieved that victory, or that you can yet ask Me to act openly as the Victor over sin and death. *Mine hour* - the hour of My Crucifixion when I will crush the serpent's head - *is not yet come*. Only when I have been crucified and risen from the dead will I be able to send the Spirit to mankind. Then and only then will the new wine of the Divine joy of the Kingdom be poured out upon all flesh."

Christ often refers to the Crucifixion as *Mine hour* (*John* 7.30, 8.20, 12.23, 12.27, 13.1, 16.32, 17.1). When the Lord says, "Mine hour is not yet come" (*John* 7.4, 6), He is saying: "Mine hour is come when the hour of the Cross comes".<sup>356</sup> And He is doing so again here.

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<sup>355</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel of John* 2.5.

<sup>356</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies On John*, 48.2; P.G. 59.271.

As St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "With Him nothing is incongruous or out of due season, just as with the Father there is nothing incongruous. For all these things were known by the Father; but the Son works them out at the proper time in perfect order and sequence. This was the reason why, when Mary was urging Him on to work the wonderful miracle of the wine, and was desirous before the time to partake of the cup of emblematic significance [the Eucharist], the Lord checking her untimely haste, said..."<sup>357</sup>

According to St. Gaudentius of Brescia, the Lord was not rebuking the Virgin, but looking forward to the Cross: "Our Lord was speaking in a mystery, meaning thereby that the wine of the Holy Spirit could not be given to the Gentiles before His Passion and Resurrection, as the Evangelist attests: 'As yet the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7.39). With reason, then, at the beginning of His miracles, did He thus answer His Mother, as though He said: 'Why this thy hasty suggestion, O Woman? Since the hour of My Passion and Resurrection is not yet come, when, - all powers whether of teaching or of divine operations being then completed - I have determined to die for the life of believers. After My Passion and Resurrection, when I shall return to My Father, there shall be given to them the wine of the Holy Spirit.' Whereupon she too, that most blessed one, knowing the profound mystery of this answer, understood that the suggestion she had just made was not slighted or spurned, but, in accordance with that spiritual reason, was for a time delayed. Otherwise, she would never have said to the waiters, *Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*"<sup>358</sup>

*And there were set six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water (2.6-7). "The stone water-pots,"* writes Blessed Theophylact, "were used for the purification of the Jews. For the Jews washed almost every day and only then began to eat. If they touched a leper, or a corpse, or had had sexual intercourse with a woman, they washed as being already unclean. And since Palestine was waterless and it was impossible to find many springs, they always filled water-pots with water so as not to have to run to the rivers when they were defiled."<sup>359</sup>

The waterpots may be interpreted to refer to human families, each containing two or three people (childless and fertile marriages respectively). Since the fall, these had become stony and dry through the activity of the passions. But the Lord came in order to purify marriage, to wash it clean of every stain, and then pour into it the grace of the Holy Spirit,

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<sup>357</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 7.

<sup>358</sup> St. Gaudentius, *Sermon 9*; P.L. 20, p. 900; in Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 173. And in another place the same saint says that Christ, "after the hour of His Passion, so far consummated the reality of the mystery which had gone before that the water of the Incarnation became the wine of the Divinity." (*Sermon 19*; P.L. 20, p. 990; Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 174).

<sup>359</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel of John*, 2.6. Sir Edwyn Hoskyns calculates that "the six waterpots were capable of holding 18 to 27 gallons each, that is, from 108 to 162 gallons in all. The Evangelist draws attention to the immense quantity of water not so much because he is thinking of the amount of purification required during the week of wedding ceremonies, but because he has in mind the fullness which all who believe in Jesus received from Him (1.16)" (*The Gospel of John*, London: Faber & Faber, 1947, p. 189).

thereby raising it to a higher level even than it had been in Paradise.

However, the pots, the water and the number six may together constitute a symbol of the fallen human nature. For man was created on the sixth day from water and clay and the breath of the Holy Spirit, but the whole mixture had become stony and dry through the loss of the Spirit. Now the Creator, having taken flesh from the virgin earth of the Virgin Mary, recasts the bodies and souls of men through the water and the Spirit, so that they may become fitting vessels, “new bottles” into which to pour the “new wine” of the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Mark 2.22). Thus the miracle signifies the transformation of the fallen man of the old creation into the “new creature” recreated by Christ in and through the Holy Spirit.

As St. Gaudentius says: “*They had no wine* because the wedding wine was consumed, which means that the Gentiles had not the wine of the Holy Spirit. So what it here referred to is not the wine of these nuptials, but the wine of the preceding nuptials; for the nuptial wine of the Holy Spirit had ceased, since the prophets had ceased to speak, who before had ministered unto the people of Israel. For all the prophets and the Law had prophesied until the coming of John, nor was there any one to give spiritual drink to the Gentiles who thirsted, but the Lord Jesus was awaited, Who would fill the new bottles with new wine by His baptism, ‘for the old things have passed away: behold all things are made new’ (II Corinthians 5.17).”<sup>360</sup>

Consistent with this interpretation is the saying of Philo the Alexandrian, who saw in Melchizedek a type of the Word Who would “bring forth wine instead of water, and give your souls to drink, and cheer them with unmixed wine, in order that they may be wholly occupied with a divine intoxication, more sober than sobriety itself”.<sup>361</sup>

However, the reference to Melchizedek reminds us that he brought forth “bread and wine” to Abraham, which, as St. Cyprian of Carthage tells us, is a type of the offering of bread and wine to God at the Eucharist.<sup>362</sup> Therefore the miracle of the transformation of water into wine may be a foreshadowing of the miracle of the transformation of wine into blood at the Mystical Supper. For, as St Cyril of Jerusalem writes: “He once in Cana of

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<sup>360</sup> St. Gaudentius, *Sermon 8*; P.L. 20. Translated by M.F. Toal, *Patristic Homilies on the Gospels*, Cork: The Mercier Press, 1955, volume 1, p. 313.

<sup>361</sup> Philo, *Leg. Alleg.* III, 82; in Hoskyns, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>362</sup> St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle 62*, 4. Later in the same letter St. Cyprian writes: “Because among the Jews there was a want of spiritual grace, wine also was wanting. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts was the house of Israel; but Christ, when teaching and showing that the people of the Gentiles should succeed them, and that by the merit of faith we should subsequently attain to the place which the Jews has lost, of water made wine; that is, He showed that at the marriage of Christ and the Church, as the Jews failed, the people of the nations should flow together and assemble: for the divine Scripture in the Apocalypse declares that the waters signify the people, saying: ‘The waters which thou sawest, upon which the whore sitteth, are peoples and multitudes, and nations of the Gentiles, and tongues’ (Revelation 17.15), which we evidently see to be contained also in the cup” (12). Then, referring to the practice of adding warm water (zeon) to the eucharistic chalice, he continues: “In the water we understand the people, but in the wine is showed the Blood of Christ. But when the water is mingled in the cup with wine, the people is made one in Christ” (13).

Galilee turned the water into wine, akin to blood, and is it incredible that He should have turned wine into blood? When called to a bodily marriage, He miraculously wrought that wonderful work; and on the children of the bride-chamber shall He not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the fruition of His Body and Blood?"<sup>363</sup> But this greatest of miracles must also await "My hour", the hour of the Crucifixion of Christ...

*And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when they have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now (2.8-10).*

In the beginning, in Paradise, the Governor of the feast of life, God the Father, set forth the good wine of unfallen eros. But this wine was turned into water by the fall. Now the Divine Bridegroom has turned that water into a wine better than the original, for it has been mixed with an infusion from "the true Vine" (John 15.1), His own Body. This wine, the Blood of Christ, was squeezed out by the winepress of the Cross, and distributed to all on the Day of Pentecost. It has inebriated those who follow Him with the "sober intoxication" of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.13).

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<sup>363</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Discourses*, XXII, 2.

## *The Wedding of the Lamb*

*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him* (2.11). The grace of the Holy Spirit is called *glory* in the Gospel. It was first manifested at the Incarnation, when *we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father* (1.14). The glory of this grace was such that it transformed human nature into a fitting Bride for the Son.

However, the Incarnation was only the beginning of the mystery, its firstfruits, as it were; the *fullness* of grace, and the communication of the mystery to the whole of mankind, could not come before the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. "For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7.39) by His Sacrifice on the Cross. Only after the Cross could all mankind enter into union with God through the Church, the Bride of Christ, each individual Christian becoming a bride of Christ through his participation in the sacraments. Until then, there was a glimpse of the coming glory at Cana, and an announcement of the coming glory, "the Kingdom of God is at hand", by St. John the Forerunner, "the friend of the Bridegroom" (John 3.29), who continued to call the Bride to the marriage feast of the Lamb until his own martyric death. But the hour of Christ was not yet come...

The death of the Forerunner marked the end of the preparation period. The Bridegroom now set off to meet the Bride, to consummate His union with Her on the Cross, to rise from the Bridal chamber of the tomb, and finally to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles so that through them He could enter into a mystical marriage with all the children of the Church throughout all generations. For "it was for her [the Church's] sake, writes St. Methodius of Olympus, "that the Word left His heavenly Father and came down to earth in order to cling to His Spouse, and slept in the ecstasy of His passion".<sup>364</sup>

The Cross was the climax both of pain and of joy. Through the pain and sorrow the sins of the Bride were wiped out, and she was thereby made worthy to enter into the joy of the Bridegroom. And so at the moment of death pain passed into joy: "Through the Cross joy is come into the world".<sup>365</sup> At that moment the union was consummated with the words "it is finished" (consummatum est), and "forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19.34) - the seed of the Church, the fruit of the consummated union.<sup>366</sup> Just as the first Adam gave birth to the first Eve, the mother of all who live only to die again, so the new Adam gave birth to the new Eve, the Church, the Mother of all who die to themselves in order to live eternally. And like the first Adam the new Adam gives birth out of His side,

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<sup>364</sup> St. Methodius, *The Symposium*, Logos 3. 8.

<sup>365</sup> Earthly marriages follow this heavenly pattern. Thus St. Nectarius of Optina said: "In married life there are always two periods: one happy, and the other sad, bitter. And it is always better when the bitter period comes earlier, at the beginning of married life, for then there will be happiness" ("Ieroschimonakh Nektarij, poslednij Optinskij starets" (Hieroschemamonk Nectarius, last Optina elder), *Pravoslavnij Put'* (The Orthodox Way), 1953, p. 61).

<sup>366</sup> It should be noted that the first union of a newly married couple, if the bride is a virgin, also involves pain and the loss of blood - through the breaking of the bride's hymen.

in an ecstatic sleep, the sleep of death that gives birth to life.

St. John Chrysostom writes: "We all know that Eve came from the side of Adam himself. Scripture has told this plainly, that God put Adam into a deep sleep and took one of his ribs, and fashioned the woman. But how can we show that the Church also came from the side of Christ? Scripture explains this too. When Christ was lifted up on the cross, after he had been nailed to it and had died, one of the soldiers pierced His side and there came out blood and water. From that blood and water the whole Church has arisen. He Himself bears witness to this when He says, 'Unless one is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven.' He calls the blood 'spirit'. We receive birth from the water of baptism, and we are nourished by His blood. Do you see how we are made from His flesh and His bones, as we are given birth and nourished by that blood and water? Just as the woman was fashioned when Adam slept, so also, when Christ had died, the Church was formed from His side."<sup>367</sup>

Through his Death on the Cross, the new Adam recreates Eve in a clear recollection of the original creation. "Coming forth from a birth without travail and wounded in Thy side with a spear, O my Maker, Thou hast brought to pass the recreation of Eve. Becoming Adam, Thou hast in ways surpassing nature slept a life-giving sleep ["Eve" means "life"], awakening life from sleep and from corruption by Thine almighty power."<sup>368</sup> And then the children of the Church, the fruit of the command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1.28), are brought into being by the water and the blood and the Spirit which flow from the side of Christ. For "there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three are one..." (I John 5.8).

But since this is the mystery of marriage, the higher mystery of the marriage of Christ

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<sup>367</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Third Discourse on Marriage*, in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94. Cf. St. Bede: "The woman was made out of the side of Adam to show how strong that union must have been. But that it was done in his sleep, and flesh filled up the place whence the bone had been taken, was for a higher mystery. For it signified that the sacraments of salvation would come out of the side of Christ as He slept in death on the cross - that is, the blood and water from which the Church was created as His Bride... It was to typify this same mystery that Scripture says, not 'made' or 'formed' or 'created', as in all the previous works, but 'the Lord God built the rib which He had taken from Adam into a woman', not as if it were a human body, but rather a house, which house we are if we keep our faithfulness and glory of hope right up to a strong end." (*On Genesis*, 2.20-22)

And Blessed Theophylact: "And so, when you approach the chalice of the communion of the Blood of Christ, so dispose yourself as if you were drinking from the rib itself. Notice, please, how it is by means of the pierced rib that the wound of the rib is healed, that is, of Eve. There Adam, having fallen asleep, was deprived of a rib; and here the Lord, having fallen asleep, gives His rib to the soldier. The spear of the soldier is an image of the sword whirling and driving us out of Paradise (Genesis 3.24). And just as everything that whirls around is not stopped in its movement until it hits on something, so the Lord shows us that He will stop this sword, and presents His rib to the sword of the soldier so that it should be clear to us that just as the sword of the soldier, on striking the rib, was stopped, so the flaming sword will be stopped and will no longer terrify us by his whirling or prevent us from entering Paradise." (*Explanation of the Gospel of John*, Kiev: Kiev Caves Lavra, 2002, p. 312)

<sup>368</sup> *Triodion*, Holy Saturday, Mattins, Canon, Canticle Five, troparion.

and the Church, it is the work not only of the new Adam, but also of the new Eve; and the new Eve must be present with the new Adam. And the new Eve is there. In fact she is the first to receive the blood falling from His side. Moreover, the new Adam again addresses her as the *Woman* rather than simply his Mother: "Woman, behold thy son" (John 19.26). John is the new son of the new Adam and the new Eve, a virgin son of virgin parents, and one born, as he himself writes, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1.13).<sup>369</sup>

The link between the Cross and Cana is emphasized in the Church service for Great Friday: "Seeing her Lamb led to the slaughter, Mary His Mother followed Him with the other women and in her grief she cried: 'Where dost Thou go, my Child? Why dost Thou run so swiftly? Is there another wedding in Cana, and art Thou hastening there, to turn the water into wine?'"<sup>370</sup>

But Cana is also linked with the Resurrection. For just as the marriage at Cana was *on the third day* (John 2.1)), so it is on the third day after the Crucifixion that the Bridegroom emerges from the bridal-chamber of the tomb in the radiant beauty of His resurrected and glorified Body. "Adorn thyself, exult and rejoice, O Jerusalem, for thou hast seen Christ the King, like a bridegroom coming forth from the tomb."<sup>371</sup>

According to the constant tradition of the Church, the first to meet Him then was Mary, His Mother, from whom He had received His Body at the Annunciation, and who had stood at the foot of the Cross.<sup>372</sup> In the Gospel account, however, it was not Mary the Virgin whom the Lord met and hailed on the morning of the Resurrection, but Mary Magdalene (John 20. 13-16). There is no contradiction here, however: the first meeting was veiled in silence, for fear of profanation (the Jews would have ridiculed a mother's witness), while the second was proclaimed to the world...<sup>373</sup>

But later the two Marys go together to the tomb (Matthew 28.1), for they represent the two aspects, as it were, of the Church. The one is already "holy and without blemish", "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5.27); while the other is "black, but comely" (Song of Songs 1.5), being not yet completely purified through repentance. The one represents the Church Triumphant, already "full of grace" (Luke 1.28) and crowned with the Bridegroom at the right hand of the Father; while the other is the Church Militant, still having to struggle with sin both within and outside her.

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<sup>369</sup> "The Lord of the wedding-feast hung on the Cross in nakedness, and whosoever came to be a guest, He let fall His blood upon him" (Mar Jacob, *Homily on Guria and Shamona*)

<sup>370</sup> *Triodion*, Holy and Great Friday, Mattins, Canon, ikos.

<sup>371</sup> *Pentecostarion*, First Sunday of Pascha, Mattins, Paschal Stichera.

<sup>372</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 18, on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers*, 4.

<sup>373</sup> St. Gregory Palamas: "The Ever-Virgin was the first to come to the tomb and receive the good tidings of the Resurrection, but afterwards many women came together and they too saw the stone rolled away and heard the angels" (*Homily 18, on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers*, 13).

Mary Magdalene mistakes Christ for the gardener - we remember that the first Adam was a gardener. But like Eve after the fall Mary is not yet allowed to touch the Tree of Life: "Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20.17). The other myrrh-bearers, on the other hand, "took hold of His feet and worshipped Him" (Matthew 28.9). Again we have a distinction between two kinds of believers: those who through purity and repentance have been initiated into the mysteries and can enter into full union with the Bridegroom, and those whose thoughts have not yet ascended far enough above earthly things to grasp the Divinity of Christ, for they still see Him primarily as a man, rather than as God seated at the right hand of the Father.

For now, in the light of the Resurrection, it is no longer permitted to love the Lord as a man only. As St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "As long as He was a servant, all men had power over His Body, since publicans and sinners came to touch Him. But once He was established as Lord, the fear which He inspired was the fear of God."<sup>374</sup> For, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "He does not dwell in those who have not received Baptism. But when they have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, then indeed there is nothing to hinder them from touching the Saviour Christ. Therefore, also, to those wish to partake of the blessed Eucharist, the ministers of Divine mysteries say, 'Holy things to the holy', teaching that participation in holy things is the due reward of those who are sanctified in the Spirit."<sup>375</sup>

It is, therefore, only after the Ascension that the Bride finally understands that the Bridegroom's physical and tangible presence is not necessary for her continued union with Him, Who as God is in all places and fills all things. And so, having witnessed His Ascension, and having ascended in spirit with Him, she can return to the arena of her earthly pilgrimage "with great joy" (Luke 24.52).

And this spiritual ascension takes place in the soul of every chosen Christian, weaning him from reliance on his physical senses and carnal feelings. For "though we once regarded Christ after the flesh, now we do so no longer" (II Corinthians 5.6). Especially is this necessary in approaching the Eucharist, where we do not trust our senses, but *by faith alone* "discern the Body of the Lord" (I Corinthians 11.29).

And yet the Bride is not deprived of the Bridegroom, even physically, after the Ascension. For ten days later, the Holy Spirit descends upon her in the Upper Room, and through the ministry of the apostles the mystery of the marriage in the flesh of the Bride and the Bridegroom is accomplished throughout the world, in the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist. And from that moment the union is permanent, unless the

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<sup>374</sup> St. Ephraim, *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, XXI, 26.

<sup>375</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On John* 10; P.G. 74:341D; quoted in Ezra Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing: An Inquiry into the Eucharistic Doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria*, Uppsala, 1968, p. 68. Cf. St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "Holy are the gifts presented, since they have been visited by the Holy Spirit; holy things therefore correspond to holy persons" (*Catechetical Lectures* 5.19).

Bride commits adultery. For, as St. Symeon the New Theologian says, "how can the bride be separated from her spouse, or the husband from his wife to whom he is once united? The legislator, tell me, will he not observe the law? The one who says: 'They will be two in one flesh', how will the man not be totally spirit with her? For the woman is in the man and the man is in the woman and the soul is united in God and God is in the soul."<sup>376</sup>

But then comes the final Day when the Bridegroom returns at the midnight of world history (Matthew 25.6) in order to rescue His Bride, complete her transfiguration and resurrection in both soul and body, and take her into the heavenly Bridal-chamber. In this sense *Mine hour is not yet come* until the very end of time, when all those who do not have a clean wedding-garment, who are "spots in your feasts of charity" (Jude 12), have been cast out (Matthew 22.13). Only then is the scene properly set for the heavenly vision: "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a Bride for her Husband..." (Revelation 21.2).

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<sup>376</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns of Divine Love*, 27; op. cit., p. 143.

## The Two Mysteries

The mystery of the marital union of each believer with Christ in the sacraments is the higher mystery of which the lower mystery of human marriage is the type and the icon. That is why, when the Apostle Paul is talking of the lower mystery of human marriage, his mind is immediately lifted to its archetype: “but I speak of Christ and the Church” (Ephesians 5.32). Even earlier in the chapter he switches easily from the lower mystery – “so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies” (v. 28) – to the higher – “for we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (v. 30).

The Holy Fathers take up the same theme. Thus St. Macarius the Great writes: “Let your soul have communion with Christ, as bride with bridegroom”.<sup>377</sup> And Blessed Theophylact writes: “He took human nature as His bride and united her to Himself, wedding her and cleaving to her, becoming One Flesh. Indeed, He did not make just one wedding, but many. For every day the Lord in heaven is wedded to the souls of the saints.”<sup>378</sup> For, writes St. Symeon the New Theologian, “it is truly a marriage which takes place, ineffable and divine: God unites Himself with each one – yes, I repeat it, it is my delight – and each becomes one with the Master. If therefore, in your body, you have put on the total Christ, you will understand without blushing all that I am saying.”<sup>379</sup>

Again, St. John of Kronstadt writes: “The Liturgy is the continually repeated solemnization of God’s love for mankind, and of His all-powerful mediation for the salvation of the whole world, and of every member separately: the marriage of the Lamb – marriage of the King’s Son, in which the bride of the Son of God is every faithful soul, and the giver of the Bride is the Holy Spirit.”<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> St. Macarius the Great, *Homily 38*, 5.

<sup>378</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel according to Luke*, 12.35.

<sup>379</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns of Divine Love*, 15; *op. cit.*, p. 55. Cf. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk: “That which takes place between a bridegroom and bride takes place between Christ and the Christian soul. The bride is betrothed to the bridegroom – in the same way the human soul is betrothed by faith to Christ the Son of God and is washed in the bath of Baptism. The bride leaves her house and parents and cleaves to her only bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul, having been betrothed to Christ the Son of God, must leave the world and worldly lusts and cleave to her only Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, to which the Holy Spirit through the prophet exhorts her: ‘Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear, and forget thine own people and thy father’s house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty’ (Psalms 44. 9-10). The bride puts on a colourful dress and is adorned, so as to please her bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul must put on a fitting garment and adorn herself within, so as to please her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The garment of the soul is indicated by the Holy Spirit through the apostle: ‘Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering’ (Colossians 3.12). A good bride remains faithful to her bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul must be faithful to Jesus Christ until death, concerning which Christ Himself says to her: ‘Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life’ (Revelation 2.10). A good bride loves nobody as much, or more than, her bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul must love nobody as much, or more than, her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.” (*Spiritual Treasure gathered from the world*, 22, Moscow, 2003, pp. 102-103).

<sup>380</sup> St. John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, quoted in *Orthodoxy America*, vol. XIX, № 6 (170), June, 2004, p. 1. “Why,” asks St. Gregory Palamas, “does the original not say that the King of Heaven made a marriage for His son, but used the words ‘nuptials’ in the plural? Because whenever Christ, the Bridegroom of pure souls,

“Yes, for it is truly great,” writes St. John Chrysostom. “What human reckoning will be able to grasp the nature of what takes place in marriage when one considers that the young wife, who has been nourished with her mother’s milk, and kept at home, and judged worthy of such careful upbringing, suddenly, in a single moment, when she comes to the hour of marriage, forgets her mother’s labor pains and all her other care, forgets her family life, the bonds of love, and, in a word, forgets everything, and gives over her whole will to that man whom she never saw before that night? Her life is so completely changed that thereafter that man is everything to her; she holds him to be her father, her mother, her husband, and every relative one could mention. No longer does she remember those who took care of her for so many years. So intimate is the union of these two that thereafter they are not two but one.

“Adam, the first-formed man, with prophetic eyes foresaw this very thing and said: ‘She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of her man. Wherefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.’ The same thing could be said of the husband, because he too has forgotten his parents and his father’s house to unite himself and cleave to the wife who on that night is joined to him. Furthermore, to point out the closeness of this union, the Holy Scripture did not say: ‘He shall be united to a wife’, but ‘He shall cleave to his wife’. Nor was Holy Writ content with that, but added: ‘And they two shall be one flesh’. For this reason Christ too brought forward this testimony and said: ‘Therefore, now they are no longer two, but one flesh’. So intimate is this union and adherence that the two of them are one flesh. Tell me, what reckoning will be able to discover this, what power of reason will be able to understand what takes place? Was not that blessed teacher of the whole world correct in saying that it is a mystery? And he did not simply say ‘a mystery’, but: ‘This is a great mystery’.”<sup>381</sup>

In another place the same holy father expands on this idea: “The girl who has always been kept at home and has never seen the bridegroom, from the first day loves and cherishes him as her own body. Again, the husband, who has never seen her, never shared even the fellowship of speech with her, from the first day prefers her to everyone, to his friends, his relatives, even his parents. The parents in turn, if they are deprived of their money for another reason, will complain, grieve, and take the perpetrators to court. Yet they entrust to a man, whom often they have never even seen before..., both their own daughter and a large sum as dowry. They rejoice as they do this and they do not consider it a loss. As they see their daughter led away, they do not bring to mind their closeness, they do not grieve or complain, but instead they give thanks. They consider it an answer to their prayers when they see their daughter led away from their home taking a large sum of money with her. Paul had all this in mind: how the couple leave their parents and bind themselves to each other, and how the new relationship becomes more powerful than the long-established familiarity. He saw that this was not a human accomplishment. It is God Who sows these loves in men and women. He caused both those who give in marriage and

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is mystically united with each soul, He gives the Father to rejoice over this as at a wedding” (*Homily 41, 9*).

<sup>381</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, I, 3-13. New York: Paulist Press, 1963.

those who are married to do this with joy. Therefore Paul said, 'This is a great mystery'."<sup>382</sup>

However, Paul goes on to say: "But I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (v. 32). The word "but" indicates that while the lower mystery of human marriage provides apt imagery for a description of the higher mystery, one must not think that they are *the same* mystery. This would amount to a pagan "sexualization of salvation" which is not the apostle's meaning. "Nevertheless," he immediately continues, "as for every one of you, let each love his wife as himself" (v. 33). In other words, they are not the same mystery, and the higher must not be reduced to the lower, but also the lower is not to be despised, being an imitation of the higher. As St. John Chrysostom writes: "The blessed Moses, - or rather, God - surely reveals in Genesis that for two to become one flesh is a great and wonderful mystery. Now Paul speaks of Christ as the greater mystery; for He left the Father and came down to us and married His Bride, the Church, and became one spirit with her: 'he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him' (I Corinthians 6.17). Paul says well, 'This is a great mystery', as if he were saying, 'Nevertheless the allegorical meaning does not invalidate married love'."<sup>383</sup>

Again, as St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "With this mystical, spiritual understanding by the Apostle of the command concerning marriage, one might come to the thought that in Christianity, according to the thought of the Apostle, marriage in the flesh is in itself unfitting. St. Paul replies to this: v. 33. 'Thus let each of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife respect her husband'. It is as if the Apostle says: 'I understood the words on marriage in a mystical sense. However, this does not repeal the law expressed literally here by which the relations of husband and wife are defined.'"<sup>384</sup>

St. Paul's words on the two mysteries come after he has outlined the different duties of husband and wife. The husband is exhorted to love his wife as Christ loves the Church, and the wife - to obey her husband as the Church obeys Christ (Ephesians 5.21-30). The husband is exhorted above all to love his wife because it was a failure of true love that caused Adam to neglect to protect his wife against the wiles of the serpent, although he himself was not deceived by him (I Timothy 2.14). And the wife is exhorted above all to obey her husband because it was disobedience that caused her to eat of the fruit without consulting with her husband, although she knew the command of God and her origin from her husband.<sup>385</sup> Thus every Christian husband is exhorted to correct the fall of Adam by

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<sup>382</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Encomium to Maximus*, 3; P.G. 51:230; in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>383</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*; in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>384</sup> St. Theophan, *Tolkovanie na Poslania sv. Apostola Pavla*, pp. 469-470.

<sup>385</sup> It should be noted, however, that the wife's obedience to her husband does not preclude her exhorting him on occasion. Thus St. Tikhon of Zadonsk writes: "The husband and wife must lay virtue, and not passion, as the foundation of their love, that is, when the husband sees any fault in his wife, he must nudge her meekly, and the wife must submit to her husband in this. Likewise when a wife sees some fault in her husband, she must exhort him, and he is obliged to hear her" (*Journey to Heaven*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, p. 117).

Again, Fr. Alexander Elchaninov writes: "The philosophy of family quarrels: they often result from the wife's reproaches, borne reluctantly by the husband even though they may be deserved (pride). It is

his love for his wife in imitation of the new Adam, just as every Christian wife is exhorted to correct the fall of Eve by her obedience to her husband in imitation of the new Eve. As the spouses come closer to this goal, the lower mystery partakes more and more fully of the grace of its archetype in such a way that, as St. Gregory the Theologian writes, "in every marriage, Christ is venerated in the husband and the Church in the wife".<sup>386</sup>

The difference in the roles of the sexes (here we return to theme first treated in chapter 1) is described by St. John Chrysostom: "Why does Paul speak of the husband being joined to the wife, but not of the wife to the husband? Since he is describing the duties of love, he addresses the man. He speaks to the woman concerning respect, saying that the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church; but to the husband he speaks of love, and obliges him to love, and tells him how he should love, thus binding and cementing him to his wife. If a man leaves his father for his wife's sake, and then abandons her for whose sake he left his father, what pardon can he deserve? Do you not see, husband, the great honor that God desires you to give your wife? He has taken you from your father and bound [literally 'nailed'] you to her. How can a believing husband say that he has no obligation if his spouse disobeys him? Paul is lenient only when an unbeliever wishes to separate: 'But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound' (I Corinthians 7.15). And when you hear Paul say 'fear' or 'respect', ask for the respect due from a free woman, not the fear you would demand from a slave. She is your body; if you do this, you dishonor yourself by dishonoring your own body. What does this 'respect' entail? She should not stubbornly contradict you, and not rebel against your authority as if she were the head of the house; this is enough. If you desire greater respect, you must love as you are commanded. Then there will be no need for fear; love itself will accomplish everything. The female sex is rather weak and needs a lot of support, a lot of condescension... Provide your wife with everything and endure troubles for her sake; you are obliged to do so. Here Paul does not think it appropriate to illustrate his point with outside sources, as he does in many other cases. The wisdom of Christ, so great and forceful, is sufficient, especially in the matter of the wife's subjection... The wife is a secondary authority, but nevertheless she possesses real authority and equality of dignity while the husband retains the role of headship; the welfare of the household is thus maintained. Paul uses the example of Christ to show that we should not only love but also govern, 'that she might be holy and without blemish'. The word 'flesh' and the word 'cling' both refer to love, and making her 'holy and without blemish' refer to headship. Do both these things, and everything else will follow. Seek the things which please God, and those which please men will follow soon enough. Instruct your wife, and

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necessary to discover the original cause of these reproaches. They often come from the wife's desire to see her husband better than he is in reality, from her asking too much, that is to say from a kind of idealization. On these occasions, the wife becomes her husband's conscience and he should accept her rebukes as such. A man tends, especially in marriage, to let things slip, to be content with empirical facts. The wife tears him away from this and expects something more from her husband. In this sense, family discords, strange as it may seem, are proof that the marriage has been fulfilled (not only planned): and in the new human being, in which two persons have merged, the wife plays the role of conscience." (*The Diary of a Russian Priest*, London: Faber & Faber, 1967; quoted in Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 90).

<sup>386</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Sermon on Matthew 19.1-13*, P.G. 36:292.

your whole household will be in order and harmony. Listen to what Paul says: 'If there be anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home' (I Corinthians 14.35). If we regulate our households in this way, we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church. Therefore it is possible for us to surpass all others in virtue by becoming good husbands and wives."<sup>387</sup>

The commands given to Adam and Eve immediately after the fall are now repeated, but in a more family-oriented context and in a form that emphasizes that if they are not obeyed, the result this time will be, not pain and toil and physical death, but eternal death. Thus the husband, who was told in the Old Testament to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow is now told: "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5.8). And the wife, who was told in the Old Testament that she would bring forth children in pain, is now told that she "will be saved through bearing children, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with sobriety" (I Timothy 2.15).

But if the penalties for quenching the redemptive grace given by Christ to marriage are great, so are the rewards of absorbing it. "You have a wife," writes St. John Chrysostom, "you have children; what is equal to this pleasure?... Tell me, what is sweeter than children? Or what is more delightful than a wife for a man who desires to be chaste?... Nothing is sweeter than children and a wife, if you wish to live with reverence."<sup>388</sup>

As we have seen, for the Holy Fathers the Eucharist is a marital mystery – more precisely, *the* marital mystery. Having sanctified the firstfruits, or root, of human nature by union with Himself in the Virgin's womb, God in the sacrament of His Body and Blood extends this union from the root to the branches, from the firstfruits to every individual human being, by sending the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine and transforming them into His Body and Blood. Just as the Holy Virgin was both daughter and mother and bride of Christ at the Incarnation, so all Christians who partake of the Body and Blood of Christ become His children and brides, insofar as the mystery of the Eucharist is, as it were, a continuation of the mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, translated in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57. And in another place he says: "This is a true relationship, this is the duty of a husband, while not taking too much notice of his wife's words but making allowance for natural frailty, to make it his one concern to keep her free from anguish and tighten the bonds of peace and harmony. Let husbands take heed and imitate the just man's restraint in according their wives such great respect and regard and making allowances for them as the frailer vessel so that the bonds of harmony may be tightened. This, you see, is real wealth, this is the greatest prosperity, when a husband is not at odds with his wife but rather they are joined together like one body – 'the two will come to be one flesh', Scripture says. Such couples, be they even in poverty, be they in low estate, would be more blessed than all the rest, enjoying true delight and living in unbroken tranquillity" (*Homily 38 on Genesis*, 15).

<sup>388</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 38 on Matthew*, 6; P.G. 57: 428; quoted in Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>389</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: "since our generation in corruption came through the woman, Eve, so our spiritual generation and re-fashioning comes to be through the man, the second Adam, Who is God. Now, notice here that my words are exact: the seed of a man, mortal and corruptible, begets and gives birth through a woman to sons who are mortal and corruptible; the immortal and incorruptible Word of the

Thus St. John Chrysostom writes: “Moses in his account of the first man has Adam say: ‘Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh’, hinting to us of the Master’s side. Just as at that time God took the rib of Adam and formed a woman, so Christ gave us blood and water from His side and formed the Church... Have you seen how Christ unites to Himself His Bride? Have you seen with what food He nurtures us all? It is by the same food that we have been formed and are fed. Just as a woman nurtures her offspring with her own blood and milk, so also Christ continuously nurtures with His own Blood those whom He has begotten.”<sup>390</sup>

Georgios Mantzaridis writes, interpreting St. Gregory Palamas: “The union between God and man achieved in Christ far surpassed all human relationship and kinship. On assuming flesh and blood, the Logos of God became a brother to man; but He became our friend as well, in that He ransomed us from slavery and made us participate in His sacraments. Indeed, Christ Himself said to His disciples that He does not call them servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing, but He calls them friends, because He has made known to them all that He heard from His Father. Christ is also men’s father and mother, for He gives them new birth through baptism and nourishes them like children at the breast – not only with His blood instead of milk, but with His body and spirit. Joined in one flesh with the faithful through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Christ becomes, in addition, the bridegroom of mankind. The similarity between God’s love towards humanity and conjugal love was familiar and widespread among the Old Testament writers, and particularly so among the mystical theologians of the Church. Palamas recognizes conjugal love as being the most exalted degree of worldly love, and he stresses the vastness of God’s love towards men in contrast to it, especially as this finds expression in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. In marriage, he says, there is a cleaving ‘in one flesh’ but not ‘in one spirit’ [*Homily 56, 6*]. Through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, however, we not only cleave to the body of Christ, we intermingle with it, and we become not merely one body with Him, but one spirit: ‘O many-sided and ineffable communion! Christ has become our brother for He has fellowship with us in flesh and blood.... He has made us His friends, bestowing on us by grace these His sacraments. He has bound us to Himself and united us, as the bridegroom unites the bride to himself, through the communion of His blood, becoming one flesh with us. He has also become our father through divine baptism in Himself, and He feeds us at His own breast, as a loving

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immortal and incorruptible God, however, begets and gives birth to immortal and incorruptible children, after having first been born of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit.

“According to this reasoning, therefore, the mother of God is the lady and Queen and mistress and mother of all the saints. The saints are all both her servants, since she is the mother of God, and her sons, because they partake of the all-pure flesh of her Son – here is a word worthy of belief, since the flesh of the Lord is the flesh of the Theotokos – and by communing in this same deified flesh of the Lord, we both confess and believe that we partake of life everlasting...”

“So this is the mystery of the marriages which the Father arranged for His only-begotten Son” – the marriage first of all with the Virgin at the Incarnation, and then with every member of the Church in the Eucharist. (*First Ethical Discourse*, 10; *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60).

<sup>390</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, III, 18,19.

mother feeds her child' [*Homily 56, 7*]."<sup>391</sup>

The younger contemporary of St. Gregory, Nicholas Cabasilas, takes up the same theme: "The sacred meal effects between Christ and us a closer union than that which was realized by our parents when they begat us. In truth He does not only share with us some particles of His flesh or some drops of His blood, but gives us both in all their fullness; He is not only a principle of life as are our parents, but in very truth Life Itself."<sup>392</sup> "O wonder of wonders! That Christ's spirit is united to our spirit, His will is one with ours, His flesh becomes our flesh, His blood flows in our veins. What spirit is ours when it is possessed by His, our clay when set on fire by His flame!"<sup>393</sup> "We are penetrated by Him and become one spirit with Him; body and soul and all the faculties are deified when there is union of soul with Soul, body with Body, blood with Blood."<sup>394</sup> "The faithful are called saints because of the holy thing of which they partake, because of Him Whose Body and Blood they receive. Members of His Body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, as long as we remain united to Him and preserve our connection with Him, we live by holiness, drawing to ourselves, through the holy mysteries, the sanctity which comes from that Head and that Heart."<sup>395</sup>

We have established that we are indeed speaking about *two* mysteries here, one in the image of the other and in imitation of it. However, the relationship is more than iconic when the lower mystery takes place *between Christians, in the Church*. For an ordinary icon does not have to be of the same substance as its archetype; but the two mysteries of marriage are consubstantial, as it were, if both the bride and the bridegroom in the lower mystery have been united with the Bridegroom, Christ Himself, in the higher mystery of the Church. This takes place, as we have seen, when each is washed in the water of Baptism as if in a kind of prenuptial bath, so as to be presented "without spot and wrinkle" to the Bridegroom, before entering into actual physical union with Him in His Most Holy Body and Blood. In this sense *the hour of Christian marriage was not yet come* at Cana, because the wine at the marriage had not yet been turned into the Blood of Christ shed on the Cross and communicated to every Christian in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which alone could change the one-flesh marriage of two fallen human beings into one strengthened and purified through the one-flesh marriage of each with the Divine Bridegroom.

The participation of the bride and bridegroom in the Body and Blood of Christ is both the foundation and the seal of their union. It is the foundation, because true unity between the spouses is impossible without the union of each individually with Christ. And it is the seal, because without the union of each with Christ their union with each other must eventually fall apart.

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<sup>391</sup> Manzaridis, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>392</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 612 C, D.

<sup>393</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 585A.

<sup>394</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 584D.

<sup>395</sup> Nicolas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 36, London: S.P.C.K., 1966, p. 89.

That is why the rite of marriage in the early Church formed part of the Divine Liturgy, being sealed by the communion of both spouses in the Body and Blood of Christ. For, as St. Symeon of Thessalonica writes, "Holy Communion is... the end of every rite and the seal of every divine mystery".<sup>396</sup> And so the lower mystery, that of the "little church", in St. John Chrysostom's words, comes into being in and through the higher mystery, that of the Great Church, the former being a building block of the latter.

Troitsky writes: "Just as a crystal does not splinter into amorphous, uncrystalline parts, but only into similarly shaped pieces that look like wholes, and the smallest part of the crystal is still a crystal, so the family is both a part of the Church and itself a Church. Clement of Alexandria calls the family, like the Church, the house of the Lord, and Chrysostom directly and precisely calls it a 'little Church'. The paradisaical family coincides with the Church, for at that time mankind had no other Church, and the Christian Church is the continuation of the paradisaical Church, the new Adam-Christ replacing the Old Adam in it (I Corinthians 15.22). This explains why the New Testament and the oldest Christian literature, the Holy Scriptures that refer to marriage, refer also the Church and vice-versa."<sup>397</sup>

A true Christian marriage is therefore an example of that true Christian unity in the image of the unity of the Holy Trinity spoken of by St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Christ, having taken as an example and image of that indivisible love, accord and unity which is conceivable only in unanimity, the unity of essence which the Father has with Him and which He, in turn, has with the Father, desires that we too should unite with each other; evidently in the same way as the Consubstantial, Holy Trinity is united so that the whole body of the Church is conceived as one, ascending in Christ through the fusion and union of two peoples into the composition of the new perfect whole. The image of Divine unity and the consubstantial nature of the Holy Trinity as a most perfect interpenetration must be reflected in the unity of the believers who are of one heart and mind" - and body, he adds, for this "natural unity" is "*perhaps not without bodily unity*".<sup>398</sup>

The bodily element cannot be removed from the type without diminishing its typical, iconic quality. For God in His descent to, and union with, mankind did not merely use the woman as a channel, as it were, for His Divine energies. He actually *became* a man, *taking flesh* from a woman; *the Word was made flesh*. And the union between the Word and the flesh was permanent, "unconfused and yet undivided", according to the Chalcedonian formula, just as the union of man and woman in marriage is permanent, "unconfused and yet undivided". Thus the full reality of the Incarnation can be expressed in opposition to those various heretics who deny its fullness only through an image that is fully physical,

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<sup>396</sup> St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Against the Heresies and on the Divine Temple*, P.G. 155:512D.

<sup>397</sup> Troitsky, "Brak i Tserkov" ("Marriage and the Church"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986 (III), № 35, pp. 7-8.

<sup>398</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On John* 17.21; quoted in Archbishop Ilarion Troitsky, *Christianity or the Church?* Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1971, p. 9. Italics mine (V.M.).

that expresses full union, union *in the flesh*. Hence the difference, and yet inseparability, of the sexes, both in the beginning, when God made them male and female, and in the last times, when “God sent forth His son, born of a woman” (Galatians 4.4). And so “neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For just as the woman was from the man [Eve was from Adam], so was the man from the woman [Christ from the Virgin]; but all things from God [the Father]” (I Corinthians 11.11)...

## 4. MARRIAGE AND MONASTICISM

*Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely hind, a graceful doe.  
Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love...*  
Proverbs 5.18-19.

*It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*  
I Corinthians 7.1.

*Are you not yet married to the flesh? Fear not this consecration; you are pure even after marriage. I will take the risk of that. I will join you in marriage. I will dress the bride. We do not dishonour marriage because we give a higher honour to virginity. I will imitate Christ, the pure Bridegroom and Leader of the Bride, as He both worked a miracle at a wedding, and honours marriage with His Presence.*  
St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration on Holy Baptism, 18.

### The Definition of Marriage

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow defines marriage thus: "Marriage is the mystery in which conjugal union is blessed, as the image of the spiritual union of Christ with the Church, and in which is asked the grace of a pure unity of soul, blessed child-bearing and the Christian upbringing of children."<sup>399</sup> This is a somewhat paradoxical definition, because while every element in it is essential, it leaves out the definitive element according to the Gospel: the *union in one flesh*. For the Lord does not say of married couples: "they are no longer two, but one *spirit*", but: "they are no longer two, but one *flesh*" (Matthew 19.5). This is by no means to demean the spiritual element in marriage: on the contrary, a *Christian* marriage must be a union in spirit as well as flesh: "Join them in one mind; crown them into one flesh", as the priest prays during the marriage service. Nevertheless, if we seek to define the difference between marriage and other unions between human beings, we are forced to return to that which the Gospel places, without any false shame, in the forefront: marriage is the union of two human beings of different sexes into one flesh, into one physical unit.

It follows that we must exclude the view that would see in sexual union an at best unnecessary and at worse sinful element in the marriage bond. Marriage is not marriage if it is not a physical union "into one flesh". This conception of marriage, writes S.V. Troitsky, "was included into the official canonical collections of the East. The *Eclogue* of the year 740 defines marriage as the union of two people in one flesh, in one substance. Together with the *Eclogue*, this definition entered into the Slavonic *Kormchaia Kniga*. Balsamon defines marriage as 'the union of husband and wife into one substance, into one man with [almost] one soul, but in two hypostases'.<sup>400</sup> To the Neo-Manichaeans it may seem that the

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<sup>399</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, Expanded Christian Catechism.

<sup>400</sup> Troitsky, op. cit., p. 18. Balsamon's text reads: "ενα σχεδον ομοουσον εν δυσι υποστασει".

definition of marriage as a one-flesh union is the clearest proof of its lowliness, even its sinfulness. However, it is precisely because marriage is a one-flesh union that divorce, adultery and fornication are seen as the truly sinful phenomena that they are, insofar as they tear apart that *physical* union which God Himself put together.

The Neo-Manichaeans argue that marriage involving physical union is less truly marriage than a purely spiritual union. Thus G.I. Benevich and A.M. Shufrin first quote St. Gregory of Nyssa: "One must love God with all one's heart and all one's soul and strength, and all one's feeling, and one's neighbour one must love as oneself, and one's wife – if she has a pure soul as Christ loves the Church, and if she is more passionate, as one's body".<sup>401</sup> Then they point to the subtle difference in the form of love recommended for a passionate wife and a not-so-passionate wife, and draw the conclusion that for a passionate wife sexual relations are permitted (perhaps even recommended), whereas for a non-passionate wife the marriage is to be virginal (as, it is supposed, was Gregory's marriage with his wife Theosebeia). Both kinds of marriage, they argue, are lawful and in the image of the marriage of Christ and the Church; but only the virginal marriage is not only in the image, but also in the likeness.<sup>402</sup>

If by "virginal marriage" these authors meant the marriage of Adam and Eve in Paradise, or of Christ and the Virgin at the Annunciation, then we would not only agree that the first marriage is a perfect likeness of the marriage of Christ and the Church, but also that the second *is* the marriage of Christ and the Church. However, if, as seems more likely, they mean that ordinary human marriages in which there is no physical union are higher than those in which it exists, then we demur. Such Platonic "marriages" may be admirable in themselves, evincing a high level of sublimation and true love; but insofar as they do not involve a physical element, they are not in fact marriages according to the Lord's own definition. For the Lord does not say: "they are no longer two, but one *spirit*", but: "they are no longer two, but one *flesh*" (Matthew 19.5). And the priest in the marriage service prays that the union will be in both spirit and flesh: "Join them in one mind; crown them into one flesh". Thus if we seek to define the difference between marriage and other unions between human beings, we are forced to return to that which the Gospel places, without any false shame, in the forefront: marriage is the union of two human beings of different sexes into one flesh, into one physical unit.

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<sup>401</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, in *Opera*, ed. H. Langerbeck, volume 6, p. 122.

<sup>402</sup> Benevich and Shufrin, "Besedy o pravoslavnom dogmaticheskom bogoslovii, beseda 3: O liubvi i obozhenii" ("Conversations on Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, conversation 3: On Love and Deification"), *Pravoslavnij Put'* (Orthodox Way), 2002, pp. 131-143.

## *The Permanence of Marriage*

Having said that, it is obvious that not every one-flesh union between a man and a woman constitutes a marriage. St. Basil the Great says: "Fornication is neither marriage, nor even the beginning of marriage."<sup>403</sup> Again, St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the words: "It is by the Lord that a man is matched with a woman" (Proverbs 19.14), writes: "He means that God made marriage, and not that it is He that joins together *every* man that comes to be with a woman. For we see many that come to be with one another for evil, even by the law of marriage, and this we should not ascribe to God."<sup>404</sup> Again, Archpriest Sergei Shukin writes: "Let us recall the words of the Savior to the Samaritan woman: 'Thou hast well said, 'I have no husband;' for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband' (John 4.17-18). This shows that from a spiritual viewpoint, not every marriage is a Christian marriage; it becomes Christian only when it has been entered into for the goals defined and established by God."<sup>405</sup>

The words of Fr. Sergei need to be qualified here: since the Samaritan woman was not, at the time of this conversation, a Christian, and did not even belong to the Old Testament People of God, the distinction made here by the Lord was not between Christian and non-Christian marriage, but between marriage and *fornication*. In other words, even among those who are not Christians, there is a real difference, recognized by God, between a lawful union in one flesh, which He calls marriage, and an unlawful union, which we call fornication. He allowed that the Samaritan woman – who, it must be remembered, was not a member of the People of God yet, although she later became both a Christian and a Martyr – had entered into five lawful marriages. But the marriage she was now in was not lawful...

In what does this difference consist? St. John Chrysostom writes: "When we speak of marriage we do not mean carnal union – on that basis, fornication would also be marriage. Marriage consists in the fact that the married woman contents herself with a single husband; this is what distinguishes the courtesan from the free and wise woman. When a woman contents herself during her life with a single husband, this union merits the name of marriage. But if she opens her house not to one man only, but to several bridegrooms, I do not dare to call this behaviour fornication, but I will say of this woman that she is very far behind the woman who has known only one husband. The latter has in effect heard the word of the Lord: 'For that a man will leave his father and his mother and will cleave to his wife, and they will be two in one flesh'; she has cleaved to her husband as if he was really her flesh and she has not forgotten the master who has been given her once and for all; the other woman has considered neither her first husband nor the second marriage as her own flesh; the first has been dispossessed by the second who is in his turn dispossessed by the first; she would not be able to preserve a faithful memory of her first husband while attaching herself after him to another; as for the second, she will not look at him with the

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<sup>403</sup> St. Basil, *Canon 26*.

<sup>404</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 23 on Romans*, 1.

<sup>405</sup> Shukin, "On Marriages with the Heterodox", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 27, no. 2, March-April, 1977, p. 29.

appropriate tenderness, since a part of her thought is distributed in favour of the one who has gone. The consequence?... Both of them, the first as well as the second, are frustrated of the esteem and affection which a wife owes to her husband."<sup>406</sup>

"Marriage consists in the fact that the married woman contents herself with a single husband". Clearly this constancy is a necessary part of true marriage. But is it sufficient? Is it not possible for a man and a woman to live together permanently, "forsaking all other", but outside lawful wedlock? Is not the *rite* of marriage, containing that *blessing* which Metropolitan Philaret mentions, also a necessary element? And if so, what kind of rite? What about the elements of consent of the marrying parties, consent of the parents or guardians, consent of the Church, the element of love?

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<sup>406</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On Monogamy*, II, 2.

## Civil and Ecclesiastical Marriage

One answer to these questions is provided by the canonist S.V. Troitsky, who concludes, on the basis of Roman and Byzantine law, that no religious rite is necessary to conclude a true Christian marriage. As I shall argue later, such a conclusion does not take into account several important facts and is unacceptable from a Christian point of view.

However, I shall first quote his answer at some length because of the important and relevant information it does contain:- “From the sovereign character of the family Roman law drew the conclusion that it was not the state that made a marriage a marriage, and not a religious organization, but exclusively the marrying parties themselves, their mutual love, their will, their agreement. Nuptiae solo affectu fiunt, nuptiae consensu contrahentium fiunt, consensus facit nuptias – such was the basic position of Roman and Byzantine, ecclesiastical and civil law in the first 8 centuries of Christian history. Moreover, in more ancient times the religious form of marriage, confarreatio, was necessary not to make marriage valid, but for manus, that is, for the acquisition by the husband of authority over the wife.

“But if marriage is concluded by the marrying parties themselves, then in what does the task of the State in relation to marriage consist? Only in verifying its existence for itself, only in registering the marriage, to the extent that this was necessary for the resolution of various questions of family and inheritance law. And Roman law left it to the will of the marrying parties to choose any form of marriage they liked, contenting itself with the minimum for its own verification.

“In ancient Rome there existed a view with regard to marriage that was the opposite of our own. We have a presumption that those living together are not married. In our time a married couple must itself prove with documents, witnesses, etc., that it is in lawful wedlock. In Rome, by contrast, the presumption was that those living together were married.

“Every permanent sexual relationship of a fully entitled man and woman was seen as a marriage. ‘We must see living together with a free woman as marriage, and not concubinage,’ writes the noted Roman jurist Modestinus. Therefore it was not the marrying parties that had to prove that they were in wedlock, but a third interested party had to prove that there existed some kind of impediment which did not allow one to see this living together as marriage. To put it more briefly, onus probandi lay not on the spouses, but on the third parties. Only when there was a basis for thinking that it was in the family or property interests of the parties to present a temporary relationship as marriage was the question of the formal criteria of marriage raised. But even in this case Roman law contented itself with the minimum. For this it was sufficient, for example, to show that there had been de facto living together for a year, the testimonies of witnesses that the parties had indeed agreed to marry or to call each other Mr. and Mrs., that some kind of marital rite had been performed, the presentation of documents with regard to the

dowry, etc. In a word, speaking in legal terms, in Rome the participation of the State in the conclusion of a marriage did not have a constitutive, but only a declarative character.

“Byzantine legislation adopted the same point of view until the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The constitution of the Emperors Theodosius and Valentinian in 428 says that for the validity of marriage neither a wedding feast is necessary, nor documents on a dowry, nor any festivity, since no law hindered the marriage of fully entitled people. Marriage acquired validity by means of agreement and the testimony of witnesses. Although Justinian, in his novella 74 of December, 537, prescribed that middle-class people should go to church to conclude their marriage, this demand was based on considerations, not of a religious, but only of an economic character, which is indicated by the fact that the very separation of this class of people was in accordance with their property census. And indeed, Justinian demanded that middle-class people should go to church not in order to be crowned, but only in order to draw up a document on marriage in front of an ecclesiastical lawyer and three or four clergy as witnesses. But even this formality did not last long, and on December 11, 542, novella 117 (ch. 4) freed even middle-class people from this obligation. Only upper-class people (*illustres et senatores*), again for reasons having to do with property, had to write documents on the dowry, while the lower classes were not obliged to write any documents at all. In the same novella 74 (chapter 5), Justinian gave the significance of an optional form of marriage, not to crowning, but to the oath ‘to take as my wife’ while touching the Bible. Only in a legislative collection of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely: in the collection of 741 of the iconoclast emperors Leo the Isaurian and Constantine Copronymus known as the *Eclogue*, was a blessing as a juridical form of concluding a marriage mentioned for the first time. But even here a blessing is not an obligatory form for the conclusion of a marriage, but only one of four forms of marriage, the choice of which depends on external circumstances and the will of the marrying parties; in other words, here a Church blessing is only an optional form of marriage, and even then not always, but only in case of necessity, and it is precisely the *Eclogue* that prescribes that marriage must be concluded by means of the drawing up of a document of a definite form, and when, as a consequence of the poverty of the spouses, it is impossible to draw up the document, the marriage can be concluded either through the agreement of the parents, or through a Church blessing, or through the witness of friends (*Eclogue*, II, 1,3,8). It is exactly the same with crowning; it is an optional form of marriage, say also the later laws of the Byzantine emperors – the *Prochiron* of 878 (IV, 6,14,17,27), the *Epanagoge* of 886 (XVI, 1) and the collection known as Blastaris’ *Syntagma* of 1335 (G., 2, translation of Ilyinsky, p. 103). ‘Marriage,’ we read in Blastaris, ‘is concluded by means of a blessing, or crowning, or an agreement’.

“That is how the ancient Church, too, looked on the form of marriage. The basic source of the Church’s teaching on marriage, the Bible, does not say that the institution of marriage arose some time later as something established by the State or the Church. Here we find another teaching on marriage. Neither the Church nor the State is the source of marriage. On the contrary: marriage is the source of both the Church and the State. Marriage precedes all the social and religious organizations. It was established already in

Paradise, it was established by God Himself. God brings the woman to Adam, and Adam himself proclaims his marital union independently of any earthly authority, even the authority of parents (Genesis 2.24; cf. Matthew 19.6). Thus the first marriage was concluded 'by the mercy of God'. In the first marriage the husband and wife are the bearers of the highest earthly authority, they are sovereigns to whom the whole of the rest of the world is subject (Genesis 1.28). The family is the first form of the Church, it is the 'little Church', as Chrysostom calls it, and at the same time it is the source also of the State as an organization of power, since according to the Bible the basis of every authority of man over man is to be found in the words of God on the authority of the husband over the wife: 'he will be your lord' (Genesis 3.16). Thus the family is not only a little Church, but also a little State. And if that is so, then the relationship of the family with the Church and the State must have a character of equality, the character of international and inter-Church relations. Therefore the performers of marriage are considered in the sources of the Church's teaching to be the spouses themselves, and the participation of a representative of authority, whether of the Church or of the State, is not an essential element of marriage, is not a condition of its validity. In the whole Bible, both in the Old and in the New Testaments, we do not find a single word on any kind of obligatory form of marriage, although here we do find many prescriptions of a ritual character. The relationship of the Church and the State to marriage is expressed not in its conclusion, but only in its verification, in its recognition as an already accomplished fact. Just as the recognition of authority in a State on the part of another State does not give this authority new rights, but is only the condition of normal relations between these States, so the participation of a representative of society, whether of the Church or of the State, is the condition of normal relations between them and the new family.

"Therefore the relationship of the Church to marriage was one of recognition. This idea is well expressed in the Gospel account of the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 1.1-11). Reference is sometimes made to this account as a proof of the teaching that the accomplisher of marriage is the priest. In fact, the Gospel account is not in agreement with this point of view. The Gospel makes no mention whatsoever of the participation of Christ in the rite of the conclusion of the marriage. Christ came with His apostles as a guest; he was invited to the wedding feast. But participation in the wedding feast was, generally speaking, an expression of the recognition of marriage on the part of society, and the presence of Christ and the apostles had the significance of a recognition of the Old Testament institution of marriage on the part of the new Church.

"This is also how the ancient Christian Church herself looked on the form of marriage. Her teaching on the form of marriage coincides with the teaching of the Bible and Roman law. Therefore the ancient Christians, who did not permit the slightest compromise with the State pagan religion and preferred a martyr's death to participation in the smallest pagan rite, entered into marriage in the time of the persecutions and later in exactly the same way as the other citizens of the Roman State. 'They, that is, the Christians, conclude marriage in the same way as everyone,' says an ancient Christian writer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in the *Epistle to Diognetus* (V, 6). 'Each of us recognizes as his wife the woman whom he

took in accordance with the laws published by you (i.e. the pagans),’ says Athenagoras in his *Apology* (33, P.G. 6:965) submitted to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (166-177). St. Ambrose of Milan says that Christians take wives ‘in accordance with the tablets’, that is, in accordance with the Roman laws of the 12 tablets (*On the Institution of Virginitiy*, 6; P.L. 16:316). Chrysostom says definitively: ‘Marriage is concluded in no other way than by agreement according to the laws’ (*Homily 56 on Genesis*, 29; P.G. 54:488). The first canon of the Council of Laodicea demands that marriage should be concluded only ‘freely and lawfully’, that is, in accordance with the Roman laws. The ancient Church completely assimilated the basic teaching of Roman marital law, that marriage is concluded by the spouses themselves, that consensus facit nuptias. This teaching is found among the most authoritative representatives of Church teaching both in the East and in the West, for example, in John Chrysostom, Balsamon, Ambrose of Milan, Blessed Augustine, Isidore, Pope Nicholas I, and others.

“Finally, we find the same teaching in the official collections of Byzantine law which have been adopted by the Orthodox Church.”<sup>407</sup>

And yet for many centuries now, in both East and West, a marriage that has not been performed by a priest in Church is considered invalid by Christians. Only in the later Middle Ages, and only in the West, did marriage begin to be seen as a no more than a civil contract.<sup>408</sup>

So why did the change take place, if it did indeed take place?

Let us return to the marriage in Cana. Troitsky asserts that Christ’s presence there signified no more than His recognition of the validity of Old Testament marriage.<sup>409</sup> And yet, as we have seen, the tradition of the Church sees more in it than that: not a recognition merely, but a blessing, the addition of a Divine element that was not there before, the changing of the cold and watery element of pre-Christian marriage into the soberly intoxicating element of Christian marriage.

Moreover, it is going beyond the evidence to suppose that Christ was merely a passive

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<sup>407</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-181.

<sup>408</sup> A.N. Wilson writes that “they were civil contracts sealed at the church door. One thinks of the Wife of Bath with her ‘housbandes at chirche doore I hadde five’. Even when marriage was raised to the dignity of a sacrament by the medieval western church (largely to make up the number of the sacraments to the magical seven), it was never suggested that the *church*, or the *priest*, made the marriage. The ministers of this particular ‘sacrament’ are the man and the woman who perform it; and in this sense any marriage, in Catholic teaching is a marriage” (C.S. Lewis, *A Biography*, London: Harper Perennial, 2005, p. 258).

<sup>409</sup> He quotes the following texts in his favour: (i) “He brings a gift in order to honour the work” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 4 on Isaiah* 6.1; P.G. 56:246); (ii) “to confirm that He Himself established marriage (in Paradise)” St. Augustine, *On John*, 9.2); (iii) “He is present here as one invited to the wedding feast, which took place already after the celebration of the marriage, and by His presence He witnesses that marriage concluded in accordance with the laws and customs of the Hebrew people is a true, God-pleasing marriage.” (Pavlov, *50-aia glava Kormchej Knigi*, Moscow, 1887, p. 58).

spectator at the marriage. We are told that He and His apostles were “invited”, which implies a certain desire for His presence on the part of the spouses, a desire which must have been the stronger in that the bridegroom, St. Simon the Zealot, was himself an apostle. In response to this active desire on the part of man for the participation of God, is it likely that God would not respond, would refuse to play any active role Himself?

This was certainly not the view of St. Gregory the Theologian, who says to those preparing to be baptized: “Are you not yet married in the flesh? Fear not this consecration; you are pure even after marriage. I will take the risk of that. I will join you in marriage. I will lead in the bride. We do not dishonour marriage because we give a higher honour to virginity. I will imitate Christ, the pure Bridegroom and Leader of the Bride, as He both worked a miracle at a wedding, and honours marriage with His Presence.”<sup>410</sup>

This passage attributes an active role to Christ as “Leader of the Bride”, while ascribing an analogous role to the priest. Just as God led Eve to Adam in Paradise, thereby making them man and wife, so did Christ at Cana and so does every Christian priest at every Christian marriage. That it is God Who is the initiator and consecrator of true marriage is confirmed by other patristic writings, some of which are quoted by Troitsky himself. Thus Tertullian writes: “Marriage takes place when God unites two into one flesh.”<sup>411</sup> And St. John Chrysostom writes: “God unites you with your wife”.<sup>412</sup> As it is expressed in a *Novella* of Emperor Alexis I, those being married “receive God”, Who “walks amidst those being united”.<sup>413</sup> Again, Metropolitan Cyprian of Kiev (1376-1406) writes in his service book that “husband and wife are united by Thee”.

Troitsky asserts that the early Church did no more than recognize the validity of marriages performed according to Roman law. And yet the earliest witness we have to the early Church’s practice implies rather more than that. Thus St. Ignatius the Godbearer writes: “It is right for men and women who marry to be united with the knowledge of the Bishop (μετα γνωμης Επισκοπου), that the marriage may be according to the Lord and not according to lust (κατα Κυριον και μη κατ’ επιθυμιαν).”<sup>414</sup> This shows that “marriage as a sacramental action has an apostolic origin, or, as Stavrinou indicates, ‘marriage from the beginning was sanctified by the Church, being accomplished by her prayers and blessing’”.<sup>415</sup>

It may be that in the early Christian centuries there was no specific rite of marriage carried out in the Church, and that Christians continued to be married according to the non-Christian procedures of the pagan Roman empire. But this in no way implies that

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<sup>410</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on Holy Baptism*, 18.

<sup>411</sup> Tertullian, *On Monogamy*, 9.

<sup>412</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, 4; P.G. 62:135.

<sup>413</sup> *Athenian Syntagma*, V, 286-291; quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>414</sup> St. Ignatius, *To Polycarp*, 5.

<sup>415</sup> Ioannis Kogkoulis, Khristos Oikonomos, Panagiotis Skaltstis, *Ο Γαμος* (Marriage), Thessalonica, 1996, p. 187.

the Church was merely a passive spectator, any more than Christ was a passive spectator at Cana. If the marriage had to be “in the Lord”, in the words of the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 7.39), and “with the knowledge of the Bishop”, as St. Ignatius says, then it is clear that some Episcopal screening was carried out beforehand to ensure that the marriage would not be contrary to the Church’s ethical and canonical norms. Moreover, the Church then added her own seal and blessing to the marriage performed outside her walls, if only by communicating the married couple as a couple in the Body and Blood of Christ. In a similar way, emperors were proclaimed for the first time outside the walls of the Church, but then received the blessing and anointing of the Church within them.<sup>416</sup>

Do the early sources betray embryonic elements of a Christian rite of marriage? Some have seen a marital blessing in the following remark of Clement of Alexandria: “On whom does the presbyter lay his hand? Whom does he bless? Not the woman decked out, but another’s hair [i.e. a wig], and through it another head.”<sup>417</sup> Less ambiguous are the words of Tertullian: “[The happy marriage is the one that] the Church joins, which the offering [oblatio, i.e. the Eucharist] strengthens, which the blessing [benedictio] seals, which the angels proclaim and which the heavenly Father confirms”.<sup>418</sup> “Secret unions [occultae conjunctiones], that is, ones that have not been professed beforehand in the Church, are judged to be equivalent to fornication and adultery.”<sup>419</sup>

In the third century Pope Callistus I was accused of allowing noble Roman women to marry lower-class men and even slaves, which was forbidden by Roman law. Whether this accusation was true or not, it shows that there must have been some kind of ecclesiastical rite of marriage distinct from the civil rite performed in Roman law.<sup>420</sup>

This fact becomes more and more indisputable as we turn from the pre-Nicene to the post-Nicene sources. Thus St. Basil the Great calls marriage “a yoke through a blessing”.<sup>421</sup> Again, St. Gregory the Theologian asks Olympiada to forgive him for not being present at her wedding, but says that in spirit he, as a priest, places the right hands of the couple on each other and both in the hand of God.<sup>422</sup> Again, St. Timothy of Alexandria answers a question relating to a priest being invited to perform a wedding, whose context reveals

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<sup>416</sup> “It is not in vain,” writes Pavel Kuzmenko, “that marriage crowning involves the laying of wreaths similar to royal crowns on the heads of the newly married. It symbolizes that the family is a small kingdom in the earthly sense and a small church in the spiritual sense” (*Nashi Traditsii: Kreschenie, Venchanie, Pogrebenie, Posty* (Our Traditions: Baptism, Marriage, Burial, Fasts), Moscow: Bukmen, 1996, p. 106). During the coronation of the Russian Tsars, the bystanders were showered with gold and silver, symbolizing the betrothal of the Tsar with the State. See Fr. Nikita Chakorov (ed.), *Tsarskie Koronatsii na Rusi* (Tsarist Coronations in Rus’), Russian Orthodox Youth Committee, 1971, p. 22.

<sup>417</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, III, 11; Kogkoulis et al., op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>418</sup> Tertullian, *To his Wife*, II, 9; P.L. 1:1302A; Kogkoulis et al., op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>419</sup> Tertullian, *On Chastity*, 4; P.L. 2:1038-1039; Kogkoulis et al., op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>420</sup> See the article of Callistus by John Chapman in the 1913 edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Encyclopedia\\_\(1913\)/Pope\\_Callistus\\_I](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Pope_Callistus_I).

<sup>421</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On the Hexaemeron*, P.G. 29:160B; Kogkoulis et al., op. cit. p. 190.

<sup>422</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Letter 183*, P.G. 37:313; Kogkoulis et al., op. cit. p. 190.

that the marriage also involved the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.<sup>423</sup> Again, Synesius of Ptolemais, a married bishop of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, tells us that he took his wife from the hand of Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria.<sup>424</sup> Again, St. Augustine calls marriage, not simply a marital bond, but an "indissoluble sacrament".<sup>425</sup>

From the above examples it is clear that "in the first years of Christianity the dominant position was held by political marriage with the thought that it was recognized by the Roman State, but the Church blessed the faithful newly weds in parallel with some form of priestly act."<sup>426</sup> Against this, Troitsky claims that the 38<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Canons of St. Basil prove that "if the parties started to live together before marriage, their fornication is turned into marriage of itself, without any rite, immediately the external obstacles are removed".<sup>427</sup> However, a closer examination of the canons proves only that a marriage has to be public and approved by parents or masters to be valid. It says nothing about the presence or absence of a rite.

Troitsky appears to be on sounder ground when he says that second marriages, except in the case when the spouse's first marriage was terminated through the adultery of his spouse, did not involve the participation of the Church at the beginning, being, in St. Theodore the Studite's words, "civil".<sup>428</sup> However, insofar as the twice-married couple continued to be members of the Church and partake of the Eucharist, we cannot assert that the Church had no part to play in those marriages; for, as we have seen above, admission of a couple to communion constitutes a seal on the marriage, its sanctification, and not simply a recognition that the couple are already married.

Later, however, the Church introduced a rite for second marriages, though without crowning and with a penance of two years without communion.

One way of looking at the matter is to see the civil marriage for Christians as not so much a marriage, as a betrothal, and the Christian rite (even if, at the beginning, that consisted in little more than the blessing of the bishop and participation in the Eucharist) as the marriage itself. This is the approach adopted by P. Kuzmenko: "In Christianity marriage has been blessed since apostolic times. Tertullian, the church writer of the third century, says: 'How can we represent the happiness of Marriage, which is approved by the Church, sanctified by her prayers and blessed by God!'

"In antiquity the rite of marriage was preceded by betrothal, which was a civil act and was performed in accordance with local customs and decrees, insofar - it goes without saying - as this was possible for Christians. Betrothal was performed triumphantly in the

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<sup>423</sup> St. Timothy, *Canon 11*.

<sup>424</sup> Synesius, *Letter 105*, P.G. 66:1485A; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.* p. 190.

<sup>425</sup> St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, I, 10, 11; P.L. 44: 419; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.* p. 191.

<sup>426</sup> Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>427</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>428</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

presence of many witnesses who ratified the marriage agreement. The latter was an official document defining the property and legal relations of the spouses. Betrothal was accompanied by a rite of the joining together of the hands of the bride and bridegroom. Moreover, the bridegroom gave the bride a ring of iron, silver or gold, depending on his wealth. Clement, bishop of Alexandria, says: 'The man must give the woman a golden ring, not for her external adornment, but so as to place a seal on the household, which from this time passes into her control and is entrusted to her care.'...

"Towards the 10th and 11th centuries betrothal lost its civil significance, and this rite was performed in the church, accompanied by the corresponding prayers. But for a long time yet betrothal was performed separately from crowning and was united with the service of Mattins. Finally the rite of betrothal received its unique form towards the 17th century.

"In antiquity the rite of marriage crowning itself was performed by a special prayer, by the bishop's blessing and by the laying on of hands in the church during the Liturgy. A witness to the fact that marriage crowning was introduced in antiquity into the rite of the Liturgy is the presence of a series of corresponding elements in both contemporary rites: the opening exclamation, 'Blessed is the Kingdom...', the litany of peace, the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel, the extended litany, the exclamation: 'And vouchsafe us, O Master...', the singing of 'Our Father' and, finally the drinking from a common chalice. All these elements were evidently taken from the rite of the Liturgy and are similar to the Eucharist (the sacrament of Communion)."<sup>429</sup>

Concerning this rite of crowning, which became the most characteristic element of the rite of marriage, as opposed to betrothal, Fr. John Meyendorff writes: "Since the fourth century a specific solemnization of the sacrament is mentioned by Eastern Christian writers: a rite of 'crowning', performed during the Eucharistic Liturgy. According to St. John Chrysostom, the crowns symbolized victory over 'passions'... From a letter of St. Theodore the Studite (+826) we learn that crowning was accompanied by a brief prayer read 'before the whole people' at the Sunday Liturgy, by the bishop or the priest. The text of the prayer, given by St. Theodore, is the following: 'Thyself, O Master, send down Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling place and unite these Thy servant and Thy handmaid. And give to those whom Thou unitest harmony of minds; crown them into one flesh; make their marriage honourable; keep their bed undefiled; deign to make their common life blameless' (*Letters* I, 22, P.G. 99, col. 973). The liturgical books of the same period (such as the famous *Codex Barberini*) contain several short prayers similar to that quoted by St.

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<sup>429</sup> Kuzmenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114. This was the situation in the Eastern Church. In the West in ancient times, writes D.S. Bailey, "the nuptials of the faithful continued to take place with the formalities customary at the time. The traditional ceremonies were not modified, save for the omission of non-essentials which were either unedifying in themselves or redolent of pagan superstition, and the substitution of the Eucharist and the benediction for the sacrifice and other accompanying religious observances. Hence the Church Orders contain no Christian marriage rite, nor is there any reference to one in the literature of the period, while the ancient sacramentaries merely give the prayers of the nuptial Mass and the blessing." (*The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought*, London: Longmans, 1957, pp. 74-75).

Theodore. These prayers are all meant to be read during the Liturgy.<sup>430</sup>

In 893 Emperor Leo VI made it compulsory to be married in Church by crowning through his Novella 89 (893). Leo introduced this law because he himself wanted to marry a second time – but with crowning, which is forbidden for second marriages by the Church. So he made crowning compulsory by law for all kinds of marriages.

But this created the problem of how Christians who were not considered worthy of receiving Communion were to be married if marriage continued to be an integral part of the Liturgy and was sealed by Communion. Such people could not be married and therefore might well fall into the sin of fornication. In order to avoid this, the Church separated marriage from the Liturgy, but introduced the common cup of wine into the rite as a reminder of the former link with the Liturgy, when the newly-weds would receive Communion. And so “from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, we have two cups, the eucharistic and the ‘common’, from which those who were unworthy to commune drank.”<sup>431</sup>

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century St. Symeon of Thessalonica sums up the teaching of the Church on the nature of a true marriage: "And immediately (the priest) takes the holy chalice with the Presanctified Gifts and exclaims: 'The Presanctified Holy things for the Holy'. And all respond: 'One is Holy, One is Lord', because the Lord alone is the sanctification, the peace and the union of His servants who are being married. The priest then gives Communion to the bridal pair, if they are worthy. Indeed, they must be ready to receive Communion, so that their crowning be a worthy one and their marriage valid. For Holy Communion is the perfection of every sacrament and the seal of every mystery. And the Church is right in preparing the Divine Gifts for the redemption and blessing of the bridal pair; for Christ Himself, Who gave us these Gifts and Who is the Gifts, came to the marriage (in Cana of Galilee) to bring to it peaceful union and control. So that those who get married must be worthy of Holy Communion; they must be united before God in a church, which is the House of God, because they are children of God, in a church where God is sacramentally present in the Gifts, where He is being offered to us, and where He is seen in the midst of us.

"After that the priest also gives them to drink from the common cup, and the hymn 'I will take the cup of salvation' is sung because of the Most Holy Gifts and as a sign of the joy which comes from divine union, and because the joy of the bridal pair comes from the peace and concord which they have received.

"But to those who are not worthy of communion - for example, those who are being married for a second time, and others - the Divine Gifts are not given, but only the common

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<sup>430</sup> Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>431</sup> Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 48. The authors continue: “The common cup reminds [them] of the joy of the marriage in Cana and in general constitutes a symbolical act, so that the newly-weds should know that they are beginning their life with the prayer of the Church that they should live inseparably and should together share in all the good things and all the joys and sorrows which they will meet”.

cup, as a partial sanctification, as a sign of good fellowship and unity with God's blessing."<sup>432</sup>

It follows that the idea that there can be Christian marriage outside the Church is mistaken. It is true that there can be marriage outside the Church – that is, a sexual union that is not counted as fornication. Even there, certain criteria must be met: the free consent of the spouses, conformity to the laws of the State, public recognition by parents or guardians. But for a Christian more is required: the seal of the Church, which is conferred by, at a minimum, the blessing of the priest and the reception of Divine communion *as a couple* in the Body and Blood of Christ.

When the Bolsheviks introduced civil marriage with divorce-on-demand into Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church resisted this innovation fiercely, insisting that civil marriage was not enough for a Christian. The leader of the Russian Church at the time was New Hieromartyr Tikhon. Before he became Patriarch, when he was still Archbishop in America, he wrote: "In order to be acceptable in the eyes of God, marriage must be entered into 'only in the Lord' (I Corinthians 7.39), the blessing of the Church must be invoked upon it, through which it will become a sacrament, in which the married couple will be given grace that will make their bond holy and high, unto the likeness of the bond between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5.23-32), which will help them in the fulfillment of their mutual duties. Sometimes, as in this country, for instance, Church marriage is deemed unnecessary. But if without the help of God we can accomplish no perfect and true good (John 15.5), if all our satisfaction is from God (II Corinthians 3.5), if God produces in us good desires and acts (Philippians 2.14), then how is it that the grace of God is unnecessary for husband and wife in order to fulfill their lofty duties honourably? No, a true Orthodox Christian could not be satisfied with civil marriage alone, without the Church marriage. Such a marriage will remain without the supreme Christian sanction, as the grace of God is attracted only towards that marriage which was blessed by the Church, this treasury of grace. As to civil marriage, it places no creative religious and moral principles, no spiritual power of God's grace, at the basis of matrimony and for its safety, but merely legal liabilities, which are not sufficient for moral perfection."<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Against the Heresies and on the Divine Temple*, 282, P.G. 155:512-3.

<sup>433</sup> Hieromartyr Tikhon, "An Address of the Right Reverend Tikhon", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 37, no. 4, July-August, 1987.

## Remarriage and Divorce

As we have seen, the Orthodox Church introduced a rite for second marriages that did not include crowning and that involved a penance. This penance does not entail that the second marriage is sinful; for the Apostle Paul counseled younger widows to marry (I Timothy 5.14), and he would hardly have counseled them to commit a sin. Also, St. Xenia of St. Petersburg (January 24) once counseled a just-widowed man to marry again. And even some of the saints, such as Theodore of Yaroslavl (September 19), appear to have entered into blessed second marriages. However, the text of the service does point to a certain lack of temperance in the spouses that makes this second marriage necessary for them; and for this penitence is fitting...

Thus St. Epiphanius of Cyprus writes: "He who cannot keep continence after the death of his first wife, or who has separated from his wife for a valid motive, such as fornication, adultery, or another misdeed, if he takes another wife, or if the wife takes another husband, the divine word does not condemn him nor exclude him from the Church or the life; but she tolerates it rather on account of his weakness."<sup>434</sup>

As with marriage in general, so in relation to divorce and remarriage, the Church did not simply adopt the State's legislation without question, but modified and strengthened it. Thus the State allowed divorce freely: the Church allowed it only in the case of adultery. The State allowed remarriage: the Church also allowed it, but emphasized the superiority of first marriage over second or third marriages<sup>435</sup>, and forbade fourth marriages.<sup>436</sup>

The strict discipline of the Church in relation to remarriage and divorce by no means proceeds from the principle of hatred of the flesh, as modern liberals charge, but rather from its opposite: a profound understanding of the importance of the flesh in general, and of the sexual union of man and woman in particular. Axiomatic is the principle that sexual union is not simply a physiological act with no important moral consequences, but *the creation of an ontologically new human unit*. And if that unit is united with the Body of Christ, its significance, and the sinfulness of the destruction of that unit, is even greater.

The Lord forbade divorce, saying: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matthew 19.6), because it destroys this new unit, which was created, not by man, but by God. As Blessed Theophylact says, "since they have become one flesh, joined together by means of marital relations and physical affection, just as it is accursed to cut one's own flesh, so is it accursed to separate husband and wife".<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> St. Epiphanius, *Against Heresies*, 69; P.G. 41:1024C-1025A; quoted in Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>435</sup> For second marriages a penance of one or two years without communion was applied (St. Basil the Great, *Canon 4*; St. Nicephorus the Confessor, *Canon 2*), and for third marriages – five years without communion (St. Nicephorus, *op. cit.*; *Tome of Union of Constantinople*, 920).

<sup>436</sup> *Tome of Union of Constantinople*, 920.

<sup>437</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 162.

For marriage is indeed, not *procreation* only, but *creation*, the creation of one new being out of two; for “they two shall be one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh’ (Matthew 19.6). For, as Holy New Hieromartyr Gregory (Lebedev) writes, “the people have ceased to exist separately even in the physical sense. They have become one physical body, ‘one flesh’. That is what the fulfilment of the will of God has done... It has not only completed and broadened their souls in a mutual intermingling, it has changed their physical nature and out of two physical existences it has made one whole existence. That is the mystery of marriage. Having explained it, the Lord concludes with a mild reproach to the Pharisees: ‘Well, what do you want? What are you asking about? How, after this, can a man leave his wife? That would be unnatural! In marriage we have a natural completion of life! But you want Me to approve of the destruction of this life?! And in marriage we have a creative act, an act of God, Who creates one life... How can you want Me to destroy life created by God? This is unnatural... Don’t think of encroaching on marriage! What God has joined together, let man not put asunder.”<sup>438</sup>

Even in the Old Testament, divorce was allowed only “for the hardness of your heart”, as the Lord said - in order to protect the wife from worse consequences. But in Malachi we read: “The Lord has borne witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, whom thou has forsaken, and yet she was thy partner, and the wife of thy covenant. And did He not do well? [the Massoretic text reads: Did he not make one?] And there was the residue of His spirit. And ye said: What else except seed doth the Lord seek? But take ye heed to your spirit, and forsake not the wife of thy youth. But if thou shouldest hate thy wife and put her away, saith the Lord God of Israel, then ungodliness shall cover thy thoughts...” (2.14-16).

Not only sinning Israelites, but even New Testament kings, have wrongly sought only “seed”, offspring in a marriage. Thus when Grand Duke Basil of Moscow put away his wife, St. Solomonia, because she was barren, the Lord rebuked him through Patriarch Mark of Jerusalem. If you do this, said the patriarch, the offspring of your unlawful second marriage will be terrible - it turned out to be Ivan the Terrible... Again, in 1845, the peasant Ivan Borisov asked for a divorce from his wife on the grounds that she could not have children. After a medical investigation confirmed this, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow ordered the marriage to be dissolved and blessed the peasant to marry again while the woman was to remain forever unmarried. However, the Holy Synod of the Russian Church did not agree with this decision of the holy metropolitan, and refused the request of the peasant because they had already had sexual intercourse.<sup>439</sup> This illustrates not only that childbearing is *not* the chief function of marriage, but also that marriage is constituted by the sexual union that has been blessed by the Church.

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<sup>438</sup> Hieromartyr Gregory, *Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark*, Moscow, 1991, p. 106 (in Russian).

<sup>439</sup> Snychev, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-322. In another, perhaps controversial decision, the metropolitan allowed a baptised Jew to marry for a fourth time on the grounds that his first two marriages were in Judaism, and were among the sins washed away by his baptism into the Orthodox Church.

Christ permitted divorce for one reason only – adultery, because adultery destroys the one-flesh union that is marriage, creating another-flesh union not blessed by God. Correspondingly, “whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 19.9). Adultery destroys the marriage bond. As Bishop Peter L’Huillier says: “It would be tedious to mention all the explicit testimonies to this effect. Let it suffice to mention St. John of Chrysostom, who confirms that through adultery marriage is dissolved and that after fornication, the husband ceases to be the husband. As for St. Cyril of Alexandria, he expressly states: ‘It is not a writ of divorce that dissolves marriage before God, but bad actions.’”<sup>440</sup>

It may be thought that there is a contradiction between the Lord’s words here and the practice of the Church in both the Byzantine and Russian empires, where divorce was allowed for other reasons than adultery. Thus in Byzantium, writes Anthony Kaldellis, “By law, a man could ask for divorce if his wife had questioned his masculine honor – say, through infidelity or immoral behavior; caused him bodily harm by attempts on his life through magic or physical violence, or jeopardized his attempts to procreate. He could also demand divorce if his wife was incapable of fulfilling her conjugal duties due to an incurable illness – say, madness or leprosy. Madness was sometimes distinguished from demonic possession, which did not constitute grounds for divorce.

“Women could demand divorce if the marriage threatened their chastity – say, through incitement to prostitution or accusations of infidelity; or their bodily integrity by attempts on their life through magic or physical violence; or if the man could not fulfil his duties because of an illness (again, madness or leprosy), was implicated in serious crimes, or was sexually impotent for more than three years or absent for more than five. A woman could also ask for divorce if her husband was convinced that she was cheating on him and persisted in this belief even after discovering that he was wrong.”<sup>441</sup>

Again, the Local Council of the Russian Church held in 1917-18 allowed ten other reasons for divorce, including apostasy, syphilis, madness and impotence.

However, there was no contradiction with the Lord’s words in this legislation. For all these reasons were, as Hieromonk Theodosius writes, “reasons that violated the sanctity of the marriage bond or that destroyed its moral or religious basis and, thus, effectively prevented the spouses from achieving the aim of marriage”.<sup>442</sup> Although the Church has admitted other reasons besides adultery, they all relate to this primary reason in that they

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<sup>440</sup> L’Huillier, “The Indissolubility of Marriage in Orthodox Law and Practice,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 32 (1988): 206.

<sup>441</sup> Kaldellis, “Nine Things You Didn’t Know about Love and Marriage in Byzantium”, OUPblog, October 14, 2017, [https://blog.oup.com/2017/10/nine-things-didnt-know-love-marriage-byzantium/?utm\\_source=feedblitz&utm\\_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm\\_campaign=oupblog](https://blog.oup.com/2017/10/nine-things-didnt-know-love-marriage-byzantium/?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=oupblog). See also the list in See A.M. Allchin, “The Sacrament of Marriage in Eastern Christianity”, in *Marriage, Divorce and the Church*, London: SPCK, 1971.

<sup>442</sup> Hieromonk Theodosius, “Economy”, *Living Orthodoxy*, #121, January-February, 2000, p. 28.

all make the one-flesh union de facto impossible, or possible only in conditions that *defile or endanger* one of the spouses. Thus “divorce is not forbidden,” said Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, “if it is in order to preserve the pure from the impure, and avert danger.”<sup>443</sup>

The heretic Tertullian, took a rigorist view that forbade not only divorce, but also second marriages precisely because, in his opinion, they violate the one-flesh union.<sup>444</sup> The Church, however, did not follow him in this, considering the death of the first spouse to constitute ipso facto the end of the one-flesh union with that spouse.<sup>445</sup> While placing first marriages above second marriages, the Church followed the Apostle Paul in allowing second marriages (I Timothy 5.14; Romans 7.1-3), provided that they are “in the Lord” (I Corinthians 7.39), by which is meant, according to St. Basil the Great, that the spouses enter into them not for the sake of pleasure but in order to have each other’s spiritual help in passing through life.<sup>446</sup>

Second marriage after divorce is not permitted for the guilty partner. Thus the Holy Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece writes: “... permission to marry again is not granted immediately to the faithful spouse, awaiting the repentance of the adulterer and the couple’s reconciliation. And only if this does not occur then properly only the innocent party may receive permission to enter into a second Marriage and not the guilty party. Because they are obligated to weep over their fall for the rest of their life (see the commentary of St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain on the 48th Apostolic Canon).”<sup>447</sup>

Even the rigorist St. Ambrose of Milan admitted second marriages. At the same time, he – and the Orthodox Church as a whole – saw them as impediments for the priesthood: “A man who has married again,” he said, “though he commits no sin and is not polluted thereby, is disqualified for the prerogative of the episcopacy.”<sup>448</sup> The same saint considered a man could not be considered for the priesthood if his wife had been married twice, even if the first marriage was before her baptism: “And I have thought it well not to pass by this point, because many contend that having one wife is said of the time after Baptism; so that the fault whereby any obstacle would ensue would be washed away in baptism. And indeed all faults and sins are washed away; so that if anyone have polluted his body with very many whom he has bound to himself by no law of marriage, all the sins are forgiven him, but if anyone have contracted a second marriage it is not done away; for sin, not law, is loosed by the laver, and as to baptism there is no sin but law. That then which has to do with the law is not remitted as though it were sin but is retained. And the Apostle has

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<sup>443</sup> Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), *Zhizn’ i Deiatel’nost’ Mitropolitan Filareta Moskovskogo* (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow), Tula, 1994, p. 317.

<sup>444</sup> Tertullian, *On Monogamy*, 4; P.L. 2:934.

<sup>445</sup> See Bailey, op. cit., pp. 88, 89-90, 90-92. Athenagoras, however, follows Tertullian in his rigorism. After calling a remarried divorcee an “adulteress”, he writes: “He who rids himself of his first wife, although she is dead, is an adulterer in a certain disguised manner” (*Apology of the Christians*, P.G. 6:968).

<sup>446</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On Virginity*; quoted in *The Rudder*, edited by D. Cummings, Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957, p. 821.

<sup>447</sup> *Encyclical on Marriage and Divorce*, November, 2019.

<sup>448</sup> St. Ambrose, *Epistle* 63, 63.

established a law, saying: 'If any man be without reproach the husband of one wife.' So then he who is blamelessly the husband of one wife comes within the rule for undertaking the priestly office; he, however who has married again has no guilt of pollution, but is disqualified for the priestly prerogative..."<sup>449</sup>

*"In the East,"* writes Fr. John Meyendorff, "the principle of married priesthood was sanctioned forever at the council of Gangra (ca. 340 A.D.): 'If anyone shall maintain, concerning a married presbyter, that it is not lawful to partake of the oblation when he offers it, let him be anathema' (canon 6). Furthermore, the so-called 'Apostolic Canons' – reflecting the discipline of the church of Antioch in the fourth century and formally enforced as authoritative by the Byzantine church – proclaim: 'Let not a bishop, presbyter, or deacon put away his wife under the pretense of religion; but if he put her away, let him be excommunicated' (canon 5)... The spiritual and theological legitimacy of a married episcopate, practiced in the early church, remained unchallenged in principle, but forbidden in practice.

"The endorsement of an unmarried episcopate by the council *in Trullo* was accompanied by a formal demand of strict monogamy for priests and deacons, and their wives. Not only was ordination restricted to candidates who married only once, with no possibility of remarrying in case of widowhood, but men married to widows, or divorcées, were also excluded from the priesthood, or the diaconate (canon 3). This rule remained permanent in the East...

*"In the West,* the trend requiring clergy continence became very early the dominant teaching of the Church. As clearly shown, with remarkable consistency in all the sources, this trend did not object in principle against the ordination of married men, but required that after ordination, they abstain from sexual relations. The motivations for this attitude were 1) a view of sex as a form of morally degrading animality, and 2) the permanence of the Old Testament idea of ritual impurity, caused by sexual intercourse (Lev. 15.18). The first motivation, while it did not originate with St. Augustine, found great reinforcement in his strong views on 'concupiscence' as the channel of transmission of sin; the second, ritual argument was applied to the Christian Eucharist which, if celebrated daily made sexual continence a permanent requirement for the one who performed the Offering.

"Beginning with the council of Elvira (304 A.D.; canon 33), the two arguments will be invoked by popes Damasus (366-384), Siricius (384-399), Innocent I (401-417), Leo I (440-461) – who extends the demand for continence even to subdeacons – and Gregory the Great (590-604). The same arguments will be affirmed by Western councils (Rome, 386; Turin, 389; Carthage, 390 and 401; Toledo, 400 and 589; and several councils in Gaul), and adopted by authors like St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Isidore of Seville. The constant repetition of such injunctions clearly shows that the norm was often ignored. It gained a more universal acceptance in the West only after the eleventh century, particularly with the

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<sup>449</sup> St. Ambrose, quoted by Bishop Tikhon in "Re: [paradosis] Re: Fornication and Adultery ", [orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com), December 19, 2003).

reformed papacy.<sup>450</sup>

“It should be noted that the ritual continence by married priests, deacons and subdeacons on the eve of the celebration of the Eucharist was also required in the East.”<sup>451</sup>

As regards the remarriage of divorcees, the Western Church forbade it even for the innocent party. But the Eastern Church, while forbidding the remarriage of the guilty party, was condescending in relation to the innocent party.

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<sup>450</sup> Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989, pp. 52, 53.

<sup>451</sup> *Sixth Ecumenical Council*, Canon 87.

## Mixed Marriages

Marriage, as we have seen, existed before the coming of Christ, among both Jews and Gentiles. But in the Church of Christ it is raised to a higher level, not only than marriage in the Fall, but even than marriage in Paradise. Why? First, because marriage in the Church is explicitly an imitation of the marriage between Christ and the Church (which it obviously could not be so intentionally before the Incarnation), and partakes of the grace of that higher and mystical marriage to the extent that this imitation is a true likeness. And secondly, because the Christian husband and wife, before becoming one flesh with each other, *are each already one flesh with Christ in the Eucharist*, so that the likeness of the lower mystery to the higher mystery is not a likeness between an archetype and type of different natures (as in icons of Christ and the saints), but is of *the same nature*.

The body of a Christian is holy because it is united to the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore it cannot be united with a body that is not also Christ-bearing and Spirit-bearing. This fact increases the intimacy and depth of the union of the Christian husband and wife and makes a betrayal of that union a greater sin; for in committing adultery, a husband not only unites his and his wife's body with the body of another<sup>452</sup>, but unites the Body of *Christ* with the body of another.

This point was made (in relation to fornication as well as adultery) with particular force by the Apostle Paul: "Ye know that your bodies are members of Christ, do ye not? Having taken up then the members of Christ, shall I make them members of a harlot? May it not be! Or know ye not that he that is joined to the harlot is one body? For 'the two,' saith He, 'shall be into one flesh'. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin whatsoever a man might do is outside the body, but he who committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom ye have from God, and yet are not your own? For ye were bought with a price; glorify then God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6.15-20).

For, as St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "He who should be one with Christ is torn away from Christ and becomes one with a harlot, and this is in accordance with the law of the original institution of marriage. Marriage is a Divine institution blessed by God, and those who cleave to each other in it become one body in Christ. But the harlot serves Satan, and therefore he who cleaves to her becomes one body with her in Satan. That fornication is the service of Satan is evident also from the fact that it darkens not only the body, but also the soul of the fornicator, drives away from his Angel Guardian and tears him away from the Lord, for it is impossible for a darkened and evil-smelling one to be united with the Lord."<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> St. John Chrysostom says: "When you see a harlot tempting you, say, 'My body is not mine, but my wife's'" (*Homily 19 on I Corinthians*, P.G. 124:160A (col. 648)).

<sup>453</sup> St. Theophan, op. cit., p. 150.

It follows that Christians can only marry other Christians, and not schismatics or heretics who do not belong to the Body of Christ and do not possess the Holy Spirit. As the holy canons declare: "Let no Orthodox man be allowed to contract a marriage with a heretical woman, nor moreover let any Orthodox woman be married to a heretical man. But if it should be discovered that any such thing is done by any one of the Christians, no matter who, let the marriage be deemed void, and let the lawless marriage be dissolved."<sup>454</sup> And if this seems excessively harsh (especially by comparison with today's excessively lenient practice), let us recall that even in the Old Testament the lawgiver Ezra, with the consent of the leaders of Israel, dissolved all marriages of Israelites with pagans (Ezra 10).

Similar reasoning underlies the prohibition on the faithful receiving communion in heretical churches. Since the Eucharist is a marital mystery, it is forbidden to the faithful to commune anywhere else than in the Church of Christ. Thus the Apostle Paul says: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" (I Corinthians 10.21-22).

Jealousy is the natural response of a lover to his beloved's adultery, and St. John the Almsgiver defined communing from heretics precisely as adultery: "Another thing the blessed man taught and insisted upon with all was never on any occasion whatsoever to associate with heretics and, above all, never to take the Holy Communion with them, 'even if', the blessed man said, 'you remain without communicating all your life, if through stress of circumstances you cannot find a community of the Catholic Church. For if, having legally married a wife in this world of the flesh, we are forbidden by God and by the laws to desert her and be united to another woman, even though we have to spend a long time separated from her in a distant country, and shall incur punishment if we violate our vows, how then shall we, who have been joined to God through the Orthodox Faith and the Catholic Church - as the apostle says: 'I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ' (II Corinthians 11.2) - how shall we escape from sharing in that punishment which in the world to come awaits heretics, if we defile the Orthodox and holy Faith by adulterous communion with heretics?"<sup>455</sup>

There are other weighty reasons for forbidding mixed marriages. In the first place, a couple who do not share the same faith are not united in that which is most important in

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<sup>454</sup> Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 72. Cf. *Fourth Ecumenical Council, Canon 14; Council of Laodicea, Canons 10 and 31; 58th rule of the Nomocanon*. According to the *Manual of Confession* of St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, St. Symeon of Thessalonica said that an Orthodox who marries a heretic cannot commune until he repents and is chrismated (*Responsa ad Gabriele Pentapolitum, Question 47, P.G. 155, 893A-893C*). Although Peter the Great pressured the Russian Church into allowing marriages with Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Presbyterians (but not Molokans, Baptists and Stundists), the Church in her ukazes of August 18, 1821 and February 28, 1858 reminded the faithful that such unions could not be allowed until the sectarians accepted Orthodoxy. See Bishop Nathaniel of Vienna, "On Marriage with the Heterodox", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 44, № 3, May-June, 1994, pp. 42-45.

<sup>455</sup> *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, in Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, London: Mowbrays, 1977, p. 251.

life. They may be united in body and soul, but not in spirit. This will lead to quarrels and possibly the tearing away of the believing spouse from the true faith for the sake of peace with his unbelieving spouse. As St. Ambrose of Milan says: "There is hardly anything more deadly than being married to one who is a stranger to the faith, where the passions of lust and dissension and the evils of sacrilege are inflamed. Since the marriage ceremony ought to be sanctified by the priestly veiling and blessing, how can that be called a marriage ceremony where there is no agreement in faith?"<sup>456</sup>

Again, St. Ambrose compares mixed marriages to the disastrous marriage of Samson and Delilah. For "how can love be suited if faith be different? Therefore, beware, Christian, to give your daughter to a Gentile [i.e. a pagan] or to a Jew. Because, I say, the Gentile woman, the Jewess, the foreigner, viz. do not take a wife who is a heretic, or any stranger to your Faith. The grace of purity is the first faith of marriage. If she worships idols whose adulteries are proclaimed, if she denies Christ, Who is the Teacher and Rewarder of chastity, how can she love chastity? Even if she is a Christian, this does not suffice unless ye are both consecrated by the Sacrament of Baptism. Ye must rise together for worship, and God is to be entreated by joint prayers. Another sign of purity is added if ye believe that the marriage which has fallen to your lot was given to you by your God. Hence, Solomon, too, says, '*A wife is suited to a man by God*' (Proverbs 19.14)."<sup>457</sup>

Tertullian lists all the disadvantages of being married to an unbelieving husband, especially the difficulty of avoiding taking part in pagan festivals.<sup>458</sup> And then he lists the joys of a marriage between believers: "Where can we find sufficient words to tell the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the offering confirms, and the blessing signs and seal, news of which the angels carry back [to heaven], which the Father takes as ratified? For even on earth children do not rightly and lawfully wed without their fathers' consent. What kind of yoke is that of two believers, partakers of one hope, one desire, one discipline, one and the same service? Both are brethren, both fellow-servants, there is no difference of spirit or flesh between them; they are truly 'two in one flesh'. Where the flesh is one, there is the spirit too. Together they pray, together prostrated, together fast; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. They are equally to be found in the Church of God, equally at the banquet of God, equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides anything from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. They freely visit the sick and relieve the needy. They give alms without fearing reprisals; they offer sacrifices without scruples; the sign of the cross is not made stealthily, greetings without trembling, blessings without muteness. They sing psalms and hymns together, and challenge each other who will chant better to the Lord. Such things Christ sees and hears with joy. To these He sends His own peace. Where two are, there is He Himself in their midst. Where He is, there the evil one is not."<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> St. Ambrose, *To Vigilus*, Letter 19:7.

<sup>457</sup> St. Ambrose, *On Abraham*, 84.

<sup>458</sup> Tertullian, *To His Wife*, 5,6.

<sup>459</sup> Tertullian, *To His Wife*, 8.

Mixed marriages were forbidden even in the Old Testament. The downfalls of Samson and Solomon were attributed to their foreign wives. And Nehemiah said: "I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but the language of each people. And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, 'You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless foreign women made even him to sin. Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?" (Nehemiah 13.23-37).

The Apostle Paul allows an exception to this rule for couples who were married before becoming Christian. In such a case, when one of the spouses becomes Christian while the other remains outside the Church, the marriage is not dissolved. "For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. For do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or you, husband, do you know whether you will save your wife?" (I Corinthians 7.14-16).

As St. Theophan comments, "in this union according to love and agreement, the purity of the Christian side is not destroyed; on the contrary, by its influence it can assist the conversion to Christianity of the pagan husband or pagan wife, and still more the children born in this marriage."<sup>460</sup>

As St. John Chrysostom writes: "If 'he that is joined to an harlot is one body,' it is quite clear that the woman also who is joined to an idolater is one body. True: it is one body. However, she does not become unclean, but the cleanness of the wife overcomes the uncleanness of the husband; and again, the cleanness of the believing husband overcomes the uncleanness of the unbelieving wife.

"How then in this case is the uncleanness overcome, and therefore the intercourse allowed; while in the woman who prostitutes herself, the husband is not condemned in casting her out? Because here there is hope that the lost member may be saved through the marriage; but in the other case the marriage has already been dissolved; and there again both are corrupted; but here the fault is in one only of the two. I mean something like this: she that has been guilty of fornication is utterly abominable: if then 'he that is joined to an harlot is one body,' he also becomes abominable by having connection with an harlot; wherefore all the purity flits away. But in the case before us it is not so. But how? The

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<sup>460</sup> St. Theophan, op. cit., p. 154.

idolater is unclean but the woman is not unclean. For if indeed she were a partner with him in that wherein he is unclean, I mean his impiety, she herself would also become unclean. But now the idolater is unclean in one way, and the wife holds communion with him in another wherein he is not unclean. For marriage and mixture of bodies is that wherein the communion consists.

“...Again, in that case, after the fornication the husband is not a husband: but here, although the wife be an idolatress, the husband's rights are not destroyed. However, he does not simply recommend cohabitation with the unbeliever, but with the qualification that he wills it. Wherefore he said, ‘And he himself be content to dwell with her.’ For, tell me, what harm is there when the duties of piety remain unimpaired and there are good hopes about the unbeliever, that those already joined should so abide and not bring in occasions of unnecessary warfare? For the question now is not about those who have never yet come together, but about those who are already joined. He did not say, If any one wish to take an unbelieving wife, but, ‘If any one hath an unbelieving wife.’ Which means, If any after marrying or being married have received the word of godliness, and then the other party which had continued in unbelief still yearn for them to dwell together, let not the marriage be broken off. ‘For,’ he says, ‘the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife.’ So great is the superabundance of your purity.”<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 19 on I Corinthians*.

## *The Purposes of Marriage*

As we saw in an earlier chapter, marriage has two aspects: a mystical, iconic aspect, which relates both to the original marriage of Adam and Eve in Paradise and to that of Christ and the Church in eternity, and a more practical aspect relating to the struggle of the spouses to fulfill the commandments of God in the conditions of the fall.

If we consider marriage only from its more practical, non-mystical aspect, then its purposes can be stated as twofold: the prevention of fornication and the procreation of children. Of these two purposes the first is the more important, as is explicitly stated by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 7, and reiterated by the apostle's most faithful interpreter, St. John Chrysostom, who writes: "As for the procreation of children, marriage does not absolutely enjoin it. That responds rather to this word of God in Genesis: 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth' (1.28). The proof of this is the large number of marriages which cannot have children. That is why the first reason for marriage is to regulate lust, and especially now that the human race has filled the whole earth."<sup>462</sup>

However, chastity and procreation are the particular purposes of marriage *in the fall*: they do not exclude the higher purpose of marriage, which consists in the creation of a likeness of the love of Christ and the Church and, if a child is included in the type, of the Holy Trinity. In fact, the chastity that marriage in its more practical aspect produces enables it to fulfill its nature in its mystical aspect, by "releasing", as it were, the erotic power that is in man in his unfallen state and directing it towards its Archetype. For a love that is purely carnal, with no grace coming down from above and no striving upwards from below, loses its iconic properties. It is like a Catholic picture of the Madonna rather than an Orthodox icon of the Mother of God: what we see is a fallen, earthly woman rather than the Queen of heaven.

Marriage is both an end in itself in the same way that an icon is an end in itself – a thing of beauty mirroring Eternal Beauty, – and one of the paths whereby the spouses can attain to a closer union with Eternal Beauty Himself. We all know that no husband measures up to the infinite patience and self-sacrificial love of Christ for the Church, just as no wife measures up to the infinite humility and obedience of the Church towards Christ, as exemplified most perfectly in the All-holy Virgin Mary. But the grace of marriage and the struggles of the married life are a path whereby they can attain to truly Christian love. This grace is therefore like a seed dropped in the fallen nature of man which, as it grows, drives out the works of the flesh, "which are... adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, heresies..., hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife", and establishes in their place the fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5.19,20,22-23).

As St. Gregory the Theologian writes, the spouses in a true marriage are "*wholly united*

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<sup>462</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *First Discourse on Marriage*.

*in the flesh, concordant in spirit, sharpening in each other by love a like spur to piety...*"<sup>463</sup>

So the purposes of marriage in the fall for each individual spouse are broader than simply the control of lust or the reproduction of the human race. By carrying out the laws of marriage as a whole, and not only those concerning sexual relations, the spouses both save themselves and spur each other on to salvation. And then, as each spouse comes closer to perfection in and through marriage, the higher purpose of marriage, which was ordained *before and independently* of the fall, is also fulfilled: the creation of a true icon of the love of Christ and the Church.

Married love can literally *save* a spouse. Thus the wife of Monk-Martyr Timothy of Esphigmenou had been abducted by a Moslem after apostasizing from the Faith. "The good heart of Triantaphylos [the future Monk Timothy] was overcome by bitter sorrow on seeing the perdition of his wife who for the sake of temporary and ephemeral happiness was depriving herself of that which is eternal.

"Finding relief from his sorrow only in prayer, he began to pray ardently to the All-Highest Creator, beseeching Him to turn back the one who had perished to the light of true knowledge. But at the same time, he was afraid for his daughters lest the same lot befall them as had their mother. For this reason he sent them to his relations, asking them to help these unfortunate ones.

"The grief over the loss of his beloved wife weighed heavily on poor Triantaphylos and he decided, come what may, to wrest her from the grasp of the devil. Besides sincere prayer, he secretly admonished her through others to abandon the Moslem faith, warning her of the eternal punishment her apostasy would bring. This sincere prayer, offered up from the fullness of his heart, was heard by the Heavenly Creator Who in His great mercy placed a good thought in the mind of the apostate woman so that she soon felt a repulsion towards Islam. Having come to her senses, she bitterly repented of her fall and resolved to accept the Christian faith again.

"But knowing that it would be difficult to escape by her own efforts from the clutches of her captor, she suggested to Triantaphylos that he pretend to accept the Moslem faith and then by legal process demand her back from her captor; it was impossible for her to be freed from the harem in any other way. Then, when she would be liberated, they would leave the world: he could become a monk on the Holy Mountain of Athos, where he could beseech God and ask forgiveness for his involuntary fall; she could go to a convent where, like him, she could heal her wounds through repentance.

"In order to regain his perishing wife, and upon hearing her request, Triantaphylos decided to fulfil her wish, imitating in this case the Apostle Paul who, for the sake of the

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<sup>463</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *In Praise of Virginity*, 11.263-75, translated in *Orthodox Life*, November-December, 1981.

salvation of the brethren, himself desired to be separated from Christ. Thus placing his hope in God, he went to the tribunal where he declared his desire to accept the Moslem religion, but only on condition that his wife be returned to him. Triantaphylos' wish was promptly granted. He was joined to the faith of the Moslems and, having received circumcision, was given back his wife. Thereafter, although Triantaphylos appeared to follow the Moslem law, with his wife he secretly confessed the Christian faith and fulfilled all the Church rituals. No matter how much they tried to keep this secret, the Turks nevertheless suspected them of betrayal and began to keep a very close watch on them. In the meantime, Triantaphylos realized that it would be impossible for them to remain among the Moslems any longer and entrusted his daughters to relatives. After bidding farewell to them, he secretly set off with his wife to the city of Enos, and from there to Cedonia where he left her in a convent. He himself went to the Holy Mountain"<sup>464</sup>, from where he later set out on the feat of martyrdom for Christ...

Now only a churlish person would wish to deny that the love of St. Timothy was both conjugal and of a very high spiritual order, of the kind of which the Lord said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13). Moreover, it was a love precisely in the image of Christ's love for the Church, as conjugal love is supposed to be: its goal was certainly no passing pleasure or joy, but the eternal salvation of the beloved. And the cost was the highest possible: the possible loss of his eternal soul. And if it be objected that the real significance of the story lies in the fact that St. Timothy was led by God's Providence out of the lower state of marriage to the higher state of monasticism and, eventually, martyrdom, we reply: "Yes indeed. But if God's Providence led St. Timothy from marriage to monasticism, was there nothing on his own side that led him in that direction? In fact, was it not precisely the exact fulfilment of the law of marriage that led him upwards and beyond marriage to monasticism and martyrdom?"

A similar example is provided by the *Lives* of the Right-believing Prince Peter, in monasticism David, and Prince Febronia, in monasticism Euphrosyne, wonder-workers of Murom. As we read: "The right-believing Prince Peter was the second son of Prince Yury Vladimirovich of Murom. He ascended the throne of Murom in 1203. Several years before this St. Peter fell ill with leprosy, from which nobody was able to heal him. In a dream vision it was revealed to the prince that the pious daughter of a bee-keeper, the virgin Febronia, could heal him. She was a peasant woman of the village of Laskovaia in Ryazan region. St. Peter sent his men to the village.

"When the prince saw St. Febronia, he so fell in love with her for her piety, wisdom and kindness that he gave a vow to marry her after he was healed. St. Febronia healed the prince. The grateful prince was united with her in marriage, although the Murom nobility opposed this. They said: 'Either let him dismiss his wife, who has insulted the noble women by her origin, or let him leave Murom.' The prince firmly remembered the words of the Lord: 'What God has put together, let not man put asunder. He who dismisses his

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<sup>464</sup> "The Life of St. Timothy of Esphigmenou", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 26, № 6, November-December, 1976, pp. 2-3.

wife and marries another is an adulterer.' For that reason, faithful to his duty as a Christian spouse, the prince agreed to renounce his principedom. They sailed away from his native city in a boat on the river Oka. The prince remained with few means of subsistence, and sorrowful thoughts involuntarily began to assail him. But the clever princess supported and comforted him: 'Sorrow not, prince, the merciful God will not abandon us in poverty.' In Murom quarrels and arguments quickly appeared, seekers of power took to their swords and many of the nobles were killed. The Murom boyars were forced to ask Prince Peter and Princess Febronia to return to Murom. Thus did the prince, faithful to his duty, triumph over his enemies.

"In Murom Prince Peter's rule was righteous, but without severe strictness, merciful, but without weakness. The clever and pious princess helped her husband with counsels and works of charity. Both lived according to the commandments of the Lord, they loved everyone, but they did not love pride or unrighteous avarice, they gave refuge to strangers, relieved the lot of the unfortunate, venerated the monastic and priestly ranks, protecting them from need.

"Once while the princess was sailing along the river in a boat she ordered a nobleman, who had been captivated by her beauty and was looking at her with evil thoughts, to take up some water from each side of the boat and swallow it. When he had fulfilled her will, she asked: 'Do you find any difference between the one and the other water?' 'None,' replied the nobleman. The saint then said: 'The nature of women is exactly identical. In vain do you abandon your wife and think of another.'

"The holy spouses died at the same day and hour on June 25, 1228, having accepted the schema before that with the names David and Euphrosyne. The bodies of the saints, in accordance with their will, were placed in one grave.

"Sts. Peter and Febronia are a model of Christian married life. By their prayers they bring heavenly blessings on those who are entering the married life."<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> *Zhitia russkikh sviatykh* (Lives of the Russian Saints), Tutaev, 2000, vol. I, pp. 694-695.

## Marriage and Monasticism

Tradition records that the bridegroom at the marriage in Cana was the holy Apostle Simon the Zealot. After the marriage, it is said, Simon was so struck by the miracle of turning the water into wine that he immediately left his bride and followed Christ. Thus did God's blessing of an earthly marriage lead to its eclipse, as it were, by the glory of the Heavenly Bridegroom, the earthly icon being left behind in the zeal for its Heavenly Archetype.<sup>466</sup>

Such transformations of the marital home into a monastery are common in the *Lives of the Saints*.<sup>467</sup> They point, in spite of the Church's teaching on the essential goodness of Christian marriage - which goodness is enshrined, not only in the Holy Scriptures, but also in the Sacred Canons of the Church<sup>468</sup>, - to a certain tension between this teaching and the teaching that there is a better way, that of virginity or monasticism. This requires, if not a Manichean despising of marriage and its pleasures, at any rate a fleeing from them as if from something defiling. As Origen puts it: "To think that marital life leads to destruction is useful, since it elicits a striving for perfection."<sup>469</sup> Thus on the one hand: "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13.4). But on the other: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins" (Revelation 14.4). On the one hand, Christ blessed the marriage at Cana in Galilee by His presence (John 2). On the other hand, he exhorted those who could receive it to become eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake (Matthew 19.12).

It would be easy, following the methodology of western scholarship, to remove this paradox by ascribing it to textual corruption or foreign influence (pagan Greek philosophy is usually the favoured candidate). However, this is not the method of Orthodox Christian hermeneutics. It would be the height of arrogance to consider our theology purer than that of the Holy Scriptures, or our philosophizing more acute than that of the Holy Fathers. When an apparent contradiction appears, we do not take this as an excuse for picking and choosing those parts of Divine Revelation which we like best while discarding the rest, but rather as the sign of the presence of a mystery, and an invitation to search deeper into the meaning of it with the help of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>466</sup> St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, vol. IX (May), pp. 298-300.

<sup>467</sup> Cf. St. Ammon of Egypt (Palladius, *The Paradise of the Fathers*, I, 8); SS. Andronicus and Athanasia (*Menaion*, October 9); a Christian in the diocese of St. Basil the Great (*Menaion*, January 1); Martyr Conon (*Menaion*, March 5); St. Alexis the Man of God (*Menaion*, March 17); Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria (*Menaion*, March 19); Martyr Cecilia (*Menaion*, November 22); the chaste lovers of fourth-century Gaul (St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, I, 47); the twice-married St. Athanasia the Wonderworker (*Menaion*, April 18); SS. Peter and Febronia of Murom (*Russian Menaion*, June 25); St. Martha, Mother of St. Symeon the Stylite (*Menaion*, July 4); St. Juliana of Lazarevo (*Orthodox Life*, vol. 47, № 1, January-February, 1997); St. John of Kronstadt (*Orthodox Life*, vol. 26, № 5, September-October, 1976); St. Elizabeth the New Martyr (July 5).

<sup>468</sup> Cf. *Council of Gangra*, canon 1; *Sixth Ecumenical Council*, canon 13.

<sup>469</sup> Origen, *On Jeremiah*, 14.4, P.G. 16:508-509; quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 94, note.

We may therefore begin our investigation by examining St. Paul's explanation of why virginity is preferable to marriage: "I would have you without care. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction" (I Corinthians 7.32-35).

The delicacy and lack of fanaticism of this explanation is striking. Sexuality comes into it not at all. Virginity is preferable to marriage, not because it involves no sex, but because it involves *less distraction* from the "one thing necessary" (Luke 10.42) for salvation, less of all those cares and tribulations and "trouble in the flesh" (I Corinthians 7.28) that are an inescapable part of married life and which cool the ardour of the spirit in its ascent to God. What the apostle fears, writes C.S. Lewis, "is pre-occupation, the need of constantly 'pleasing' - that is, considering - one's partner, the multiple distractions of domesticity. It is marriage itself, not the marriage bed, that will be likely to hinder us from waiting uninterruptedly on God. And surely St. Paul is right? If I may trust my own experience, it is (within marriage as without) the practical and prudential cares of this world, and even the smallest and most prosaic of those care, that are the great distraction. The gnat-like cloud of petty anxieties and decisions about the conduct of the next hour have interfered with my prayers more often than any passion or appetite whatever. The great, permanent temptation of marriage is not to sensuality but (quite bluntly) to avarice..."<sup>470</sup>

Especially interesting is the reference to the necessity of pleasing one's wife. It was Adam's fear of offending his wife that led to his fall in Eden...

Similarly St. Gregory Palamas, in asserting the superiority of virginity, emphasizes, not sexual relations, but the ties imposed on a married woman by *all* her relatives: "If one considers the body's indignation and insubordination towards virtue, or better said, its rebellious nature which we carry around, why then should we agree to increase the obstacles towards virtue, by bonding with many and otherwise diverse bodies? How can she acquire freedom, towards which she vowed to aspire, by being connected with natural ties of husband and children and all blood relatives? How can she serve the Lord free of anxieties, when she has undertaken concerns about so many people? How can she acquire quietude when she is occupied with such a multitude of people?... Cleansing can also be accomplished by those who live in marriage, but with utmost difficulty."<sup>471</sup>

Virginity involves a greater struggle with sexual thoughts and fantasies than marriage.

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<sup>470</sup> Lewis, *The Four Loves*, London: Collins, 1960, 2012, pp. 117-118.

<sup>471</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Treatise on the Spiritual Life*, 4; Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1995, pp. 44, 43.

Paradoxically, therefore, it is marriage that is preferable to virginity from the point of view of *sexual* distraction - "it is better to marry than to burn" (I Corinthians 7.9). Virginity reveals its superiority only in the context of the Christian life taken as a whole; for at the price of a sharper and more difficult struggle with sexual temptation (victory over which brings a greater reward), the virgin can devote him or herself more single-mindedly to the service of God alone, "that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (I Corinthians 7.34).

St. Gregory Palamas compares the two callings as follows: "'You shall not be unchaste' (Exodus 20.14), lest instead of being united to Christ you become united to a prostitute, severing yourself from the Divine Body, forfeiting the Divine inheritance and throwing yourself into hell. According to the law (cf. Leviticus 21.9), a daughter of a priest caught whoring is to be burnt, for she dishonours her father; how much more, then, does the person who defiles the Body of Christ deserve endless chastisement. If you are capable of it, embrace the path of virginity, so that you may become wholly God's and may cleave to Him with perfect love, all your life devoting yourself undistractedly to the Lord and to what belongs to Him, and in this way anticipating the life to come and living as an angel of God on earth. For the angels are characterized by virginity and if you cleave to virginity you emulate them with your body, in so far as this is possible. Or, rather, prior to them you emulate the Father Who in virginity begot the Son before all ages, and also the virginal Son Who in the beginning came forth from the virginal Father by way of generation, and in these latter times was born in the flesh of a virginal Mother; you likewise emulate the Holy Spirit Who ineffably proceeds from the Father alone, not by way of generation, but by procession. Hence if you practise true chastity in soul and body you emulate God and are joined to Him in imperishable wedlock, embellishing every sensation, word and thought with virginal beauty.

"If, however, you do not choose to live in virginity and have not promised God that you will do this, God's law allows you to marry one woman and to live with her alone and to hold her in holiness as your own wife (cf. I Thessalonians 4.4), abstaining entirely from other women. You can totally abstain from them if you shun untimely meetings with them, do not indulge in lewd words and stories and, as far as you can, avoid looking at them with the eyes of both body and soul, training yourself not to gaze overmuch upon the beauty of their faces. For 'whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matthew 5.28), and in this way he is impure before Christ Who sees his heart; and the next step is that he commits shameless acts with his body also. But why do I speak of fornication and adultery and other natural abominations? For by looking overfondly on the beauty of bodies a person is dragged down unrestrainedly into lascivious acts contrary to all nature. Thus, if you cut away from yourself the bitter roots, you will not reap the deadly harvest but, on the contrary, you will gather the fruits of chastity and the holiness which it confers, and without which 'no one will see the Lord' (Hebrews 12.14)."<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, "A New Testament Decalogue", 6, 7; *The Philokalia*, volume IV, pp. 328-329.

The teaching of St. Seraphim of Sarov on marriage is particularly important. "Once two ladies visited him. One was young and belonged to a merchant family, the other was middle-aged and of noble birth. The latter had a great desire for the monastic life, but her parents would not give her their blessing, the former did not even think of monasticism. But the Saint's spiritual insight led him to give them advice which was just the opposite of their intentions. He firmly urged the noble lady to marry.

"'Married life,' he said to her, 'is blessed by God Himself. It is only necessary for both parties to keep marital fidelity, love and peace. You will be happy in marriage. Monasticism is not the way for you. The monastic life is difficult; not everyone can endure it.'

"But the Saint told the younger woman to enter monasticism, and even told her the name of the Monastery where she would be saved. Both visitors were dissatisfied with the talk, and left the Elder disappointed. But subsequently everything turned out exactly as Father Seraphim foretold.

"The thought of the blessedness of marriage the Saint often repeated to his visitors. Once a young man came to him and asked him to bless him to enter a Monastery. But the Saint, wishing to test his firmness and strength in his good intention, spoke to him of marriage. "'Not all can receive this counsel" (Matthew 19.11), and the Lord does not compel them to do so. But,' he added, "'all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9.23). Remain in the world, get married. Don't forget conjugal intercourse and hospitality. Practice the virtues which will be remembered at the awful judgement of God, according to the Holy Gospel: "I was hungry, and you gave Me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was naked, and you clothed Me" (Matthew 25.35-36). Herein is your salvation! And also observe chastity. Remain continent on Wednesdays and Friday, 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.'"<sup>473</sup>

Further insight into this question is provided by Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, who was asked the following question: "Why do I always have the impression that a girl or woman - a Church person, of course - is moving away from the Lord when she marries? More than once I have seen wives or mothers for whom all the things of God would not have been of merely secondary importance. But in this respect they all became worse after getting married."

Archbishop Theophan replied: "It is necessary, first of all, to establish the correct understanding of marriage in principle, and then to examine the question from a practical point of view. There are two extreme viewpoints with regard to this question that are in principle incorrect: both that which considers marriage to be an evil and that which completely abolishes the difference in inner merit between marriage and virginity. The

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<sup>473</sup> Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, *St. Seraphim of Sarov. A Spiritual Biography*, Blanco, Texas: New Sarov Press, 1994, pp. 291-292.

first extreme is seen in many mystical sects, the second is a generally accepted opinion in the Protestant West, from where it has succeeded in penetrating Orthodox literature also. According to the latter viewpoint, both the married and the virginal ways of life are simply defined as individual characteristics of a man, and nothing special or exalted is seen in the virginal way by comparison with the married state. In his time Blessed Jerome thoroughly refuted this viewpoint in his work: *Two books Against Jovinian*. While the positive teaching of the Church was beautifully expressed by St. Seraphim in his words: 'Marriage is a good, but virginity is a better than good good!' True Christian marriage is the union of the souls of those being married that is sanctified by the grace of God. It gives them happiness and serves as the foundation of the Christian family, that 'house church'. That is what it is in principle; but unfortunately it is not like that in our time for the most part. The general decline in Christian life has wounded marriage, too. Generally speaking, people in recent times have forgotten that the grace of God is communicated in the sacrament of marriage. One must always remember this grace, stir it up and live in its spirit. Then the love of the man for the woman and of the woman for the man will be pure, deep and a source of happiness for them. For this love, too, is a blessed gift of God. Only people do not know how to make use of this gift in a fitting manner! And it is for this simple reason, that they forget the grace of God! 'The first thing in the spiritual life,' says St. Macarius the Great, 'is love for God, and the second - love for one's neighbour. When we apply ourselves to the first and great task, then the second, being lesser, follows after the first and great task. But without the first the second cannot be pure. For can he who does not love God with all his soul and all his heart apply himself correctly and without flattery to love for his brothers?' What has been said about love in general applies also to married love. Of all the kinds of earthly love it is the strongest and so it is represented in Holy Scripture as an image of the ideal love of the human soul for God: 'The Song of Songs,' says Blessed Jerome, 'is a nuptial song of spiritual wedlock,' that is, the union of the human soul with God. However, with the blessedness of the virgins nothing can be compared, neither in heaven nor on earth...' <sup>474</sup>

True virginity is the fulfilling of the first and greatest commandment, to love God with all one's soul and mind and heart and strength. It is a burning love of God so strong that there can be no thought of a human bride or bridegroom. For such a thought would indeed be a defilement for one who has dedicated himself exclusively to the Heavenly Bridegroom. For, as St. Ignaty Brianchaninov writes: "The purity of those living in marriage consists in their faithfulness to each other. The purity of virgins and widows who are wedded to Christ consists in their faithfulness to Christ." <sup>475</sup>

Thus the path of this mystery lies in the renunciation of everything that can in any way distract from the love of God. For as an eagle in its flight to the sun can be kept on earth by even the smallest impediment on its talons, so the flight of Christians to the Sun of Righteousness can be impeded by even the most innocent of affections - which can then become in a real sense idols. That is why the Prophets Elijah and Jeremiah, the greatest

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<sup>474</sup> *Pis'ma Arkhiepiskopa Feofana Poltavskogo* (The Letters of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava), Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1976, pp. 35-37.

<sup>475</sup> St. Ignaty, "On Purity", *Orthodox Life*, July-August, 1983, p. 31.

denouncers of idolatry in the Old Testament, - which sin is always depicted under the image of adultery (cf. Jeremiah 3; Hosea 4) - were also the only virgins; while another great prophet, Ezekiel, had to suffer the pain of the death of his beloved before he could enter upon the most difficult part of his mission (Ezekiel 24.16).

As for "the greatest of those born of women" (Matthew 11.11), St. John the Baptist, that "burning and shining light" (John 5.35) who compelled the admiration even of the Pharisees and who prepared the way of the Lord in the spirit of Elijah, he, too, was a virgin. Of him the Church chants: "Having embraced chastity and temperance, he possessed them by nature, while he fled contrary to nature, fighting against nature".<sup>476</sup>

In a similar way, true marriage is the fulfilment of the second commandment, to love one's neighbour as oneself. For in loving his wife, a man is loving his neighbour as himself, in that "he that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Ephesians 5.28). Moreover, it is a training ground for those virtues that will enable him to love all men, and even his enemies, as himself.

The idea that marriage is in any way incompatible with true Christian love is contrary to the Holy Scriptures. Who showed more love for man than the God-seer Moses, who was willing to sacrifice his own salvation for that of the People of Israel? - and he was a married man. To whom was entrusted a greater authority and a weightier burden in the service of the Church than the Apostle Peter? - and he, as St. John Climacus points out, "had a mother-in-law".<sup>477</sup> Therefore, says St. Gregory the Theologian to those preparing to be baptised: "Are you not yet married to the flesh? Fear not this consecration; you are pure even after marriage. I will take the risk of that. I will join you in marriage. I will dress the bride. We do not dishonour marriage because we give a higher honour to virginity. I will imitate Christ, the pure Bridegroom and Leader of the Bride, as He both worked a miracle at a wedding, and honours marriage with His Presence."<sup>478</sup>

For fallen man, marriage is a virtual necessity; and even in Christ it is the best path for most to the goal of chastity. However, Christ by His Coming and Example has opened up another path to the same end - that of monasticism. Christ, writes Vladimir Lossky, "... for the redemption of 'eros', opens two paths...: the path of Christian marriage and the path of monasticism".<sup>479</sup> Monasticism is the more direct, more arduous way to the summit; and to reach it by this path brings a special reward. True monastics attain in this life to the condition of the life to come, in which "they neither marry nor are given in marriage... for they are equal to the angels" (Luke 20.35, 36). Marriage is the longer, less direct route to the same summit, with many stops on the way and with the consequent danger of becoming distracted by the scenery along the way. That is why St. Paul says: "I would that all men were even as myself [i.e. virgins]... But every man hath his proper charisma, one

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<sup>476</sup> *Menaion*, June 24, The Nativity of St. John the Baptist, Vespers, Aposticha, Glory...

<sup>477</sup> St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 15, 67.

<sup>478</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on Holy Baptism*, 18.

<sup>479</sup> Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, op. cit., p. 75.

after this manner, and another after that" (I Corinthians 7.7).

It is in this contrast that we can perhaps find the solution to the paradox of marriage: that it can be both "on account of fornication" (I Corinthians 7.2) and "not on account of fornication" (Tobit 8.7), both "honourable in all" (Hebrews 13.4) and defiling for some (Revelation 14.4).

First it is necessary to establish that the aim of marriage is identical to that of monasticism: the purification and redirection of eros, or *chastity*, a pure heart, without which no one can either see God or truly love his neighbour.<sup>480</sup> Consequently, we cannot deny that marriage is a form of asceticism, as the virgin Constantine Leontiev points out: "At first glance it seems that monasticism, in renouncing the family, is the logical antithesis of the family. In fact, however, it is not like that. Marriage is a special kind of asceticism, a special kind of renunciation. A strict, religious, moral marriage is only a softer kind of monasticism; monasticism for two, or with children as pupils..."<sup>481</sup>

But for some one way will be preferable, for others - the other. For the few, the more direct assault on the fallen passions is the path chosen for them by Divine Providence. These are they who earn their reward "in the burden and heat of the day" (Matthew 20.12), without seeking a respite in the shady cool of marriage. Some have even chosen this path at the outset of married life, as we have seen, living as brother and sister with their wives. Others come to it later, after the death of their spouse. Many of the greatest saints, such as Spyridon of Cyprus and John the Almsgiver, Juliana of Lazarevo and Theodora of Sihla, Metrophanes of Voronezh and Innocent of Moscow, and many of the holy kings and queens, have trodden this path to the Kingdom.<sup>482</sup>

However, for most people this more direct approach is too difficult and dangerous (because of the danger of falling into fornication, or for other reasons). That is why God has blessed marriage, not only as an end, the restoration of the fallen unity of Adam and Eve in Paradise, but also as a means, to avoid fornication, to provide children, and to provide an arena of struggle and self-perfection parallel to the still more testing arena of monasticism. For those called by God to this path, the measured rhythm of coming together and abstinence in sexual relations (I Corinthians 7.5), combined with all the trials and tribulations, the responsibilities and obediences of married life, is the best means to the attainment of chastity. For, in New Hieromartyr Gregory's words, marriage "completes and broadens [the spouses'] souls in a mutual intermingling".<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> Cf. Chrestos Yannaras: "Marriage and virginity in Christ are two parallel ways towards the healing and restoration of affective desire" (*Honest to Orthodoxy*, Athens, 1967, p. 76).

<sup>481</sup> K.N. Leontiev, "Third Letter from Athos", in *Vostok, Rossia i Slaviansstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow: "Respublica", 1996, p. 33.

<sup>482</sup> See Monk Moses of the Holy Mountain, *Married Saints of the Church*, Wildwood, Ca.: St. Xenia Skete, 1991.

<sup>483</sup> Hieromartyr Gregory, *Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark*, Moscow, 1991, p. 106. Cf. Fr. Alexander Elchaninov: "Before marriage man hovers above life, observing it from without; only in marriage does he plunge into it, entering it through the personality of another. This delight in real knowledge and real life gives us a feeling of achieved plenitude and satisfaction which makes us richer and wiser" (in Meyendorff,

St. Amphilochius of Iconium writes: "We do not introduce enmity between virginity and marriage - on the contrary, we respect both the one and the other as mutually beneficial. Virginity is glorious, but true virginity, because there is a difference in virginities: some virgins dozed and fell asleep, while others kept vigil (Matthew 25.1-13). Marriage is also worthy of praise, but faithful and honourable marriage, insofar as many have kept its purity, and many have not."<sup>484</sup>

Not only are marriage and monasticism compatible in this way: "the many-coloured wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3.10) has placed them in a relationship of mutual dependence, each order gaining in humility from contemplating the feats of the other. Thus the married man will ponder deeply on the fact that the vast majority of non-martyr saints have been monastics. Beholding their self-denial, he will remember that the Kingdom of Heaven is won by those who take up the cross and deny themselves, doing violence to their fallen nature (Matthew 10.38, 11.12). If he has read something about the true monk's inner life, even if he cannot understand it from experience, he will nevertheless realize that, quite apart from his external struggle, the monk suffers from such assaults of the flesh and the devil as he, the married man, can hardly conceive. This will make him less inclined to praise himself for refraining from adultery, remembering that "unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5.20). He will realize that, even if his life is peaceful, this is probably because the passions are still dormant in him, for he has never really entered into battle with them. Finally, he will realize that, if he is to fulfill his own vocation in the world, he, too, must become something of a monk - internally, at any rate. For there is no other way than that of the Cross, and that, as St. John Chrysostom points out, the commandments are the same for monks and laymen with the single exception of the prohibition to marry for the former. The monk, on the other hand, having turned his back on Egypt for ever, will nevertheless admire those who remain pure amid its fleshpots, fulfilling the commandments while encumbered with wives, children, possessions, cares, honours and responsibilities. For, as Chrysostom says, "it is possible to surpass all others in virtue by becoming good husbands and wives".<sup>485</sup> If he is beginning to pride himself on his asceticism, he will have cause to humble himself on beholding the "crowned icon" of a truly Christian marriage. He will remember the words of St. Macarius the Great, who, on being shown the lives of two married Christian women who, as God had revealed to him, were his equals in virtue, said: "In truth there is neither virgin nor married, neither monk nor secular. But God seeks only the intention of each, and gives the Spirit of life to all."<sup>486</sup>

Understood in this way, there is no opposition between the two charismata; they both

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op. cit., p. 88).

<sup>484</sup> St. Amphilochius, in Fr. Gregory Diachenko, *Uroki i primery khristianskoj zhizni* (Lessons and Examples of Christian Life), St. Petersburg, 1900, p. 608.

<sup>485</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 7 on Hebrews*, 4.

<sup>486</sup> St. Macarius, in Kallistos Ware, "The Monk and the Married Christian: Some Comparisons in Early Monastic Sources", *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. VI, № 1, Spring, 1974, p. 80.

fulfill the commandments, and in both the grace is given of a pure, chaste and single-minded fidelity. Only monasticism must be accorded the higher place. For there is no limit to the love of God, which is higher than the love of man; whereas the love of man is good only so long as it is less than the love of God. For, as St. Barsanuphius of Optina says, "a woman... wants to love her bridegroom with a passionate love and remain devoted with all her soul to Christ, but these are incompatible. In love for one's bridegroom there is, of course, no sin; but if love for him is stronger than love for God, it will distance her from Christ. The Lord Himself said, 'No man can serve two masters' (Matthew 6.24). To work only for Christ, people go to a monastery..."<sup>487</sup>

Again, if, as St. Macarius the Great says, it is impossible to love one's neighbour with a pure heart unless one has first come to love God, it follows that married people must first master the art of monastic self-discipline if they are to achieve a perfect union with each other. For, as Vladimir Lossky writes, "our fallen condition always endures, demanding for the accomplishing of our human vocation not only the integrating chastity of marriage but also, and perhaps primarily, the sublimating chastity of monachism."<sup>488</sup>

This "sublimating chastity of monachism" is necessary even for the married because, as St. Maximus says, "it is impossible for those who have not first cloven singlemindedly to God to harmonise with each other in their mutual tendencies."<sup>489</sup> Thus it would appear to be necessary to attain *intrapersonal* unity within *the monad*, the unmarried man or woman, before *interpersonal* unity can be attained within *the dyad*, the married couple.

In practice, however, while marriage can lead to monasticism later, the reverse is impossible. For the love of God, while compatible with the love of neighbour, is incompatible with those forms of it which require a return to the world. Marriage and the raising of children necessarily involve some immersion in the world, but the monk has vowed to renounce the world forever. The true monk has chosen "the good part" (Luke 10.42), which will not be taken from him. Having set his hand to the plough, he will not turn back (Luke 9.62). Having climbed the heights of dispassion, far from the Sodom and Gomorrah of the world, he will not want to return to Zoar (Genesis 19.30), that refuge from sin that nevertheless overlooks Sodom and is close enough to smell its stench...<sup>490</sup>

In any case, the specific kind of interpersonal union that is marriage will not take place

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<sup>487</sup> Victor Afanasyev, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2000, p. 643.

<sup>488</sup> Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>489</sup> St. Maximus, *Epistle 2*, P.G. 91, 396D.

<sup>490</sup> Cf. St. Gregory the Great: "Since there are many who relinquish indeed the sins of the flesh, and yet, when placed in the state of wedlock, do not observe solely the claims of due intercourse, Lot went indeed out of Sodom, but yet did not at once reach the mountain heights; because a damnable life is already relinquished, but still the loftiness of conjugal continence is not thoroughly attained. But there is midway the city of Zoar, to save the weak fugitive; because when the married have intercourse with each other even incontinently, they still avoid lapse into sin, and are still saved through mercy. For they find as it were a little city, wherein to be protected from the fire; since this married life is not indeed marvellous for virtue, but yet is secure from punishment" (*The Pastoral Rule*, III, 27).

in the resurrection (Matthew 22.30); for then, intra-personal union having been achieved by all, all will also be united inter-personally in the Body of Christ, the only form of interpersonal union that will endure forever. This is not to say that husbands and wives on earth will not be united in the heavens, only that their union will no longer be a marital one. For the union “up there will be closer, the union of soul with soul, much more delightful and more noble.”<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *To a Young Widow*, 7.

### Lourié's Manichaeian Thesis

This view of the relationship between marriage and monasticism has been challenged by V.M. Lourié. His major thesis, as we have seen, is that abstention from sexual relations is a necessary condition of the life of grace, the life of the New Testament, whereas the married state belongs to the Law, to the Old Testament. Thus a married Christian must necessarily abstain from relations with his wife (whether with her permission or without) in order to “pass from the life of the Old Testament to that of the New”.<sup>492</sup> True, “it is necessary to call those who cannot ‘accommodate’ this to Christian marriage – there is no argument about that. Only the call is to a marriage that is Christian, not to fornication under a crown (блуд под венцом)”.<sup>493</sup> However, for Lourié any expression of desire, even in marriage, is fornication; so that a sinless marriage, for him, can only be a virginal marriage. “Fornication is fornication, even if it is committed with one’s lawful wife”.<sup>494</sup>

A variant of this heresy, whose appearance was prophesied by the Apostle Paul (I Timothy 4.3), was rebutted by Clement of Alexandria: “There are some who say outright that marriage is fornication and teach that it was introduced by the devil. They proudly say that they are imitating the Lord Who neither married nor had any possession in this world, boasting that they understand the Gospel better than anyone else. The Scripture says to them: ‘God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble’ (James 4.6; I Peter 5.5). Further, they do not know the reason why the Lord did not marry. In the first place He had His own Bride, the Church; and in the next place He was no ordinary man that He should also be in need of some helpmeet after the flesh. Nor was it necessary for Him to beget children, since He abides eternally and was born the only Son of God.”<sup>495</sup>

Through his teaching on marriage, Lourié also introduces an ecclesiological heresy, a fundamental distortion of the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments. Membership of the New Testament is open to all those who believe correctly in Christ and belong to His Church, whether they live in marriage, widowhood, or monasticism. Certainly, monks and virgins, if they are *good* monks and *wise* virgins, live a more perfect life from the Christian point of view than married people. But they do not for that reason constitute a special class of “New Testament Christians”, as opposed to the “second-class”, “Old Testament” Christians of the married state. As St. Paul made abundantly clear in his words against the Judaizing Christians in Galatians, there is no such thing as an “Old Testament Christian”; all Christians are such by Grace, not the Old Testament Law.

Lourié tries to justify his innovative understanding of the difference between the Old and the New Testaments by the following argument: “Being ‘in the grace of Christ’ does not depend on the time in which a person lives – before or after the Coming of Christ in the flesh. For the *Orthodox* Church Tradition there is nothing exotic in this thought. It is

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<sup>492</sup> Lourié, *Prizvanie Avraama*, p. 118.

<sup>493</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>494</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 19, note 32.

<sup>495</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*; in Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.

sufficiently obvious – otherwise the Church of the New and the Old Testaments would not constitute one Church, that is, the Body of Christ, and it would be necessary to make a sharp distinction in ecclesiastical veneration between the saints of the Old Testament time and those of the New Testament (of which distinction, it goes without saying, there is no mention). If the righteous of the Old Testament receive ‘perfection not without us’ (Hebrews 11.40), then, all the more, we receive it ‘not without them’.”<sup>496</sup>

True; and yet before the Coming of Christ in the flesh all the righteous of the Old Testament went to hades (cf. Genesis 37.35), and were saved only by His descent into hades after the Crucifixion. Clearly, the Coming of Christ brought something absolutely vital which was not available to even the holiest men of the Old Testament, but which *is* available to those who partake of the sacraments of the New Testament Church - that is, the grace of redemption, the forgiveness of sins and the communication of a new, unfallen human nature. Through the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Body and Blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit not only works *through* the saints, as He worked through the Prophets of the Old Testament, but works *in* them as a constituent part of their new nature, redeemed from corruption and death. For “before holy baptism,” writes St. Diadochus of Photike, “grace encourages the soul towards good from the outside, while Satan lurks in its depths, trying to block all the intellect’s ways of approach to the divine. But from the moment we are reborn through baptism,” which can only take place in the New Testament Church, “the demon is outside, grace is within.”<sup>497</sup>

As Blessed Theophylact writes, “Those who lived under the Law also had the Spirit, but they had Him in images and shadows, whereas now we can say that Truth Himself has descended essentially to the disciples... He comforts the apostles when He says that the world cannot receive Him, but this excellent gift will be given to you and He will remain ‘with you’, and, what is more, will abide ‘in you’. For the words ‘with you’ point to an external help from nearby, but ‘in you’ – to a more internal dwelling and strengthening.”<sup>498</sup>

In this sense, “he who is least in the Kingdom of heaven”, that is, in the New Testament Church, “is greater than” John the Baptist or any of the Old Testament righteous (Matthew 11.11), not because he is intrinsically greater than John the Baptist (who can be greater than John the Baptist?) but because he possesses in himself, in his very body and blood, that Holiness that was not in any of the Old Testament righteous during their earthly lives. For, as Vladimir Lossky writes, “it is only through the [New Testament] Church that the holiness of the Old Testament can receive its fulfilment... in a perfection which was inaccessible to humanity before Christ.”<sup>499</sup>

Lourié’s working out of this thesis is paradoxical, for he ascribes the grace of the New Testament to several Old Testament saints, such as Abraham, Moses and David, who, since

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<sup>496</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>497</sup> St. Diadochus, “On Spiritual Knowledge”, 76; in *The Philokalia*, vol. I, p. 279.

<sup>498</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel of John*, 14.16.

<sup>499</sup> Lossky, “Panagia”, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, London: Mowbrays, 1975, p. 201.

they were married (and in fact had several wives and/or mistresses in some cases), should, by Lourié's own criteria, be deprived of New Testament status; whereas New Testament Christians who have only one wife and partake of all the sacraments of the New Testament Church are relegated to the status of the Old Testament for no other reason than that they did not free themselves in time from what are, in Fr. Gregory's opinion, the defiling pleasures of marriage!

The *Lives of the Saints* do not support Lourié's thesis. Consider the *Life* of St. Thomais of Alexandria, who was killed for refusing to submit to the lecherous advances of her father-in-law. As far as we know, she led a normal married life with her husband, and exhibited no special gifts or exploits. And yet St. Daniel of Skete recommended that monks suffering from sexual temptations should pray to her for relief, which would appear to indicate that her virtue lay precisely in her refusal to succumb to sexual sin. Her martyrdom did not "remove sexual sin", but was the culmination of her successful struggle *against* sexual sin!<sup>500</sup> This shows that she was not only a saint *in spite of* the supposedly defiling pleasures of marriage, but *because of* her resistance to unlawful passions, which virtue enables her to give help to monks to this day!

Lourié degrades the sacrament of marriage by refusing to see in it any specific charisma that would raise it above the simple satisfaction of carnal desire, and by insisting that the act that constitutes marriage, the union in one flesh, inescapably involves sin insofar as it involves pleasure. For "pleasure... from sexual relations is recognized as the sign of illness, the inevitable result of which is physical death..."<sup>501</sup> Marriage is "good" only in a negative way, in that, by permitting a little sin, it avoids the committing of a greater sin, like a safety valve letting off steam or a doctor administering controlled doses of heroin to a drug addict.

We have already discussed the subject of pleasure and desire. Certainly, the cycle of pleasure and pain was introduced into our nature as a result of the fall. But just as nobody would be so mad as to assert that the suffering of pain is a sin, but only the excessive *fear* of pain, so pleasure is not sinful in itself, but only the *enslavement* to pleasure. As for desire, according to St. John Chrysostom, "desire is not sin"<sup>502</sup>, but only its overflowing its lawful boundaries, a position supported by St. John of Damascus.<sup>503</sup>

In order to justify his error, Lourié interprets St. Paul's words: "He who marries should be as though he were unmarried" (I Corinthians 7.29), as though this meant that he should not have sexual relations with his wife. But the correct interpretation is provided by

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<sup>500</sup> "The Martyrdom of St. Thomais", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 25, № 4, July-August, 1975, pp. 4-7. She is commemorated on April 14.

<sup>501</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>502</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 13 on Romans*.

<sup>503</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 13.

Clement of Alexandria: "He should consider his marriage inseparable from his love of the Lord. His affection for his wife should be subordinate to that of the Lord."<sup>504</sup>

Lourié misinterprets in a similar direction the apostle's words to married couples: "Deprive not each other [of sexual relations] except by agreement for a season, in order that ye may have more leisure for prayer" (I Corinthians 7.5). He argues that "in both of Chrysostom's interpretations of Paul, 'Do not deprive' has turned out to be only a form of 'Deprive' for tender ears".<sup>505</sup>

Amazing! So the saint *really* meant *the exact opposite* of what he actually said! What Chrysostom in fact says is the following: "'Let not the wife,' says he, 'exercise continence, if the husband be unwilling; nor yet the husband without the wife's consent.' Why so? Because great evils spring from this sort of continence. For adulteries and fornications and the ruin of families have often arisen from it. For if when men have their own wives they commit fornication, much more if you defraud them of this consolation. And well says he, 'Defraud not', 'fraud' here, and 'debt' above, that he might show the strictness of the right of dominion in question. For that one should practice continence against the will of the other is 'defrauding'; but not so, with the other's consent: any more than I count myself defrauded, if after persuading me you take away any thing of mine. Since only he defrauds who takes against another's will and by force. A thing which many women do, working sin rather than righteousness, and thereby becoming accountable for the husband's uncleanness, and rending all asunder. Whereas they should value concord above all things, since this is more important than all beside.

"We will, if you please, consider it with a view to actual cases. Thus, suppose a wife and husband, and let the wife be continent, without consent of her husband; well then, if hereupon he commit fornication, or though abstaining from fornication fret and grow restless and be heated and quarrel and give all kind of trouble to his wife; where is all the gain of the fasting and the continence, a breach being made in love? There is none. For what strange reproaches, how much trouble, how great a war must of course arise! since when in an house man and wife are at variance, the house will be no better off than a ship in a storm when the master is upon ill terms with the man at the head. Wherefore he saith, 'Defraud not one another, unless it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer.' It is prayer with unusual earnestness which he here means. For if he is forbidding those who have intercourse with one another to pray, how could 'pray without ceasing' (I Thessalonians 5.17) have any place? It is possible then to live with a wife and yet give heed unto prayer. But by continence prayer is made more perfect. For he did not

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<sup>504</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*; in *The One Who Knows God*, p. 94. This is why it is in vain for Lourié to cite Luke 14.26: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sister, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple". As Blessed Theophylact and other Fathers make clear, this "hatred" is in order only when the wife or other family member hinders the Christian from fulfilling the commandments of God. If they do not, then not only do family ties not hinder the life in Christ: whole families can attain the highest crowns as single units, as we see in the lives of SS. Joachim, Eustathius, Terence, Xenophon and Tsar-Martyr Nicholas.

<sup>505</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

say merely, 'That ye may pray'; but, 'That ye may give yourselves unto it'; because this thing [intercourse] produces only listlessness in prayer, not uncleanness."<sup>506</sup>

There is no support for Lourié's interpretation of Chrysostom here. The saint insists that "do not deprive" *does* mean what it says. He also says that the exhortation to abstain from intercourse for periods is not because intercourse is unclean, nor because it makes the command to pray without ceasing impossible to fulfill, but because abstinence enables prayer to be more intense. True, he adds that their coming together again is "because of your incontinence". But the resumption of intercourse is not itself incontinence, but a rather a remedy against incontinence, and therefore not evil in any way.

Since St. John Chrysostom's homilies consistently expound a quite different approach to marriage and sexuality from Lourié's, he is constantly employed in trying to "reinterpret", i.e. distort the holy Father. Thus when the saint writes: "Use marriage temperately, and you will be the first in the Kingdom of heaven and be counted worthy of all its blessings"<sup>507</sup>, Lourié argues that "temperately" means "virginally", insofar as "the meaning and aim of Christian marriage... does not differ in any way from the celibate life".<sup>508</sup>

But what does the saint in fact say? "It is possible, very possible, also for those who have wives to be virtuous, if they wish. How? If they, while having wives, shall be as though they had them not, if they will not rejoice in acquisitions, if they will use the world as if not using it (I Corinthians 7.29-31). But if some have found marriage an obstacle, let them know that it is not marriage that serves as an obstacle, but self-indulgence ill-using marriage, just as wine does not produce drunkenness, but evil self-indulgence and its intemperate use. Use marriage in a temperate way, and you will be the first in the Heavenly Kingdom and will taste all its blessings, which may we all be worthy of through the grace and love for man of our Lord Jesus Christ..."<sup>509</sup>

The critical comparison here is between wine and sexual relations. Just as it is possible to drink wine sparingly without getting drunk, so it is possible to have sexual relations in marriage "in a temperate manner", without it serving as an impediment to the spiritual life. Complete abstinence from sexual relations is definitely *not* indicated. If it were, then the saint would have said that one must not drink wine even in small quantities because even the smallest consumption leads to drunkenness. But the whole point of the comparison is that in wine-drinking, as in marital relations, small, "measured" use is not harmful, and even sometimes beneficial. So there is no evidence that St. John meant here by "temperance" "complete abstinence".

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<sup>506</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 19 on I Corinthians*.

<sup>507</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 7 on Hebrews*, 4.

<sup>508</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>509</sup> Cf. the same saint's *Homily 21 on Genesis*, 18: "See once more another good man [Noah] with his wife and family achieving great satisfaction in God's eyes and opting for the way of virtue in the sight of everyone, hindered in no way either by marriage or by family responsibilities."

The marriage in Cana proves the point in relation to wine-drinking as to marriage. For did not Christ change water into wine there? And is it not true that wine is prescribed at Church feasts because it is then that the people should rejoice, and “wine maketh glad the heart of man” (Psalm 103.17)?<sup>510</sup>

Lourié’s provocative phrase “fornication under a crown” further undermines the traditional teaching on marriage, for it obscures the essential difference between marriage and fornication, namely, the fact that in marriage sexual union is with “one’s own flesh”, whereas in fornication it is with “strange flesh”, that is, flesh that is *not* one’s own through the sacrament of marriage. It is true, of course, that it is possible to sin sexually within the bounds of lawful marriage. But to call this “fornication” is a dangerously misleading misuse of language. It is an attempt to create an association between the deadly sin of fornication and the lawful pleasures of an undefiled marriage-bed. For, according to Lourié, sexual union even within marriage is “the satisfaction of lust, albeit in a limited degree”<sup>511</sup>, and therefore ipso facto sinful.

In this opinion, he comes close to the opinion of Tertullian when he had become a Montanist heretic: “What is the thing that takes place in all men and women to produce marriage and fornication? Commixture of the flesh, of course; the concupiscence whereof the Lord put on the same footing with fornication. ‘Then,’ says [someone], ‘are you this time destroying first – that is, single – marriage, too?’ And not without reason, inasmuch as it, too, consists of that which is the essence of fornication.”<sup>512</sup>

And yet, as we have seen, the Scriptures and the Fathers distinguish the evil passion of lust that is manifest in fornication and adultery from the innocent passion of sexual love that we see in lawful marriage.

Let us consider some test-cases. First, in the *Life* of Righteous Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Mother of God, we read that the conception of the Holy Virgin, which is celebrated as a feast in the Church, took place as a result of prayer and was announced to them by an Angel. According to St. Gregory Palamas, this conception was not the product of lust, for the parents “were exceptionally chaste, and that chastity, conceiving through

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<sup>510</sup> As New Hieromartyr John (Stebelin-Kamensky) writes, “the Christian is not a stranger to earthly joys. On the contrary, he appreciates them to a much higher degree than the unbeliever, because he believes that they have been given to him not by chance, and the joy of this or that experience of event in life is united in him with the spiritual experience of boundless gratitude to the One Who knows all our needs. The Christian is not a stranger to earthly joys, but does not make them the aim of his life; he does not fight against his neighbour for their sake, and does not seek them. Therefore he receives them ‘pure’, and they do not darken his spirit.” (in Igumen Damaskin (Orlovsky), *Mucheniki, ispovedniki i podvizhniki blagochestia Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi XX stoletia* (Martyrs, Confessors and Ascetics of Piety of the Russian Orthodox Church of the 20th Century), Tver: “Bulat”, 2000, vol. 4, p. 247.

<sup>511</sup> Lourié, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>512</sup> Tertullian, *An Exhortation to Chastity*, 9.

prayer and asceticism, [became] the mother of virginity”, the Holy Virgin Mary.<sup>513</sup>

Secondly, in the *Life* of St. Macarius the Great, we read that the saint was conceived when an angel appeared to his father, a priest who had been living with his wife as brother and sister for some years and said: “Go to your house and know your wife and she will conceive and bear you a son.”<sup>514</sup>

Thirdly, in the *Life* of St. Wulfhilda of Barking, we read that for eighteen years before the conception of Wulfhilda, her pious parents, who had already had several children, had been living as brother and sister so as to give themselves up more completely to prayer and fasting. “One night, however, an angel appeared to each of them separately three times, and told them that they should come together so as to beget a daughter who would become a bride of Christ. The next morning they told each other the vision, and discovered that it had been identical for the two of them. So they accepted it as having come from God. Thus was the saint conceived and born...”<sup>515</sup>

These last two cases are particularly difficult for Lourié to explain. For clearly here God called two people living the life of grace to return to the life of the law, in Lourié’s terms. They returned, according to him, to “the satisfaction of the passion of lust, albeit to a limited degree” – for, of course, even if the purpose of the act, as here, is solely child-bearing, it is physiologically impossible to accomplish this purpose without the experience of pleasure, which Lourié says is sinful and leads to death. But would God ever call anyone to satisfy a sinful lust? Or to return from the life of grace to the life of the law? Of course not! So sexual relations in marriage do not impede the life of grace.

In this case, we might expect Lourié to avail himself of Blessed Augustine’s argument, that sexual relations in marriage are “covered” by the aim of childbearing.<sup>516</sup> But Lourié is keen to avoid any association with Augustinianism, and uses instead the patristic argument that childbearing is less important now that the Messiah has been born. However, the fact remains that his position on marriage and sexuality is close, not so much to that of Blessed Augustine (who respects marriage more than Lourié)<sup>517</sup>, as to earlier and

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<sup>513</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 44*, 5.

<sup>514</sup> *Saint Macarius the Godbearer*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004, p. 155.

<sup>515</sup> V. Moss, *The Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, volume III, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1997, p. 7. A similar story is to be found in the *Life* of St. Gerald of Aurillac (+909): “His father was so careful to conduct himself chastely in his marriage, that he frequently slept alone far from the marriage bed, as though for a time giving himself to prayer according to the apostle. He is said to have been warned in sleep on a certain night that he should know his wife, because he was to beget a son, and they say that it was announced to him that he should call his name Gerald, and that he would be a man of great virtue...” (in Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1995, p. 298)

<sup>516</sup> However, St. Dionysius of Alexandria permits even older married people to have sexual relations at their discretion, when procreation cannot be their aim (*Epistle to Bishop Basilides*, canon 3).

<sup>517</sup> Thus even while St. Augustine does not approve of marital intercourse that is not for the sake of childbearing, he specifically rejects the view that this is “fornication under a crown” or any such thing: “The question is often asked whether this should be called marriage: when a male and female, neither of whom is married to anyone else, come together, not for the begetting of children, but by reason of incontinence, for the sake of sexual

later heretical Latin doctrines (those of Tertullian and the Roman Catholic Church).

A fourth test-case: the holy Tsar-Martyr Nicholas and his spouse, the Tsaritsa-Martyr Alexandra. Anyone who has read the diaries of these saints will know that their love was far from platonic, and by no means without passion. And yet nobody has suggested that their love for each other, being “fallen”, was an impediment to their holiness. On the contrary. As Fr. Sergius Furmanov writes, “The family of the Tsar was an icon of the family... The holy royal couple, who constructed their family happiness on a love *that was in no way darkened* in the course of 24 years of marriage, shows the path to young people, that they may with prayer to God for help seek for partners in life.”<sup>518</sup> There can be no doubt that the royal couple were willing, if necessity demanded, to give up the married life that brought them so much consolation and strength (the Tsar even offered, after the birth of the Tsarevich, to become a monk and then patriarch). And God Who knows all things knew of this willingness of theirs. And yet He did not require this sacrifice of them; such a sacrifice was not pleasing to Him. Their path to holiness lay in and through marriage. He loved her as Christ loved the Church, and he loved his nation as a father loves his children; while she was a “help like” him in everything...

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intercourse alone, there being between them this trust, that neither will he do it with any other woman, nor she with any other man. Perhaps this may, not without reason, be called marriage, if both parties have resolved [on faithfulness to each other] until the death of one of them, and if they do not try and avoid the begetting of children, although they have not come together for that reason.” (*On the Good of Marriage*, 5).

<sup>518</sup> Furmanov, *Russkij Pastyr'* (Russian Pastor), 36, № 1, 2000, p. 34. Italics mine (V.M.).

### Stars differing in glory

That which is less than the ideal, or a *lesser* ideal, is not necessarily sinful: this obvious, but often neglected fact needs to be emphasized especially in this context. Just as “one star differs from another in glory” (I Corinthians 15.41) without any of the stars being anything but full of light, so one condition of the Christian life can differ from another in glory without either being sinful or in any way not pleasing to God. Monasticism is higher than marriage because it involves the greater struggle, less distraction and greater concentration on the highest, most beautiful Object of desire – God Himself.

However, that which is higher *in general and in principle* is not necessarily better for each individual person. Since the pattern of men’s characters and fallenness is very varied, God devises very varied paths for the overcoming of that fallenness, and different charismata for different men. For one man, monasticism would lead to salvation, while marriage would lead to damnation. For another man the reverse is true: if he became a monk, no matter how hard he tried, he would fail. For it is not only man’s will that matters but also God’s. And God’s choice for each individual cannot be defied, even for the best of motives, without sin and tragedy. Thus St. Martha, the mother of St. Symeon the Stylite, at first did not want to follow her parents’ will and marry. However, St. John the Baptist appeared to her and told her that it was the will of God that she marry. She married, became the mother of one of the greatest of the saints, and herself is numbered among the saints...

Again, we read in a biography of St. Seraphim of Sarov: “How many people came to him with questions about marriage, and sometimes about monasticism! And he solved their doubts and difficulties with such faith that it seemed as if the all-seeing eye of God were looking through him. Often he did not give the decision that was expected. Here are a few striking examples.

“Once two ladies visited him. One was young and belonged to a merchant family; the other was middle-aged and of noble birth. The latter had a great desire for the monastic life, but her parents would not give her their blessing; the former did not even think of monasticism. But the Saint’s spiritual insight led him to give them advice which was just the opposite of their intentions. He firmly urged the noble lady to marry.

“‘Married life,’ he said to her, ‘is blessed by God Himself. It is only necessary for both parties to keep marital fidelity, love and peace. You will be happy in marriage. Monasticism is not the way for you. The monastic life is difficult; not everyone can endure it.

“But the Saint told the younger woman to enter monasticism, and even told her the name of the Monastery where she would be saved. Both visitors were dissatisfied with the talk, and left the Elder disappointed. But subsequently everything turned out exactly as Father Seraphim foretold.

“The thought of the blessedness of marriage the Saint often repeated to his visitors. Once a young man came to him and asked him to bless him to enter a Monastery. But the Saint, wishing to test his firmness and strengthen him in his good intention, spoke to him of marriage: “Not all can receive this counsel” (Matthew 19.11), and the Lord does not compel them to do so. But,’ he added, “all things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9.23). Remain in the world, get married. Don’t forget conjugal intercourse and hospitality. Practise the virtues which will be remembered at the awful judgement of God, according to the Holy Gospel. “I was hungry, and you gave Me food. I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink. I was naked, and you clothed Me” (Matthew 25.35-36). Herein is your salvation! And also observe chastity. Remain continent on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as on Sundays and all holidays. For not practising chastity on Wednesdays and Fridays children are born dead, and for not observing holidays and Sundays wives die in childbirth.

“The young man returned home, but Father Seraphim’s advice kindled still more his desire for monasticism and a year and a half later he entered the Sarov Monastery.

“Sometimes Father Seraphim unexpectedly linked the lives of people who had never met before. An officer came to ask for his blessing to marry. Father Seraphim told him that his bride was already there, at the hostel. This young lady also soon came for a blessing to marry some other man.

“No, your bridegroom is here, in Sarov,’ the Elder told her.

“The young people became acquainted, and later both came to the Saint who gave them his blessing to marry. The marriage was an extremely happy one.”<sup>519</sup>

“Without Me,” said the Lord, “you can do nothing” (John 15.5). Without the grace of God that is given to a man to be a monk (or married), he could make no progress. Of course, the man must also apply his own will. But the will of man alone is not enough. If God does not also will it, then no amount of striving will make him succeed in the calling he has chosen. Fallen nature underlies and hinders all our efforts, whatever our calling.

The struggle against sexual sin in thought, feeling and deed is a struggle that must be undertaken by all, whether they are in the monastic or the married state. It is not the case that all virgins or monastics necessarily sin less sexually than married people (let us remember that lusting only in one’s heart is adultery, according to the word of the Lord (Matthew 5.28)). Many married people have reached high levels of chastity and sanctity, while many foolish virgins have failed to enter the marriage-chamber of the Lamb. Thus it is not the path to the end, but the end itself which matters in the long run. And that end is attainable by both.

Having said that, it is still necessary to emphasize that virginity is not only higher than

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<sup>519</sup> Moore, op. cit., pp. 290-292.

marriage: it is the only viewpoint from which marriage can be correctly evaluated, and the apparently contradictory scriptural texts on marriage understood. For whereas a perfect marriage is the end of most men's dreams, "paradise on earth", the ideal of virginity points to a still higher end - not paradise on earth, but the Kingdom of heaven. Although these two ends are not incompatible, and in fact have the same end in view, *everyone*, both the monk and the married, must love the Kingdom more than paradise on earth if he is not ultimately to be deprived of both the one and the other; he must be ready in his heart to reject all earthly delights, however lawful, for the Kingdom's sake. For paradise on earth will not last, - at the very most for the duration of earthly life, - whereas the Kingdom of heaven endures for ever and ever. And in the end, those who will be counted worthy of salvation, both the monastics and the virgins, will be "like the angels, who always behold the face of the Father in heaven" (Matthew 18.11). For when the Supreme Object of desire is present, lesser objects are necessarily eclipsed, not because they are flawed or lacking in beauty, but simply because they are lesser. As St. Maximus the Confessor writes: "It is like the light from the stars. The stars do not shine in the day. When the greater and incomparable light of the sun appears, they are hidden and cannot be seen by the senses. With respect to God this is even more so, for God is infinite, and uncreated things cannot be compared to created things."<sup>520</sup>

That is why the holy Apostle Simon the Zealot, the bridegroom at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, abandoned not only the water of a fallen marriage, but even the wine of a marriage transformed and elevated to iconic status by Christ, for love of the Divine Bridegroom Himself...

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<sup>520</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 7, P.G. 91:1077A.

## 5. EROS AND HUMAN NATURE

*It is God Who sows these loves.*

St. John Chrysostom, Encomium to Maximus, 3; P.G. 51:230.

*All things must desire and yearn for and love the Beautiful and the Good.*

St. Dionysius the Areopagite, On the Divine Names, 4.

*When desire is redirected from the flesh to the spirit, it raises us to such heights... We must make haste to attain purity and chastity and avoid fornication and every uncleanness, in order to rejoice throughout all ages with the pure Bridegroom in the unsullied bridal-chambers.*

St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 5, On the Meeting of the Lord, 7, 24.

### The Nature of Eros

Having discussed the origins of eros, its fall and its redemption in Christ and in the institutions of marriage and monasticism, we can now pose the direct question: what is eros? Let us begin with a patristic definition. St. Basil the Great writes: "Together with the making of the animal (I mean man), a certain seminal word was implanted in us, having within itself the tendency to impel us to love."<sup>521</sup> Again, St. Diadochus of Photike writes: "The natural love of the soul is one thing, and the love which comes to it from the Holy Spirit is another. The activity of the first depends on the assent of our will to our desire. For this reason it is easily taken over and perverted by evil spirits when we do not keep firmly to our chosen course."<sup>522</sup> Eros, then, is a natural love of the soul, whose expression requires the assent of our will and which can be perverted to evil ends. As St. Symeon the New Theologian puts it, God "placed within all of human nature a power to love (*δυναμιν αγαπητικον*), so that the rational nature of man may be assisted by the natural power of love to handle decisively all self-willed love... the great and perfecting commandment concerning love which God gave..."<sup>523</sup>

This natural love of the soul, or eros, is necessary for salvation. For, as St. Maximus the Confessor writes: "The passionless knowledge of divine things does not convince the mind altogether to scorn material things; it is like the mere thought of a sensible thing. Hence many men may be found with much knowledge who yet wallow in fleshly passions like swine in the mire..."

"As the simple thought of human things does not force the mind to scorn the divine, so neither does the simple knowledge of divine things persuade it to scorn completely human things; because the truth now exists in shadows and figures. Therefore there is need for

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<sup>521</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Regulae Fusius* 2.1, P.G. 31, 908C.

<sup>522</sup> St. Diadochus of Photike, "On Spiritual Knowledge", 34; *The Philokalia*, London: Faber & Faber, 1981, vol. I, p. 263.

<sup>523</sup> St. Symeon, in B.N. Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine Tradition*, Rollingford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2007, p. 135.

the blessed passion of holy eros; it binds the mind to spiritual objects and persuades it to prefer the immaterial to the material, the intelligible and divine to the sensible."<sup>524</sup>

"It was for the sake of the new Man, Christ, that human nature was created in the beginning. It was for this reason that mind and desire were created in man. We receive reason in order to know Christ, desire in order to run to Him, and we have memory in order to carry Him inwardly, because He was the archetype of our creation."<sup>525</sup>

Eros is usually identified with the desiring or appetitive faculty of the human soul (ερωσ, το επιθυμητικον). The other faculties, as we have seen, are defined by the Holy Fathers, following Plato, as the intellect or intelligence (νους, το λογιστικον) and the incensive or irascible faculty (θυμος, το θυμικον). Thus St. Ambrose of Milan writes that "the soul has three states of feeling in the body, the first rational, the second desiring, and the third impetuous, viz. λογιστικον, επιθυμητικον, θυμικον"<sup>526</sup>

Although we have identified eros with the desiring faculty of the soul, this is not quite accurate, according to St. Maximus. Rather, Eros is "the offspring, as it were, of the gathering together of the soul's faculties in relation to divine realities, and of the union of those faculties – rational, irascible and concupiscent"<sup>527</sup>.

This illustrates the important principle that no individual faculty of the human soul, whether the rational, the irascible or the concupiscent, is completely independent of the others, just as there is no important human function which is completely spiritual, with no participation of the body, or completely bodily, with no participation of the soul or mind. Taken together, the incensive and desiring faculties are called the "passible aspect" of the soul (παθητικον). It is this passible aspect which has to come under the control of the intellect; in the morally healthy man the intellect rules the incensive and desiring faculties as a charioteer rules his horses.

Thus, as St. Anthony the Great says, "when the soul endowed with intelligence firmly exercises her freedom of choice in the right way, and reins in like a charioteer the incensive

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<sup>524</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Century III on Charity*, 66, 67. St. Gregory of Nyssa appears to contradict St. Maximus here, writing: "The soul will be joined with the divine through its purity, adhering to that which is proper to it. If this should happen, there will no longer be a need for the impulse of desire to lead us toward the light; if he should come into the light, attainment will replace desire. The possibility of attainment makes desire useless and vain." (*On the Soul and the Resurrection*, ch. 6; Roth, *op. cit.* p. 77). Earlier, however, he writes: "If desire were altogether rooted out..., what is there which would raise us towards the union with the heavenly? Or if love (□□□□□) is taken away, in what manner will we be joined with the divine?" (*On the Soul and the Resurrection*, ch. 3; Roth, *op. cit.*, p. 59).

<sup>525</sup> St. Nicholas Kabasilas.

<sup>526</sup> St. Ambrose, *Exposition of Saint Luke*, VII, 139. In another place the saint proposes a variant to this schema, adding a fourth faculty, that of perception (το διορατικον), to the other three (*On Abraham*, 54, Etna, Ca.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2000, p. 78).

<sup>527</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, 49. Anestis Keselopoulos puts it as follows: "When all three of the soul's faculties function naturally, then divine and blessed love blossoms forth" (*Passions and Virtues according to Saint Gregory Palamas*, South Canaan: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2004, p. 179).

and appetitive aspects of her nature, restraining and controlling her passionate impulses, she receives a crown of victory; and as a reward for all her labours, she is granted life in heaven by God the Creator."<sup>528</sup>

The intellect is not to be confused with the discursive power of the mind. It is located, not in the head, but in the heart, and is the first receptacle of divine grace. Thus St. Diadochus of Photike writes: "The grace of God dwells in the very depths of the soul – that is to say, in the intellect... The heart of those who are beginning to experience the energy of the Spirit is only partially warmed by God's grace. The result is that, while their intellect begins to produce spiritual thought, the outer parts of the heart continue to produce thoughts after the flesh, since the members of the heart have not yet all become full conscious of the light of God's grace shining upon them."<sup>529</sup>

Under the influence of Divine grace, and with the cooperation of the free will of man, the intellect exerts power over the "outer" regions of the heart, the incensive and desiring faculties. It "informs" the heart, so that all the actions of the heart become "rational" or "noetic". When thus purified and under the control of the intellect, the incensive and desiring faculties by no means hinder the soul in its ascent to God: *on the contrary, they help it*. Thus St. Isaiah the Solitary writes with regard to the incensive faculty: "There is among the passions an anger of the intellect, and this anger is in accordance with nature. Without anger a man cannot attain purity; he has to feel angry with all that is sown in him by the enemy."<sup>530</sup> Again, St. Niketas Stithatos writes: "If when aroused and active a man's incensive, appetitive and intelligent powers spontaneously operate in accordance with nature, they make him wholly godlike and divine, sound in his actions and never in any way dislodged from nature's bedrock. But if, betraying his own nature, he follows a course that is contrary to nature, these same powers will turn him, as we have said, into a polymorphic monster, compounded of many self-antagonistic parts."<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Attributed to St. Anthony the Great, *On the Character of Men*, 143; *The Philokalia*, vol. I, p. 351.

<sup>529</sup> St. Diadochus of Photike, *On Spiritual Knowledge*, 79, 88; *The Philokalia*, vol. I, pp. 280, 287.

<sup>530</sup> St. Isaiah, *On Guarding the Intellect: Twenty-Seven Texts*, 1. St. Ambrose of Milan writes: "Admittedly, it is natural to be angry, or there is generally cause for anger. Still, it is our duty as human beings to moderate our anger, and not be carried away by a brutal fury knowing no restraint. It is our duty not to sow strife, not to exacerbate family quarrels. 'A wrathful man diggeth up sin' (Proverbs 15.18). You cannot 'be one' if you are double-minded, if you cannot control yourself when you are angry, of which David well says: 'Be angry, and sin not' (Psalm 4.5). He is not commanding us to be angry, but making allowance for human nature. The anger which we cannot help feeling we can at least moderate. So, even if we are angry, our emotions may be stirred in accordance with nature, but we must not sin, contrary to nature. If a man cannot govern himself, it is intolerable that he should undertake to govern others." (*Letter* 63, 60). Again, St. John Cassian writes: "We have, it must be admitted, a use for anger excellently implanted in us for which alone it is useful and profitable for us to admit it, viz., when we are indignant and rage against the lustful emotions of our heart, and are vexed that the things which we are ashamed to do or say before men have risen up in the lurking places of our heart, as we tremble at the presence of the angels, and of God Himself, Who pervades all things everywhere and fear with the utmost dread the eye of Him from Whom the secrets of our hearts cannot possibly be hidden."

<sup>531</sup> St. Niketas, *On the Practice of the Virtues: One Hundred Texts*.

## The “Sublimation” of Eros

The idea that the natural passions can, under the influence of grace, help rather than hinder the soul in its striving for salvation, is sometimes confused with the Freudian idea of “sublimation” and therefore condemned as heretical.<sup>532</sup> Thus Lourié mocks the idea that “one’s sexual energies can be directed toward God in an acceptable spiritual way”.<sup>533</sup> However, in this rejection he shows his kinship to the heretic Barlaam<sup>534</sup>, to whom St. Gregory Palamas writes: “But, philosopher, we have not been taught that dispassion is the putting to death of the soul’s passionate part; on the contrary, it is the conversion of the passionate part from the lower to the higher, and its active devotion to divine realities, completely turned away from evil and towards what is good.”<sup>535</sup> The saint’s words were confirmed by the Athonite Fathers: “Once the soul’s passible aspect is transformed and sanctified – *but not reduced to a deathlike condition* – through it the dispositions and activities of the body are also sanctified, since body and soul share a conjoint existence.... If anyone... considers [dispassion] to be *a deathlike condition of the soul’s passible aspect*, then, by adhering to such views, he inevitably denies that he can enjoy an embodied life in the world of incorruption that is to come.”<sup>536</sup>

Several recent commentators on St. Gregory Palamas confirm that this is indeed his teaching. Thus George Mantzaridis writes: “Putting to death the soul’s passionate part makes man incapable of achieving the good. Christian conduct consists, not in this, but in dedicating the capacities of man’s soul to God.”<sup>537</sup>

Again Anestis Keselopoulos writes: “Dispassion cannot be understood as the denial of the passions, but their redirection toward longing for God. The dispassionate man is not he who has mortified his soul’s passionate aspect and has become unmoved and inactive in his godly habits, in his relationship with God and in his disposition towards Him. Rather, the dispassionate man is he who has subordinated the soul’s passionate aspects (the incensive and desiring faculties) to the nous and has firmly oriented them towards God...

“Palamas refers to dispassion as the ‘blessed passion’ [*Defense of the Hesychasts* 2.2.12] in which both the soul and the body mutually participate. Dispassion does not, however, rivet the spirit to the flesh, but it serves ‘to draw the flesh to a dignity close to that of the spirit, and persuade it to tend towards what is above’ [*ibid.*]. He also teaches that

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<sup>532</sup> In fact, it was probably Nietzsche who was the first to use sublimieren in its specifically modern sense, as in *Beyond Good and Evil*: “It was precisely during the Christian period of Europe and altogether under the pressure of Christian value judgements that the sex drive sublimated itself into love (amour-passion).”

<sup>533</sup> Lourié, op. cit., p. 135, note 236.

<sup>534</sup> Which is more than a little ironic, since Lourié considers himself an expert on Palamism, and likes to label his Orthodox opponents “Barlaamites”.

<sup>535</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, II, 2, 19.

<sup>536</sup> “Declaration of the Holy Mountain in Defence of Those who Devoutly Practise a Life of Stillness”, 6; *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, p. 423. Italics mine (V.M.)

<sup>537</sup> Mantzaridis, op. cit., p. 79.

dispassion is numbered among those spiritual energies that originate in the nous and then proceed to the body: '... in order to transform the body into something better and to deify it by these actions and passions' [ibid.]...

"Man is not meant to mortify his soul's passionate aspects, since this would make them so stagnant and inactive that they would be unable to acquire those habits, ways of relating, and predispositions that please God."<sup>538</sup>

Again, D.I. Makarov writes: "The investigator of the teaching of Palamas and the language of his homilies comes up against the thought: is it not possible... to deduce the advice that the passions and impulses of the lower parts of the soul should be converted to lofty, spiritual and absolute values, thereby somehow justifying the existence of the given parts?... Insofar as, according to the patristic teaching, 'that which is not received is not healed', and nothing in man was created superfluous, we are obliged – by means of a process of perfection – to purify these potentialities of the soul also, and open for the *whole* man an entrance into the Kingdom of God...

"... To this programme of asceticism [of Palamas] should be added one more point: the transfer of the lower, passion-immired potentialities of the soul to higher objects and aims, and first of all – onto God and His Kingdom...

"... For the teacher of hesychasm the purification of the passionate part of the soul was equivalent not to its cutting off, but its change to the better."<sup>539</sup>

Several other Holy Fathers teach this. Thus St. Ambrose of Milan, commenting on Song of Songs 6.12, says that the chariot of the soul is drawn by four obedient horses (prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice) and four disobedient horses (wrath, lust, fear and injustice). The task of the soul is not to destroy the disobedient horses, but to control them and make them run together with their obedient fellows.<sup>540</sup>

Again, St. John of the Ladder writes: "I have seen impure souls raving madly about physical love; but making their experience of carnal love a reason for repentance, they transferred the same love to the Lord; and, overcoming all fear, they spurred themselves insatiably into the love of God. That is why the Lord does not say of that chaste harlot: 'Because she feared', but: 'Because she loved much', and could easily get rid of love by love."<sup>541</sup>

Again, St. Maximus the Confessor writes: "The passions become good in those who are spiritually earnest once they have wisely separated them from corporeal objects and used

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<sup>538</sup> Keselopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 170, 171, 187.

<sup>539</sup> Makarov, *Antropologia i Kosmologia sv. Grigoria Palamy* (The Anthropology and Cosmology of St. Gregory Palamas), St. Petersburg, 2003, pp. 269, 270, 271. Ironically, Makarov is a close disciple of Lourié.

<sup>540</sup> St. Ambrose, *On Isaac, or The Soul*, 8.65.

<sup>541</sup> St. John, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 5.26.

them to gain possession of heavenly things. For instance, they can turn desire (επιθυμια) into the appetitive movement of the mind's longing for divine things, or pleasure (ηδονη) into the unadulterated joy of the mind when enticed toward divine gifts, or fear (φοβος) into cautious concern for imminent punishment for sins committed, or grief (λυπη) into corrective repentance of a present evil... The spiritually earnest use the passions to destroy a present or anticipated evil, and to embrace and hold on to virtue and knowledge. Thus the passions become good when they are used by those who 'take every thought captive in order to obey Christ' (II Corinthians 10.5)."<sup>542</sup>

We shall call this process of purification by redirection "sublimation". But the word "sublimation" (or "transmutation") is used here in a strictly patristic, not Freudian sense.<sup>543</sup> Here are some more examples of the Fathers' use of the idea:

- i. *St. Basil the Great*: Desire, irascibility and the other passible faculties "each becomes a good or an evil for its possessor according to the use made of it. As for the soul's faculty of desire, one who uses it for the enjoyment of the flesh and the consumption of impure pleasure is disgusting and licentious, while one who turns it toward the love of God and the longing for eternal good things is enviable and blessed."<sup>544</sup>
- ii. *St. John Cassian*: "Movement in the sexual organs was given to us by the Creator for procreation and the continuation of the species, not for unchastity; while incensive power was planted in us for our salvation, so that we could manifest it against wickedness, but not so that we could act like wild beasts towards our fellow men. Even if we make bad use of these passions, nature itself is not therefore sinful, nor should we blame the Creator. A man who gives someone a knife for some necessary and useful purpose is not to blame if that person uses it to commit murder."<sup>545</sup>
- iii. *St. Ambrose of Milan*: The soul and the body "agree in the unanimity of inseparable love when the flesh, submissive to its superior, obeys saving commands... so that the flesh becomes an appurtenance of the soul, no longer a procuress of vices, but an enemy thereof and, so to speak, a handmaiden of virtue."<sup>546</sup>
- iv. *St. Hesychius the Priest*: "We should use the three aspects of the soul fittingly and in accordance with nature, as created by God. We should use the incensive power against our outer self and against Satan. 'Be incensed', it is written, 'against sin' (cf. Psalm 4.4), that is, be incensed with yourselves and the devil, so that you will

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<sup>542</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, I, 48, 49.

<sup>543</sup> For Freud, as an atheist, did not understand that true sublimation is impossible without the grace of God. But in Christianity, writes Protopresbyter George Grabbe in his discussion of Freud, "In prayer, love and labour for the glory of God our carnal instincts are as it were transfigured" ("Pravoslavnoe vospitanie deteje v nash dni" (The Orthodox Upbringing of Children in our Days"), <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=lib&id=846>).

<sup>544</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Homily against those who get angry*, 6; P.G. 46.61B, 65B-68A, 88D-89A.

<sup>545</sup> St. John Cassian, *On the Eight Vices*, "On Avarice"; *The Philokalia*, vol. I, p. 78.

<sup>546</sup> St. Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of Saint Luke*, VII, 141.

not sin against God. Our desire should be directed towards God and towards holiness. Our intelligence should control our incensive power and our desire with wisdom and skill, regulating them, admonishing them, correcting them and ruling them as a king rules over his subjects. Then, even should they rebel against it, our inmost intelligence will direct the passions in a way that accords with God's will, for we shall have set it in charge of them. The brother of the Lord declares: 'He who does not lapse in his inmost intelligence is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body' (James 3.2). For the truth is that every sin and transgression is brought about through these three aspects of the soul, just as every virtue and good action is also produced through them."<sup>547</sup>

- v. *St. Diadochus of Photike*: "If we learn persistently to be detached from the good things of this world, we shall be able to unite the earthly appetite of the soul to its spiritual and intellectual aspiration, through the communion of the Holy Spirit" "A controlled incensive power is a weapon implanted in our nature by God when He creates us. If Eve had used this weapon against the serpent, she would not have been impelled by sensual desire."<sup>548</sup>
- vi. *St. Theodore the Great Ascetic*: "Every deiform soul is tripartite, according to Gregory the Theologian. Virtue, when established in the intelligence, he calls discretion, understanding and wisdom; and when in the incensive power, he calls it courage and patience; and when in the faculty of desire, he calls it love, self-restraint and self-control. Justice or right judgement penetrates all three aspects of the soul, enabling them to function in harmony."<sup>549</sup>
- vii. *St. Theodore the Great Ascetic*: "With respect to its intelligent aspect, to purify the soul is to eradicate and completely expunge from it all degrading and distorted features, all 'worldly cares', as the Divine Liturgy puts it, all turbulence, evil tendencies and senseless prepossession. With regard to its desiring aspect, it is to purge away every impulsion towards what is material, to cease from viewing things according to the senses, and to be obedient to the intelligence. And with respect to the soul's incensive power, purification consists in never being perturbed by anything that happens."<sup>550</sup>
- viii. *St. Gregory the Theologian*: "I am united to God in an indivisible identity of will... through making reasonable in a fitting manner the irrational powers of the soul by leading them through reason to a familiar commerce with the mind: I mean anger and desire. I have changed the one into charity, and the other into joy."<sup>551</sup>
- ix. *St. Gregory of Nyssa*: "If we use our reason aright and master our emotions, everything can be transformed into virtue; for anger produces courage, hatred - aversion from vice, the power of love - the desire for what is truly beautiful..."<sup>552</sup>
- x. *St. Gregory of Nyssa*: "The desiring faculty has grown and matured not towards

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<sup>547</sup> St. Hesychius the Priest, *On Watchfulness and Holiness*, 126; *The Philokalia*, vol. I, p. 184.

<sup>548</sup> St. Diadochus of Photike, *On Spiritual Knowledge*, 29, 62; *The Philokalia*, vol. I, pp. 261, 272.

<sup>549</sup> St. Theodore the Great Ascetic, *A Century of Spiritual Texts*, 24; *The Philokalia*, vol. II, p. 18.

<sup>550</sup> St. Theodore the Great Ascetic, *Theoretikon*; *The Philokalia*, vol. II, p. 38.

<sup>551</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, in St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, P.G. 91, 1665D.

<sup>552</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVIII, 5.

the good by nature, for the sake of which it was sown in us, but instead it has made the harvest beastly and irrational. This is where the impulse of desire has been led by misjudgement concerning the good. In the same way also the seed of anger has not been tempered into courage, but has armed us for battle with our own kind. Likewise the power of love has turned away from the intelligible, running riot in the immoderate enjoyment of the sensual... We might be [deprived of the better part] if desire were altogether rooted out along with the useless growth. For if this should happen to our human nature, what is there which would raise us towards the union with the heavenly? Or if love is taken away, in what manner will we be joined with the divine? If anger is quenched, what weapon will we have against the adversary?... These emotions are neither virtuous nor wicked in themselves, since they are impulses of the soul which lie in the power of the users to serve good or otherwise. When their movement is toward the better, we shall declare that they are material for praise, as desire was for Daniel, anger for Phineas, and grief for the one who mourns rightly. If, on the other hand, their inclination is towards the worse, then they become passions and are named accordingly."<sup>553</sup>

- xi. *St. Maximus the Confessor*: "Let our intelligence, then, be moved to seek God, let our desire be roused in longing for Him, and let our incensive power struggle to keep guard over our attachment to Him. Or, more precisely, let our whole intellect be directed towards God, tensed by our incensive power as if by some nerve, and fired with longing by our desire at its most ardent."<sup>554</sup>
- xii. *St. Maximus the Confessor*: "For him whose mind is continually with God, even his concupiscence is increased above measure into a divinely burning love; and the entire irascible element is changed into divine charity."<sup>555</sup>
- xiii. *St. Maximus the Confessor*: "The incensive power and desire... are to be treated like the servant and the handmaid of another tribe. The contemplative intellect (VOYΣ), through fortitude and self-restraint, subjugates them for ever to the lordship of the intelligence, so that they serve the virtues. It does not give them their complete freedom until the law of nature is totally swallowed up by the law of the spirit, in the same way as the death of the unhappy flesh is swallowed up by infinite life (cf. I Corinthians 5.4), and until the entire image of the unoriginate kingdom is revealed, mimetically manifesting in itself the entire form of the archetype. When the contemplative intellect enters this state it gives the incensive power and desire their freedom, transmuting desire into the unsullied pleasure and pure enravishment of an intense love for God and the incensive power into spiritual fervour, an ever-active fiery *élan*, a self-possessed frenzy."<sup>556</sup>
- xiv. *St. Maximus the Confessor*: "The second of the mind's elders or captains is the concupiscent faculty, whereby divine love (αγαπη) is produced. Through this love, the mind, voluntarily attaching itself to the desire for the undefiled

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<sup>553</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection*, chapter 3.

<sup>554</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *On the Lord's Prayer; The Philokalia*, vol. II, p. 298.

<sup>555</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Second Century on Charity*, 48.

<sup>556</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Third Century on various texts*, 54; *The Philokalia*, vol. II, p. 253.

- Godhead, has a ceaseless longing for what it desires. Still another elder or captain is the irascible faculty, whereby the mind ceaselessly clings to the peace of God, drawing its movement toward the divine passion (ερωσ) or desire (επιθυμια)."<sup>557</sup>
- xv. *St. Maximus the Confessor*: "He came to bind to Himself the principle of desire..., that it might take on a procreative disposition fixed and unalterable in the good."<sup>558</sup>
- xvi. *St. Isaac the Syrian*: "The work of the cross is twofold. And this corresponds to the duality of nature which is divided into two parts: into endurance of bodily afflictions which comes through the energy of the irascible part of the soul and is called practice; and into the subtle work of the mind in sacred studies and constant prayer and so forth, which is done with that desiring part and is called contemplation. Practice purifies the passionate part through the power of zeal; contemplation refines that part capable of knowing by means of the energy of the love of the soul, which is its natural longing."<sup>559</sup>
- xvii. *Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid*: "He teaches that we ought not to love God partially, but to give all of ourselves to God. For we perceive these three distinctions of the human soul: the vegetative, the animal, and the rational. When the soul grows and is nourished and begets what is like unto it, it resembles the plants; when it experiences anger or desire, it is like the animals; when it understands, it is called rational. See, then, how these three facets are indicated here. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart' - this is the animal part of man; 'and with all thy soul [or life]' - this is the vegetative part of a man, for plants are alive and animate; 'and with all thy mind' - this is the rational."<sup>560</sup>
- xviii. *St. Peter of Damascus*: "'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy might' (Deuteronomy 6.5). When I heard the words 'with all thy soul' I was astounded, and no longer needed to hear the rest. For 'with all thy soul' means with the intelligent, incensive and desiring powers of the soul, because it is of these three powers that the soul is composed. Thus the intellect should think at all times about Divine matters, while desire should long constantly and entirely, as the Law says, for God alone and never for anything else; and the incensive power should actively oppose only what obstructs this longing, and nothing else."<sup>561</sup>
- xix. *St. Gregory of Sinai*: "Additional labour quells the body's dissolute impulses and checks the desire for sensual indulgence. Thus checked, desire gives rise to spiritual longing, longing to love..."
- xx. *St. Gregory Palamas*: "Not only hast Thou made the passionate part of my soul entirely Thine, but if there is a spark of desire in my body, it has returned to its source, and has thereby become elevated and united to Thee."<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, 49.

<sup>558</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 42.

<sup>559</sup> St. Isaac the Syrian, *On the Ascetical Life*, II, 21.

<sup>560</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to Matthew*, 22.

<sup>561</sup> St. Peter of Damascus, *24 Discourses: On Love*.

<sup>562</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, I, ii, 1.

- xxi. *St. Gregory Palamas*: "Impassibility does not consist in mortifying the passionate part of the soul, but in removing it from evil to good, and directing its energies towards divine things... Through the passionate part of the soul which has been orientated towards the end for which God created it, one will practise the corresponding virtues: with the concupiscent appetite, one will embrace charity, and with the irascible, one will practise patience. It is thus not the man who has killed the passionate part of the soul who has the pre-eminence, for such a one would have no momentum or activity to acquire a divine state and right disposition and relationship with God; but rather, the prize goes to him who has put that part of his soul under subjection, so that by its obedience to the mind, which is by nature appointed to rule, it may ever tend towards God, as is right, by uninterrupted remembrance of Him... Thus one must offer to God the passionate part of the soul, alive and active, that it may be a living sacrifice. As the Apostle said of our bodies, 'I exhort you, by the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God' (Romans 12.1)."<sup>563</sup>
- xxii. *St. Gregory Palamas*: "The impassible man is one who no longer possesses any evil dispositions, but is rich in good ones, who is marked by the virtues, as men of passion are marked by evil pleasures; who has tamed his irascible and concupiscent appetites (which constitute the passionate part of the soul), to the faculties of knowledge, judgement and reason in the soul, just as men of passion subject their reason to the passions. For it is the misuse of the powers of the soul which engenders the terrible passions, just as misuse of the knowledge of created things engenders the 'wisdom which has become folly'."
- xxiii. *St. Gregory Palamas*: "But if one uses these things properly, then through the knowledge of created things, spiritual understood, one will arrive at knowledge of God; and through the passionate part of the soul which has been orientated towards the end for which God created it, one will practise the corresponding virtues: with the concupiscent appetite, one will embrace charity, and with the irascible, one will practise patience. It is thus not the man who has killed the passionate part of his soul who has the pre-eminence, for such a one would have no momentum or activity to acquire a divine state and right dispositions and relationship with God; but rather, the prize goes to him who has put that part of his soul under subjection, so that by its obedience to the mind, which is by nature appointed to rule, it may ever tend towards God, as is right, by the uninterrupted remembrance of Him.... Thus one must offer to God the passionate part of the soul, alive and active, that it may be a living sacrifice."<sup>564</sup>
- xxiv. *St. Gregory Palamas*: "Therefore those who love the Good (οι εραστοι των καλων) carry out a transposition (μεταξερσιν) of this faculty and do not make it die; they do not suck it into themselves without letting it move, but they show it to be active in love towards God and neighbor."<sup>565</sup>
- xxv. *St. Gregory Palamas*: "The great Paul says, 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not

<sup>563</sup> *St. Gregory Palamas, Triads, II, ii, 5.*

<sup>564</sup> *St. Gregory Palamas, Triads, II, ii, 19, 20.*

<sup>565</sup> *St. Gregory Palamas, Triads, III, iii, 15.*

fulfil the lusts of the flesh' (Galatians 5.16). Elsewhere he exhorts, 'Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth' (Ephesians 6.14). For the contemplative part of the soul strengthens and supports the part concerned with desires, and chases away fleshly lusts. The great Peter tells us with absolute clarity what the references to the loins and the truth mean. 'Wherefore', he says, 'gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ' (I Peter 1.13)."<sup>566</sup>

- xxvi. *St. Gregory Palamas*: "We have not been taught, O philosopher, that dispassion is the mortification of the passionate faculty, but a change in its direction from the worse to the better."<sup>567</sup>
- xxvii. *St. Philaret of Moscow*: "[The command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] prepares the raising of the lower powers of man, as well as the higher."<sup>568</sup>
- xxviii. *St. Ignaty Brianchaninov*: "The conquest and the alteration of nature belong only to God... Then the very body itself is drawn to what the spirit aspires to."<sup>569</sup>
- xxix. *St. John of Kronstadt*: "When you see a beautiful girl or woman or a handsome youth, immediately lift up your thoughts to the supreme, most holy beauty, the Author of every earthly and heavenly beauty, that is, to God; glorify Him for having created such beauty out of mere earth; marvel at the beauty of God's image in man, which shines forth even in our perverted state; imagine what our image will be when we shall shine forth in the kingdom of our Father, if we become worthy of it; picture to yourself what must be the beauty of God's saints, of the holy angels, of the Mother of God Herself, adorned with the Divine glory; imagine the unspeakable goodness of God's countenance, which we shall behold, and do not be allured by earthly beauty, by flesh and blood. Carnal desire is sweet, but it is sinful, corruptive, and repugnant to God. Do not attach yourself with your heart to any girlish or female beauty, but to the Lord God alone, Who has created every beauty for His own sake, and say: "It is good for me to hold me fast by God," [Psalm 73:28] to God alone, and not to fleeting carnal beauty."<sup>570</sup>

Another source for this teaching is the services of the Church, which speak of the passions of the saints being tamed and transfigured by grace but not destroyed at root. Thus "the fire of divine love being within you, O Sergius and Herman, the flame of lust and the fire of wrath were transformed into dew. Wherefore, rejoicing, ye chanted in quietude: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!"<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 11, On the Precious and Life-Giving Cross*, 7.

<sup>567</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Defense of the Hesychasts* 2.2.19.

<sup>568</sup> St. Philaret, *Zapiski rukovodstvuiuschia k osnovatel'nomu razumeniu Knigi Bytia* (Notes leading to a basic knowledge of the Book of Genesis), Moscow, 1867, p. 43.

<sup>569</sup> St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, *On Purity*.

<sup>570</sup> St. John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*.

<sup>571</sup> *Menaion*, September 11, Service to SS. Sergius and Herman of Valaam, Mattins, canon, Ode 7, troparion.

## *Sublimation and "Falling in Love"*

We can better understand the role that the "sublimation" of eros plays by turning to the highly ambiguous phenomenon known as "falling in love". On the one hand, the word "falling" indicates that this is a phenomenon close to lust. And certainly, the element of compulsion in falling in love indicates the influence of the fall. On the other hand, the use of the word "love" is not out of place; for falling in love, as we shall see, takes a person out of himself, makes him capable of self-sacrifice and is the first step to a God-blessed marriage. It even makes him a poet: "At the touch of love," writes Plato, "every man becomes a poet". This shows that while falling love partakes of lust, it is more than just lust, being the first step, at least in some, to the *sublimation* of lust.

It is a striking fact about "falling in love" that the more intense it is, the purer and more independent, as it were, of the physical act of sexual union it appears to the lovers themselves. The act of sexual union is, of course, the longed-for climax and consummation of their love. But it is the love itself that is central, that consumes the time and energy of the lovers, that appears to them to be a goal in itself, even if the relationship is for one reason or another not consummated.

This important psychological fact is well documented in Christian literature, but more or less completely discounted by secular psychologists. Thus St. Augustine writes: "We know that many of our brothers by mutual agreement refrain from carnal love, but not from marital love. The more strongly the former is suppressed, the more the latter is strengthened."<sup>572</sup> Again, "when purity is preserved," writes St. Asterius of Amasia, "peace is preserved as well as mutual attraction, but when the soul is overwhelmed by unlawful and sensual lust, it loses the lawful and just love".<sup>573</sup> Again, St. John Chrysostom says that "love is born from chastity"<sup>574</sup>, that "love makes people chaste", and that "lewdness comes from nothing else than a lack of love".<sup>575</sup>

C.S. Lewis writes: "Love of every sort is a guard against lust, even, by a divine paradox, sexual *love* is a guard against lust. No woman is more easily and painlessly abstained from, if need be, than the woman one loves."<sup>576</sup>

And again: "There may be those who have first felt mere sexual appetite for a woman and then gone on at a later stage to 'fall in love with her'. But I doubt if this is at all common. Very often what comes first is simply a delighted pre-occupation with the Beloved - a general, unspecified pre-occupation with her in her totality. A man in this state really hasn't leisure to think of sex. He is too busy thinking of a person. The fact that she is a

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<sup>572</sup> St. Augustine, *Sermon on Concupiscence*, 11, P.L. 38:345; quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>573</sup> St. Asterius of Amasia, *Sermon on Matthew 19.3*, quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>574</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Sermon on 'Kiss Aquila and Priscilla'*, quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>575</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 33 on I Corinthians*, quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>576</sup> Lewis, *Yours, Jack. The Inspirational Letters of C.S. Lewis*, London: Harper, 2008, p. 308.

woman is far less important than the fact that she is herself...<sup>577</sup>

“Though it is a fully sexualised love,” writes Philip Sherrard, “in that it involves the fully differentiated beings of man and woman, this sexual element does not necessarily have any so-called carnal (or genital) expression: not because the man and woman have taken any vow of virginity or regard celibacy as a superior state of existence, but simply because the kind of communion they experience makes such expression superfluous – a descent into a lower key.”<sup>578</sup>

As Scruton has pointed out, “Desire is indeed a natural phenomenon, but it is one that lies beyond the reach of any ‘natural science’ of man.”<sup>579</sup> This is an important point. Science can understand love, desire and “falling in love” only by reducing them to the category of instinctual animal behaviour and chemical reactions in the brain.<sup>580</sup> The problem is that while being in love is clearly influenced by instinctual forces, it differs from instinctual behaviour in important ways.

First of all, it is highly *personal* and *individual*. If John is in love with Mary, then his desire is focused exclusively on her, and her alone. No other woman can take her place, and if she rejects his love, then it is no good suggesting to him that he find another. In fact, the very suggestion is likely to offend him deeply! Only when his passion for her fades will he be able to be strongly attracted to another. For, as C.S. Lewis writes, “erotic love is not like desire for food, nay, a love for one woman differs from a love for another woman in the very same way and the very same degree as the two women differ from one another.”<sup>581</sup>

Even a Don Juan, whose passions for women change with exceptional speed, does not love *all* women at the same time. He loves first one particular woman, and then another particular woman. His love may be fickle, but it is at all times *personalised* and *individualised*.

But this is quite unlike typically instinctual behaviour. If a man is hungry, then *any* food will do. If he is tired, then *any* kind of bed will satisfy his need to rest weary limbs. But for a man in love it is quite the opposite. Not *any* woman will do, but only *one particular* woman.

Secondly, the strength of the phenomenon does not vary in any simple way in accordance with hormone levels or frequency of intercourse. Of course, the likelihood of falling in love increases dramatically with the onset of puberty, and decreases with the onset of old age. And there is evidence that the menstrual cycle and the level of hormones

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<sup>577</sup> Lewis, *The Four Loves*, London: Collins, 1960, 2012, p. 113. Lewis makes a clear distinction between Eros and Venus, the latter referring to everything that is specifically sexual.

<sup>578</sup> Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>579</sup> Scruton, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

<sup>580</sup> See Robert Winston, *The Human Mind*, London: The Bantam Press, 2003, chapter 8.

<sup>581</sup> Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, London: Collins, 1955, p. 256. “Eros makes a woman really want, not a woman, but one particular woman” (*The Four Loves*, p. 115).

such as testosterone influence levels of desire. And yet human beings, unlike animals, do not “go on heat”. In fact, by comparison with those of animals, human beings’ passions are both *more* constant and obsessive, and *less* dependent on biological forces and cycles.

The Russian religious philosopher S.L. Frank writes about being in love: “What can so-called empirical psychology observe in it? First of all it will fall on the external, physical symptoms of this phenomenon – it will point out the changes in blood circulation, feeding and sleep in the person under observation. But remembering that it is, first of all, psychology, it will pass over to the observation of ‘mental phenomena’, it will record changes in self-image, sharp alterations in mental exaltation and depression, the stormy emotions of a pleasant and repulsive nature through which the life of a lover usually passes, the dominance in his consciousness of images relating to the beloved person, etc. Insofar as psychology thinks that in these observations it has expressed, albeit incompletely, the very essence of being in love – then this is a mockery of the lover, a denial of the mental phenomenon under the guise of a description of it. For for the lover himself all these are just symptoms or consequences of his feeling, not the feeling itself. Its essence consists, roughly, in a living consciousness of the exceptional value of the beloved person, in an aesthetic delight in him, in the experience of his central significance for the life of the lover – in a word, in a series of phenomena characterizing the inner meaning of life. To elucidate these phenomena means to understand them compassionately from within, to recreate them sympathetically in oneself. The beloved will find an echo of himself in artistic descriptions of love in novels, he will find understanding in a friend, as a living person who has himself experienced something similar and is able to enter the soul of his friend; but the judgements of the psychologist will seem to him to be simply misunderstandings of his condition - and he will be right.”<sup>582</sup>

Why will the judgements of the psychologist fall short of their mark? Because the “object-consciousness” (to use Frank’s term) of the psychologist, and of the scientist in general, is appropriate only in relation to things which are indeed just objects, and not capable of having an “object consciousness” of their own. But human beings *do* have object consciousness; and this object consciousness is not suspended during the state of “being in love”, but is, on the contrary, heightened.

Object-consciousness – or, as more contemporary philosophers prefer to call it, *intentionality* – is beyond the capacity of animals. Still more beyond their capacity is the characteristic that enables two people to relate to each other not only as subjects and objects, but as *inter-penetrating subjects-cum-objects* who share, albeit from different initial points of view, their perceptions of each other.

Frank calls this simply “communion”, and defines it as follows: “When we speak to a person, or even when our eyes meet in silence, that person ceases to be ‘object’ for us and is not longer a ‘he’ but a ‘thou’. That means he no longer fits into the frame-work of ‘the

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<sup>582</sup> Frank, *Dusha Cheloveka* (The Soul of Man), 1917, Paris: YMCA Press, pp. 43-44.

world of objects': he ceases to be a passive something upon which our cognitive gaze is directed for the purposes of perception without in any way affecting it. Such one-sided relation is replaced by a two-sided one, by an interchange of spiritual activities. We attend to him and he to us, and this attitude is different from – though it may co-exist with – the purely ideal direction of attention which we call objective knowledge: it is real spiritual interaction. Communion is both our link with that which is external to us, and a part of our inner life, and indeed a most essential part of it. From an abstract logical point of view this is a paradoxical case of something external not merely coexisting with the 'inward' but of actually merging with it. Communion is at one and the same time both something 'external' to us and something 'inward' – in other words it cannot in the strict sense be called either external or internal.

“This can still more clearly be seen from the fact that all communion between 'I' and 'thou' leads to the formation of a new reality designated by the word 'we' – or rather, coincides with it.”<sup>583</sup>

It is as if the two are like two mirrors placed opposite each other. What is reflected in mirror A reflected in mirror B, and vice-versa, in an indefinite reciprocal regression. The knowledge each has of the other is therefore objective and subjective at the same time; in fact, the objectivity and subjectivity of the vision or visions are logically and chronologically inseparable: “My awareness of myself is in part constituted by my awareness of me, and my awareness of him is in part constituted by my awareness of his awareness of me.”<sup>584</sup>

Sexual love heightens this characteristic to an extraordinary degree, generating an indefinitely long chain of reciprocity, in which “she thinks of her lover thinking of her thinking of him...”<sup>585</sup>

It will be obvious that this kind of communion or “inter-subjective consciousness” is both absolutely central to the structure of human sexual relations and quite impossible to describe in terms of instinctual feelings alone. For instinctual feelings are “blind”; they do not relate to objects so much as devour them. And it goes without saying that they cannot form the basis of inter-personal communion, although they obviously “colour” that communion. Irrational, instinctual desire seeks only the achievement of a certain purely subjective satisfaction. It is egoistical, solipsistic; it needs the other only in order to engulf it and make it no longer the other, just as food no longer remains food when it has been absorbed into the body that eats it. Under this aspect sexual love is indeed “blind”, as the proverb tell us. And not only blind, but also deaf, completely insensitive... On the other hand, “rational” (i.e. intentional, mind-directed, quintessentially human) desire contemplates the other and seeks to be united with it, but not by engulfing it, nor by

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<sup>583</sup> S.L. Frank, *Reality and Man*, London: Faber & Faber, 1965, p. 61.

<sup>584</sup> J. Heron, “The Phenomenology of the social encounter: the gaze”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXXI, 1970-1971, pp. 243-264.

<sup>585</sup> Scruton, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

destroying it, but, on the contrary, by preserving it in its unique, individual, separate existence *for ever*. As such, it is not subjective, but objective – more precisely, *interpersonal*. In fact, if sexual love is to achieve its goal of personal union with the other, it is essential that the other remain the other; the union must be “undivided but unconfused”.

The fall of sexuality consists in the instability of its intentionality, its tendency to allow *impersonal animality* to overwhelm *personal humanity*, so that the mind is diverted from the contemplation of the embodied soul of the desired other to his “unpsyched” body – that concentration on body as mere flesh which causes shame in all normal people: *Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action...*<sup>586</sup> Moreover, fallen sexual love reveals in the very moment of its consummation a certain barrier to complete union. At a superficial level, this is manifested in the fact that, as a result of the fall, the lovers' bodies are opaque, can never merge entirely and therefore have to separate eventually. They become “one flesh”, and yet remain two bodies. And their souls are divided, too: passion ebbs, embodiment fades away, and opaqueness returns, returning the lovers to the cold reality of their fallen, divided existence.

Let us examine the development of the sexual impulse from its inchoate, undirected, instinctual beginnings in childhood and adolescence to its fixed, focused and “intentional” end in adult married love... In the beginning, it is closer to primitive biological desires such as hunger than it will ever be later on. Under the influence of hormonal changes in his body, the adolescent boy is filled with a vague longing or wanderlust, an indefinite dissatisfaction which he knows not how to satisfy. Even at this early stage, however, the sexual impulse is not “purely” animal, but is heavily influenced by other passions characteristic of a rational being, such as pride. Thus Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) writes: “When the male organism matures, a feeling of self-satisfaction is aroused in the young man. This is strengthened by the change in the youth's social position: he becomes an independent member of society – a student; or, as a senior schoolboy, he is preparing to become one – to enter this totally uninhibited group of people. In student society he feels like a bridegroom – he is no longer under the constant supervision of his parents, he earns some money for himself. In general, his conditions of life favour the development of a feeling of self-satisfaction. The newly aroused sexual passion on its part has also something in common with this feeling, and now he wants to live without any restriction; mentally he says to himself: ‘Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,... and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes’. But the words which follow in Ecclesiastes will be revealed to him by the voice of his conscience even if he has never read them, and will cause him intense irritability and will arouse a feeling of enmity against God and against religion. Here are these words” ‘But know, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement’ (ch. 11, v. 19).”<sup>587</sup>

But then he meets a girl who for the first time focuses and “incarnates” his hitherto bodiless, unshaped longing. And not only focuses it, but also *humbles* it. For the feeling of

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<sup>586</sup> Shakespeare, *Sonnet 129*.

<sup>587</sup> Metropolitan Anthony, *Confession*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, pp. 63-64.

self-satisfaction noted by Metropolitan Anthony flees with the advent of true (or, at any rate, truer) love. Before the image of beauty he humbles his proud mind. Now he and his own desires are no longer his first priority; he seeks to *serve* the object of his love.

The way in which falling in love humbles the lover is illustrated by the words of a German Nazi during the invasion of Russia: "I fell in love with a Russian girl, although nothing ever came of it, and for the first time I began to doubt our racial superiority. How could I be better than her?"<sup>588</sup>

Does the instinctual longing then disappear? No. And yet one can no longer call it purely instinctual. For what precisely is this longing *for*? The sexual act? Hardly, especially if the youth is still a virgin and uninfluenced by sexual talk and images. In fact, the very idea may well disgust him, as if it polluted the absolute purity of his new feeling. A particular form of sensual pleasure? Not at all, for he does not yet know what sexual pleasure is, still less how it is produced. In fact, the paradoxical thing is that at the first appearance of the object of desire, desire as such is stilled, at any rate temporarily. It is as if a thirsty man having come upon a river in the desert is so stunned by the beauty of the water that he forgets to drink...

When vague longing has matured into "being in love", the boy longs for a specific individual girl, *the girl*, not for just any girl, not for anything about the girl, but *the girl herself*. He does not long for certain pleasures which she may be able to give him. He does not long for her body as such, nor any part of her body. He longs for *her*. John longs for Mary, not for anything or anyone else.

Of course, even now he still feels a fascination for certain parts of the girl's body, and here undoubtedly the instinctual part of his nature is evident. And yet the part of the body which fascinates him most is not any of the specifically sexual members or "erogenous zones", but *the face*.

"Schopenhauer," writes Scruton, "- whose view of these matters is a good example of the chaos that ensues from the premature attempt to explain them - argues that the face is the least important of all the indices of beauty, since it is the least relevant to the reproductive function which underlies and explains desire. That is almost the opposite of the truth. Although a pretty face surmounting a deformed or mutilated body may indeed fail to arouse sexual interest, it is well known that a pretty face may compensate for much bodily ugliness... A beautiful body, however, will always be rendered repulsive by an ugly face, and can certainly never compensate for it."<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Henry Metelmann, in Julian Llewellyn-Smith, "From Third Reich to Charterhouse", *The Sunday Telegraph* (London), November 30, 2003, review, p. 4.

<sup>589</sup> Scruton, *op. cit.*, p. 70. Nietzsche corrected Schopenhauer here when he wrote: "The chastest words I have heard : 'Dans la véritable amour c'est l'âme, qui enveloppe le corps' " (*Beyond Good and Evil*, Epigrams and Interludes, 142).

Why the face? Because the face, far more than any other part of the body, reveals the soul, the *person*. In Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich's parable on love entitled "Cassiana", the heroine of the story is ugly in body – she has a huge hump-back. And yet she has a beautiful *face* – which indicates her inner beauty of soul. This is why the word for "face" and person" in Russian is the same – лицо. And why the Latin word persona, whence comes the English "person", originally referred to the masks, or faces, that actors assumed during performance.<sup>590</sup>

If we wish to know who a person is and what he is feeling, then while we may take into account other elements of body language, it is the movements of the face, - the smiles, the blushes<sup>591</sup>, the laughs, the tears, - and especially the expression of the eyes, that we will study most closely. For it is the eyes that are, as the proverb says, "the mirror of the soul", making the workings of the invisible soul visible with an extraordinary transparency:

*Beshrew your eyes,  
They have o'erlooked me and divided me,  
One half of me is yours, the other half yours –  
Mine own I would say: but if mine then yours,  
And so all yours.*<sup>592</sup>

But what has sexual desire to do with the workings of the invisible soul? Nothing, if the Platonic-Kantian-Freudian line of thought is to be believed, which sees sexual desire, "vulgar eros", as a purely biological phenomenon having nothing to do with the noetic realm. But this only goes to prove that this line of thought is inadequate to describe, let alone explain, the phenomenon of sexual desire, which, the more focused and concentrated it is, the more intensely personal it is.

For sexual love, as opposed to lust, is not in the first place directed to the flesh of the desired one but to *the soul*. It is not the purely physical pleasure of the caress, the glance or the kiss that is the vital element, but the fact that it is *his* (or *her*) caress, glance or kiss; the physical pleasure is inseparable from the knowledge of *the person* who gives it. This knowledge makes the physical contact the sign, the "incarnation", the icon, as it were, of a non-physical reality.

Thus the true object of desire that has not completely lost its intentional – i.e. individual, personal, as opposed to generic, impersonal, – character, is not the body as such, but the body *as the expression of the soul*, not the pleasure as such, but the pleasure *as the expression*

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<sup>590</sup> In modern English, "persona" has come to mean a role or act, something which does not so much reveal the person as hide it. On the other hand, the word for "person" in Greek, hypostasis, literally means "that which stands under" the face.

<sup>591</sup> Maslow writes: "there is in the real world no such thing as blushing without something to blush about"; in other words, blushing presupposes object-consciousness and personal communion with another human being; it is always "blushing in a context" (V. Frankl, "Self-Transcendence as a Human Phenomenon", *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 6 (2), 1966, p. 101).

<sup>592</sup> Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, III, 2.

of the thought. It is this *iconic* quality of the flesh in sexual love, enabling the veneration paid to the flesh to ascend to its “archetype”, the soul, that transforms the temporality of pleasure into the eternity of true love:

*Eternity was in our lips and eyes,  
Bliss in our brows' bent, none our parts so poor  
But was a race of heaven.*<sup>593</sup>

And if that same physical pleasure were provided by another person, it would entirely lose its significance and thrill. This is proved by the (admittedly, highly unusual) circumstance of the lover discovering that the pleasure he receives comes not from the person he thought it came from, but from someone else. In this case, the pleasure immediately evaporates and often turns to disgust. As Scruton writes, “the knowledge that it is an unwanted hand that touches me at once extinguishes my pleasure. The pleasure could not be taken as confirming the hitherto unacknowledged sexual virtues of someone previously rejected. Jacob did not, for example, discover attractions in Leah that he had previously overlooked: his pleasure in her was really pleasure in Rachel, whom he wrongly thought to be the recipient of his embraces (Genesis 29.25).”<sup>594</sup>

Being in love therefore represents an acute experience of the *unity* of the human being, not only the de facto inseparability of body and soul, but of the fact that the person *is* his body as well as his soul, so that contact with the body *is* contact with the soul.

Scruton calls this the experience of *embodiment*: “My sense of myself as identical with my body, and my sense of you as identical with yours are crucial elements, both in the aim and in the reception, of the arousing caress. I am awakened *in* my body, to the embodiment of *you*. Underlying the woman’s state of arousal is the thought: ‘I, in my body, am something for him’, and her response – the ‘opening’ to this approaches, and all that is entailed in that – must be understood in part as an *expression* of that thought, and of the interpersonal intentionality that is built upon it.”<sup>595</sup>

Thus in the eyes of the lover, the beloved’s soul is *embodied* in her body, while her body is *transparent* to his soul.<sup>596</sup> That is why within Eros, as C.S. Lewis writes, sexual desire “becomes almost a mode of perception, entirely a mode of expression. It feels objective; something outside us, in the real world.”<sup>597</sup>

But what does the lover actually *see* in the “embodied soul” of his beloved? And: *with*

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<sup>593</sup> Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, I, 3, 35.

<sup>594</sup> Scruton, op. cit., pp. 21-22. St. Cyril of Alexandria writes that Jacob’s reward for serving Laban was “quite small: marriage...” (*On Hosea*, 6; quoted in Burghardt, op. cit., p. 98)!

<sup>595</sup> Scruton, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>596</sup> Antony Ter-Grigorian rightly notes: “The point does not lie in a division of love into a physical (fallen) and a non-physical (non-fallen) kind. This is not a valid distinction, since all levels and manifestations of love are ‘transparent’” (personal communication).

<sup>597</sup> Lewis, *The Four Loves*, p. 116.

*what* does he see it? He sees with the eyes of *the mind*, and not of the body.

For, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes, “flesh can neither love nor hate. A body cannot fall in love with another body. The capability of loving belongs to the soul. When a soul falls in love with a body, that is not love but desire, lust. When a soul falls in love with a soul, but not through God, that is out of either fascination or empathy. But when a soul falls in love with another through God, then regardless of the physical appearance (beauty or ugliness) that is love.”<sup>598</sup>

The power of eros is a power of the mind no less than of the body. For, as the poet John Donne writes,

*If any, so by love refined,  
That he soul's language understood,  
And by good love were grown all mind,...*

Erotic love must become “all mind” in order to see its true object. And this object must be, to use Platonic language, an ideal, unmoving and not a sensory object. For

*This ecstasy doth unperplex  
(We said) and tell us what we love,  
We see by this, it was not sex,  
We see, we saw not what did move.*

“It was not sex” – that is, simple lust – by which the lovers saw each other. And yet it *was* eros. For the love in question here is not Platonic, but one in which

*Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread  
Our eyes upon one double string.  
So to engraft our hands, as yet  
Was all the means to make us one.*<sup>599</sup>

The object of erotic love that is true cannot be her body, which is changeable, nor the moods of her soul, which are also changeable, but that which is in essence unchanging, *the image of God* in her. Only such an object is worthy of love and can raise love from the corruptible to the incorruptible. Hence the intuition that true love must survive the fading of bodily beauty; it must be immortal, since its true object is immortal. This intuition was wonderfully expressed by Shakespeare, who begins by pointing out that even erotic love is in essence the marriage of *minds*:

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds*

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<sup>598</sup> Velimirovich, “Cassiana”, 50; in Fr. Milorad Loncar (ed.), *Missionary Letters of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich*, Grayslake, IL: New Gracanica Monastery, 2009, p. 58.

<sup>599</sup> John Donne, *The Ecstasy*.

*Admit impediments. Love is not love  
 Which alters when it alteration finds,  
 Or bends with the remover to remove.  
 O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
 If this be error, and upon me prov'd,  
 I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.*<sup>600</sup>

And yet what we are in essence, our Godlikeness, which alone is worthy of an undying love, rarely corresponds to what we show ourselves to be in everyday life. And this discrepancy between the image of God and the image of sin - in the soul both of the lover and of his beloved - causes intense anguish and pain - *moral pain* - to the lovers.

For, as Scruton writes: "Desire obliges you to find value in its object, and so to 'see him as' the embodiment of virtue'."<sup>601</sup>

Not only that: you want your lover to see *you* as the embodiment of virtue, and you are prepared to work on yourself to make yourself more worthy. Thus falling in love becomes a major incentive to moral improvement. In fact, this love is well defined, in Solomon's words, as "the care of discipline" (Wisdom 6.17). For the lover is impelled by his love to discipline himself, to make himself worthy of his beloved. This inextricable - and highly creative - relationship between love and esteem is the analogy and reflection, on a much lower level, of the Bride of Christ striving to make herself "without spot or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5.27).

"One may describe the course of love," writes Scruton, "as a kind of 'mutual self-building'... I want you to be worthy of my love, behind which desire lies, always compelling me. And I too want to be lovable, so that you may reciprocate my affection. Hence we begin to enact a cooperative game of self-building."<sup>602</sup>

This "cooperative game of self-building" may lead to quarrels - but quarrels with a

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<sup>600</sup> Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 129.

<sup>601</sup> Scruton, op. cit., p. 237. Cf. Phineas Fletcher's poem, *Love*:

*When nothing else kindles desire,  
 Even virtue's self shall blow the fire.  
 Love with thousand darts abounds,  
 Surest and deepest virtue wounds...*

<sup>602</sup> Scruton, op. cit., pp. 241-242.

creative element, because they become an arena of moral improvement, spurred on by desire. Hence the proverb:

*The falling out of lovers is the renewal of love.*<sup>603</sup>

Thus even Cleopatra, the embodiment of fallen sensual desire, wishes in the end to become not simply a mistress for Anthony, but a wife, having shed all downward-looking elements, the “earth and water” of lust, in order that only the “fire and air” of pure love should remain:

*Husband, I come.  
Now to that name my courage prove my title!  
I am fire and air; my other elements  
I give to baser life.*<sup>604</sup>

Of course, a lover may wish to “build up” himself or his beloved for vainglorious reasons: because he considers himself to be good, and “only the best will do” for such a good person. However, this attitude is already at one remove from the initial experience of being in love, which in its simplicity is an encounter with what one’s perceives to be *goodness incarnate*. For love reveals beauty to be not only truth but also it also *goodness*.

But is it in fact goodness? Does not love see beauty sometimes in the most worthless objects, as Shakespeare portrayed it in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*? Is not the cynicism of *A Misummer Night’s Dream* more truthful than the idealism of *Romeo and Juliet*?

Put another way: is it not so much the perception of an ideal as an idealization of something far from ideal, a form of self-deception? It certainly can be; for the intuitive power of the lover’s erotic vision is strictly dependent on his moral level. An unspiritual man is not likely to fall in love with a spiritual woman, because he will neither *see* her spirituality nor *admire* it if he did. But a spiritual man will love a woman who is like him in being spiritual - although he, too, can be deceived into loving an object unworthy of his love.

For like can recognize like only in the case of one whose eros is sufficiently purified to see the likeness. But for one whose eros is less purified, there will be many misperceptions in love, giving fertile ground for the proverb that love is blind. And yet eros in its essence, purified of that veil of darkness that the fall has draped over it, is the opposite of blind: it is an instrument given by God to us in order to pierce the veil of the flesh and see the true person underneath.

If falling in love were always and necessarily a purely instinctual phenomenon that

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<sup>603</sup> David Pickering, *Cassell’s Dictionary of Proverbs*, London: Cassell, 2001, p. 293.

<sup>604</sup> Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, V, 2, 285.

obscures the truth of the beloved in a fog of hormone-fuelled intoxication, we would expect the intensity of the initial falling in love to be inversely proportional to the depth and duration of the subsequent relationship. And that is certainly what the Platonic model, which tends to oppose love and desire as antagonistic opposites, would suggest. But such scientific research as approaches this essentially supra-scientific sphere does not come to this conclusion.

Thus Winston writes: "The evidence suggests that, over time, the first mad fever of love becomes replaced by a more solid partnership, one more ideally suited to the raising of children. But some research has suggested that the most long-lived relationships are those that preserve a degree of the earlier, less rational phase.

"Dr. Ellen Berscheid, Regents Professor of Psychology at the University of Minnesota, was the first to identify the 'pink-lens effect', whereby couples in love idealize their partners and make overoptimistic judgements about them. We think, for instance, that our lovers are 'brilliant' and 'wonderful'; we over-estimate their intelligence, their honesty, their generosity and their looks.... This effect has been shown to decrease over time. In general we would expect that, as a relationship progresses, we become more realistic about our partner's strengths and weaknesses - we 'love them for what they are', rather than the idealized, rose-tinted view we may have picked up in the initial frenzy of attraction.

"But a study at the University of New York, Buffalo, has also shown that the greater the intensity of the pink-lens effect, the greater the likelihood of the couples staying together. Another, more long-term study at the University of Texas, Austin, followed 168 couples who married in 1981. Once again, the couples who idealized one another the most at the outset were also those whose relationships were the most long-lived...."<sup>605</sup>

Winston here uses such words as "irrational", "mad" and "frenzy" which presuppose us to think that falling in love must necessarily involve self-deception and "rose-tinted" falsification. And yet the research itself suggests something different: that while falling in love in a sense idealizes the beloved, this idealization may not always be self-deceiving. It may sometimes be a more accurate vision of the true nature of the beloved, an idealistic vision which nevertheless lights up something that is real, and therefore helps rather than hinders the durability of the relationship. Similarly, while falling *out* of love may be the consequence of seeing "the bitter truth" about the beloved, it may also involve a *loss* of true vision, an obscuring of that reality which was so wonderfully obvious before. Since human beings are a mixture of good and evil, the beautiful and the ugly, the image of God and the image of the beast, there are objective grounds for both kinds of vision - the vision which accompanies falling *into* love and the vision which accompanies falling *out of* love...

"Falling in love" is not simply lust, but nor is it pure love unsullied by fallen passion. Saints do not fall in love; they have passed that stage. But nor do the truly evil fall in love;

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<sup>605</sup> Winston, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

they cannot attain to the glimpse of the ideal that it provides... The real danger of falling in love is the temptation to idolize it, as in *Romeo and Juliet* or *Tristan and Isolde*, to make it a justification for the despising of God's commandments, to place the love a creature above love of the Creator.

As C.S. Lewis writes, "It is in the grandeur of Eros that the seeds of danger are concealed. He has spoken like a god. His total commitment, his reckless disregard of happiness, his transcendence of self-regard, sound like a message from the eternal world.

"And yet it cannot, just as it stands, be the voice of God Himself. For Eros, speaking with that very grandeur and displaying that very transcendence of self, may urge to evil as to good... The love which leads to cruel and perjured unions, even to suicide-pacts and murder, it not likely to be wandering lust or idle sentiment. It may well be Eros in all his splendor; heart-breakingly sincere; ready for every sacrifice except renunciation...

"We must not give unconditional obedience to the voice of Eros when he speaks most like a god. Neither must we ignore or attempt to deny the god-like quality. This love is really and truly like Love Himself. In it there is a real nearness to God (by Resemblance); but not, therefore and necessarily, a nearness of approach. Eros, honoured so far as love of God and charity to our fellows will allow, may become for us a means of Approach. His total commitment is a paradigm or example, built into our natures, of the love we ought to exercise towards God and Man. As Nature, for the Nature-lover, gives a content to the word *glory*, so this gives a content to the word *Charity*. It is as if Christ said to us through Eros, 'Thus - just like this - with this prodigality - not counting the cost - you are to love me and the least of my brethren.' ...

"But Eros, honoured without reservation and obeyed unconditionally, becomes a demon. And this is just how he claims to be honoured and obeyed. Divinely indifferent to our selfishness, he is also demonically rebellious to every claim of God and Man that would oppose him..."<sup>606</sup>

And so falling in love remains an ambiguous phenomenon, on the frontier between good and evil. "Get it into your head," says the senior demon to the younger one in C.S. Lewis' parable, "that this state of *falling in love* is not, in itself, necessarily favourable either to us [the demons] or to the other side [God]. It is simply an occasion which we and the Enemy [God] are both trying to exploit. Like most of the other things which humans are excited about, such as health and sickness, age and youth, or war and peace, it is, from the point of view of the spiritual life, mainly raw material..."<sup>607</sup>

But whether directed towards good or evil, falling in love is always human, not animal, and irreducible to mere lust, since it is always intentional, personal. Its moral quality depends, first, on the spiritual maturity and purity of the person who loves, and secondly,

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<sup>606</sup> Lewis, *The Four Loves*, pp. 131, 133, 134.

<sup>607</sup> Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 100.

on whether God is in the process, guiding it to the end-state of lawful marriage. If He is not in that process, and He is not leading it to that end, then the love is likely to fade and may lead to fornication or an unhappy marriage or even divorce. If, on the other hand, He *is* in it, then the experience will be truly “in the Lord”, that is, “in all decency and in honour”.<sup>608</sup> For, as St. John Chrysostom says, “it is God Who sows these loves”<sup>609</sup>, in that “it is by the Lord that a man is matched with a woman” (Proverbs 19.14).

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<sup>608</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On Marriage*, II, 4; P.G. 41:223.

<sup>609</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Encomium to Maximus*, 3; P.G. 51:230.

## Sublimation and Marriage

Falling in love that leads to a stable and happy marriage may be called the first stage in the sublimation of fallen eros. It involves the redirection of all sexual desire from "strange flesh" (Jude 7) to one's own flesh, that is, one's spouse; for through the sacrament of marriage that is what the lovers become in reality. In this state, the state of true monogamy, as Alexis Khomyakov put it, "for the husband, his companion is not just one of *many* women, but *the* woman; and her mate is not one of *many* men, but *the* man. For both of them the rest of the race has no sex."<sup>610</sup>

Insofar as marriage involves the sublimation of fallen eros, its redirection in an *upward* direction, it cannot be called lust, which is by definition the direction of eros *downwards*. Thus Tobit says on his wedding night: "O Lord, I take *not* this my sister for the satisfaction of lust, but in truth" (Tobit 8.7). And St. Ignatius the Godbearer writes that a marriage that is carried out with the blessing of the bishop, whose job it is to discern whether God has really brought these two persons together, will be "not according to lust [ ]", but "according to the Lord".

In this context, writes St. Ignatius of Antioch, there need by no shame about the satisfactions that marriage brings: "Speak to my sisters that they love the Lord, and be satisfied with their husbands in flesh and in spirit. In the same way enjoin on my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ 'to love their wives as the Lord loved the Church'."<sup>611</sup>

It follows that "falling in love", when confirmed, strengthened and sanctified by marriage, can turn out to be, not a "fall", but a "rise" in the spiritual life, taking a hitherto self-absorbed and completely self-oriented person "out of himself" into a new realm, a realm marked out for him by God, in which he can make greater spiritual progress than if he were unmarried. Thus Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) recounts the following case: "There exists a common conviction that only woes lead people to God, and that happiness rather ties them to the earth and makes them forget about Heaven. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Pirogov writes in his autobiography that the first days of his married life were filled with such a lofty blessedness that his soul as it were melted and was purified under the breath of this blessedness, and he who before had suffered from the infirmity of little faith saw God in the radiance of his pure familial joy..."<sup>612</sup> Again, Fr. Alexander Yelchaninov writes: "An integral knowledge of another person is possible in marriage, a miracle of sensation, intimacy, of the vision of another person... Before marriage, the human person glides above life, seeing it from outside. Only in marriage is he fully immersed into it, and enters it through another person. This enjoyment of true knowledge and true life gives us that feeling of complete fullness and satisfaction which renders us richer and wiser. And this fullness is even deepened when out of the two of us,

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<sup>610</sup> Khomyakov, in *Orthodox Life*, November-December, 1983, p. 22.

<sup>611</sup> St. Ignatius, *To Polycarp*, 5.

<sup>612</sup> Metropolitan Anastasy, *Besedy s sobstvennym serdtsem* (Conversations with One's own Heart), Jordanville, 1998, pp. 14-15.

united and reconciled, a third appears, our child."<sup>613</sup>

Insofar as the husband longs for his wife *as a person*, that is, *spirit, soul and body*, as a being of the same nature as himself, made in the image of God, and not just as a hunk of flesh, then, by virtue of the grace of the sacrament of marriage, which not only legalizes but also sanctifies their union, making them of one flesh not accidentally, as it were, as would be the case outside marriage, but essentially, - their love is a chaste love. For such a love does not hinder the love of God.

Nor is it animal, but fully human. This is not to say that fallen lust cannot undermine and defile a chaste erotic love. But we cannot deny the possibility of a chaste erotic love unless we deny that there was such an erotic love between Adam and Eve before the fall - which, as we have seen, we cannot do...

It will be immediately apparent, however, that even this, the lowest level of sublimation, is very hard to achieve. Our fallen nature is not attracted to only one member of the opposite sex, but to many; the "natural" state for fallen human beings (especially men) is polygamy or "serial monogamy" rather than true monogamy. So the *individualization* of eros on one and one only person on a permanent basis is an exploit in itself, especially in the young.

Rightly directed eros is iconic. That is, just as in the veneration of the icons the veneration paid to the icon ascends to its archetype, so that the icon is venerated, not for its own sake, as piece of wood, but for the sake of its archetype, the person depicted in it, so in rightly directed erotic love the beloved's body is not admired for its own sake, but as being the expression, the icon, as it were of her *soul*. For "rightly directed eros [is directed to] the beauty of the soul, and not of the body."<sup>614</sup>

And "chaste love," writes Clement of Alexandria, "does not admire the beauty of the flesh. It admires the beauty of the spirit. With such love, a person sees the body only as an image. His admiration carries him through to the Artist Himself - to true beauty."<sup>615</sup>

We see this ascent to a higher Beauty in the relationship between the chaste married Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria: "Thou didst desire most comely beauty and didst pass beyond visible beauty; and by thy truly golden words, O blessed Chrysanthus, thou didst lead to Christ the glorious Daria..."<sup>616</sup>

It is this upward direction of eros rightly directed, from the body of the beloved to her soul and then to her Creator, that anchors the perception of her beauty in *truth*. This truth is twofold - the truth of the created person that the beloved is, and the truth of the

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<sup>613</sup> Yelchaninov, in Bishop Hilarion, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>614</sup> St. John Chrystosom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, 2.

<sup>615</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*; in *The One Who Knows God*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>616</sup> *Menaion*, March 19, Service to SS. Chrysanthus and Daria, Mattins, Sedalion.

Uncreated Person in Whose image she is made, Who *is* Truth. On the other hand, eros that stops at the body, i.e. *lust*, tells a lie about it – that the body is not essentially the expression of a soul, that it is not inseparable from that soul and has no value independently of it. Moreover, this lie about the other proceeds from a lie about the self – that the lover’s love can be satisfied by the body alone, that it does not need a higher beauty, a beauty anchored in truth.

Eros rightly directed acts as a kind of filter to the senses, concentrating and heightening their powers so that they are able to pierce the veil of the flesh to the immaterial world beyond, connecting, not body with body, but spirit with spirit, man with man. As St. John Chrysostom writes: “God implanted a filter (φίλτρον) in our nature, so that we should love one another. ‘Every beast loves his like, and every man his neighbour’ (Sirach 13.15)”<sup>617</sup>

The truth of Platonism lies in its acknowledgement of this fact, of the existence of a love that pierces through corruptible sensibilia to incorruptible “ideas”. Its falsehood lies in its insistence that sexual love is quite different from this, being a purely physical or physiological phenomenon, no different in essence from the “love” of animals on heat. It is this false dichotomy that has enabled some religious people to attempt to banish sexuality from “respectable” life altogether (we think of the seventeenth-century Puritans and the nineteenth-century Victorians), and the irreligious to create a “science of sex” on the grounds that sexuality is an object of science like any other.

Erotic love that rests on the body alone, finding its beauty and desirability exclusively in its physical characteristics independently of the soul that animates it and of the Creator Who is the true source of its beauty, is impure. It is impure because it is idolatrous, because it loves the creature more than the Creator, thereby betraying the true Lover of the human soul and committing adultery in relation to Him; for every preference of a creature to the Creator is called adultery in the Holy Scriptures. In this sense, and this sense only, we can talk about lust and fornication defiling the relations even of lawfully married spouses.

However, the neo-Manichaeans’ claim that sexual relations between spouses are *necessarily* lustful and therefore sinful is unfounded. The Holy Scriptures (especially Hebrews 13.4) and the Holy Fathers confirm that sexual relations within marriage *can* be pure. And the priest in the marriage service would not pray for the descent of a “pure and perfect” love on the couple, an undefiled bed and many children, if such purity were impossible. Of course, we are not talking here about the human nature that underlies that act. Lust, impure desire, remains a part of the nature of all men and women, both married and monastic, who have not yet attained to passionlessness, which can be defined as the complete redirection of all desire from unlawful to lawful objects.

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<sup>617</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 2 on Ephesians*, 3; P.G. 62:20.

As we have seen, such a redirection is possible, because, although our love made in the image of God's love has been defiled by sin, Christ has restored that image by taking on all the consequences of sin in the form of a human nature tossed between the desire for pleasure and the fear of pain, and then by resisting every temptation to pleasure while voluntarily assuming every form of pain, including the ultimate pain of death. And through the sacraments God has communicated this nature that has triumphed over the evil passions to our passionate nature, destroying the passions by His Passion. For, as St. Maximus the Confessor writes, "in exchange for our passions, [Christ] gives us His life-giving Passion as a salutary cure which saves the whole world."<sup>618</sup> Or, as the Divine services put it: "Having associated in the flesh with passion, Thou hast remained without participation in passion. And Thou, O our Saviour, dost set man loose from passion by having made the passions suffer. For Thou only art impassible and almighty."<sup>619</sup>

The possibility of purity in married sexual relations depends on several conditions: (1) God's own calling of the couple to the married state; (2) the communication of the grace of marriage to the couple through a lawful Christian marriage; and (3) the working together of this grace with the couple's own striving to keep the commandments. The fulfillment of these three conditions makes possible the continual sublimation of the couple's erotic loves towards the things of the spirit. It also raises the couple themselves to a new level, conforming them to the image of the Wedding of Christ and the Church – which, as we have seen, was the original purpose of the differentiation of the sexes and the introduction of marriage in the first place, in the Paradise of delight.

It follows from the above that while Christianity works to *suppress* downward-looking eros, or lust, it *liberates* upward-looking eros, or true love. For example, in the *Life* of the fifth-century St. Brigit of Ireland we read: "A certain man of Kells... whom his wife hated, came to Brigit for help. Brigit blessed some water. He took it with him and, his wife having been sprinkled [therewith], she straightway loved him passionately."<sup>620</sup>

Another, still more striking example from the *Life* of St. Columba, Apostle of Scotland (+597): "Another time, when the saint was living on the Rechrena island, a certain man of humble birth came to him and complained of his wife, who, as he said, so hated him, that she would on no account allow him to come near her for marriage rights. The saint on hearing this, sent for the wife, and, so far as he could, began to reprove her on that account, saying: 'Why, O woman, dost thou endeavour to withdraw thy flesh from thyself, while the Lord says, 'They shall be two in one flesh'? Wherefore the flesh of thy husband is thy flesh.' She answered and said, 'Whatever thou shalt require of me I am ready to do, however hard it may be, with this single exception, that thou dost not urge me in any way to sleep in one bed with Lugne. I do not refuse to perform every duty at home, or, if thou dost command me, even to pass over the seas, or to live in some monastery for women.'

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<sup>618</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy*, 8; P.G. 91:688C. Quoted by Paul M. Blowers, "The Passion of Jesus Christ in Maximus the Confessor", *Studia Patristica*, 2001, vol. 37, p. 376.

<sup>619</sup> *Menaion*, Sunday, Tone Six, Mattins, Canticle Nine, troparion.

<sup>620</sup> *Bethu Brigitte*, edited by Donncha O hAodha, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978, 45, p. 32.

The saint then said, 'What thou dost propose cannot lawfully be done, for thou art bound by the law of the husband as long as thy husband liveth, for it would be impious to separate those whom God has lawfully joined together.' Immediately after these words he added: 'This day let us three, namely, the husband and his wife and myself, join in prayer to the Lord and in fasting.' But the woman replied: 'I know it is not impossible for thee to obtain from God, when thou askest them, those things that seem to us either difficult, or even impossible.' It is unnecessary to say more. The husband and wife agreed to fast with the saint that day, and the following night the saint spent sleepless in prayer for them. Next day he thus addressed the wife in the presence of her husband, and said to her: 'O woman, art thou still ready today, as thou saidst yesterday, to go away to a convent of women?' 'I know now,' she answered, 'that thy prayer to God for me hath been heard; for that man whom I hated yesterday, I love today; for my heart hath been changed last night in some unknown way – from hatred to love.' Why need we linger over it? From that day to the hour of death, the soul of the wife was firmly cemented in affection to her husband, so that she no longer refused those mutual matrimonial rights which she was formerly unwilling to allow."<sup>621</sup>

Of course, we are not here advocating the sexual permissiveness of modern culture. We are not advocating it because it is precisely *downward*-looking eros that modern culture permits, while putting every obstacle in the way to the resurrection of *upward*-looking eros. What we are pointing to is the practice of the saints in encouraging, rather than quenching, the love between husbands and wives – and by "love" we mean precisely eros in its sexual expression.<sup>622</sup>

In the context of a lawful marriage in which the grace of the sacrament is fully assimilated by the spouses, their erotic love is fully lawful because it is not downward-, but upward-looking – looking up to the image of God in the other, and to the creation of the new Christian unit, a new likeness of the love of Christ and the Church. Thus the grace of marriage can transform lust into a passionate tenderness which is not self-seeking and fully deserves the name of love. Consequently, the quenching of eros here is contrary to God's will, insofar as it endangers the harmony of the icon. And for that reason Saints Brigit and Columba were prepared to pray for the resurrection of desire in the spouses who came to them for help. And their prayers were answered...

### [The Resurrection of the Body](#)

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<sup>621</sup> St. Adamnan, *Life of St. Columba*, II, 42; Lampeter: Llanerch Enterprises, 1874, 1988, pp. 103-104.

<sup>622</sup> A certain Orthodox Christian put it well: "Physical relations may be elicited by lust, but they may [also] be elicited by love. The spouses enter into physical relations not with the aim of removing overexcitement and quenching the ragings of the flesh, but because they love each other, because they are striving for unity...The aim of marriage is to lessen the element of lust in physical relations and increase the element of love." And again: "The unity of spouses, on being accepted into the Church is liberated in the Church from its limitedness. Love for one's spouse becomes a school of love for all." (Oleg VM, "O lyubvi. Kak govorit ministr-administrator",

<http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?Id=2297293&fs=0&ord=1&1st=&board=12871&arhv=>)

But monogamy is only the first stage of sublimation. To the degree that a man is purified, his eros becomes stronger and keener; it penetrates the veil of the flesh, seeing it as an icon, a window or door into a higher, supersensual world.<sup>623</sup> First, the soul of his spouse, created in the image of God; then the beautiful, rational order revealed by true science and art and reflecting the Mind of the Creator<sup>624</sup>; and finally the invisible, uncreated Beauty of God Himself. In this way, to use the language of Platonic philosophy, his "vulgar Eros" is changed into "heavenly Eros", on whose wings he ascends into the world of supersensual, unchanging reality. St. John Climacus writes of this ascent or "sublimation" of eros: "Blessed is he who has obtained such love and yearning for God as an enraptured lover has for his beloved.... So it is with our bodily nature; and so it is in spirit."<sup>625</sup>

And he gives an example of crucified and resurrected Eros: "Someone told me of an extraordinarily high degree of purity. He said: 'A certain man, on seeing a beautiful woman, thereupon glorified the Creator; and from that one look, he was moved to the love of God and a fountain of tears. And it was wonderful to see how what would have been a cause of destruction for one was for another the supernatural cause of a crown.' If such a person always feels and behaves in the same way on similar occasions, then he has risen immortal before the general resurrection."<sup>626</sup>

The reference to the general resurrection here reminds us that the final end of man is not only the resurrection of the soul, but also of *the body*, and therefore of all the body's faculties as originally created by God. This must include man's sexual faculties, too; for Christ took upon Himself all that is human, including our sexuality and even our sexual organs. St. Symeon the New Theologian spells out this fact with no false shame. As Alexander Golitzin writes: "Symeon accepts... the fact that God Himself 'was not ashamed' to become like one of us and, in consequence, has shared Himself with us in every particular, and in every member of the body. To shudder at all the implications of the last, as he says to his opponents in *Hymn 15*, is to '... attach your shame to Christ and to me, saying: "Do you not blush at these shameful words, and above all to bring Christ down to the level of "shameful members"?" Symeon replies at once: 'But I say in my turn:

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<sup>623</sup> "The beauty of the creatures, if it is not referred to the glory of the Maker, naturally defrauds of rational reverence those who behold it." (St. Maximus the Confessor)

<sup>624</sup> With regard to science, cf. Sir Francis Bacon: "God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world: rather may He graciously grant to us to write an apocalypse or true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on His creatures." (The Great Instauration, "The Plan of the Work" (1620)).

And with regard to art, cf. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Sonnet for Tommaso Cavalieri*:

*But God, in His graciousness, does not show Himself  
More fully elsewhere to me than in some lovely mortal veil;  
And I love that solely because in it He is reflected.*

Again, St. Barsanuphius of Optina says that "in the soul of an artist there is always a streak of asceticism, and the more lofty the artist, the more brightly that fire of religious mysticism burns in him" (Afanasyev, *op. cit.*, p. 500).

<sup>625</sup> St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 30.11, 13.

<sup>626</sup> St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 15.60.

“See Christ in the womb of His mother, picture to yourself the interior of this womb and He escaping from it, and whence my God had to pass to come out of it!”<sup>627</sup>

If Christ took on our sexual organs, he also took on our eros – but in its unfallen form. And so our eros, too, is to be resurrected. “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory” (I Corinthians 15.42-44).

According to St. Gregory the Great, the wedding-garment that every person called to the marriage-feast of the Son of God must have is *love*.<sup>628</sup> But according to the interpretation of St. Gregory Palamas, it is *the body*, the covering of the soul.<sup>629</sup> There is no contradiction between these interpretations if we remember that the natural love of the soul, or eros, is rooted in both the soul and the body, and therefore it is precisely a purified, redirected, deified eros that we must possess if we are to enter the marriage-feast of Christ at the general resurrection.

To this the neo-Manichaeans may object: “But the Lord says that in the resurrection we shall not marry, being like the angels in heaven. If we shall not marry, there will be no place in us for erotic love. After all, the angels do not experience eros.”

In answer to this objection, we cite St. Peter of Damascus: “...the perfect man will certainly become the equal of the angels, as the Lord affirms; but he will do so in the resurrection of the dead, and not in this present world. Even then the perfect will not be angels, but 'equal to the angels' (Luke 20:36). This means that men cannot forsake their own nature, though like angels they can become changeless through grace and released from all necessity, free in everything they do, possessing ceaseless joy, love of God, and all that 'the eye has not seen, and the ear has not heard' (I Corinthians 2:9).”

We shall be like the angels in heaven, not marrying or giving in marriage, because the continuation of the race in time through sexual procreation will no longer be necessary. However, we shall still have bodies, which the angels do not have. And we shall still be men and women, just as Christ and the Mother of God will still be a man and a woman. For, as St. Maximus says, “the masculine and feminine elements are not destined to disappear, only to be subsumed effectively under the principle (logos) of the common

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<sup>627</sup> Golitzin, *St. Symeon the New Theologian: On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997, pp. 90-91.

<sup>628</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Homily 38, On the Marriage Feast*: “What can we understand by this garment but charity? We must suppose, then, that this man enters without a wedding garment who is a member of our holy Church by reason of his faith, but who lacks charity. It is so called with good reason because our Maker wore it when he came as a Bridegroom to unite Himself with the Church.”

<sup>629</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 41, On the Marriage Feast*: “As every soul has its companion, the body, as its covering, anyone who fails to preserve his body and cleanse it in this life by means of self-control, purity and chastity, will possess it then as a useless garment, unworthy of that incorruptible bridechamber, and the cause of his being thrown out.”

human nature.”<sup>630</sup>

And this extra complexity of human nature, including its physicality, means that the unity it attains at its completion and fulfillment at the resurrection will be broader and deeper than that attained by the bodiless angels. It will be broader and deeper above all because it will be united to Christ not only by *grace*, as the angels are united to Him by grace, but even by *nature*, insofar as we will be – and already are, as members of the Church – partakers of His human nature.<sup>631</sup>

The Holy Fathers teach that the angels, too, have an intense longing for God that is called eros. But the eros of human beings is higher than that of the angels – shocking as this may sound to the Platonic-Manichaean mind-set – *precisely because an earthly body is conjoined to it*. Thus St. Gregory Palamas writes: “Our intellect, because created in God’s image, possesses likewise the image of this sublime Eros or intense longing – an image expressed in the love experienced by the intellect for the spiritual knowledge that originates from it and continually abides in it... The noetic and intelligent nature of angels also possesses intellect, and the thought-form (λογος) that proceeds from the intellect and the intense longing (ερωσ) for its thought-form. This longing is likewise from the intellect and coexists eternally with the thought-form and the intellect, and can be called spirit since by nature it accompanies the thought-form. But this spirit in the case of angels is not life-generating, for it has not received from God an earthly body conjoined with it, and so it has not received the power to generate and sustain life. On the other hand the noetic and intelligent nature of the human soul has received a life-generating spirit from God since the soul is created together with an earthly body, and so by means of the spirit it sustains and quickens the body conjoined to it...”<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> St. Maximus, *Ambigua*, 41.

<sup>631</sup> There is an argument that man is in the image of God not so much as an individual, or as a family, but as the fullness of the whole of saved humanity. Thus Constantine Tsirplanis writes: “According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, each soul as the Image of God is the human as well as the cosmic πληρωμα, includes ‘all humanity’, ‘the entire plenitude of humanity’; ‘our whole nature, extending from the first to the last, is so to say, one image of Him Who is’; it is ‘the nature of man in its entirety and fullness’” (*op. cit.*, pp. 32-33).

<sup>632</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *150 Chapters*, 37, 38; *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, pp. 362-363. St. Gregory of Sinai explains this in more detail: “The natural law is the potential power to energize inherent in each species and in each part. As God does with the respect to the whole of creation, so does the soul with respect to the body: it energizes and impels each member of the body in accordance with the energy intrinsic to that member. At this point it must be asked why the holy fathers sometimes say that anger and desire are powers pertaining to the body and sometimes that they are powers pertaining to the soul. Assuredly, the words of the saints never disagree if they are carefully examined. In this case, both statements are true, if correctly understood in context. For indescribably body and soul are brought into being in such a way that they coexist. The soul is in a state of perfection from the start, but the body is imperfect since it has to grow through taking nourishment. The soul by virtue of its creation as a deiform and intellective entity possesses an intrinsic power of desire and an intrinsic incensive power, and these lead it to manifest both courage and divine love. For senseless anger and mindless desire were not created along with the soul. Nor originally did they pertain to the body. On the contrary, when the body was created it was free from corruption and without the humours from which such desire and uncontrollable rage arise. But after the fall anger and desire were necessarily generated within it, for then it became subject to the corruption and gross materiality of the instinct-driven animals. That is why when the body has the upper hand it opposes the will of the soul

How far we are from Platonism here! The soul is not brought down by the body: it is exalted through its association with the body! For by its conjunction with the body it “has received a life-generating spirit from God”, a spirit that the saint calls eros, whereas the eros of angels, not being associated with a body, is not life-generating.

Fr. George Florovsky writes: “For ancient man the fear of impurity is much stronger than the fear of sin. The source and seat of evil is usually represented as this ‘lower nature’, the body and the flesh, a plump, coarse substance. Evil is from defilement, not from a perversion of the will [the only source of evil, according to the Holy Fathers]. From this defilement it is necessary to be freed, externally cleansed... And lo, Christianity brings a new good news about the body also... From the beginning every kind of docetism [the doctrine that Christ’s incarnation was only appearance, not reality] was rejected as the most destructive delusion, as a certain dark, anti-good-news, which is from the Antichrist ‘the spirit of deception’ (cf. I John 4.2-3). This was so vividly felt by the early Christian writers, by Hieromartyr Ignatius and Hieromartyr Irenaeus. Tertullian, with all the tension of his ascetical pathos, was raised to a real ‘justification of the flesh’, almost to ecstasy and injury (see his very interesting discussion, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, partly also in his *Apology*)... The temptation of deincarnation had already been removed and rejected with complete decisiveness in the Apostle Paul. ‘For we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, so that the mortal should be swallowed up by life’ (II Corinthians 5.4)... ‘Here he deals a mortal blow to those who denigrate our bodily nature and denounced our flesh,’ explains Chrysostom. ‘The meaning of his words is as follows. It is not the flesh, he says as it were, that we want to slough off, but corruption; not the body, but death. The body is one thing, and death another; the body is one thing, and corruption another. Neither is the body corruption, nor corruption the body. True, the body is corruptible –

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through anger and desire. But when what is mortal is made subject to the intelligence it assists the soul in doing what is good. For when characteristics that do not originally pertain to the body but have subsequently infiltrated into it become entangled with the soul, man becomes like an animal (Psalms 49.20), since he is now necessarily subject to the law of sin. He ceases to be an intelligent human being and becomes beast-like.

“When God through His life-giving breath created the soul deiform and intellective, He did not implant in it anger and desire that are animal-like. But He did endow it with a power of longing and aspiration, as well as with a courage responsive to divine love. Similarly when God formed the body, He did not originally implant in it instinctual anger and desire. It was only afterwards, through the fall, that it was invested with these characteristics that have rendered it mortal, corruptible and animal-like. For the body, even though susceptible of corruption, was created, as theologians will tell us, free from corruption, and that is how it will be resurrected. In the same way the soul when originally created was dispassionate. But soul and body have both been defiled, commingled as they are through the natural law of mutual interpenetration and exchange. The soul has acquired the qualities of the passions or, rather, of the demons; and the body, passing under the sway of corruption because of its fallen state, has become akin to instinct-driven animals. The powers of body and soul have merged together and have produced a single animal, driven impulsively and mindlessly by anger and desire. That is how man has sunk to the level of the animals, as Scripture testifies, and has become like them in every respect.” (*137 Texts on Commandments and Doctrines*, 81,82; in *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, pp. 227-228)

but it is not corruption. The body is mortal – but it is not death. And the body was the work of God, while corruption and death were introduced by sin. And so, he says, I want to slough off from myself that which is foreign to me, not my own. And that which is foreign to me is not the body, but corruption... The coming life annihilates and destroys not the body, but the corruption and death that have been attached to it' [*On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 6] Chrysostom here faithfully hands down the unchanging self-feeling of the ancient Christians. 'We are waiting for spring in our bodies also', said the Latin apologete of the second century [Minucius Felix] ...With all the apparent similarity between Platonic and Christian asceticism (which creates the constant danger of mixings, self-delusion and substitution), there is a radical difference between them both in their original ideas and in their final hopes... In Platonism it is precisely this 'bad news' about the body that dominates, the news about death and corruption – with this is linked all these guesses about 'wanderings' and 'migrations' of souls. And hence the desire for deincarnation. A struggle is constantly being conducted with 'feelings' for the sake of a complete liberation from this material world of events... But in the Christian revelation about the body 'good news' has been brought – about the coming incorruption, transfiguration and glory, about the coming transfiguration of the whole world, about the universal renewal. And the struggle with 'sensuality' is waged here not for the sake of liberation, but in order that the body, too, should become spiritual. With this agrees the hope of resurrection. 'It is sown a natural body, it rises a spiritual body' (I Corinthians 15.44)... Here is the same antithesis of eschatological hopes and desires: to 'be unclothed' or to 'be clothed' [with body]."<sup>633</sup>

It follows, as Keselopoulos writes, that "God does not require of man the dispassion of angels, but a *human* dispassion, that corresponds with human nature."<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> Florovsky, "O voskresenii mertvykh" (On the Resurrection of the Dead), in *Dogmat i Istoria* (Dogma and History), Moscow: St. Vladimir Brotherhood, 1998, pp. 420-421, 422.

<sup>634</sup> Keselopoulos, op. cit.; St. Gregory Palamas, *Defense of the Hesychasts*, 1.3.49.

## Eros and Agape

At this point a word should be said about the relationship between the concepts denoted by the words “eros” and “agape”. In the Catholic and Protestant West a sharp distinction is usually made between the two. Thus Schopenhauer sees eros as part of the Will to life, and as such completely egoistical. To this he opposes agape, which is sympathy, a selfless kind of love: “All true and pure love is sympathy (Mitleid), and all love which is not sympathy is selfishness (Selbstsucht). Eros is selfishness; agape is sympathy.”<sup>635</sup> The Lutheran Bishop Andres Nygen adopts the same view in his book *Agape and Eros*, arguing that the Greek word “agape”, being a purely biblical term not found in earlier Greek<sup>636</sup>, denotes a kind of love that is completely different from that denoted by the older term “eros”, which was predominant in the pagan Hellenistic world. The task of Christianity, according to this view, was to replace eros with agape in the hearts of men.

The Holy Fathers sometimes make a distinction between eros and agape. Thus Lars Thunberg writes that for St. Maximus the Confessor “charity, the summit of the virtues... is a natural desire [ερωϑ] sustained by divine charity [αγαπη], the fruit of which is divine-human and at the same time the perfection of all that is in man.”<sup>637</sup> However, we can see here that eros and agape are not sharply opposed as if one were good and the other bad, but are rather seen as complementary, eros being a human, created (but good) love which goes out to meet the Divine, uncreated love. In any case, it is much more common to find “eros” and “agape” used more or less interchangeably. In the Bible the word “agape” and its cognates are used to denote sexual love, sometimes very fallen love. Thus it is used to denote both the clearly sexual love of The Song of Songs and Amnon’s very fallen love of Themar, which resulted in her rape (II Kings 13.1,2,15).

We find the same in the Holy Fathers. For example, St. John Chrysostom. Even Lourié has to admit that, for this saint, “eros” (ερωϑ) and “agape” (αγαπη) are virtual synonyms, as are other words such as “epithymia” (επιθυμια) and “pothos” (ποθος).<sup>638</sup>

Thus “this love (αγαπη),” writes the saint, “is more tyrannical than any tyrant. For other desires are strong, but this desire (επιθυμια) possesses both strength and constancy. For there exists a certain love (ερωϑ) implanted in [our] nature which in a manner that is hidden from us weaves together these bodies.”<sup>639</sup> Again: “Those who shine with the beauty of the soul... thereby make love (ερωϑ) warmer in their husbands, as also their own love (αγαπην) which attaches to him... When the mother is beautiful and chaste and endowed with every virtue, she will by all means be able to draw her husband and enjoy his desire (ποθω) for

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<sup>635</sup> Schopenhauer, in Fr. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7, part II: Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1965, p. 48.

<sup>636</sup> J.H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1901, p. 4.

<sup>637</sup> Thunberg, *Man and Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985, p. 102, p. 102.

<sup>638</sup> Lourié, op. cit., p. 138, note 239. Chrysostom’s usual word for “lust” is λαγνεια (*On Virginity*; P.G. 48:552).

<sup>639</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, 1; P.G. 62: 135.

her.”<sup>640</sup> And again: “For love (ερωσ) is not of necessity. For nobody loves (φιλει) by necessity, but willingly and by choice.”<sup>641</sup> In all these cases, ερωσ, αγαπη, επιθυμια, ποθος and φιλια are used virtually interchangeably.

Particularly important is this passage: “Often it happens that from that day [of marriage] fornication takes the bridegroom prisoner and removes him from his friends and quenches his love (ερωσ) for his bride, and drags down kind feelings and dissolves the love (αγαπη) that was kindled before and drops the seeds of debauchery.”<sup>642</sup> This shows that, in the thinking of St. John Chrysostom, not only is the impulse to fornication not to be identified with eros, but it actually *quenches* it, as if they were opposites...

We find a similar use of eros and agape in St. Gregory of Nyssa, who calls God “the one truly worthy of agape and eros” (το μονον τω οντι αγαπητον και ερασιμον), as if the two concepts were interchangeable.<sup>643</sup> St. Gregory was concerned, like Origen, that the “heavenly eros” of the saints should not be confused with the “vulgar eros” of fallen human sexuality.<sup>644</sup> However, he accepted that there was a kinship between the two, since the heavenly eros is the desiring faculty of man directed to heavenly things, while the vulgar eros is *the same faculty* directed to earthly things.

Nygren expounds St. Gregory (disapprovingly) as follows: “In true Platonic spirit Gregory writes: ‘Since our nature is indigent of Beauty, it always reaches out after what it lacks. And this longing is the desire that lies in our constitution’... This natural *desire* in man, aroused by the sense of his own deficiency and reaching out towards the Beautiful, is plainly the same reality which Plato calls *Eros*; Gregory, however, calls it alternately επιθυμια and αγαπη. Thus *Agape* means for him *fundamentally love in the sense of desire*; constitutive of it is its connection with the Beautiful and its ceaseless effort to win this for itself.

“Agape is the yearning in every man for what can make his life richer and happier. But it can seek its good in two different directions; it can ‘by reason of a false judgement concerning the good, be balked of it, or by reason of a right judgement, find it’ [*On the Soul and Resurrection*, P.G. 46:92C]. The former happens when the search is directed downwards towards the sense-world, the latter when it is directed upwards towards God. The danger of life in the world is that men are tempted to pursue the shadows of the sense-world. In order to avoid this the virgin life is recommended [*On Virginitiy*, P.G. 46:317]. It is not, however, intended that desire should be abolished outright. For desire is an integral part of man’s nature, indeed it actually belongs to the image of God in man [*What is ‘In the image*

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<sup>640</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Encomium to Maximus*, 5; P.G. 51: 233,240.

<sup>641</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 2 on Ephesians*, 3; P.G. 62:20.

<sup>642</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *On ‘On account of fornication’*, P.G. 51:212.

<sup>643</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection*, 450; in Tsirplanis, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>644</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily 13 on the Song of Songs*, 1048C; Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Prologue.

of God', P.G. 46:1336C]. Even if the Agape-desire happens for the moment to be misdirected downwards towards things sensible and irrational [*On the Soul and Resurrection*, P.G. 46:65A], that is no reason for wishing to tear it up by the roots; to do so would be to 'pull up the wheat with the tares' (Matthew 13.29). 'Therefore the wise husbandman leaves this growth that has been introduced amongst his seed to remain there, so as to secure our not being altogether stripped of better hopes by desire having been rooted out along with that good-for-nothing growth. If our nature suffered such a mutilation, what will there be to lift us up to grasp the heavenly delights? If Agape is taken from us, how shall we be united to God?' [*Ibid.*].

"Desire is not to be rooted out, but *purified* and directed to the right objects - that is, to that which is in itself Beautiful, or God. Desire (Agape), by its very nature, turns in its intention towards the Beautiful, and likewise the Beautiful by its very nature arouses desire and draws it to itself [*Ibid.* 89:B]. These two, desire and the Beautiful, are meant for one another and must find one another. Their union can be hindered only if the sense-world comes between and draws desire to itself. But if desire has been purified from all taint of sense, there is no longer anything to distract it, no obstacle to its union with God...

"Without desire, Gregory holds, there would be nothing 'which could lift us up to union with the heavenly' [*On the Soul and the Resurrection*, P.G. 46:61]. Therefore he does not intend that desire should be rooted out of us. It only needs to be purified and directed upwards. In one passage he illustrates this function of desire in the ascent, by the simile of a 'chain, which draws us up from earth towards God' [*On the Soul and Resurrection*, P.G. 46:89A]. If we add that desire, *επιθυμια*, in Gregory's view is synonymous with *αγαπη*, we are thus given the idea of 'the chain of love'."<sup>645</sup>

Jean Daniélou agrees with Nygren that St. Gregory identifies eros and agape, but disagrees that St. Gregory's notion of eros has anything Platonic about it...

"The notion of *Eros* denotes the surge of love which sweeps the soul out of itself in proportion to its awareness of God's infinite loveliness. It should be noted here that Gregory's notion of *Eros* has nothing in common with the Platonic notion of love - an unfortunate conclusion of which Anders Nygren is guilty in his chapter on Gregory in his book, *Eros and Agape*. Rather must it be explained in terms of ecstasy and 'inebriation', as we have explained them: as God's adorable presence becomes more and more intense, the soul is, as it were, forced to go out of itself by a kind of infatuation, and to withdraw from its usual mode of existence, to be swept along the ways of God. *Eros*, then, is not a longing for possession in a self-centred way, but a truly ecstatic love. As Gregory explicitly tells us, *Eros* here is simply the *Agape* of the Gospels in its most intense form. 'The bride then puts the veil from her eyes and with pure vision sees the ineffable beauty of her Spouse. And thus she is wounded by a spiritual and fiery dart of desire (*Eros*). For love (*Agape*) that is strained too intensely is called desire (*Eros*).'<sup>645</sup> It is clear then that Gregory uses the word

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<sup>645</sup> Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, pp. 437-439, 446.

because he feels that the passionate aspect of *Eros* is a more suggestive symbol for the passivity of the soul as it is overpowered by the revelation of the infinite beauty of God. In this way, too, Gregory justifies the use of nuptial imagery in the *Canticle of Canticles* to symbolize the love of God: 'In order to have us understand its profoundest doctrine, the Scriptures use as a symbol that which is the most violent of all our pleasurable inclinations, I mean the passion of love. Thus we are meant to understand that the soul that contemplates the inaccessible beauty of the divine nature falls in love with it in much the same way as the body is attracted towards things that are connatural with it. But here the entire disturbance of the soul has been transformed into impassibility, all carnal passion is extinguished in us, and the soul burns with love by the sole flame of the Spirit.' Thus that irrational *Eros*, which violently draws bodies together by physical attraction, becomes here a symbol of that supra-rational attraction which draws the soul irresistibly towards God by a kind of 'passionless passion'. We have here again another paradox..."<sup>646</sup>

The same idea can be found in St. Dionysius the Areopagite: "Some of our writers on sacred matters have thought the title 'yearning' [ερω̄ς] to be more divine than 'love' [αγαπη]. The divine Ignatius writes: 'He for whom I yearn has been crucified.' In the introductory scriptures you will note the following said about the divine wisdom: 'I yearned for her beauty' (*Wisdom of Solomon* 8:2). So let us not fear this title of 'yearning' nor be upset by what anyone has to say about these two names, for, in my opinion, the sacred writers regard 'yearning' and 'love' as having one and the same meaning. They added 'real' [οὐτως] to the use of 'yearning' regarding divine things because of the unseemly nature such a word has for men. The title 'real yearning' is praised by us and by the scriptures themselves as being appropriate to God. Others, however, tended naturally to think of a partial, physical, and divided yearning. This is not true yearning but an empty image or, rather, a lapse from real yearning."<sup>647</sup>

St. Dionysius points out, as Robert Wilken writes, "that in places the scriptures use the term 'agape' when they mean desire or erotic love, implying that this is the case in other passages. His example comes from (the Septuagint version of) *2 Samuel* 1.26), David's lament over Jonathan, at the end of which David speaks of the love between them. David cries out: 'Your love for me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women'. Here, where one would expect to find the term 'eros', the scriptures use 'agapesis' – love having no carnal element and thus its highest form. Dionysius concludes from this: 'To those listening properly to the divine things, the term 'love' is used by the sacred writers in divine revelation with the exact same meaning as the term 'eros'."<sup>648</sup>

Again, St. Maximus, as Blowers writes, "projects the transformation of desire (επιθυμια) both into αγαπη and ερω̄ς. There is no interest to segregate αγαπη, as self-transcending charity, and ερω̄ς, as the driving passion deeply rooted in the individual soul; both express the truly graced and indeed 'natural' motion of the concupiscible faculty. In this

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<sup>646</sup> Daniélou, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>647</sup> St. Dionysius, *On the Divine Names* IV.12.

<sup>648</sup> Wilken, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

conception of love Maximus approximates what one contemporary theologian has termed 'affective conversion', a kind of transforming passion that subsumes both falling-in-love... and deliberate or intelligent commitment. Such is the kind of love that transforms the whole desire, and thus the whole individual person, in relation to, and in the full interest of, the beloved."<sup>649</sup>

What are we to conclude from these facts? That the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers are careless in their language, mixing up love with desire? God forbid! No, the mistake is not in the sacred texts but in our preconceived ideas about love and desire, ideas inherited from heterodox philosophical traditions which ignore the fact that human nature as it was originally created, including its erotic faculty, was "very good" ...

The natural love which the Holy Fathers call "eros" is a spectrum of feelings rather than a single feeling, but a spectrum rooted in a single reality. At one end of the spectrum, assisted by Divine grace, eros strives to the very heights, to God Himself. At the other end, deprived of grace and divided against itself, it fixes its blunted and narrowed vision on the lowest of objects. But it is one and the same love-desire that finds true fulfillment in the one case and barren frustration in the other. And if we choose to call upward-looking eros "love", and downward-looking eros "desire", this should not blind us that we are talking about a spectrum of feelings rooted in a single reality.

Now since downward-looking eros leads away from God and towards the depths of hell, it is natural that the ascetic literature should urge its *destruction* and *crucifixion*. As St. Paul says, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5.24). And yet it is not eros *as such* that is to be destroyed or crucified, but its downward-looking tendencies, which tendencies only came into existence after the fall. For eros as such not only should not, but *cannot* be destroyed, because it is a fundamental force of human nature. As St. Basil writes, human nature "has within itself the tendency towards love,"<sup>650</sup> and this tendency is not to be destroyed.

But downward-looking eros, or lust, must indeed be crucified in all its manifestations with the utmost determination. However, it must be remembered that that which is crucified can rise again in a new form. And so the crucifixion of eros in its downward-looking tendencies is in fact the path to the resurrection of eros in its upward-looking tendencies.

Earlier I offered a definition of love as "a transfer of the desires of the soul from the service of self to the service of another". According to this definition, *love presupposes* desire, and the difference between love and lust consists not in the presence or absence of desire, but in its *direction*, and in its personal or intentional quality. Thus if a person's desire fixes only on the body of the other, and only in order to please himself, it can be

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<sup>649</sup> Blowers, *op. cit.*, p. 77. Cf. Archimandrite George Capsanis, *The Eros of Repentance*, Newbury, Ma.: Praxis Institute Press, pp. 2-7.

<sup>650</sup> St. Basil the Great, *The Longer Rules*, II.

characterized as lust. If, on the other hand, his desire fixes on the body of the other with the penetrating intuition of the mind, seeing *through* it, as it were, as if through a window into the soul beyond, and he fervently desires to serve the other, even at the expense of his own interests, as in the experience of “being in love”, then there is nothing to stop this being called precisely *love*.

Although love presupposes desire, desire does not imply love; it can remain fixed on the flesh, egoistical and lustful. But St. Maximus the Confessor says that the “ability to desire” is the *precondition* of “the ability to love”.<sup>651</sup> As Scruton points out, desire “provides a motive to love”.<sup>652</sup> For it propels the mind to seek the truly beautiful in the other, when its object will be not the flesh, but the (embodied) soul, a person. And a *person* (as opposed to a hunk of meat) can only be loved, not lusted after...

Love appears to be opposed to desire because it always involves a readiness for *sacrifice*, and the idea of sacrifice, to many, implies a conflict between duty and desire. However, this is a superficial description; it has validity only when we are speaking of lower levels of desire, when other desires interfere with the desire for the beloved. When love for the beloved is weak, it is justified on the grounds that it is “duty”. Thus for the Kantian-Protestants, and for the post-schism Western Christian tradition in general, love is justified precisely because its object is *not* desired, but rather *commanded* by some “categorical imperative” that transcends nature and is obeyed out of a “pure”, “passionless” sense of duty towards that imperative. For them, good works do not proceed from cooperation between human nature and Divine grace, but from a Divine command that does not correspond to any answering desire in human nature, but which simply compels obedience in some inexplicable manner.

However, in the *Lives of the Saints* we find the opposite: a natural love for God which, when united with Divine grace, sweeps away all egoistic tendencies that would oppose God’s will, an intensity of desire for the beloved in which there is no hint of “duty”, even when desire for the beloved entails the ultimate sacrifice, life itself.

This may be described as the conquest of desire by love, where “desire” means eros in its *downward*-looking tendencies:

*Rejoice, love that vanquishes all desire!*<sup>653</sup>

And yet this conquest of desire by love is often represented in a distinctly, unashamedly erotic manner. Thus the holy Virgin-Martyr Agnes of Rome repulsed the advances of a potential earthly bridegroom by speaking of her far stronger eros for her Heavenly Bridegroom, Christ: “Trouble me no more, kindler of the flame of sin, slave of impure

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<sup>651</sup> St. Maximus, *Various Chapters* 2.74; *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 203; P.G. 90:1248C; Keselopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 55).

<sup>652</sup> Scruton, *op. cit.*, p. 238. My italics (V.M.).

<sup>653</sup> *Akathist to the Mother of God*, ikos 7.

passions, fuel for the unquenchable fire! I have pledged myself to One Whose beauties, lineage, and rank incomparable surpass yours. He has adorned me spiritually: I wear the ring of faith in Him; my wrists and neck glimmer with gems and golden coins He has bestowed upon me; my waist is girded with His glittering, jewelled belt; and I am 'arrayed in a vesture of inwoven gold' (Psalm 44.8) from His stores. I have glimpsed the treasures He promises if I remain true; therefore, do not hope that I shall betray Him. I do not care even to look at another; much less will I forsake my first love, to Whom I am bound by ardent devotion. His origin is sublime, His power is unequalled, He is 'comely in beauty more than the sons of men', and His affections are incomparably sweet. Our wedding-chamber is already prepared. Never have I heard a more pleasant voice than His; the taste of milk and honey is upon His lips. He has already pressed me to His chaste bosom; my flesh is even now joined to His; His blood is rouge upon my cheeks. His mother is a virgin, His Father has never known a woman, He is served by angels, the sun and moon marvel at the perfection of His countenance, the dead rise at His command, the ailing are cured by His touch, His wealth is never diminished, and His treasures never fail. To Him I am utterly loyal; to Him I surrender myself wholeheartedly. Joined to Him in wedlock, I shall remain forever a virgin; touching Him, I shall never be sullied. Daily our union will produce fruit, yet I shall remain without children."<sup>654</sup>

Here we see both the desiring and incensive faculties of the soul given unfettered expression. But there is no shame in this, because these desires are completely "informed" by the nous, wholly concentrated on preserving union with the Supreme Object of desire, God Himself, and on repelling all other possible objects of affection. For just as for John who loves Mary the prospect of union with any other woman will be shameful, so for the soul that is in love with God and has betrothed herself to Him alone the prospect of union with any human being whatsoever will be repellent. Hence the paradox that the saints speak of God in highly erotic language, and yet repel the thought of human sexual relations with vehemence.

Again, St. Symeon the New Theologian uses erotic language to describe his passion for God: "Dispassion in the form of lightning united itself with me and ever more remains – understand this spiritually, you who read, lest you be wretchedly defiled! – and produces in me the ineffable sweetness of consummation and an infinite longing for marriage, for union with God, sharing in which I, even I, have become dispassionate, who was enflamed with passion, afire with longing for it, and I partook of the light, yea and became light, beyond every passion and outside every evil."<sup>655</sup>

We find another example of such a conquest of desire by love in the Life of the nineteenth-century ascetic and friend of St. Seraphim of Sarov, George the Recluse of Zadonsk: "Early on he realized all the vanity of worldly life and went to a monastery, but was not satisfied even with this and chose for himself absolute solitude – reclusion. Here

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<sup>654</sup> St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2002, vol. V, January 21, p. 394.

<sup>655</sup> St. Symeon, *Hymn* 46, 29-37.

he spent his time in fasting, prayer and contemplation of God, but temptations did not leave him. When he was still in the world, he had loved a girl with a pure love, and her image often stood before him, disturbing his state of spiritual calm. Once, sensing his helplessness in the struggle, he cried out: 'O Lord, if this is my cross, give me the strength to bear it; but if it is not, then erase the very recollection of her from my memory.' The Lord heard him. And on that very night he saw in a dream a young maiden of uncommon beauty, clothed in gold raiment. In her gaze there radiated such unearthly beauty, majesty and angelic purity that George was unable to tear his eyes away from her, and with reverence he asked, 'Who are you? What is your name?' 'My name is chastity,' she replied, and the vision came to an end. Coming to himself, the ascetic offered up thanks to the Lord for bringing him to reason. The image he had seen in his dream was so ingrained in his mind that it completely erased all other images."<sup>656</sup>

A metaphor may help to illustrate the inter-relationship of love, desire and the grace of God in the economy of salvation. We may compare man to a rocket pointed upwards to the heavens. The natural passions of man, his desiring and incensive faculties (eros and thymos), may be compared to the liquid fuel element in the rocket. When this passible element is properly integrated into the whole of the rocket mechanism (that is, fully controlled and "informed" by the nous), its ignition propels the rocket away from the earth and into the stratosphere of God's love. Several factors may impede this trajectory and lead the rocket to fall back towards the earth: the force of gravity (the world), a mechanical failure leading to a premature or uncontrolled ignition of fuel (the flesh) and an external attempt to abort the mission (the devil). However, if the launch is successful and the rocket ascends higher, the force of gravity will gradually become weaker (the pleasures of the world will seem less attractive), the heavy fuel tanks will fall away (purely instinctual feelings will become weaker) and the influence of ground-based saboteurs will recede ("resist the devil and he will depart from you"). Then, having freed itself from the earth's atmosphere (entering the sphere of passionlessness), the rocket will be propelled not so much by its own power (although that will continue to exist) as by a new force coming, not from the earth, but from the sun (the grace of God). New dangers may appear: passing meteorites (more subtle temptations) and space-based saboteurs (the demons of the air). But for the rocket which preserves itself in good working order, with full harmony between its control and power mechanisms (the rational, the desiring and the incensive faculties), the energy of the sun will bring it closer and closer to its desired goal, union with the sun (the Sun of righteousness, God Himself)...

### [The Cult of Romantic Passion](#)

We have touched upon the idolization of eros; and one of the most striking and unique characteristics of our civilization is its cult of romantic passion – eros that is directed, not towards a wife, but towards an unlawful object of desire, and with an intensity and

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<sup>656</sup> Victor Afanasiev, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 454.

supposed irresistibility that is not found in lawful conjugal relations. Such love was frowned upon as madness in pagan Greece and Rome, and as the sin of adultery in Christian times. And yet today it has acquired a power over the imagination of the people, and a hold over the arts, especially the novel and the cinema, that has no parallel in earlier civilizations.

Denis de Rougement has proposed an interesting explanation of the origin of the cult of romantic passion, tracing it to the emergence of the heresy of *Catharism* (a form of Manichaeism) found among the Albigensians of Southern France in the early twelfth century, and the cult of courtly love that it engendered. This cult, paradoxically, had nothing directly to do with sex, or even with this created world. The Catharist heretics deliberately cultivated this passion, but not for sexual or political ends – on the contrary, both sexual intercourse and war were considered to be evil, insofar as the whole created world was considered to be the work of the evil demiurge, – but in order to escape this world entirely and unite with the Light beyond the grave (which is why this passion could as well be called Thanatos as Eros). This love of passionate Love received a symbolic expression in the poetry of the Troubadors and a “myth” expressed in such early romances as *Tristan* and *Lancelot*, in which, under the guise of an adulterous passion for an unattainable married lady, with whom union was not possible, and not even desired in this life, but only after death, the Catharist’s striving for union with the uncreated Light was represented.

The “sacred” symbolic poetry of the troubadours soon degenerated, in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, into profane love poetry and tragic dramas (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Phèdre*) and the first romantic novels, which instead of symbolizing an essentially religious and other-worldly ideal in the form of courtly love, represented unmistakably *profane* love under the guise of an irresistible, “divine” passion and with no taboo on sexual consummation. This was, of course, a complete reversal of the original intent of the myth.

By the eighteenth century in France, even the “divinity” of this passion had been discarded, and in figures such as Don Juan or the Marquis de Sade only its supposed irresistibility and incompatibility with conventional Christian morality remained. However, towards the end of the eighteenth century two events served to resurrect the original myth: the rise of German romanticism and the French revolution. German romanticism again represented eros as a divine passion that could not be fulfilled in this life, but only in and through death. And in Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde* the original myth is represented in something like its original religious force (and in music of an originality and power that transformed the later history of opera and music in general).

According to De Rougemont, “*Tristan* is far more profoundly and indisputably Manichaeic than the *Divine Comedy* is Thomist...”

“The drama opens with a monumental evocation of the powers that rule the world of day – the hate and pride, and the barbarous and sometimes even criminal violence, of

feudal honour. Isolde wishes to avenge the affront she has suffered. The potion she gives to Tristan is intended to bring about his death, but a death disallowed by Love, a death in accordance with the laws of day and of revenge – brutal, accidental, and devoid of mystical significance. The highest Minne, however, causes Brengain to make a mistake that can preserve Love. For the death-potion she substitutes the drink of initiation. Hence the one embrace which conjoins Tristan and Isolde as soon as they have drunk is the solitary kiss of the Catharist sacrament, the consolamentum of the Pure! From that moment the laws of day, hate, honour, and revenge, lose all power over their hearts. The initiated pair enter the nocturnal world of ecstatic release. And day, coming back with the royal procession and its discordant flourish of trumpets, is unable to recapture them. At the end of the ordeal which it compels them to undergo – this is their passion [“passion” derives from passio, meaning “suffering”] – they have already foreseen the *other* death, the death that will alone fulfil their love.

“The second act is the passion song of souls imprisoned in material forms. When every obstacle has been overcome, and the lovers are alone together in the dark, carnal desire still stands between them. They are together, and yet they are two. The ‘und’ of *Tristan und Isolde* is there to indicate their duality as creatures. Here music alone can convey the certitude and substance of their twin nostalgia for one-ness; music alone can harmonize the plaint of the two voices, and make of it a single plaint in which there is already being sounded the reality of an ineffable other world of expectation. This is why the leitmotif of the love duet is already that of death.

“Once again day returns. The treacherous Melot wounds Tristan. But by now passion has triumphed. It wrests away the apparent victory of day. The wound through which life flows out is passion’s pledge of a supreme recovery – that recovery of which the dying Isolde sings once she has cast herself upon Tristan’s corpse in an ecstasy of the ‘highest bliss of being’.

“Initiation, passion, fatal fulfilment – the three mystic moments to which Wagner, with a genius for simplification, saw that he could reduce the three acts of the drama, express the profound significance of the myth, a significance kept out of sight even in the medieval legends by a host of epic and picturesque detail. Nevertheless, the art form adopted by Wagner renews the possibility of ‘misunderstanding’. The story of Tristan *had* now to be in the form of an opera... Even as the transgression of the rules of chaste love by the legendary lovers turned the poetic lay of the troubadors into the novel – so the powers of day, when brought forward in the first act, introduce struggle and duration, the elements of drama. But a play does not allow everything to be stated, for the religion of passion is ‘in essence lyrical’. Hence *music* alone is equal to conveying the transcendental interaction, the wildly contradictory and contrapuntal character of the passion of Darkness, which is the summons to uncreated Light.”<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1956, pp. 137, 236-237.

The other-worldliness of *Tristan* degenerated, as had the poetry of the troubadors before it, into sensuality: the lushness of post-Wagnerian romantic music and the love affairs of the modern romantic novel. For from the world-denying heresy of Manichaeism on the right, as it were, it is only a short distance to its apparent opposite, the worldliness of naturalism on the left. And so in countless operas, plays and novels we see fallen sexual passion glorified – and usually gratified.

But elements of Manichaeism remain: in the need to overcome obstacles and test character before passion can be fulfilled (in the comic mode), or in the consciousness that passion is doomed in this world of convention and marital ordinariness (in the tragic mode).

In both modes passion is seen as heroic, opposed to the world, and – this is the most dangerous aspect – infinitely superior to staid Christian morality.

As an example we may cite Thomas Hardy's tragic novel *Jude the Obscure*, a tale, according to its author, "which attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity; to tell, without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit..."

But "flesh" and "spirit" mean something different to Hardy from what they meant to St. Paul. For him "flesh" is convention, the power of money and Christian morality (specifically, the law against adultery) that cruelly stand in the way of a passion that is more "spiritual" than any Christian feeling. For in Hardy's very modern and modernist opinion, "a marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties – being then essentially and morally no marriage".<sup>658</sup>

And in the novel itself we read: "The kiss was a turning-point in Jude's career. Back again in the cottage, and left to reflection, he saw one thing: that though his kiss of that aerial being had seemed the purest moment of his faultful life, as long as he nourished this unlicensed tenderness it was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation..." (IV-iii).

So the language and myths of Manichaeism are adapted to the cult of naturalism: adultery is "pure", its object "aerial", and Christianity is damned because under it "the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress..." (IV-iii).

It is ironic – and significant – that Manichaeism should lead in this way to its apparent

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<sup>658</sup> Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, Author's preface (1895) and postscript (1912).

opposite, naturalism. Only Orthodoxy transcends both the Manichaeian hatred of creation, and the naturalist worship of it...

De Rougemont concludes: "The *social function* of the sacred myth of courtly love in the twelfth century was to order and purify the lawless forces of passion. Its transcendental mysticism secretly directed the yearnings of distressed mankind to the next world, and concentrated them there. No doubt it was a heresy, but a peaceful one, and in some respects productive of a civilizing stability. But its being opposed to the propagation of the species and to war was enough to cause society to persecute it. It was the Roman Church that carried fire and sword to the provinces which had been won for the Heresy. In destroying the material shape of this religion, the Church doomed it to spread in a form more dubious and perhaps more dangerous. Tracked down, repressed, and disorganized, heresy soon underwent a thousand distortions. The disorders which it had encouraged in spite of itself, the glorification of human love that was the inversion of its doctrine, its language both essentially and opportunely equivocal, and also open to every kind of abuse - all this was bound to defy the judges of the Inquisition, and then to invade the European mind even where still orthodox, and finally, by a kind of irony, to bestow its passionate rhetoric upon the mysticism of the highest [Catholic] saints.

"When myths lose their esoteric character and their sacred purpose they take literary form. The courtly myth was peculiarly fitted to do this, since the only way of stating it had been in terms of human love, which were given a mystical sense. Once this mystical sense had vanished, there remained a rhetoric which could express our natural instincts, but not without distorting them imperceptibly in the direction of another world; and this other world, in growing more and more mysterious, answered the need of idealization which the human mind had acquired from a mystical understanding first condemned, then lost. This was the opportunity of European literature, and this alone will account for the sway which literature has exercised from that moment all the way down to our own time, first over the upper classes alone, later over the masses as well - a sway unique in the history of civilizations.

"Nevertheless, when the dark forces had been deprived of their sacred element, the classical style sought to impose *an art form* upon these obscure powers deprived of their sacred form. Romanticism supervened to attack these ritualistic vestiges. Hence, at the end of the eighteenth century, there occurred the magnification of all that the Tristan myth, and later its literary substitutes, had been intended *to contain*. The middle-class nineteenth century witnessed the spread into the profane mind of a 'death instinct' which had long been repressed in the unconscious, or else directed at its source into the channels of an aristocratic art. And when the framework of society burst - under a pressure exerted from quite another quarter - the content of the myth poured out over everyday life. We were unable to understand this diluted elevation of love. We supposed it to be a new springtime of instinct, a revival of dionysiac forces which a so-called Christianity had persecuted...

"... The present breakdown of middle-class marriage is a delayed triumph - perverted,

if you like, but nevertheless a triumph – for a profaned passion. But far outside marriage and the realm of sex properly so-called, the content of the myth together with its phantoms have now invaded other spheres. Politics, the class war, national feeling – everything nowadays is an excuse for ‘passion’ and is already being magnified into this or that ‘mystic doctrine’. The reason for this is that we have grown incapable of regulating our desires, of understanding their character and object, and of keeping their vagaries within bounds...”<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> De Rougemont, op. cit., pp. 247-249.

## *Eros: Human and Divine*

In conclusion, let us attempt to place eros in the context not only of human nature but also of the Divine nature in Whose image it was created.

St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: "Holy Scripture says: 'Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things' (Romans 11.36)... All things must desire and yearn for and love the Beautiful and the Good... [Eros is] a faculty of unifying and conjoining and of producing a special commingling together in the Beautiful and the Good: a faculty which pre-exists for the sake of the Beautiful and the Good, and is diffused from this Origin and to this End, and holds together things of the same order by a mutual connection, and moves the highest to take thought for those below and fixes the inferior in a state which seeks the higher. And the Divine Eros brings ecstasy, not allowing them that are touched by it to belong to themselves but only to the objects of their affection. This principle is shown by superior things through their providential care for their inferiors, and by those which are of the same order through the mutual bond uniting them, and by the inferior through their diviner tendency towards the highest... Words of the most holy Hierotheus from the *Hymns of Eros*: 'Eros (whether it be in God or in angel, or spirit, or animal life, or nature) must be conceived of as a uniting and commingling power which moves the higher things to a care for those below them, moves co-equals to a mutual communion, and finally moves the inferiors to turn towards their superiors in virtue and position'."<sup>660</sup>

Thus "eros" has a dual connotation: on the one hand, an uncreated Energy of God Himself, and on the other, a created energy made in the image of the uncreated Energy that exists at every level of creation. It is a kind of universal life-force which is communicated to different creatures on different levels in different ways depending on the degree they can participate in it by nature. At each level above the animal it may be rightly directed or wrongly directed; but it remains in essence good.

Eros directed upwards is *chastity*; for St. Methodius of Olympus writes: "It is not right that the wings of chastity should be dragged down to earth by their own nature. Rather they should soar aloft into the pure ether and to the life that is close to the angels". Directed downwards, however, to the earth, it is desire in its fallen state, *lust*. Thus at the level of sexual life in men, "the depraved sinner, though bereft of the Good by his brutish desire, is in this respect unreal and his desires unrealities; but still he hath a share in the Good insofar as there is in him a distorted reflection of true Love and Communion. And anger has a share in the Good insofar as it is a movement which seeks to remedy apparent evils, converting them to that which appears to be fair. And even he that desires the basest life, yet insofar as he feels desire at all and feels desire for life, and intends what he thinks the best kind of life, to that extent participates in the Good. And if you wholly destroy the Good, there will be neither being, life, desire, nor motion or any other thing."<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, IV, 10, 12-13, 15.

<sup>661</sup> St. Methodius, *The Symposium*, Logos 8.2.

St. Maximus the Confessor writes in the same vein: “The beautiful is identical with the good, for all things seek the beautiful and the good at every opportunity, and there is no being which does not participate in them. They extend to all that is, being what is truly admirable, sought for, desired, pleasing, chosen and loved. Observe how the divine force of love – the erotic power pre-existing in the good – has given birth to the same blessed force within us, through which we long for the beautiful and good in accordance with the words: ‘I sought to take her for my bride, and I became a lover (εραστην) of her beauty’ (Wisdom 8.2), and ‘Love her (ερασθητι αυτην) and she shall keep thee’ (Proverbs 4.6).

“Theologians call the divine sometimes an erotic force, sometimes love, sometimes that which is intensely longed for and loved. Consequently, as an erotic force and as love, the divine itself is subject to movement; and as that which is intensely longed for and loved it moves towards itself everything that is receptive of this force and love. To express this more clearly: the divine itself is subject to movement since it produces an inward state of intense longing and love in those receptive to them; and it moves others since by nature it attracts the desire of those who are drawn towards it. In other words, it moves others and itself moves since it thirsts to be thirsted for, longs to be longed for, and loves to be loved.

“The divine erotic force also produces ecstasy, compelling those who love to belong not to themselves but to those whom they love. This is shown by superior beings through their care of inferiors, by those of equal dignity through their mutual union, and by lower beings through their divine conversion towards those that are highest in rank. It was in consequence of this that St. Paul, possessed as he was by this divine erotic force and partaking of its ecstatic power, was inspired to say: ‘I no longer live, but Christ lives in me’ (Galatians 2.20). He uttered these words as a true lover and, as he himself says, as one who has gone out from himself to God (cf. II Corinthians 5.13), not living his own life but that of the beloved, because of his fervent love for Him...

“God is said to be the originator and begetter of love and the erotic force. For He externalized them from within Himself, that is, He brought them forth into the world of created things. This is why Scripture says that ‘God is love’ (I John 4.16), and elsewhere that He is ‘sweetness and desire’ (cf. Song of Songs 5.16), which signifies the erotic force. For what is worthy of love and truly desirable is God Himself...

“We should regard the erotic force, whether divine, angelic, noetic, psychic or physical, as a unifying and commingling power. It impels superior beings to care for those below them, beings of equal dignity to act with reciprocity, and, finally, inferior beings to return to those that are greater and more excellent than they.”<sup>662</sup>

And again: “You should understand that God stimulates and allures in order to bring about an erotic union in the Spirit; that is to say. He is the go-between in this union, the one who brings the parties together, in order that He may be desired and loved by His

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<sup>662</sup> St. Maximus, *Fifth Century on various texts*, 83-85, 87, 90; *The Philokalia*, vol. II, pp. 280-282.

creatures. God stimulates in that He impels each being, in accordance with its own principle, to return to Him. Even though the word 'allurement' signifies something impure to the profane, here it stands for the mediation which effects the union with God."<sup>663</sup>

The complementarity that exists between the Divine, Uncreated Eros and human, created eros is the same complementarity as exists between Christ and the Church, and, at a lower level, between man and woman. The initiative comes from the Divine, Uncreated Eros of the Bridegroom for His Church, whereby He bowed the heavens and came down to earth, and was united to her in flesh as well as spirit, giving to her His Spirit and receiving from her her flesh, in order to rescue her from the dominion of death and raise her to the heavenly bridal-chambers. The response comes from the human, created, but completely deified eros of the Church for her Bridegroom, whereby she cries with ever-increasing desire, "Come!" (Revelation 22.17) until the very last of their children in the Spirit and in the flesh have been born, redeemed and resurrected in glory.

This marital yet virginal intermingling of the icon and its Archetype, the human and the Divine, created eros and Uncreated Eros constitutes the mystery of our faith and "the crown of our salvation".<sup>664</sup> It was first accomplished in the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the first member of the Body of the Church and the first to be deified and resurrected in the body. She stands "at the border between created and uncreated nature", in St. Gregory Palamas' phrase.<sup>665</sup> She is the "Bride unwedded" – a "bride" because a truly marital mystery took place in her, "unwedded" because neither was her virginity broken nor did any fallen element creep into her union with the Son of God. Therefore to her as to the model and prototype of the soul's perfect union in love with God we chant:

*Rejoice, thou who didst give birth to the Sower of purity!  
Rejoice, bridechamber of a seedless marriage!  
Rejoice, thou who dost wed the faithful to the Lord!  
Rejoice, good nourisher of virgins!  
Rejoice, adorer of holy souls as for marriage!  
Rejoice, thou Bride unwedded!*<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> St. Maximus, *Fifth Century on various texts*.

<sup>664</sup> *Menaion*, March 25, Troparion of the Annunciation.

<sup>665</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 37, On the Dormition*, 15.

<sup>666</sup> *Akathist to the Mother of God*, ikos 10.

## CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

*My Eros is crucified.*

St. Ignatius the Godbearer, To the Romans, 7.

No other set of religious writings speaks more about Eros in both its fallen and unfallen forms than the Sacred Scriptures of the Church of Christ. As St. Gregory Palamas says: “Who could recount all the sayings of the Apostles and Prophets on this subject?”<sup>667</sup> The question arises: why this “obsession with sex”, as the enemies of Christianity would put it?

First, let us emphasize again that this is no mere “obsession with sex” in the narrow sense of the word. More accurate would be to call it an obsession with love, “love” being understood as the natural force in the human soul, eros, which in its original, incorrupt movement propels the soul out of itself towards other rational beings and above all towards God. Eros occupies such a central place in Christian theology and anthropology precisely because Christians understand that it is the quality of our love more than anything else that determines our relationship with God, because “God is love”.

The natural power of love that is called eros was created by God in order that man should understand, in the depths of his psychophysical being, the fundamental pattern and dynamic that holds the creation together in God, and that, through reflecting upon it, he should be drawn to it and enter into it; for, as Nicholas Cabasilas writes, “the beginning of every action is desire, and the beginning of desire is reflection”.<sup>668</sup> This pattern is unity-in-diversity and unity-in-hierarchy, and the dynamic is the attraction of complementary lovers on one level of hierarchy into unity on a higher level. The complementary lovers are the Creator and His creation. The Creator is the male pole of the attraction, while His creation is the female pole. The Creator seeks out His creature, wishing to be united with her in love, while the creature responds in love and obedience.

Therefore the natural love of the creature for the Creator, and the natural movement of all rational created beings to their end in God, is most naturally and appropriately described in the language of sexual love.

As St. Maximus writes: “If the intellectual being is moved intellectually in a way appropriate to itself, it certainly perceives. If it perceives, it certainly loves what it perceives. If it loves, it certainly experiences ecstasy (ΕΚΣΤΑΣΙΣ) over what is loved. If it experiences ecstasy, it presses on eagerly, and if it presses on eagerly it intensifies its motion; if its motion is intensified, it does not come to rest until it is embraced wholly by the object of its desire. It no longer wants anything from itself, for it knows itself to be

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<sup>667</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 5, On the Meeting of the Lord*, 19.

<sup>668</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, VI, 3.

wholly embraced, and intentionally and by choice it wholly receives the life-giving delimitation. When it is wholly embraced it no longer wishes to be embraced at all by itself but is suffused by that which embraces it.”<sup>669</sup>

But the creature rejected the love of her Creator. Nothing daunted, the Creator did not give up His pursuit of her. He even *became* a man in order to seek out His woman - in the first place, the Virgin Mary, the only creature who did not sin against him voluntarily. And then through her and together with her He sought out to-be-redeemed humanity, the Church, His Body and Bride. It could not be otherwise, because, according to the sexual archetype that is implanted in human nature and throughout creation by God Himself, it is the man who saves, the woman who is saved; it is the man whose strength and courage destroys the destroyer, the woman whose beauty and grace inspires him to such feats. So when God came to save mankind from the power of the devil, He necessarily came as a man to save His woman. And He saved her by uniting with her – physically, but at the same time virginally, with a Divinely “passionless passion”. Before the union, He was the invisible Word: after it – the incarnate Christ. As the liturgical verse puts it: “The Lord visibly passed through the closed gate of the Virgin. He was naked on entering her, but was seen to be God incarnate at His coming forth.”<sup>670</sup> Then, having saved the Church by His Sacrifice on the Cross, He entered into union with each of her members in the sacraments. And when all her members have been united to Him individually, He will come again to unite Himself with the Church wholly, and take her to live with Himself forever in the heavens.

This is not, as the feminists or sophianists might argue, to ascribe sexuality to God, but the opposite: to ascribe Godlikeness to the virginal but at the same time physical relationship between Christ and the Church. This relationship embraces not only God and man, but also heaven and earth, spirit and flesh, men and angels, male and female: all divisions are transcended in the Wedding of the Lamb, the Marriage Feast of Christ and the Church.

However, this union of the Divine, uncreated Eros with the created eros of rational beings is possible only after the created eros has been purified of all corrupt, downward-looking elements and shines forth in the original beauty of its uncreated Archetype. Paradoxically, therefore, eros and lust are opposed to each other as the spirit is opposed to the flesh. The full flowering of eros is possible only after its complete reorientation from the flesh to the spirit, from earth to heaven, from the created to the uncreated.

Eros in its full, unfettered, incorrupt form finds its satisfaction in God alone. That is why the first and greatest commandment is to love God “with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy strength” (Mark 12.30; Deuteronomy 6.5). This statement is not only a prescriptive command, but also a revelation of fact: that *only* God can be loved in such an unlimited

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<sup>669</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua 7*, P.G. 91:1073C-D; in Blowers and Wilken, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>670</sup> *Octoechos*, Tone 3, Sunday Mattins canon, Ode 9, irmos.

way. By comparison with this love for the Creator our love for created beings - "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" - is necessarily limited: "A limit and measure," writes St. Gregory the Great, "is set to the love of our neighbour... The love of God, however, is marked by no limit."<sup>671</sup> Thus love for God and love for neighbour are in essence the same love, from the same fount: but the one love is limited, and the other unlimited.

This love is sometimes called "eros", sometimes "agape" by the apostles and fathers of the Church; and all attempts to make a sharp distinction between these two words have foundered on the fact that "agape" is sometimes used in the Holy Scriptures in the most erotic, overtly sexual of contexts, while "eros" is used in the most exalted and spiritual of contexts. Clearly, whether "eros" or "agape" is used to name it, the love of God must be clearly distinguished from the fallen passion of lust. Equally clearly, however, the love of God is more intense, more all-consuming and more "passionate" than the most passionate of earthly loves.

Some are scandalized by the fact that the absolutely pure love of God that is above space and time and matter is described in the same terms as a love that is narrowly restricted in space and time, and inescapably centred on a being with a body and on certain specific characteristics of that being. But there is nothing to be scandalized about here. We do not degrade the love of God by describing it as "eros", nor do we purify our language by choosing some other term without sexual connotations, such as "agape". For the sexual and erotic forces in human nature were originally created to be directed towards God and the image of God in created beings, and were only later, as a result of the fall, redirected downwards towards the corruptible objects of sense-perception. Eros as originally created was a single, unitary force embracing and integrating all the forces of the soul and body. However, to the extent that it was diverted from its primary object, God, it began to divide up and degrade itself. This is not to say that the love of a created being is in itself degrading. But it must be love of that creature *in God*, in the Creator; it must be the love of *the image of God* in him. Love of the creature in God, and of the image of God in the creature, is in no way incompatible with the love of God but is another expression of that love. For, as the Lord said, the second commandment is "like" the first. Indeed, if the Divine, uncreated Eros was expressed in love of the creature, and in dying for him, how can the human, created eros created in the image of the Divine Eros not involve the love of creatures? As the Apostle of love writes: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (I John 4.20-21).

The degradation of eros began when the creature began to be loved for itself, independently of God. This is *idolatry*. And it is highly significant that idolatry is almost always described in the Holy Scriptures as *fornication* or *adultery*. Nor is this simply a figure of speech. Idolatry is fornication in the proper sense of the word, while the fornication that takes place between sinful men and women is a special form of idolatry, the kind that is

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<sup>671</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Homily 38 on the Marriage Feast*.

directed towards human bodies. Again, sexual fornication is that form of fornication in which a man or woman is desired independently of God, so that the love of God Himself is weakened in the lover.

Idolatry in the proper sense of the word leads to idolatry in the form of sexual fornication, and thence to the even worse idolatry of sexual perversion. For, as St. Gregory Palamas says, "they should be aware that if they do not quickly make a stand against this passion, in time they will be delivered up to worse, shameful, unnatural passions".<sup>672</sup> For, as the Apostle Paul writes, it was because men "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" that "God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature" (Romans 1.25-26).

Other, non-sexual loves for human beings may be no less idolatrous and therefore adulterous in relation to God; they are called carnal even if no physical contact is involved, because they express the will of the flesh in opposition to the will of the spirit no less clearly than physical fornication. Such can be loves for parents, for children, for spiritual and political leaders, for nations, and even for humanity as a whole if humanity is loved in itself and not in God. Not in vain did the Lord say that "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10.37), and "if any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14.26).

The love of man for God is described in various terms in the Holy Scriptures: as the love of a son for his father, a brother for a brother, a disciple for his master, a friend for his friend... But most often it is described as the love of a bride for her bridegroom. Why? First, because of all the natural loves between human beings, sexual love is the strongest and therefore the best image of that strongest of all loves which is the love between God and man. Secondly, because sexual love is actually the *origin* of all other human loves, just as Adam and Eve are the origin of the human race in general, coming before them and engendering them. Thirdly, because sexual love is exclusive and jealous by nature (if that nature has not been so corrupted as to prefer "free", promiscuous love to monogamy). Therefore it is the best image of God's love for man, which is also exclusive and jealous (in an unfallen sense), not permitting any rival to God in the beloved's heart, but insisting that the beloved love Him alone with all his heart and mind and strength. And fourthly and most importantly, because God's love for man was expressed in the Word becoming *flesh*, and continues to be realized by the giving of His Body and Blood to every believer, so that the two become one flesh, as in marriage.

We see now that those who attack the possibility of a sinless erotic love between men

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<sup>672</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 5, On the Meeting of the Lord*, 16.

and women in marriage also indirectly attack the possibility of a *total*, all-consuming love of man for God in the sense of a love that engages all the powers of his soul and body. These Neo-Manichaeans are forced into affirming that the erotic force in man was not part of his nature as originally created, but was “added” after the fall, and is the cause of evil in human nature. But if God added to human nature that which causes us to sin, then He is the cause of the evil in our nature, which is blasphemous...

In any case, we have seen that even those Holy Fathers, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, who allow that sexuality was in some sense “added” after the fall (in the sense that the secondary sexual characteristics were not there at the beginning and will not be there at the end), nevertheless insist that the erotic force in man is not meant to be discarded and annihilated in the ascent to God, but *redirected* towards Him. This teaching is especially developed by St. Gregory Palamas, who demonstrates that eros was a part of human nature from the beginning, before the fall, that it was degraded after the fall by being diverted, as it were, from God to the objects of sense, but that it is capable, through the grace of God and as a result of the renewal of the whole of human nature through the Incarnation, of being redirected back to the original object of its desire.

The Neo-Manichaeans, being unable to discern any difference between eros and carnal lust, propose to eliminate both at the same time. But this is sinful for the same reason that self-castration is sinful, as implying a hatred of that which God created good in the beginning. Secondly, it is impossible, because eros, being an inalienable part of human nature, both of the soul and of the body, cannot be destroyed. And thirdly, even if it were possible to destroy eros altogether, the result would be a soul incapable of rising to God, of loving Him, and therefore of fulfilling the first and greatest commandment.

For the soul rises to God and is united to Him through the power of its erotic faculty in conjunction with, on the one hand, its contemplative faculty, and on the other, the grace of God. Nor does the activation of eros necessarily involve the activation of carnal lust. On the contrary, as St. Gregory Palamas points out, “the contemplative part of the soul strengthens and *supports* the part concerned with desires, and *chases away* fleshly lusts.”<sup>673</sup>

In support of their heretical position, the Neo-Manichaeans invoke the superiority of monasticism to marriage, as affirmed by St. Paul and the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church. Their argument is that monasticism is superior to marriage because while monasticism involves a decisive and complete rejection of eros, marriage involves a certain compromise with it in the form of marital sexual relations. A necessary consequence of this view is that a marriage which is not virginal is for that reason sinful, even if the sin is venial or permitted for the sake of avoiding a greater sin (fornication).

This view, which is also in essence the view of the Latins, not only contradicts the testimony of St. Paul that sexual relations in marriage are innocent: it misrepresents the

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<sup>673</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 11, On the Precious and Life-Giving Cross*, 7. Cf. *Homily 20*, 16.

highly complex comparison between marriage and monasticism. Monasticism is a way of life constructed in all its details by God for the salvation of those whom He calls to enter upon it. As is marriage for those whom He calls to enter upon *this* path. God decrees for the monastic life complete abstinence from sexual relations. And for the married life - measured sexual activity for as long as one or both spouses feel the need for it. Just as it is a sin for a monk to engage in sexual activity, so it is a sin for a married person not to engage in sexual relations with his or her spouse, unless by agreement for a limited period of time for the sake of greater concentration in prayer. The superiority of monasticism to marriage does not consist primarily in its absence of sexual activity, but in the fact that it facilitates concentration on God without all the cares and distractions that inevitably form part of the married life (especially if children are involved). However, this general superiority does not translate into the affirmation that monasticism is better for every individual Christian: for many - indeed, most Christians - marriage provides the safer and better path to salvation.

The aim of both monasticism and marriage is the gradual redirection, not only of eros, but of all the faculties of the soul and body, from sin and death to virtue and eternal life. In the case of eros, this means from unlawful material objects of desire to lawful and immaterial objects (God and the image of God in creatures). Both involve the ascension of eros: from the sub-human to the properly human in the case of marriage, and from the sub-human to the Divine in the case of monasticism. There is therefore no contradiction between them: neither path denies eros, both seek to raise and redeem it, to restore it to its original path and purpose. Neither is evil; for neither denies the goodness of God's creation, neither permits the perversion of human nature to subhuman ends. Both are good; both are "strong as death" (Song of Songs 8.6) and lead to life; for both are directed upwards, away from the fallen passions and towards the "passionless passion" of God, the Lover of man. Only the one goes further and higher along that same path, and therefore calls on her fellow, her "little sister" (Song of Songs 8.8), to go higher with her, towards the most complete union with the Divine Bridegroom, the Uncreated Eros, Who was crucified for us that our created eros might be resurrected and find its fulfilment in Him alone...

Last of all, writes St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, "beseech the Lord, in Whom, because of Whom, and Whom you believe, hope and love, to give you grace so that you may render Him love for Love, eros for Eros..."<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> St. Nicodemus, *26th Meditation, Πνευματικά Γυμνασμάτα* [Spiritual Exercises], Thessalonica, 1999; in *Concerning Frequent Communion of the Immaculate Mysteries of Christ*, Thessalonica: Uncut Mountain Press, 2006, p. 205.

## APPENDIX 1: THE MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE

It is of the greatest significance that the first miracle accomplished by Christ, according to St. John, was the miracle at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; for just as the first effect of the Fall, after the loss of communion with God, was the loss of communion between man and woman, so the first fruit of the Incarnation, after the reunion of God with man, was the reunion of man and woman.

Of course, communion between man and woman was not entirely lost after the Fall. And the joy of marital union remained as a kind of nostalgic reminder of the joys of Paradise. As Vladimir Lossky writes: "Human love would not be pregnant with such a paradisiacal nostalgia if there did not remain painfully within it the memory of a first condition where the other and the world were known from the *inside*, where, accordingly, death did not exist..."<sup>675</sup> But earthly joys, however innocent, can only be a shadow of those of Paradise and Heaven. And Christ, Who came "that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10.10), now approached an ordinary human couple so as to transform the water of their fallen love into "the new wine of the birth of Divine joy of the Kingdom of Christ".<sup>676</sup>

"And the Mother of Jesus was there" (John 2.1). Of no other miracle of Christ is it recorded that "the Mother of Jesus was there", and in no other miracle of Christ is such an important intercessory role ascribed to another human agent. The reason is plain. The miracle accomplished here is *the restoration of the relationship between Adam and Eve*: but how can that be done without the participation of both the new Adam and the new Eve? And if the original rupture was caused by the sinful petition of the first Eve to the first Adam, how can that be reversed if not by a sinless petition of the new Eve to the new Adam?

And so "the Mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine" (John 2.3). She who received the new wine of the love of God now wishes, in her love for her fellow men, that they, too, should partake of it. Having fulfilled her first and greatest role as Mother of God, she now wishes to pass on to her second, that of *intercessor for the human race*.

But Christ replies in an unexpected manner: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come" (John 2.4). Some of the Fathers have interpreted this as a rebuke to the Virgin, as if it had been wrong for her to put herself forward and intercede at this time. But other Fathers offer a deeper interpretation...

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It should be noted, first of all, that the Virgin does not act as if she had been rebuked.

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<sup>675</sup> Lossky, "Creation: Cosmic Order", in *Orthodox Theology*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978, p. 67.

<sup>676</sup> *Pentecostarion*, Paschal Mattins, canon, canticle eight, troparion.

On the contrary, she acts as if she has received some kind of assurance from Him to continue as before, and tells the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2.5). Moreover, Christ does not refuse her request, but performs the miracle...

One possibility is that Christ was recalling the fact that it was through giving in to his wife's petition that the first Adam fell, so that just like the Virgin herself at the approach of the Archangel Gabriel, He, the new Adam, was going to act with cautious reserve. So: "What have I to do with thee?" means "What is my relationship with you: tempted and tempter, as in the Garden, or something new and holy?"

But if their relationship is new and holy, then she must understand that the full restoration, when He can truly say, "It is finished" (John 19.30) and "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21.5), must await "Mine hour" - the hour of His Crucifixion and Death on the Cross (John 7.30, 8.20, 12.23, 12.27, 13.1, 16.32, 17.1), at which, of course, the Mother of God would also be present. Then, and only then, can the Holy Spirit be poured out on all flesh as it was first poured out upon her.

That the Lord is obliquely referring to Adam and Eve in the Garden is confirmed by His use of the word "Woman". For this recalls the prophecy that was given to first Eve in the Garden concerning the Woman Whose Seed, it was promised, would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3.15). Now Mary is indeed the Woman of that prophecy, as Christ is the Seed Who will crush the power of Satan - only the time for that victory has not yet come.

According to the illuminating interpretation of St. Gaudentius, bishop of Breschia in the fourth century, the Lord was not rebuking the Virgin, but looking forward to the Crucifixion: "This answer of His does not seem to me to accord with Mary's suggestion, if we take it literally in its first apparent sense, and do not suppose our Lord to have spoken in mystery, meaning thereby that the wine of the Holy Spirit could not be given to the Gentiles before His Passion and Resurrection, as the Evangelist attests: 'As yet the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7.39). With reason, then, at the beginning of His miracles, did He thus answer His Mother; as though He said: 'Why this thy so hasty suggestion, O Woman? Since the hour of My Passion is not yet come when, - all powers whether of teaching or of divine operations being then completed - I have determined to die for the life of believers. After My Passion and Resurrection, when I shall return to the Father, there shall be given to them the wine of the Holy Spirit.' Whereupon she too, that most blessed one, knowing the profound mystery of this answer, understood that the suggestion she had just made was not slighted or spurned, but, in accordance with that spiritual reason, was for a time delayed. Otherwise, she would never have said to the waiters, 'Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye'."<sup>677</sup>

"For He Who before, by way of image, from water made wine, when He said to the most blessed Mary, 'What is it to Me and thee, Woman? Mine hour is not yet come', the Same,

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<sup>677</sup> St. Gaudentius, *Sermon* 9; *P.L.* 20, p. 900.

after the hour of His Passion, so far consummated the reality of the mystery which had gone before, that the water of the Incarnation became in truth the wine of the Divinity."<sup>678</sup>

Just as at Cana the Lord and His Mother look forward to His "hour", the Crucifixion, so at the Crucifixion, according to the liturgy of the Orthodox Church, His Mother looks back to the marriage at Cana. Or rather, as the text indicates, she looks forward to the heavenly marriage-feast of the Resurrection, which also took place "on the third day" (John 2.1): "Seeing her own Lamb led to the slaughter, Mary His Mother followed Him with the other women, and in her grief she cried: 'Where dost Thou go, my Child? Why dost Thou run so swiftly? Is there another wedding in Cana, and art Thou hastening there to turn the water into wine?'"<sup>679</sup>

"And there were set six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water" (John 2.6-7). Some commentators suggest that these waterpots were used for the washing of hands before meals. Considering their size - 18 to 27 gallons each - they might well have been used to wash, not the hands only, but the whole body. If so, then they become a fitting symbol of the fallen nature of man. For man was created on the sixth day from water and clay and the breath of the Holy Spirit, but the whole mixture had become stony and dry through the loss of the Spirit. Now the Creator of man, having Himself taken flesh from the virgin earth of Mary, recasts the bodies and souls of men through Baptism, so that they can become fitting vessels, "new bottles" into which to pour the "new wine" of the Spirit (Mark 2.22).

As St. Gaudentius says: "'They had no wine' because the wedding wine was consumed, which means that the Gentiles had not the wine of the Holy Spirit. So what is here referred to is not the wine of these nuptials, but the wine of the preceding nuptials; for the nuptial wine of the Holy Spirit had ceased, since the prophets had ceased to speak, who before had ministered unto the people of Israel. For all the prophets and the Law had prophesied until the coming of John; nor was there any one to give spiritual drink to the Gentiles who thirsted; but the Lord Jesus was awaited, Who would fill the new bottles with new wine by His baptism; 'for the old things have passed away: behold all things are made new' (II Corinthians 5.17)."<sup>680</sup>

Alternatively, we may take the waterpots to be marriages, each containing two (childless) or three (fertile) people. Now marriage is, as it were, a "natural" sacrament inherent in the original creation.<sup>681</sup> Since the Fall, however, it has become stony and empty

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<sup>678</sup> St. Gaudentius, *Sermon 19*, P.L. 20, p. 990.

<sup>679</sup> *Triodion*, Holy Friday, Compline, canon, ikos.

<sup>680</sup> St. Gaudentius, *Sermon 8*, P.L. 20. Translated by M.F. Toal, *Patristic Homilies on the Gospels*, Cork: The Mercier Press, 1955, volume 1, p. 313.

<sup>681</sup> S. Troitsky, "Brak i Tserkov" ("Marriage and the Church"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986, pp. 7-33.

through the passions. So the Lord first purifies it, washing away every defilement of sin and fallen passion. Then He pours into it the grace of the Holy Spirit, thereby raising it to a higher level than it was even in Paradise.

"And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when they have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John 2.8-10).

In the beginning, the Governor of the feast of life, God the Father, set forth the good wine of the paradisiacal Eros. But this wine was turned into water by the Fall, and even dried up completely in places. Now God the Son, the Divine Bridegroom of the human race, has turned that water into a wine better than the original; for it has been mixed with, and transformed by an infusion from "the true Vine" (John 15.1). And this wine, squeezed out by the winepress of the Cross and distributed in abundance on the Day of Pentecost, has inebriated those who follow Him with the "sober intoxication" of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.13).

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him" (John 2.11). The grace of the Holy Spirit is called "glory" in the Gospel. It was first manifested at the Incarnation, when "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1.14). Between the Incarnation and the Crucifixion, when Jesus was glorified and the Spirit could be given for the first time "without measure" and to all peoples, the glory of God is said to be manifested only once - at the marriage in Cana. This shows that the marriage in Cana marks a special stage in the economy of salvation. If the Incarnation is suffused with glory because then, for the first time, the grace of God is restored to human nature in the person of the Virgin, then the marriage in Cana is suffused with glory because then, for the first time, grace is restored to the relationship between man and woman. And if at Nazareth man became once more "the image and glory of God", then at Cana woman became once more "the glory of the man" (I Corinthians 11.7)...

*(Orthodox America, vol. XVI, 147-148, March-April, May-June, 1997, pp. 13-15)*

## APPENDIX 2: "FLEE FORNICATION"

"Why can't I sleep with her, if she agrees, and I love her?" Very many Orthodox Christian parents must have heard these or similar words from their children. It is easy to give a correct, albeit rather short, answer, "Because God says you can't", much harder to give an answer that will *convince* a young person exposed to the full blast of today's permissive society.

It is a truism to say that the temptation to commit fornication is more powerful than ever today. The very word "fornication" has almost disappeared from contemporary English, and not many people below a certain age now talk about "chastity". Adultery is still considered a sin by most – but for reasons that have nothing specifically to do with Christianity. Adultery is considered wrong because, if discovered, it causes mental anguish to the deceived third person – and pain is, of course, a negative value – in fact, *the only* negative value – in a strictly utilitarian morality. Even if not discovered, adultery is usually disapproved of because it is "cheating" – and some value is still attached to honesty and the keeping of promises. But there are signs that "cheating", too, is no longer abhorred as much as it used to be... However, if some opprobrium still attaches to adultery and divorce in more conservative circles, none at all, it would appear, attaches to straightforward fornication. Fornication is now healthy and normal at all times and for all people, even those destined to become the heads of Churches.

If we are to help our children acquire the strength to withstand the temptation of fornication, it is not sufficient to tell them that God disapproves, nor even that fornicators go to hell according to the Apostle (I Corinthians 6.9). They must be given at least some indication *why* God disapproves of it, and *why* it is such a serious sin that it leads to hell. There are two basic approaches to this problem: the approach from the point of view of sacramental theology, and the approach from the point of view of conventional morality.

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Fr. Demetrius Kaplun gives a clear example of the moral approach: "There is an idea," he writes, "that marriage and fornication are in no way different from each other. 'Why go to church', 'why put a stamp in the passport' – that is how some irresponsible people reason. But even if we ignore the mystical aspect of the Church's sacrament of marriage, even a marriage recognized by society, marriage 'with a stamp', is different from fornication in exactly the same way as a serious and strong friendship is distinguished from companionship in some enterprise – by the degree of mutual obligations. When companions begin some enterprise, they act together only to the degree that they are useful to each other, but friendship presupposes moral obligations in addition. Just as bandits who get together only in order to carry out a crime more easily (one slips through the ventilation pane well, while another breaks the safe), so a couple living in fornication are only useful to each other for this or that reason. For example, the woman cooks well, the man has got money, they love each other – but take no responsibility upon themselves. If

one 'companion' decides tomorrow to find himself another 'companion', there is nothing to keep them together and bind them any longer. When a man easily changes friends and retains no obligations, he is called a traitor. It is impossible to rely on such a man. Unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities, they are condemned by God and man.

“And so the first thing that is valued in marriage is faithfulness, holiness of mutual obligations. The bonds of marriage are holy: they truly bind and limit a man, place on him the burden of service. On entering into marriage, a man can demonstrate his worthiness by the fact that he preserves his faithfulness, his honour in a holy manner. Just as for a soldier there is no greater shame than desertion, going under the flag of the other army, so for an honourable spouse there is no greater baseness that to defile the holiness of the marital bond. Spouses are to a definite degree like soldiers; they must preserve and guard the honour of the family for the shame of lust, falling, inconstancy, from the encroachment of sin.

“In ancient Rome brave and faithful soldiers were crowned with the wreath of a conqueror. Therefore the ecclesiastical sacrament of marriage, too, is called the Sacrament of Crowning. The spouses are crowned as a sign of the incorruption of their lives, as a sign of their faithfulness to each other, as a sign of the fact that they are acquiring a royal, masterly dignity in the circle of their descendants. During the Sacrament of Crowning rings are placed on the hands as a sign of their mutual agreement, and those being married are led three times around the analogy with the cross and the Gospel 'in the form of a circle', signifying the inviolability and eternity of the marital union, since the circle indicates eternity; the circle has no beginning or end. 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder' (Matthew 19.6).”<sup>682</sup>

Now this approach is certainly valid and useful as far as it goes. But the suspicion remains that it does not go far enough, and fails to take into account the idealism of the emotion of falling in love, especially first love. For no young Romeo and Juliet will disagree with the idea that “unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities”. In fact, they couldn't agree more, and often swear undying constancy towards each other. Nothing could be further from their minds than the thought that their love might die, and they might move on to other partners. In fact, it is precisely the strength and intensity of their love for each other that leads them, in many cases, to scorn the idea that this profound feeling needs to be bolstered by a mere legal contract, a “scrap of paper”. They feel that love is not love if it needs an external support.

Even if social, legal or moral considerations lead them to accept the desirability of marriage, these are unlikely to deter them from sleeping together before the marriage date. After all, they consider themselves already married in each other's eyes. Moreover, the considerations that deterred lovelorn couples in earlier ages - the disapproval of parents and relatives, the shame of the bride going to the altar with a prominent bump in her

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<sup>682</sup> Kaplun, “Azbuka pravoslavnago khristianina” (The ABC of the Orthodox Christian), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life). May, 2005, pp. 24-25.

stomach, the financial and legal disincentives – are all largely irrelevant today when parents are desperate to show that they are not “behind the times”, when brides sometimes go to the altar, not merely with a bump in the stomach, but with a whole bevy of already born children, and when the State goes out of its way, as in Britain today, not only to remove all stigmas attached to single mothers, but even to make the production of children out of wedlock a financially attractive proposition.

There are some who argue that fornicating before marriage is actually a sensible way of testing whether a proposed marriage is likely to be lasting. After all, if a couple are about to commit themselves to lifelong unity and fidelity, it is only prudent to make sure beforehand that they are physically compatible with each other. If the experience proves to be a failure, then they can abort the marriage before it takes place, thereby saving two people a lifetime of misery and probable divorce. Of course, this argument is false: all the evidence indicates that couples who sleep together before marriage are less rather than more likely to be faithful to each other and remain together. In any case, statistical arguments are a feeble rampart against fallen human nature stirred up by the spirits of evil. “Indeed,” wrote C.S. Lewis in 1955, “now that contraceptives have removed the most disastrous consequences for girls, and medicine has largely defeated the worst horrors of syphilis, what arguments against promiscuity is there left which will influence the young unless one brings in the whole supernatural and sacramental view of man?”<sup>683</sup>

So let us turn to the sacramental argument, as developed by the Holy Apostle Paul, who defines fornication for a Christian as uniting the Body of Christ – for the body of every Christian is a part of the Body of Christ – to a body that is not Christ’s. “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body [with her]? For two, saith He, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with Him].” (I Corinthians 6. 15-17).

This argument depends on the premise that there is a most intimate connection between two sacramental mysteries: the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and the sacrament of marriage. Both are mysteries of fleshly union, and in this sense both are marital mysteries. The mystery of the marital union of each believer with Christ in the Eucharist is the higher mystery of which the lower mystery of human marriage is the type and the icon. That is why, when the Apostle Paul is talking of the lower mystery of human marriage, his mind is immediately lifted to its archetype: “but I speak of Christ and the Church” (Ephesians 5.32). Even earlier in the chapter he switches easily from the lower mystery – “so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies” (v. 28) – to the higher – “for we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (v. 30).

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich comments on this passage from Ephesians as follows: “It is a great mystery when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. The

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<sup>683</sup> Lewis, *Yours, Jack*. *The Inspirational Letters of C.S. Lewis*, London: Harper, 2008, p. 265.

Apostle himself, who has been raised to the third heaven and beheld many heavenly mysteries, calls the marriage of natural man on earth a great mystery. It is the mystery of love and life... The only mystery that exceeds this [the mystery of human marriage] is the mystery of Christ's bond with His Church. Christ calls Himself the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride. Christ so loves the Church that He left His heavenly Father for her - though remaining equal with Him in unity of essence and divinity - and came down to earth and clave to his Church. He suffered for her sake that He might, by His Blood, cleanse her from sin and from all impurity and make her worthy to be called His Bride. He warms the Church with His love, feeds her with His Blood, and enlivens, enlightens and adorns her with His Holy Spirit."<sup>684</sup>

So, combining the teaching of the holy Apostle in I Corinthians and Ephesians, we can reconstruct his argument as follows: (1) Every act of sexual intercourse, whether inside or outside marriage, effects an ontological change, making two people one in the flesh. (2) Every Christian who has received the Body and Blood of Christ is united to Christ in a marital bond, becoming one with Him in flesh and in spirit. Therefore (3) every Christian who has sexual relations with a woman is uniting, not only his flesh with hers, but also her flesh with Christ's. But (4) Christ does not want to be united in the flesh with a person with whom He is not united in the spirit, through faith. Therefore (5) a Christian cannot be united in the flesh with a person who is not herself also united with Christ in spirit and in body, and whose union with the Christian has not been sanctified and raised to a true iconic resemblance to the marriage between Christ and the Church through the sacrament of marriage.

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Let us study the steps in this argument in more detail.

**1. The act of sexual intercourse effects an ontological change, making two people one in the flesh.** The basis of this assertion is the words of Adam repeated by the Lord Himself in His discussion of divorce: "They two shall be one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh' (Matthew 19.6) - that is, as Holy New Hieromartyr Gregory (Lebedev) writes, "the people have ceased to exist separately even in the physical sense. They have become one physical body, 'one flesh'. That is what the fulfilment of the will of God has done... It has not only completed and broadened their souls in a mutual intermingling, it has changed their physical nature and out of two physical existences it has made one whole existence. That is the mystery of marriage. Having explained it, the Lord concludes with a mild reproach to the Pharisees: 'Well, what do you want? What are you asking about? How, after this, can a man leave his wife? That would be unnatural! In marriage we have a natural completion of life! But you want Me to approve of the destruction of this life?! And in marriage we have a creative act, an act of God, Who creates one life... How can you want Me to destroy life created by God? This is unnatural... Don't think of

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<sup>684</sup> Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue of Ochrid*, vol. II, p. 238, May 29.

encroaching on marriage! What God has joined together, let man not put asunder.”<sup>685</sup>

So lawful marriage is not so much a means towards *procreation*, as an act of *creation*, the creation of a new personal unit. Moreover, the same can be said about an act of fornication insofar as “he who is joined to an harlot is one body [with her]”. Except that the creation of a new unit here destroys the old unit of the lawful marriage, and also the marriage with Christ...

**2. The believer is married to Christ in the Eucharist.** This thought is found in many of the Holy Fathers. Thus St. Macarius the Great writes: “Let your soul have communion with Christ, as bride with bridegroom.”<sup>686</sup> And Blessed Theophylact writes: “He took human nature as His bride and united her to Himself, wedding her and cleaving to her, becoming One Flesh. Indeed, He did not make just one wedding, but many. For every day the Lord in heaven is wedded to the souls of the saints.”<sup>687</sup> For, writes St. Symeon the New Theologian, “it is truly a marriage which takes place, ineffable and divine: God unites Himself with each one – yes, I repeat it, it is my delight – and each becomes one with the Master. If therefore, in your body, you have put on the total Christ, you will understand without blushing all that I am saying.”<sup>688</sup>

Again, Georgios Mantzaridis writes, interpreting St. Gregory Palamas: “The union between God and man achieved in Christ far surpassed all human relationship and kinship. On assuming flesh and blood, the Logos of God became a brother to man; but He became our friend as well, in that He ransomed us from slavery and made us participate in His sacraments. Indeed, Christ Himself said to His disciples that He does not call them servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing, but He calls them friends, because He has made known to them all that He heard from His Father. Christ is also men’s father and mother, for He gives them new birth through baptism and nourishes them like children at the breast – not only with His blood instead of milk, but with His body and spirit. Joined in one flesh with the faithful through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Christ becomes, in addition, the bridegroom of mankind. The similarity between God’s love towards humanity and conjugal love was familiar and widespread among the Old Testament writers, and particularly so among the mystical theologians of the Church. Palamas recognizes conjugal love as being the most exalted degree of worldly love, and he stresses the vastness of God’s love towards men in contrast to it, especially as this finds expression in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. In marriage, he says, there is a cleaving ‘in one flesh’ but not ‘in one spirit’ [*Homily 56, 6*]. Through the sacrament of the

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<sup>685</sup> Hieromartyr Gregory, *Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark*, Moscow, 1991, p. 106. As Blessed Theophylact says, “since they have become one flesh, joined together by means of marital relations and physical affection, just as it is accursed to cut one’s own flesh, so is it accursed to separate husband and wife” (*Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 162).

<sup>686</sup> St. Macarius the Great, *Homily 38, 5*.

<sup>687</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel according to Luke*, 12.35.

<sup>688</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns of Divine Love*, 15.

Holy Eucharist, however, we not only cleave to the body of Christ, we intermingle with it, and we become not merely one body with Him, but one spirit: 'O many-sided and ineffable communion! Christ has become our brother for He has fellowship with us in flesh and blood.... He has made us His friends, bestowing on us by grace these His sacraments. He has bound us to Himself and united us, as the bridegroom unites the bride to himself, through the communion of His blood, becoming one flesh with us.' [*Homily 56, 7*]"<sup>689</sup>

Again, Nicholas Cabasilas writes: "The sacred meal effects between Christ and us a closer union than that which was realized by our parents when they begat us. In truth He does not only share with us some particles of His flesh or some drops of His blood, but gives us both in all their fullness; He is not only a principle of life as are our parents, but in very truth Life Itself."<sup>690</sup>

Again, St. John of Kronstadt writes: "The Liturgy is the continually repeated solemnization of God's love for mankind, and of His all-powerful mediation for the salvation of the whole world, and of every member separately: the marriage of the Lamb - marriage of the King's Son, in which the bride of the Son of God is every faithful soul, and the giver of the Bride is the Holy Spirit."<sup>691</sup>

**3. Every Christian who has sexual relations with a woman is uniting, not only his flesh with hers, but also her flesh with Christ's.** This takes place within lawful marriage as well as in fornication. However, in lawful marriage there is no scandal, because the wife as well as the husband already belong to Christ in spirit and in flesh. The horror comes in the case of fornication, when, as the apostle puts it, the believer "takes the members of Christ and makes them the members of an harlot?"

**4. Christ does not want to be united in the flesh with a person with whom He is not united in the spirit, through faith.** In the Old Testament the lawgiver Ezra, with the consent of the leaders of Israel, dissolved all marriages of the Israelites with pagans (Ezra 10). But the matter is still more serious in the New, where the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist have created a mystical union of spirit and flesh between Christ and the Christians that is far higher and more intimate than the union between God and the Old Israel.

That is why mixed marriages with heretics, schismatics or atheists are forbidden by the Holy Church. As the holy canons declare: "Let no Orthodox man be allowed to contract a

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<sup>689</sup> Manzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, pp. 52-53.

<sup>690</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 612 C, D.

<sup>691</sup> St. John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, quoted in *Orthodoxy America*, vol. XIX, № 6 (170), June, 2004, p. 1. "Why," asks St. Gregory Palamas, "does the original not say that the King of Heaven made a marriage for His son, but used the words 'nuptials' in the plural? Because whenever Christ, the Bridegroom of pure souls, is mystically united with each soul, He gives the Father to rejoice over this as at a wedding" (*Homily 41, 9*).

marriage with a heretical woman, nor moreover let any Orthodox woman be married to a heretical man. But if it should be discovered that any such thing is done by any one of the Christians, no matter who, let the marriage be deemed void, and let the lawless marriage be dissolved.”<sup>692</sup>

Similar reasoning underlies the prohibition on the faithful receiving communion in heretical churches. Since the mystery of the Eucharist is a marital mystery, it is forbidden to the faithful to communicate anywhere else than in the Church of Christ. Thus the Apostle Paul says: “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” (I Corinthians 10.21-22).

Jealousy is the natural response of a lover at the sight of his beloved’s adultery, and adultery was what St. John the Almsgiver considered receiving communion from heretics to be: “Another thing the blessed man taught and insisted upon with all was never on any occasion whatsoever to associate with heretics and, above all, never to take the Holy Communion with them, ‘even if’, the blessed man said, ‘you remain without communicating all your life, if through stress of circumstances you cannot find a community of the Catholic Church. For if, having legally married a wife in this world of the flesh, we are forbidden by God and by the laws to desert her and be united to another woman, even though we have to spend a long time separated from her in a distant country, and shall incur punishment if we violate our vows, how then shall we, who have been joined to God through the Orthodox Faith and the Catholic Church – as the apostle says: ‘I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ’ (II Corinthians 11.2) – how shall we escape from sharing in that punishment which in the world to come awaits heretics, if we defile the Orthodox and holy Faith by adulterous communion with heretics?”<sup>693</sup>

Christians can be “crowned into one flesh”, as the marriage rite puts it, only if they have already been crowned into one flesh with Christ. That is why joint participation in the Eucharist is both a necessary condition of a valid marriage in the Church and the culminating point in the marriage service itself (as it is meant to be celebrated). Indeed, according to St. Symeon of Thessalonica, it is joint participation in the Eucharist that seals a couple’s marriage, making it valid: “(The priest) takes the holy chalice with the Presanctified Gifts and exclaims: ‘The Presanctified Holy things for the Holy’. And all respond: ‘One is Holy, One is Lord’, because the Lord alone is the sanctification, the peace and the union of His servants who are being married. The priest then gives Communion

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<sup>692</sup> *Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 72. Cf. Fourth Ecumenical Council, Canon 14; Council of Laodicea, Canons 10 and 31; Nomocanon, rule 58. Although Peter the Great pressured the Russian Church into allowing marriages with Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Presbyterians (but not Molokans, Baptists and Stundists), the Church in her ukazes of August 18, 1821 and February 28, 1858 reminded the faithful that such unions could not be allowed until the sectarians accepted Orthodoxy. See Bishop Nathaniel of Vienna, “On Marriage with the Heterodox”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 44, № 3, May-June, 1994, pp. 42-45.*

<sup>693</sup> *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, in Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, London: Mowbrays, 1977, p. 251.

to the bridal pair, if they are worthy. Indeed, they must be ready to receive Communion, so that their crowning be a worthy one and their marriage valid. For Holy Communion is the perfection of every sacrament and the seal of every mystery. And the Church is right in preparing the Divine Gifts for the redemption and blessing of the bridal pair; for Christ Himself, Who gave us these Gifts and Who is the Gifts, came to the marriage (in Cana of Galilee) to bring to it peaceful union and control. So that those who get married must be worthy of Holy Communion; they must be united before God in a church, which is the House of God, because they are children of God, in a church where God is sacramentally present in the Gifts, where He is being offered to us, and where He is seen in the midst of us. After that the priest also gives them to drink from the common cup, and the hymn 'I will take the cup of salvation' is sung because of the Most Holy Gifts and as a sign of the joy which comes from divine union, and because the joy of the bridal pair comes from the peace and concord which they have received. But to those who are not worthy of communion - for example, those who are being married for a second time, and others - the Divine Gifts are not given, but only the common cup, as a partial sanctification, as a sign of good fellowship and unity with God's blessing."<sup>694</sup>

**5. A Christian cannot be united in the flesh with a person who is not herself also united with Christ in spirit and in body, and whose union with the Christian has not been sanctified and raised to a true iconic resemblance to the marriage between Christ and the Church through the sacrament of marriage.** This means that not only is fornication forbidden, but also civil marriages in a register office.

Those who think that civil marriage is sufficient for Christians fail to realize that there is a fundamental difference between fleshly union in the Body of Christ and fleshly union outside It. In the former three people are involved - the couple and God: in the latter - only two. In the former marriage fulfills only certain biological, social and legal functions; in the latter it also accomplishes a sacramental and iconic function - the creation of a new cell in the Body of Christ and the imaging of the marriage between Christ and the Church.

When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, they also said that a third person was involved in all marriages - but the third person was Lenin, not God. Then, on the principle that sexual relations had no more significance than drinking a glass of water (the words of Commissar Alexandra Kollontai, Lenin's lover), they introduced civil marriage and divorce-on-demand for one rouble. The Russian Orthodox Church resisted this innovation fiercely, insisting that civil marriage was not enough for a Christian.

The leader of the Russian Church at the time was New Hieromartyr Tikhon. Before he became Patriarch, when he was still Archbishop in America, he wrote: "In order to be acceptable in the eyes of God, marriage must be entered into 'only in the Lord' (I Corinthians 7.39), the blessing of the Church must be invoked upon it, through which it will become a sacrament, in which the married couple will be given grace that will make

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<sup>694</sup> St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Against the Heresies and on the Divine Temple*, 282, P.G. 155:512-3.

their bond holy and high, unto the likeness of the bond between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5.23-32), which will help them in the fulfilment of their mutual duties. Sometimes, as in this country, for instance, Church marriage is deemed unnecessary. But if without the help of God we can accomplish no perfect and true good (John 15.5), if all our satisfaction is from God (II Corinthians 3.5), if God produces in us good desires and acts (Philippians 2.14), then how is it that the grace of God is unnecessary for husband and wife in order to fulfil their lofty duties honourably? No, a true Orthodox Christian could not be satisfied with civil marriage alone, without the Church marriage. Such a marriage will remain without the supreme Christian sanction, as the grace of God is attracted only towards that marriage which was blessed by the Church, this treasury of grace. As to civil marriage, it places no creative religious and moral principles, no spiritual power of God's grace, at the basis of matrimony and for its safety, but merely legal liabilities, which are not sufficient for moral perfection."<sup>695</sup>

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We are now in a position to understand the full force of St. Paul's words: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is outside the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought for a price. Therefore glorify God both in your bodies and in your souls, which are God's." (I Corinthians 6.18-20).

Through the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist we are temples of the Holy Spirit and brides of Christ. Therefore what we do with our souls and bodies does not concern ourselves alone, but also God, Who dwells in our bodies and has united His Body with ours. Moreover, this indwelling of God in our souls and bodies was achieved at a most high price - the Suffering and Death of the Son of God.

The body of a Christian is holy because it is united to the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore it cannot be united with a body that is not also Christ-bearing and Spirit-bearing. This fact makes a betrayal of that union through fornication or adultery a greater sin; for in committing fornication, a man not only unlawfully unites his own body with the body of another, but unites the Body of *Christ* with the body of another who is not Christ's.

All sin is committed with the help of the body (if only through the action of the brain), but only one kind of sin is committed against the body as such: fornication. And this not only because the consequences of this sin are felt in the body (I Corinthians 5.5; Romans 1.27), but also because it violates in an especially intimate way the marriage in the flesh between Christ and the individual Christian. All fornication is adultery from God insofar as the soul and the body is married to God through the sacrament of the Eucharist.

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<sup>695</sup> "An Address of the Right Reverend Tikhon", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 37, no. 4, July-August, 1987.

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St. John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople.*

### APPENDIX 3. THE ORIGINS OF SEXUAL PERVERSION

*There is no limit, no bottom to the abyss of carnal pleasures. Today – this far, tomorrow – further, and so on to loss of consciousness, to self-annihilation.*  
Archpriest Lev Lebedev.

In the sixth chapter of Genesis, we read the extraordinary story of how the “sons of God” (“angels” is the word in the original text of the Alexandrian Bible) seduced the “daughters of men”; from these unlawful unions came “giants”. Then there came the universal Flood which swept away the whole of mankind except Noah and his family. Much remains unclear about this story. And it is not indicated whether or not there is a direct causal connection between the unlawful unions and the Flood of Noah. But their close proximity is very suggestive...<sup>696</sup>

The Apostle Jude appears refer to this story, linking it with the sexual perversions of Sodom and Gomorrah: “The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgement of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities round about in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 6-7). The Apostle Peter has a very similar passage in his second epistle (2.4-6).

The Lord Himself compared the period before the Flood to the period before His Second Coming. Both periods are marked by a sinister combination of apparent normality with profound abnormality: “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17.26-27). The period we are living through now is very similar. Now, as then, men have begun to multiply on the earth, and now, as then, the condition of mankind, while relatively peaceful, is profoundly sinful, being manifested above all in the spread of *sexual perversions* of all kinds.

Sexual perversion may be defined as the diversion of sexual desire from a *person* of the opposite sex to a *body* of the opposite sex (rape, sadomasochism, paedophilia), or to a person of the *same* sex (homosexuality, paedophilia), or to an *animal* (bestiality), or to an inanimate *thing* (fetishism). Since perversions are unnatural, the penance for them is more severe than for fornication – but the same as for adultery. Thus the penance for adultery, sodomy and bestiality is fifteen years without communion, while for fornication it is seven years.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this story, see V. Moss, “Genetics and the Birth of the Antichrist”, [www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com), the “Articles” section.

<sup>697</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Canons* 58, 59, 62, 63.

However, before we discuss perversions as such, let us establish what is natural and what is not natural, perverted and unperverted, in man's sexual nature.

Now the contemporary perverts and their champions argue that the sexual distinctions are not important and therefore can be "renegotiated". However, according to the Holy Scriptures, the distinction - and the attraction - between male and female was there from the very beginning, even before the fall. When Eve was created out of the side of Adam, he said of her: "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called woman [isha in Hebrew] because she was taken out of man [ish]"<sup>698</sup>. Here he is acknowledging that they are of one flesh - in other words, that they are *married - physically married*. These words, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes, are "the foundation of, and the reason for, the mysterious attraction and union between man and woman".<sup>699</sup> They "have become," writes St. Asterius of Amasea, "a common admission, spoken in the name of all men to all women, to the whole female sex. These words bind all the rest. For that which took place in the beginning in these first-created ones passed into the nature of their descendants."<sup>700</sup> "This is the origin," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "of the irresistible attraction of man to his 'wife' (the woman) as to the most necessary complement of his own nature. Union in love with the woman can be replaced only by union in love with God, which is immeasurably more profound. It is on such a union with God that monasticism is founded, which is why it does not lead to psychological complexes. But monasticism is not for everyone, it is the lot of special people, 'who can accommodate' this condition (Matthew 19.11-12). But for the majority the woman remains one of the most necessary conditions of a normal existence."<sup>701</sup>

Adam continues with the famous words which the Lord Jesus Christ, followed by the Apostle Paul, saw as the founding document of marriage: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be in one flesh.*

Now it may be true, as St. Gregory of Nyssa argues, that the whole apparatus of sexual anatomical differences and sexual reproduction, being aspects of "the garments of skin" given to Adam and Eve after their fall, only came into being after the fall. If that is so, then sexual intercourse took place, as St. John of the Ladder points out, only after the fall, and could not have taken place in Paradise. But the fact remains that Adam was a man and Eve a woman already in Paradise, that they were married and of one flesh already in Paradise,

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<sup>698</sup> The Hebrew words "ish" and "isha" (like the English "man" and "woman") emphasize the unity of the sexes in a single human nature. For "this name," as St. John Chrysostom says, "should reveal their common creation and become the foundation of a durable love and the cement of their union" (*Homily 6 on Genesis*, 5).

<sup>699</sup> Velimirovich, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, volume IV, p. 241, November 25.

<sup>700</sup> St. Asterius, *Sermon on Matthew 19.3*, P.G. 40:228; in S.V. Troitsky, "Brak i Tserkov'" ("Marriage and the Church"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986 (III), № 35, pp. 25-26.

<sup>701</sup> Lebedev, "O masterakh i margaritakh" ("On Masters and Margaritas"), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 53, № 5 (640), May, 2003, p. 31.

and that even then they were attracted to each other in a natural, but sinless, unfallen manner. Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria writes of Adam's body *before* the fall that it "was not entirely free from concupiscence of the flesh".<sup>702</sup> For "while it was beyond corruption, it had indeed innate appetites, appetites for food and procreation. But the amazing thing was that his mind was not tyrannized by these tendencies. For he did freely what he wanted to do, seeing that his flesh was not yet subject to the passions consequent upon corruption."<sup>703</sup>

Now the Lord said that in the resurrection there will be no marrying, but that men and women will be like the angels. Granted: but does that mean the Lord Himself will no longer be a man, nor the Mother of God a woman? This seems profoundly counter to Christian intuition. Christ was born as a man of the male sex. And He has not ceased to be male since the resurrection. It may be that since there will be no marrying in the resurrection, but we shall be like the angels in heaven, we shall then have no secondary sexual characteristics, insofar as the need to continue the race through sexual reproduction will have disappeared. However, it runs counter to the intuition of Christians to argue that we will cease to be men and women in *any* significant sense. Rather, we see in Christ and the Virgin Mary, the new Adam and Eve, a real man and a real woman with no tendency towards "unisex"; indeed, they are the eternal types of real manliness and real femininity. There is therefore no reason to believe that the *primary, essential* differences between men and women will disappear in the resurrection.

Thus St. Jerome, in spite of his highly rigorist attitude to sexuality in general, insists that sexual differentiation will remain: "When it is said that they neither marry nor are given in marriage, the distinction of sex is shown to persist. For no one says of things which have no capacity for marriage, such as a stick or a stone, that they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but this may well be said of those who, while they can marry, yet abstain from doing so by their own virtue and by the grace of Christ. But if you will cavil at this and say, how shall we in that case be like the angels with whom there is neither male nor female, hear my answer in brief as follows. What the Lord promises is not the nature of angels, but their mode of life and their bliss. And therefore John the Baptist was called an angel even before he was beheaded, and all God's holy men and virgins manifest in themselves, even in this world, the life of angels. When it is said: 'Ye shall be like the angels', likeness only is promised and not a change of nature."<sup>704</sup>

Now science has established that the intellectual and emotional differences between men and women may be related to hormonal differences and to different patterns of activity in the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Indeed, these hemispherical differences appear to complement each other rather like male and female.<sup>705</sup> It is as if each

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<sup>702</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On I Corinthians 7*; quoted in Walter Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria*, Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College Press, 1957, p. 98.

<sup>703</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian*, 3, P.G. 76, 637; quoted in Burghardt, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>704</sup> St. Jerome, *Letter 108*, 23.

<sup>705</sup> Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2003.

individual man and woman were one half of a single bisexual organism, so that each man appears to be “missing” certain feminine qualities that would make him more whole, while each woman appears to be missing certain masculine qualities that would make her more whole.<sup>706</sup>

Be that as it may, and whether or not such differences existed before the fall, the fall has accentuated and corrupted the differences between the sexes. Thus men tend to be crude, insensitive and boastful, and women – weak-willed, vain and easily led by all kinds of influences. But these fallen differences do not entail that in the beginning, before the fall, there was never meant to be *any* real and important difference. The restoration of the image of God in man involves, not the abolition of all sexual differences, but their return to their unfallen condition, not the abolition of sexuality but sexual *integration*. Thus men return to real masculinity together with those feminine qualities which fallen masculinity drives out; and vice-versa for women.

Again, modern medicine claims to be able to change men into women, and women into men. But sex-change operations appear to be far less successful than is commonly claimed.<sup>707</sup> Dr. Paul R. McHugh, the former psychiatrist-in-chief for John Hopkins Hospital and its current Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry, said that transgenderism is a “mental disorder” that merits treatment, that sex change is “biologically impossible,” and that people who promote sexual reassignment surgery are collaborating with and promoting a mental disorder.<sup>708</sup> And the reason for that seems to be that while you can (up to a point) change a man’s (or a woman’s) *secondary, external* secondary characteristics, you cannot change his *primary, internal* sexuality.

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<sup>706</sup> Intriguing, in this connection, is the following remark of Clement of Alexandria: “This, then, is the mark of the man, the beard, by which he is seen to be a man, is older than Eve, and is the token of the superior nature. In this God deemed it right that he should excel, and dispersed hair over man’s whole body. Whatever smoothness and softness was in him He abstracted from his side when He formed the woman Eve,... while he (for he had parted with all his smoothness) remained a man, and shows himself a man.” (*The Instructor*, III, 3) The inference is that Adam was of the male sex before, as after, the creation of Eve. However, Clement also seems to be implying that he lost certain of his more feminine attributes (here, his smoothness) and so was more masculine after than before her creation.

<sup>707</sup> Walt Heyer, “‘Sex change’ Surgery: What Bruce Jenner, Diane Sawyer, and you should Know”, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/78949.htm>, April 27, 2015.

<sup>708</sup> Michael W. Chapman, “Johns Hopkins Psychiatrist: Transgender is ‘Mental Disorder;’ Sex Change ‘Biologically Impossible’”, *cnsnews.com*, June 2, 2015. Cf. “The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s Next Civil Rights Frontier”, *Time Magazine*, June 9, 2014.

For sexuality is not as superficial and “negotiable” as the modernists would like us to believe. There is more to sexuality than meets the eye...

The deeper aspects of sexuality, even on the purely physical plane, appear to be immutable.<sup>709</sup> Thus the male has an X and a Y chromosome, while the female has two X chromosomes – a fact of our sexual nature that can in no way be changed. As a scientific journalist writes: “Although men and women sometimes act like separate species, scientists have long assumed that – in terms of their DNA – they are more or less the same. But a new study has shown that the sexes really are quite different, reports *Nature* magazine, and it all comes down to the X chromosome. Women carry two X chromosomes; men, by contrast, have one X, inherited from their mothers, and one Y. The Y is an ‘eroded’ version of the X chromosome with fewer than 100 working genes. The X, by contrast, has more than 1000, and is able to deploy them more intricately. “Because women have two X chromosomes, one is inactive. But that doesn’t mean it’s entirely silent. The new research has revealed that up to 25 % of genes in the so-called inactive chromosome are actually switched on. In other words, women are getting ‘double doses’ of some genes. ‘The effect of these genes from the inactive X chromosome could explain some of the differences between men and women that are not attributable to sex hormones,’ said Laura Carrel of Pennsylvania State University. These could include emotional, behavioural and physical differences, including susceptibility to disease. Although the X contains only 4% of all human genes, it accounts for almost 10% of those inherited diseases that are caused by a single gene. These ‘X-lined’ disorders include colour blindness, haemophilia, various forms of mental retardation and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. With no ‘spare’ X to make up for genetic deficiencies, men are more vulnerable to ‘X-linked’ conditions.”<sup>710</sup>

Thus the scientific evidence, taken as a whole, gives some support to St. Gregory’s view that secondary sexual characteristics were “added” to the original man after the fall. And since there will be no marriage in the resurrection, it follows, as St. Gregory writes, that these secondary characteristics will not exist in the Kingdom: “If the organs of marriage exist for the sake of marriage, when that function does not exist we shall need none of the organs for that function”.<sup>711</sup>

*But* the evidence also supports the position that there appears to be a deeper, primary level of sexuality that is “wired into” the brain and cannot be removed or changed, from which it follows that the attempt to remove or reverse or “renegotiate” sexuality is unnatural and perverse...

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<sup>709</sup> Cf. Dorothy Kimura, "Sex Differences in the Brain", *Scientific American*, vol. 267, September, 1992, pp. 80-87.

<sup>710</sup> “The Difference between Men and Women”, *This Week*, March 26, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>711</sup> St. Gregory, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 10. However, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose writes that “Adam and Eve were created, like the whole of the first creation, in the bloom of youth and beauty, and already possessing the sexual distinction that would be needed in their fallen nature” (*Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 187)

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Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: "*Individual* people can hold themselves back at certain levels of this abyss, but as a *tendency* in the life of society it has no end. Just as society's *permissiveness* or *debauchery* in the present world of various 'pleasures' has no limit. If, 40-50 years ago, one had said that male homosexuals or female lesbians would be officially registered as 'conjugal' pairs, then the reply would not even have been horror, but rather a friendly laugh. However, that is the reality *now*! In a series of western countries they are officially *registered* and '*crowned*'. What next? Perhaps there will follow a *recognition* of bestiality as one of the forms of 'refined and elegant' sex? And then?... 'Progress' is 'progress' because it strives for infinity...

"According to the just formulation of F.M. Dostoyevsky, 'if God does not exist, then *everything* (!) is permitted'. In fact, if God does not exist, then the holiest 'holy thing', the idol of the *highest value* in existence is undoubtedly '*pleasure*'. Whatever it may consist of and for whoever it may be. If!

"But if God does exist? Then what? Then it is necessary to know *what* laws He placed in the nature of man and what man is 'prescribed' to do, what not, and *why*...

"But who is now trying to 'free' men from the commandments of God and 'allow' them the cult of 'pleasure'? The medieval (and *contemporary*!) Templars represent 'him' in the form of a *goat with a woman's torso*, sitting on the earth's globe, with a five-pointed star on his goat's forehead, and between his horns a torch, a symbol of 'enlightenment', 'reason'. On one hand is written: 'free', and on the other 'permit'. He is called 'Baphomet'. He is an idol, one of the representations of the devil (Lucifer). He whispers into the ears of his worshippers the idea that he is 'god', but he lies, as always. He is a fallen creature of God and will be punished with eternal torments, where he will with special 'pleasure' mock those who, at his suggestion, serve 'pleasure' as an idol. But before that before the Second Coming of Christ, he will try to establish his dominion over the whole world with the help of his 'son' - the Antichrist. But he, in his turn, in order to gain dominion over men, will, among other methods, particularly strongly use *sex*. For *sex*, which turns people into voluntary animals, makes their manipulation very much easier, that is, it destroys the primordial structure of mankind, the nation and the state - the correct *family*, thereby as it were annihilating the 'image of God' in mankind."<sup>712</sup>

If we try and go deeper into the nature of this self-destructive tendency of modern society we come to concept of *self-love* (Greek: φιλαυτία), which, though spiritual in essence, is closely linked to the carnal sin of lust, in that the latter represents a corruption and redirection of man's natural erotic feeling from the other to the self. The passionless delight *in* the other becomes a passionate desire *for* the other; "flesh of my flesh" becomes "flesh

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<sup>712</sup> Lebedev, "'Seksual'noe obrazovanie'" ("Sexual Education"), *Russkij Pastyr'* (Russian Pastor), № 24, I-1996, pp. 86-87, 90-91.

for my flesh". As such, it is a devouring, egocentric force, the very opposite of love. Self-love is at the root, not only of lust, but also of all forms of perversion, insofar as perversion involves the utilization of another, who (or which) is seen as no more than an instrument for one's pleasure (or pain). For perversion rejects a fully mutual personal relationship of love in favour of an impersonal relationship of use (or rather: abuse).

As St. Maximus the Confessor teaches, in Hans Balthasar's interpretation of his thought: "Two elements come together in the concept of *φιλαυτία*, which is the essential fault: egoism and carnal voluptuousness. To sin is to say no to the authority of God, it is 'to wish to be a being-for-oneself', and in consequence, for man it is to slide towards sensual pleasure. But in this double element there also lies hidden an internal contradiction of the sin which manifests itself immediately as its immanent chastisement. In sensual pleasure, the spirit seeks an egoistical substitute for its abandonment of God. But this abandonment itself isolates it egoistically instead of uniting it to the beloved. Voluptuousness 'divides into a thousand pieces the unity of nature, and we who take part in this voluptuousness tear each other apart like ferocious beasts'.

"*Φιλαυτία* has even torn apart the one God into a multitude of idols as it has torn nature, and 'to obtain a little more pleasure, it excites us against each other like animals'. This 'deceiving and pernicious love', this 'cunning and tortuous voluptuousness' ends by pitting our flesh: 'the flesh of every man is a valley pitted and gnawed by the continuous waves of the passions' and ends 'in the disgust which overthrows the whole of this first affection'."<sup>713</sup>

There are many illustrations of the ferocious and deadly power of this fallen sexuality in the Old Testament. Thus we have the story of the Levite's concubine, whose body he cut up in twelve pieces, literally "dividing the unity of nature into pieces" (Judges 19). Again, "the overthrow of the first affection" is illustrated by the story of the incestuous rape of David's daughter by his first-born son Amnon. The sacred writer says that Amnon loved Themar and "was distressed even unto sickness" because of her. And yet, having raped her, "Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her" (II Kings 13.1,2,15).

For, writes St. Maximus, "the torment of suffering is intimately mixed with pleasure, even when it seems to be snuffed out by the violence of the impassioned pleasure of those who are possessed by it". "Nature punishes those who seek to do violence to her to the extent that they deliver themselves to a way of life contrary to nature; they no longer have at their disposal all the forces of nature such as she had given to them originally; so here they are diminished in their integrity and thus chastised." "Wishing to flee the painful sensation of grief, we hurl ourselves towards pleasure... and in forcing ourselves to soothe

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<sup>713</sup> Balthasar, *Liturgie Cosmique: Maxime le Confesseur* (Cosmic Liturgy: Maximus the Confessor), Paris: Aubier, 1946, pp. 142-143. Cf. St. Maximus: "The more human nature sought to preserve itself through sexual procreation, the more tightly it bound itself to the law of sin, reactivating the transgression connected with the liability to passions" (*Questions to Thalassius* 21).

the wounds of grief by pleasure, we thereby confirm still more the sentence directed against themselves. For it is impossible to find a pleasure to which pain and grief are not attached.”<sup>714</sup> “Man acquired an impulse to pleasure as a whole and an aversion to pain as a whole. He fought with all his strength to attain the one and struggled with all his might to avoid the other, thinking that in this way he could keep the two apart from each other, and that he could possess only the pleasure that is linked to self-love and be entirely without experience of pain, which was impossible. For he did not realize... that pleasure can never be received without pain; the distress caused by pain is contained within pleasure.”<sup>715</sup>

This intimate connection between pleasure and pain means that perhaps the most characteristic of all the sexual perversions is sado-masochism. For here, as the philosopher Roger Scruton points out, “there is frequently an aspect of punishment: the sadist’s punishment of the other for failing to return his desire or for failing to play sincerely the role that the sadist has devised for him; the masochist’s desire for punishment, which relieves him of the burden of a culpable desire. The masochist may indeed receive the strokes of the whip as a kind of ‘permission’ – a reassurance that he is paying her and now for his sexual transgression, and that the claims of conscience have been satisfied.”<sup>716</sup>

However, the most widespread perversion is homosexuality... The men of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, writes the Apostle Jude, because they went after “strange flesh” – that is, not flesh of the opposite sex, which would be natural, but flesh of the same sex, which is indeed “strange”. Therefore they “are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7).

St. Paul sees the cause of homosexuality in the worship of the creature instead of the Creator, of which modern naturalism is another form: “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use

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<sup>714</sup> St. Maximus, in Balthasar, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-143.

<sup>715</sup> St. Maximus, *Questions to Thalassius*, P.G. 90: 256A.

<sup>716</sup> Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, London: Phoenix, 1994, p. 303. C.S. Lewis writes similarly of “a certain attitude which Venus, in her intensity, evokes from most (I believe, not all) pairs of lovers. This act can invite the man to an extreme, though short-lived, masterfulness, to the dominance of a conqueror or a captor, and the woman to a correspondingly extreme abjection and surrender. Hence the roughness, even fierceness, of some erotic play; the ‘lover’s pinch which hurts and is desired’. How should a sane couple think of this? Or a Christian couple permit it?” (*The Four Loves*, London: Collins, 1960, 2012, p. 125)

into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust (ορεξει) one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet..." (Romans 1.21-26).

St. John Chrysostom comments: "Here he sets the pleasure according to nature, which they would have enjoyed with more sense of security and greater joy, and so have been far removed from shameful deeds. But they would not; which is why they are quite beyond the pale of pardon, and have insulted nature itself. And still more disgraceful than these is the women seeking these couplings, for they ought to have more sense of shame than men.... Then, having reproached the women first, he goes on to the men also, and says, 'And likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman' This is clear proof of the ultimate degree of corruption, when both sexes are abandoned. Both he who was called to be the instructor of the woman and she who was told to become a help like the man now behave as enemies to one another. Notice how deliberately Paul measures his words. For he does not say that they loved and desired (ηρασθησαν και επεθυμησαν) each other but that 'they burned in their lust (εξεκαυθησαν εν τη ορεξει) for one another'! You see that the whole of desire (επιθυμιας) comes from an excess which cannot contain itself within its proper limits. For everything which transgresses God's appointed laws lusts after monstrous things which are not normal. For just as many often abandon the desire for food and come to feed on earth and small stones, and others, possessed by excessive thirst, often long even for mire, so these also charged into this explosion of lawless love. But if you ask, where did this intensity of lust come from? [I answer:] it was from being abandoned by God. And why were they abandoned by God? Because of their lawlessness in abandoning Him: 'men with men working that which is unseemly'. Do not, he means, because you have heard that they burned, suppose that the evil was only in desire. For the greater part of it came from their luxuriousness, which also kindled their lust into flame.... And he called it not lust, but that which is unseemly, and that rightly. For they both dishonoured nature, and trampled on the laws. And see the great confusion which fell out on both sides. For not only was the head turned downwards but the feet too were turned upwards, and they became enemies to themselves and to one another....

"It was meet that the two should be one, I mean the woman and the man. For 'the two,' it says, 'shall be one flesh'. But this was effected by the desire for intercourse, which united the sexes to one another. This desire the devil first took away and then, having changed its direction, thereby divided the sexes from one another, and made the one to become two in opposition to the law of God. For it says, 'the two shall be one flesh'; but he divided the one flesh into two: here then is one war. Again, these same two parts he provoked to war both against themselves and against one another. For even women abused women, and not men only. And the men stood against one another, and against the female sex, as happens in a battle by night. So you see a second and third war, and a fourth and fifth. And there is also another, for beside what has been mentioned they also behaved lawlessly against nature itself. For when the devil saw that it is this desire that, principally, draws the sexes together, he was bent on cutting through the tie, so as to destroy the race, not

only by their not copulating lawfully, but also by their being stirred up to war, and in sedition against one another."<sup>717</sup>

Fr. Thomas Hopko writes: "An interpretation of this passage [Romans 1.21-29] that claims the apostle was right in forbidding acts 'contrary to nature', but was ignorant of the fact that many people are 'by nature' homosexual and therefore should act according to their God-given homosexuality, is unacceptable to Orthodox Christian faith. No one in Orthodox Christian tradition has ever interpreted this text in this way, nor can anyone do so, according to Orthodoxy, when they read the Bible as a whole. On the contrary, the biblical teaching is rather this: The fact that many people have sexual feelings and desires for persons of their own sex is among the most powerful proofs that human beings and life have been distorted by sin..."<sup>718</sup>

Clearly, then, there is a difference in kind between natural heterosexual desire, fallen though it is, and unnatural homosexual desire. The one was implanted in nature by God from the beginning (as we have seen, according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, an uncorrupted form of sexual attraction was already present between Adam and Eve in paradise): the other is unnatural, and is incited by demonic forces outside human nature to which sinners give access through their idolatrous worship of creation. Like the demonic lust of "the sons of God" for the daughters of men in Genesis 6, homosexuality is a demonically inspired undermining of the natural order.

This is proved by the many cases in which people who have been led to think that they are homosexual, but return quickly and joyfully to the natural order once they have been freed from the unnatural power that controlled them. While supporters of homosexuality mock this evidence, it is actually very important in demonstrating that homosexuality is by no means natural. Thus Robert Epstein writes: "In a landmark study published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in October 2003, [Robert L.] Spitzer interviewed 200 men and women who once considered themselves homosexuals but who had lived their lives as heterosexuals for at least five years. Most of the participants had undergone some form of reorientation therapy. In addition to determining whether such therapy actually worked, Spitzer wanted to know just how dramatically people could alter their orientation. To his surprise, most of his subjects not only reported living long-term (more than 10 years) as heterosexuals, they also declared that they had experienced 'changes in sexual attraction, fantasy and desire' consistent with heterosexuality. The changes were clear for both sexes..."<sup>719</sup>

A vivid example of such a "conversion" is the following true story related by the present writer's wife, Mrs. Olga Moss. (The names of the people in the story have been changed.) "This took place some years after the war, after I had graduated from Amsterdam university, had married and was living in England with my first husband. I had a

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<sup>717</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 4 on Romans*.

<sup>718</sup> Hopko, *Christian Faith and Same-Sex Attraction*, Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 2006, p. 57.

<sup>719</sup> Robert Epstein, "Do Gays have a Choice?", *Scientific American Mind*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2009, pp. 66-67.

schoolfriend who was a real macho man, good at sport and so on. He had a younger brother called Pieter who was quite the opposite: tall and slim, with a sensitive nature, studying history in Leiden. Because of the sharp contrast with his brother, many of his student friends started to suggest to Pieter that he was a homosexual. And when he listened to them talking about falling in love, and how their pulses would race, and their heart would beat, at the sight of certain girls, Pieter, who had never experienced what they were describing, thought: 'Maybe I am a homosexual'. As a result, he made himself vulnerable to the advances of other men, and entered into a relationship.

"He then wrote me a letter from Holland telling me his story, and said: 'Maybe you don't want to know me any more.' I replied: 'Of course I want to know you. But this is against the Law of God [Pieter was a believer], it is an abomination in His sight, and you must fight against it. We all suffer from various temptations and sins. But we must not give in to them, but must control them. We must not say: "Because I'm made that way, I can act that way." For example, if we are kleptomaniacs, we cannot just give in to the temptation to steal. And if we have a violent temper, we cannot just give in to our temper and be violent.' Pieter fell into a depression, and went to his parents' town to throw himself off a bridge near his parents' home.

However, by Divine Providence, his father decided to go for a walk in that area, something he never normally did. Approaching the bridge, he recognized his son standing on the edge, as if he was about to throw himself in. He called out: 'Pieter!', Pieter stopped, and turning to his father, put his arms around him and sobbed: 'I was about to commit suicide because I'm a homosexual.' His father was deeply shocked; he took him home, but didn't want to speak to his son again. Some time later, Pieter's father was dying. Pieter was the only one of his three sons who was in Holland. He sat next to his bed in hospital, keeping watch. He fell asleep and had an extraordinary vision. He saw a great and evil angel trying to throw him onto the ground. Pieter struggled to free himself, knowing that it was essential that he did not fall. But this angel was far stronger than him. Suddenly, however, the angel let go. Pieter woke up and felt himself completely cured of his homosexuality. He bent over to his father to tell him the news, but his father had died...

"A little later, Pieter went to Ireland for his Ph.D. studies in history, and met a Spanish student called Pilar who was also working for her Ph.D. They fell in love. Returning to Holland via London airport, Pieter phoned me up at 5 in the morning to tell me excitedly: 'Olga, Olga, I've fallen in love. My pulse is racing, my heart is fluttering. She's beautiful, has lovely eyes and voice,' etc., etc. I was very sleepy and could hardly take it all in. But I was very happy for him. A little later Pilar came to Holland - they were going to get engaged there and then get married in Spain. She was going to leave the Roman Catholic church, and he the Protestant church in order to join the Orthodox Church to which I belong. Then followed the happiest weeks of his life preparing for the engagement and wedding. She came over before Pascha, but unknown to us was carrying the Legionnaires' disease, which she had caught in Spain. He was infected, and fell very ill on Great Friday. 24 hours later he was dead. The death was so rapid that an autopsy was ordered. It

revealed that Pieter had been deficient in a certain sexual hormone. Pilar went back to Spain, and Pieter was buried next to his father...<sup>720</sup>

Although this story constitutes no more than anecdotal evidence, it strongly suggests three things: (1) that a low level of normal libido may make a man vulnerable to homosexuality even when he is in fact heterosexual; (2) that environmental influences – the suggestions of schoolfriends and peers – may also dispose a man to the sin if he does not actively resist them; but that (3) the main agent of homosexuality is *demonic*, the demon of homosexuality.

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The idea that homosexuality has a biological base in human nature has been based mainly on the hypothesis that there is a “gay gene”. However, “no one has yet identified a particular gay gene,” writes Robert Kunzig.<sup>721</sup>

Linda Bowles puts it more bluntly: “The truth is this: There is no ‘gay’ gene. The scientific search for a biological basis for homosexuality has been a complete failure. Highly touted studies, including the study of the brains of 35 male cadavers by Simon LeVay (1991) and the heralded study of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers by Dean Hamer (1993), have not stood up to rigorous scientific scrutiny.

“The widely respected Dr. Joel Gelertner of Yale University in an article in *Science* made this observation about various studies trying to link genes with complex human behavior. ‘All were announced with great fanfare; all were greeted unsceptically in the popular press; all are now in disrepute.’

“Studies of identical twins are especially revealing. Identical twins, unlike fraternal twins, have precisely the same genetic makeup. If same-sex orientation were genetically determined, one could expect identical twins to always have the same sexual orientation. Dozens of studies prove they do not. Almost all scientists who have studied human development agree that environmental influences and life experiences play a significant role in essentially all complex human behaviors, including sexual mindsets.

“The bottom line is this: No child is born to be a homosexual. Homosexuals are made, and they can be unmade. This is the truth that more psychiatrists and psychologists need to acknowledge. This is the truth that the American people need to know, parents of young children need to heed, and politicians need to understand.”<sup>722</sup>

“By their fruits ye shall know them”: that homosexuality is evil and unnatural is proved

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<sup>720</sup> Mrs. Olga Moss, personal communication, 2014.

<sup>721</sup> Kunzig, “Finding the Switch”, *Psychology Today*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200804/finding-the-switch>.

<sup>722</sup> Bowles, “New Study Shows Homosexuals can Change”, in *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509).

by its destructive fruits. Thus it is destructive from a *medical* point of view (because it spreads AIDS), from a *psychological* point of view (because it creates no stable, satisfying bonds), from a *demographic* point of view (because it brings down the birth-rate and makes societies older), from a *social* point of view (because it is divisive, dividing “straights” against “gays” and men against women), and from a *political* point of view (because it undermines the foundation of the State, which is the family).

Let us look first at some of the psychological and social effects.

“In their book *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop*, David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison found that of the 156 couples they studied, 75 percent of the partners learned within five years that for the relationship to survive, cheating had to be tolerated, as long as one or the other did not become emotionally involved with the other sex partner. In her book *The Mendola Report*, lesbian Mary Mendola conducted a nationwide survey of approximately 400 homosexual couples. She, too, found that homosexuals distinguish between sexual and emotional exclusivity. Indeed, just 26 percent of homosexuals believe commitment is paramount in a marriage-type relationship. This translates to an almost unfathomable degree of sleeping around. A recent Amsterdam study found that men in homosexual relationships cheat with an average of eight partners a year. Others have found that the average homosexual has between 100 and 500 sexual partners over his or her lifetime. One study showed that 28 percent have had 1,000 or more sex partners, with another study placing the percentage between 10 and 16 percent. While adultery is certainly a factor in traditional marriages, it is comparatively rare. In fact, studies on matrimony place the male fidelity rate between 75 and 80 percent and that of females between 85 and 90 percent. The reason is simple: Unlike homosexual relationships, emotional and sexual fidelity within matrimony are inexorably linked and always have been by definition. To extend the concept of marriage to a situation wherein fidelity is not the norm would not only cheapen the institution, but it would have disastrous consequences for children. Simply put, a marriage is not a marriage without total exclusivity.”<sup>723</sup>

Let us also look briefly at the *political* effects of homosexuality.

A permissive attitude towards sodomy is not only a mortal sin in the eyes of God and has profoundly evil consequences for private and public morality and happiness: it is also incompatible with any understanding of *the State* that is based on the natural order. This is because the State is based on the family, and is designed to protect the family and its continuation and multiplication down the generations, whereas homosexuality, for obvious reasons, cuts short the timespan of the single-sex “family” to one generation. Therefore the State that legalizes homosexuality and discourages or downgrades natural, heterosexual marriage and childbirth will first undergo a process of rapid aging (this is already happening in many western societies), and then will eventually simply die out -

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<sup>723</sup> *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509).

unless it adopts unnatural, artificial (and often immoral) methods of acquiring children, such as kidnapping, accelerated immigration, genetic experimentation and surrogate motherhood.

Finally, Michael Hanby explores the *philosophical-anthropological* significance of the legalization of homosexuality and the new sexual technologies: “We must first understand that the sexual revolution is, at bottom, the technological revolution and its perpetual war against natural limits applied externally to the body and internally to our self-understanding. Just as feminism has as its practical outworking, if not its theoretical core, the technological conquest of the female body—“biology is not destiny,” so the saying goes—so too same-sex marriage has as *its* condition of possibility the technological mastery of procreation, without which it would have remained permanently unimaginable.

“Opponents of same-sex marriage have not always perceived this clearly. They maintain that partisans of ‘marriage equality’ redefine marriage as an affective union which makes the birth and rearing of children incidental to its meaning, a result of the decoupling of sex and procreation in the aftermath of The Pill. But this is only half true. Since married couples normally can and typically *do* have children, same-sex unions must retain in principle some form of the intrinsic connection between marriage, procreation and childrearing if they are really to be counted as marriage and to be truly ‘equal’ in the eyes of society and the law. This can only be done by technological means. And so the argument for marriage as an affective union has been buttressed time and again in the courts by the claim that assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), surrogacy, and the like eliminate any relevant difference between a married man and woman and a same-sex couple, from which it is but a short step to the conclusion that the state has an obligation to secure same-sex couples’ rights and access to these technologies as a condition of their genuine equality.

“Yet if this is true, it follows that no great weight attaches to natural motherhood and fatherhood and that being born to a father and mother is inessential to what it means to be human, or even to the meaning of childhood and family.

“To accept same-sex unions as ‘marriage’ is thus to commit officially to the proposition that there is no meaningful difference between a married man and woman conceiving a child naturally, two women conceiving a child with the aid of donor semen and IVF, or two men employing a surrogate to have a child together, though in the latter cases only one of the legally recognized parents can (presently) contribute to the child’s hereditary endowment and hope for a family resemblance. By recognizing same-sex ‘marriages’ the state also determines once and for all that ARTs are not merely a remedy for infertility but a normative form of reproduction equivalent to natural procreation, and indeed it has been suggested in some cases that ARTs are an *improvement* upon nature. Yet if this is true, it follows that no great weight attaches to natural motherhood and fatherhood and that being born to a father and mother is inessential to what it means to be human, or even to the meaning of childhood and family. These are not fundamentally ‘natural’ phenomena

integral to human identity and social welfare but mere accidents of biology overlaid with social conventions that can be replaced by 'functionally equivalent' roles without loss..."<sup>724</sup>

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This leads us, finally, to consider perhaps the profoundest and most frightening aspect of the modern sexual revolution and its legitimization of sexual perversion: the loss of the concept of *fatherhood*, with the consequent loss of the concept of *God the Father*. In gay marriages, a child is brought up with two fathers and no mother, or with two mothers and no father. Apart from any other psychological disturbances this kind of deprivation – some would say: child molestation – may cause, one must be the loss of the concept of fatherhood and/or motherhood.

The Lord taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer to "Our Father", and He called Himself "the Son of God" and "the Son of Man". The whole Gospel is imbued with the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. And yet the central dogma of the Holy Trinity, the dogmas of the Incarnation, and the Life and Death of Christ in obedience to His Father, and finally the dogma of the adoption of Christians as sons of the Father in His Only-Begotten Son and of our holy Mother, the Church – all these become incomprehensible, or at least less vivid, less *real* for a person who has been brought up without real, natural family life – that is, with a biological father and a biological mother.

Just as the democratic revolution has weakened the consciousness of kingship and civil obedience in the people, so has the sexual revolution weakened the concept of fatherhood and sonship. Thus the sexual revolution not only destroys morality: it also destroys the Christian dogmatic consciousness... Therefore as Lot fled from the burning of Sodom, it is time for us to "flee to the mountains", to the saints and to the Kingdom on high. There we will find refuge and strength. For just as the Lord "delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)", so "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgement" (II Peter 2.7-9).

May 23 / June 5, 2015.

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<sup>724</sup> Hanby, "The Brave New World of Same-Sex Marriage", *The Federalist*, <http://thefederalist.com/2014/02/19/the-brave-new-world-of-same-sex-marriage>.

## APPENDIX 4. THE DORMITION AND WOMEN PRIESTS

Today we celebrate the feast of the Dormition, or Assumption, of the Mother of God, and the greatest glory ever attained, or ever possible of attainment, by a created human being. The All-Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary falls asleep in death, but is immediately resurrected in the flesh and ascends into heaven. She is the only created human being ever to be granted this glory. And she is a woman...

The question immediately arises in the minds of some: if this is so, why should women not be given equal rights with men in all things, and in particular be allowed to become priests?

For the Orthodox the answer to this question is simple: because the Holy Tradition of the Church has quite clearly excluded the possibility. But this answer will not be sufficient for those coming to Orthodoxy from other traditions, nor for that large number of Orthodox who have been significantly influenced by feminist currents of thought. So we need to look into the matter more closely.

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Let us begin with Holy Scripture...

Although the Scriptures say nothing specifically about women priests, they do say a lot about the relative roles of men and women which is directly relevant to this question. St. Paul says that he does not allow women to teach in church, nor to exercise any authority over men. For the woman was made from the man and for the man, and not vice-versa. The woman must be in subjection to the man as to her head, and for that reason she must wear a veil or scarf on her head.

The veil is the symbol of the hierarchical, head-body relationship between men and women. The apostle writes: "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head" (I Corinthians 11.7-10).

As St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "The husband, as the image and glory of God amongst creatures, must not cover his head in church, while the wife was taken from the husband later, created, as it were, in accordance with his image, and is therefore the image of the image, or the reflection of the glory of the husband, and must therefore cover herself in church as a sign of subjection to her husband".<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> St. Theophan, *Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla* (Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), Moscow, 2002, p. 179.

This hierarchical, head-body relationship between men and women is important not only in itself, but as symbolizing still higher mysteries. For just as “the head of Christ is God”, so Christ is the Head of the Church and “the head of the woman is the man”. And just as the Son is “the effulgence of the glory” of the Father and “the impress of His Hypostasis” (Hebrews 1.3; Colossians 1.15), so the woman is “the glory of the man”, “the image of the image”, and yet of the same nature as him.<sup>726</sup> Thus the relationships between the Father and the Son, Christ and the Church and man and woman mirror each other, and are in turn mirrored by the relationship between the head and the body. It follows that the relationship between man and woman has the capacity to illumine for us the relationship between Christ and the Church, and that the structure of the human body is an icon, a likeness of the most spiritual and ineffable mysteries. For just as the head (the man) is lifted above the body (the woman) and rules her, but in love for her and desiring her salvation, so does Christ love and save the Church, His Body – all in obedience to *His* Head, the Father, Who “so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16).

From this perspective we can see that the psychological differences between man and woman reflect the differences in spiritual function between Christ and the Church, and that these differences were implanted in human nature from the beginning, before the fall, precisely in order to mirror the spiritual relationships. The man is physically stronger, more aggressive and more inclined to lead because he, like Christ, must wage war on the devil and rescue the woman (the Church) from his clutches. The woman is more intuitive, compassionate and submissive because she must be sensitive to the will of the man and submit to him in order to make their common struggle easier. If, in the fall, the man must still take the lead, this is not because he is less fallen than the woman, or that only the masculine qualities are necessary for salvation, but because obedience to the hierarchical principle at all levels is the only way out of the fall. For only if the woman obeys the man, and the man obeys Christ, as Christ obeyed the Father, can grace work to heal fallen nature and restore “glory” to the fallen lower levels of the hierarchy. Only if the man disobeys Christ, and demands that the woman follow him in his disobedience, must she disobey him out of obedience to Christ. In this case the hierarchical principle has been violated at one level (the level of the man), but remains intact at another (the level of the woman).

Although the woman is placed at the bottom of this hierarchy, she can be united with the very top. For, as St. Paulinus of Nola says: “We might say that she is placed at the base to support that body’s chain which is linked to God by the head of Christ, to Christ by the

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<sup>726</sup> Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria: “Because the woman is the likeness of the man and the image of the image, and the glory of the glory, he admonishes her to nourish the hair on her head on account of her nature. And yet why would the former begrudge grace to the latter, especially as the woman herself displays the image and likeness of God? But nevertheless she does so in a sense through the man, because the nature of the woman differs in some small way” (*P.G.* 74, pp. 881-884). And Blessed Theodoretus writes: “He is called the image of God on account of being entrusted with dominion over all things on earth. The woman, on the other hand, being placed under the authority of the man, is the glory of the man, just as she is also the image of the image. Now she herself also rules other things, but is justly subjected to the man” (*Commentary on I Corinthians* 11, *P.G.* 82, pp. 309-314).

head of man, and to man by the head of woman. But Christ makes woman also belong to the head at the top by making her part of the body and of the structure of the limbs, for in Christ we are neither male nor female..."<sup>727</sup>

Thus there is neither male nor female in Christ not in the sense that sexual differences cease to have any importance in Christ, but that if each sex carries out his or her differentiated role in love in accordance with the will of God, there will be complete harmony and unity throughout the hierarchy, and an "interchange of qualities" will take place, not only between God and man, but also between man and woman, with the result that God will be "all in all" (I Corinthians 15.28).

Turning now to Holy Tradition, we note that from the beginning the Church clearly and decisively excluded women from the priesthood. Thus in the early third century, Tertullian and the compiler of the *Didascalia* confirm this ban with specific reference to the performance of the sacraments. Thus the *Didascalia* says: "That a woman should baptize, or that one should be baptized by a woman, we do not counsel, for it is a transgression of the commandment, and a great peril to her who baptizes and to him who is baptized. For if it were lawful to be baptized by a woman, our Lord and Teacher Himself would have been baptized by Mary His Mother, whereas He was baptized by John, like others of the people. Do not therefore imperil yourselves, brethren and sisters, by acting beside the law of the Gospel."

We find the same teaching in the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*: "Now, as to women's baptizing, we let you know that there is no small peril to those that undertake it. Therefore we do not advise you to do it; for it is dangerous, or rather wicked and impious. For if the 'man be the head of the woman', and he be originally ordained for the priesthood, it is not just to abrogate the order of the creation..."<sup>728</sup>

These admonitions were considered necessary because, as Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) writes, "various schismatic groups in the second and fourth centuries had women as priests and bishops: the Gnostic Marcosians, for example, and the Montanists, and the Collyridians. When referring to these last, St. Epiphanius (d. 403) examines at length the possibility of women priests. 'Since the beginning of time,' he states, 'a woman has never served God as a priest.' (He means, of course, in the Old Testament; he knew there were priestesses in the pagan fertility cults.) In the New Testament, although we find female prophets (Luke 2.36; Acts 21.9), no woman is ever an apostle, bishop, or presbyter. Christ had many women among His immediate followers - Mary his mother, Salome and others from Galilee, Martha and Mary the sisters of Lazarus - yet on none of them did he confer the apostolate or priesthood. 'That there exists in the Church an order of deaconesses is undisputed; but they are not allowed to perform any priestly functions.' Besides deaconesses, the Church has also orders of widows and old women; but we never find

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<sup>727</sup> St. Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 23: To Severus, 24, 25.

<sup>728</sup> This and the previous quotation from Patrick Mitchell, *The Scandal of Gender: Early Christian Teaching on the Man and the Woman*, Salisbury, Ma.: Regina Orthodox Press, 1998, pp. 49-50.

'female presbyters or priestesses'. 'After so many generations' Christians cannot now start ordaining priestesses for the first time. Such, then, is Epiphanius' conclusion concerning women and the ministerial priesthood: 'God never appointed to this ministry a single woman upon earth'."<sup>729</sup>

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The matter appeared to be settled, and in none of the mainstream Churches – Orthodox, Monophysite, Catholic or Protestant – was it seriously discussed again until the twentieth century. But then the Anglican Church – always exceptionally sensitive and responsive to modernist currents of thought – put it back on the agenda. And now, as is well known, it has women bishops and priests.

Let us examine the response of the famous Anglican layman, C.S. Lewis, to this proposal when it first came up.<sup>730</sup>

But before we come to his response, let us examine Lewis' exposition of "the analogy between God's love for man and man's love for a women. It is freely used in Scripture. Israel is a false wife, but her heavenly Husband cannot forget the happier days: 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wildnerness.' [Jeremiah 2.2] Israel is the pauper bride, the waif whom her Lover found abandoned by the wayside, and clothed and adorned and made lovely and yet she betrayed Him [Ezekiel 16.6-15]. 'Adulteresses', St. James calls us because we turn aside to the 'friendship of the world', while God 'jealously longs for the spirit He has implanted in us' [James 4.4, 5] The Church is the Lord's bride whom He so loves that in her no spot or wrinkle is enduringable [Ephesians 5.27]."<sup>731</sup>

"At first," writes Lewis of the female priesthood, "all the rationality... is on the side of the innovators. We are short of priests. We have discovered in one profession after another that women can do very well all sorts of things which were once supposed to be in the power of men alone. No one among those who dislike the proposal is maintaining that women are less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning and whatever else seems necessary for the pastoral office. What, then, except prejudice begotten by tradition, forbids us to draw on the huge reserves which could pour into the priesthood if women were here, as in so many professions, put on the same footing as men? And against this flood of common sense, the opposers (many of them women) can produce at first nothing but an inarticulate distaste, a sense of discomfort which they themselves find it hard to analyse..."

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<sup>729</sup> Ware, "Man, Woman, and the Priesthood of Christ", in Peter Moore (ed.), *Man, Woman, Priesthood*, London: SPCK, 1978, pp. 75-76.

<sup>730</sup> This can be found in an article Lewis wrote for *Time and Tide* in 1948, which was republished in his *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, London: HarperCollins, 2002, pp. 398-402.

<sup>731</sup> Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (1940), in *The Complete C.S. Lewis*, HarperSanFrancisco, 2002, pp. 572-573.

Lewis then dismisses the idea that this discomfort comes from any contempt for women. He cites the extreme veneration for the Holy Virgin in the Catholic tradition, which nevertheless rejects the idea of women priests. And he says that there were prophetesses – whom he identifies as “female preachers” – in both the Old and the New Testaments.

“At this point the common sensible reformer is apt to ask why, if women can preach, they cannot do all the rest of a priest’s work. This question deepens the discomfort of my side. We begin to feel that what really divides us from our opponents is a difference between the meaning which they and we give to the word ‘priest’. The more they speak (and speak truly) about the competence of women in administration, their tact and sympathy as advisers, their natural talent for ‘visiting’, the more we feel that the central thing is being forgotten. To us a priest is primarily a representative, a double representative, who represents us to God and God to us. Our very eyes teach us this in church. Sometimes the priest turns his back on us and faces the East – he speaks to God for us: sometimes he faces us and speaks to us for God. We have no objection to a woman doing the first [sic]: the whole difficulty is about the second. But why? Why should a woman not in this sense represent God? Certainly not because she is necessarily, or even probably, less holy or less charitable or stupider than a man. In that sense she may be as ‘God-like’ as a man; and a given woman much more so than a given man. The sense in which she cannot represent God will perhaps be plainer if we look at the thing the other way round.

“Suppose the reformer stops saying that a good woman may be like God and begins saying that God is like a good woman. Suppose he says that we might just as well pray to ‘Our Mother which art in Heaven’ as to ‘Our Father’. Suppose he suggests that the Incarnation might just as well have taken a female as a male form, and the Second Person of the Trinity be as well called the Daughter as the Son. Suppose, finally, that the mystical marriage were reversed, that the Church were the Bridegroom and Christ the Bride. All this, as it seems to me, is involved in the claim that a woman can represent God as a priest does.

“Now it is surely the case that if all these supposals were ever carried into effect we should be embarked on a different religion. Goddesses have, of course, been worshipped: many religions have had priestesses. But they are religions quite different in character from Christianity. Common sense, disregarding the discomfort, or even the horror, which the idea of turning all our theological language into the feminine gender arouses in most Christians, will ask ‘Why not? Since God is in fact not a biological being and has no sex, what can it matter whether we say *He* or *She*, *Father* or *Mother*, *Son* or *Daughter*?’

“But Christians think that God Himself has taught us how to speak of Him. To say that it does not matter is to say either that all the masculine imagery is not inspired, is merely human in origin, or else that, though inspired, it is quite arbitrary and unessential. And this is surely intolerable: or, if tolerable, it is an argument not in favour of Christian priestesses but against Christianity. It is also surely based on a shallow view of imagery.

Without drawing upon religion, we know from our poetical experience that image and apprehension cleave closer together than common sense is here prepared to admit; that a child who had been taught to pray to a Mother in Heaven would have a religious life radically different from that of a Christian child. And as image and apprehension are in an organic unity, so, for a Christian, are human body and human soul.

“The innovators are really implying that sex is something superficial, irrelevant to the spiritual life. To say that men and women are equally eligible for a certain profession is to say that for the purposes of that profession their sex is irrelevant. We are, within this context, treating both as neuters. As the State grows more like a hive or an ant-hill it needs an increasing number of workers who can be treated as neuters. This may be inevitable for our secular life. But in our Christian life we must return to reality. There we are not homogeneous units, but different and complementary organs of a mystical body... The point is that unless ‘equal’ means ‘interchangeable’, equality makes nothing for the priesthood of women. And the kind of equality which implies that the equals are interchangeable (like counters or identical machines) is, among humans, a legal fiction. It may be a useful legal fiction, but in church we turn our back on fictions. One of the ends for which sex was created was to symbolize to us the hidden things of God. One of the functions of human marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the Church. We have no authority to take the living and seminal figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were geometrical figures.

“This is what common sense will call ‘mystical’. Exactly. The Church claims to be the bearer of a revelation. If that claim is false then we want not to make priestesses but to abolish priests. If it is true, then we would expect to find in the Church an element which unbelievers will call irrational and which believers will call suprarational...”

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Let us now return to the Orthodox tradition in order to learn more about what this suprarational element is... As Lewis rightly says, one of the functions of human marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the Church. Still more fundamentally, as we have seen, the male-female relationship is symbolic of the relationship between the Creator and His creation. Just as Eve came from Adam and was dependent on him for her existence, so the creation comes from the Creator and is dependent on Him for everything. Of course, this dependence is much greater in the case of the Creator/creature relationship: the creature was created out of nothing by the Creator, whereas Eve came from the already existing being of Adam. Moreover, she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones, whereas the material universe has nothing in common with the nature of God. Nevertheless, the analogy exists. And it became much closer when the Creator became one of His own creatures, taking on flesh from the Virgin. Now He is the New Adam, and she – the New Eve. He is flesh of her flesh and bone of her bones. He is the head, and she – the body. He is the Bridegroom, and she – the Bride.

By meditating on the mystery of sexuality in its unfallen, what we may call pristine form, we come closer to understanding the higher Mystery of the Incarnation, and of the whole salvific economy of God in relation to man. It teaches us that the relationship between God and man is one of hierarchy and dominance, but at the same time of sacrifice and love. God is incomparably greater and higher than man; and the well-being of man consists in his voluntary and heart-felt submission to the will of God in all things – “be it unto me in accordance with Thy will”. But even when man goes against the will of God his Creator, and falls into the dark realm of estrangement, corruption and death, God shows that He is not only the Creator but also the Saviour, not only the Lord but also the Bridegroom. He forsakes His position of dominance in order to take on the form of a servant, descends to the depths of man’s estrangement, and saves him from death through His sacrificial love. This is romance – but romance on a cosmic scale, not the cheap, novelistic kind, but the heroic, suffering kind that pays the ultimate price for the sake of the ultimate prize – the salvation of the Beloved.

Now the role of Christ as the Saviour of the Church is precisely the role of the priest in relation to his flock. This role is explained in detail in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, whose main theme is the nature of the New Testament priesthood and its relationship to the old. Christ the Great High Priest pleads for the forgiveness and salvation of mankind with God the Father. For the forgiveness of men’s sins, He becomes man, defeats the devil and offers His human nature in sacrifice to the Holy Trinity. The priesthood of the New Testament Church is precisely Christ’s priesthood; the ordinary human priest is not simply imitating Christ in his priesthood, he *is* Christ in His Priesthood; the symbol does not simply mirror reality, it becomes reality.

And that is why the symbol cannot be changed. Merely conventional symbols can be changed. For example, the colour green could cease to be a symbol for “go” and become a symbol instead for “red” – if everyone agreed. But the symbolism that God has implanted in creation from the beginning as symbolizing His eternal mysteries cannot be changed, just as the mysteries themselves cannot be changed. And so even if everyone agreed that women could now serve as priests, the reality of God’s order and God’s creation would remain the same: the only difference would be that now there would be no true priests on earth...

The greatness of the Mother of God consists in the fact that in her life, death and resurrection from the dead she perfectly exemplified and symbolized, not the Priesthood of Christ, but the perfect attainment and consummation of the Great High Priest’s aim and desire. God became man on earth in order to carry out the work of a priest, in order that men should be forgiven, justified and deified, and should ascend with Him to sit at the right hand of the Father in glory. The Dormition of the Mother of God shows that aim achieved, the first and most glorious fruit of the mystery of the Christian priesthood.

And yet, paradoxically, it was precisely by her refusing to take the man’s role, and by submitting in all things to her Bridegroom that the Holy Virgin acquired the title by which the Orthodox know her of “Despoina”, “Mistress” – the Mistress of all creation, almost on

a par with the “Despotis”, the Master. Moreover, we can say that just as a priest cannot perform the Divine Liturgy without the presence of at least one member of the laity and without the offering of the gifts of bread and wine by the laity, so the Priesthood of Christ would not have been possible without the Holy Virgin’s offering of her body to become the dwelling-place of her Son. For without her humble assent, “Be it unto me according to Thy word”, the Son of God could not have become the Son of man in her womb, the gulf created by sin between the Creator and His creation could not have been bridged, and we all would still be in sin and death...

That is why an ancient Anglo-Saxon homily on the feast of the Dormition says that it “incomparably surpasses the feast-days of all the other saints” and continues: “On this heavenly queen’s ascent the Holy Spirit gave glory in hymns, asking: ‘Who is this that here ascends like the rising dawn, as beautiful as the moon, as choice as the sun, as terrible as a warlike band?’ (Song of Songs 6.9). The Holy Spirit wondered, for He caused all Heaven’s inhabitants to wonder at this Virgin’s upward journey. Mary is more beautiful than the moon because she shines without intermission of brightness; she is choice as the sun with rays of exalted power because the Lord, Who is the Sun of righteousness, chose her for a parent; her journey is comparable to a warlike band because she was escorted by heavenly potentates and companies of angels.”

For “it was fitting”, as St. John of Damascus says, “that she who had nourished the Creator as an Infant at the breast should find shelter in His heavenly mansions. It was fitting that the Bride the Father had promised in marriage should dwell in the heavenly bridal-chambers. It was fitting that she who had beheld her Son upon the Cross, and had received in her heart the sword of pain she had escaped in childbirth, should now look upon Him sitting next to the Father. Lastly, it was fitting that the Mother of God should receive back her Son, and as Mother of God receive the veneration of all creatures. For though the inheritance of parents ever passes on to the children, now, however, to use the words of the wise man (Ecclesiastes 1.7), the fountains of the sacred rivers turn back ‘from whence they came’: for the Son has made all creation the servant of His Mother.”<sup>732</sup>

*August 19 / September 1, 2014.*

*Afterfeast of the Dormition.*

*Holy Martyr Andrew the General and those with him.*

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<sup>732</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Second Homily on the Dormition*, 14.

## APPENDIX 5: STUMP THE PRIEST: FASTING AND MARITAL RELATIONS



Question: "Are married couples required to abstain from sex during the fasts?"

The short answer is "no." But a longer answer is necessary here.

It is a pious custom for married couples to abstain from sex during the fasts, and when this is done by mutual consent, that is a good and laudable thing. However, the key word in the question is "required," and something that must be by mutual consent cannot therefore be required.

St. Paul addresses this question directly: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment" (1 Corinthians 7:1-6).

St. John Chrysostom comments on this as follows: "The wife hath not power over her own body;" but is both the slave and the master of the husband. And if you decline the service which is due, you have offended God. But if thou wish to withdraw thyself, it must be with the husband's permission, though it be but a for short time. For this is why he calls the matter a debt, to shew that no one is master of himself but that they are servants to each other. When therefore thou seest an harlot tempting thee, say, "My body is not mine, but my wife's." The same also let the woman say to those who would undermine her chastity, "My body is not mine, but my husband's." Now if neither husband nor wife hath power even over their own body, much less have they over their property. Hear ye, all that have husbands and all that have wives: that if you must not count your body your own, much less your money" (Homily 19 on 1st Corinthians).

And specifically on the meaning St. Paul's admonition: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time," St. John says: "What then can this mean? "Let not the wife," says he, "exercise continence [i.e. abstain from marital relations], if the husband be unwilling; nor yet the husband without the wife's consent." Why so? Because great evils spring from this sort of continence. For adulteries and fornications and the ruin of families have often arisen from hence. For if when men have their own wives they commit fornication, much more if you defraud them of this consolation. And well says he, "Defraud not; fraud" here, and "debt" above, that he might shew the strictness of the right of dominion in question. For that one should practice continence against the will of the other is "defrauding;" but not so, with the other's consent: any more than I count myself defrauded, if after persuading me you take away any thing of mine. Since only he defrauds who takes against another's will and by force. A thing which many women do, working sin rather than righteousness, and thereby becoming accountable for the husband's uncleanness, and rending all asunder. Whereas they should value concord above all things, since this is more important than all beside.

We will, if you please, consider it with a view to actual cases. Thus, suppose a wife and husband, and let the wife be continent, without consent of her husband; well then, if hereupon he commit fornication, or though abstaining from fornication fret and grow restless and be heated and quarrel and give all kind of trouble to his wife; where is all the gain of the fasting and the continence, a breach being made in love? There is none. For what strange reproaches, how much trouble, how great a war must of course arise! since when in an house man and wife are at variance, the house will be no better off than a ship in a storm when the master is upon ill terms with the man at the head. Wherefore he saith, "Defraud not one another, unless it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer." It is prayer with unusual earnestness which he here means. For if he is forbidding those who have intercourse with one another to pray, how could "pray without ceasing" have any place? It is possible then to live with a wife and yet give heed unto prayer. But by continence prayer is made more perfect. For he did not say merely, "That ye may pray;" but, "That ye may give yourselves unto it;" as though what he speaks of might cause not uncleanness but much occupation.

“And may be together again, that Satan tempt you not.” Thus lest it should seem to be a matter of express enactment, he adds the reason. And what is it? “That Satan tempt you not.” And that you may understand that it is not the devil only who causeth this crime, I mean adultery, he adds, “because of your incontinency” (Homily 19 on 1st Corinthians).

A husband and a wife have a responsibility to serve one another, and to help each other on the path of salvation. If depriving your spouse of marital relations causes them to sin, you are responsible for having caused them this temptation.

In this regard, [Origen](#) wrote: "You have given up your wife, to whom you are bound. This is a big step you have taken. You are not abusing here, you say, but claiming that you can be chaste and live more purely. But look how your poor wife is being destroyed as a result, because she is unable to endure your purity! You should sleep with your wife, not for your sake, but for hers. (Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3.33.23-25, quoted in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, Vol. VII*, Gerald Bray, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999) p. 59f).

**St. Augustine** wrote a letter to a woman named Eudicia on this issue, and advised her, based on St. Paul's words as follows: "According to this, if he had wished to practice continence but you had not, he would have been obliged to give in to you, and God would have given him credit for continence for not refusing intercourse out of consideration for your weakness, but not his own, in order to prevent you from committing adultery. How much better would it have been for you, for whom subjection was more appropriate, to yield to his will in rendering him the debt, since God would have taken account of your intention to observe continence, which you gave up in order to save your husband from destruction" (Letter 262 to Eudicia, quoted in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, Vol. VII*, Gerald Bray, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999) p. 62).

So in summary, it is good to fast from marital relations for a time, by mutual consent, but it is positively sinful to insist upon it, if your spouse does not consent. And according to St. Augustine, when such a spouse do not refuse their husband or wife, they have both the virtue of having had good intentions, and also of showing due love and consideration for their spouse.

Finally, it worth considering the wise words of **Fr. Alexander Lebedeff**: "Not long after we were married, my wife and I (I was a third year Seminarian at Jordanville then), were invited to have lunch by one of the old Russian couples that lived in the so-called "Russian village" about a mile from the monastery. We gladly accepted (we were so poor, we were subsisting mainly on macaroni, so any invitation "out" was deeply appreciated). After a wonderful Russian meal, the old "babushka" of the house took us over to the side and conspiratorily whispered: "I know you're recently married, but you do know, of course, the Church rules on when you can, and when you can't?"

It was pretty clear what she was talking about, so we just politely nodded.

She went on: "Well, you can't do it on Tuesday, because that's the eve of a fast day; you can't do it on Wednesday, because it's a fast day; you can't do it on Thursday, because that's the eve of a fast day, also; you obviously can't do it on Friday, because that's a fast day, too; you can't do it on Saturday, because that's the eve of a Feast Day, and you can't do it on Sunday, because that's a Feast Day."

"What about Monday?" I asked.

"Well, you can't do it on Monday, either, because of an old pious custom, since Monday is dedicated to the Bodiless Powers, the Angels, who are an example of purity--and it's also a fast day among monastics."

I asked the venerable Babushka, "And you followed these rules strictly when you were young and just married?"

"Oh, no," she replied, "We were young and foolish, and didn't know any better. . . "

The point of this story is that old babushkas are the first to point out restrictions that do not at all exist according to the Church. The scriptural admonition is for married couples \*not\* to deny each other sexual relations, except by mutual consent for the purpose of prayer and fasting.

Abstinence from sexual relations (by mutual consent) is certainly appropriate the evening before receiving the Holy Sacraments, and during the day that one receives them. It is certainly \*not\* an absolute "requirement" of the Church to abstain on all fast days (and on the eves of fast days), or during the 11 days after the Nativity when marriages are not permitted.

The Russian Church in the 13th century issued guidelines for married clergy on these issues, and they included as days of mandatory abstinence only the first and last week of Great Lent, the two weeks of Dormition Lent, and Wednesdays and Fridays during Nativity Lent and the Lent of the Holy Apostles.

The married state is blessed and the marriage bed is undefiled. The Holy Church in protecting the sanctity of marriage and the well-being of the spouses, as well as encouraging procreation and the raising of "fair children" has no interest in creating artificial impediments to preclude spouses from "rejoicing in one another."

If anyone wishes individual guidance on these matters, they should, of course, consult with their Spiritual Father."

*The Blog of Fr. John Whiteford, December 21, 2016.*

## APPENDIX 6. ST. LEONID OF OPTINA ON CHOOSING A SPOUSE

When people asked his blessing for marriage, Fr. Leonid usually advised them to examine very carefully all of the favourable and unfavourable circumstance; for instance, to make sure that both the husband and wife were in good health, that they had a way of supporting themselves and that they were not of widely differing social backgrounds. He especially advised poor families not to take a rich bride, so as not to become her slaves. On these occasions he would repeat the simple, old proverb: 'Let a fancy boot keep to a fancy boot, and a moccasin to a moccasin.' He also told those asking about how to select a groom to pay special attention to his father's personality, and those asking about a bride to pay special attention to the personality of her mother. He would say, 'The apple can't roll away very far from the apple tree.' Finally, he advised the groom, bride and parents to examine their own hearts. When the final decision was to be made concerning the marriage, if the bride, groom and parents senses a calmness of soul, then the Elder advised them to decide in favour of the marriage. If, on the other hand, at this point there was some doubt or inexplicable fear, unrest or distress, then fr. Leonid would say that this was not a good sign and would advise them to look for another groom or bride.

(Fr. Clement Sederholm, *Elder Leonid of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1990, p. 134)