

## Jesus the Bridegroom

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## Introduction

### Shakespeare and the Drama of Scripture

1. Comedy: love story that ends with a *wedding*
  - a. *Much Ado about Nothing*
  - b. *All's Well that Ends Well*
  - c. Hero and the Heroine marry
2. Tragedy: love story that ends with a *death*
  - a. *Romeo and Juliet*
  - b. *Hamlet*
  - c. Hero and the Heroine die
3. The Bible Fuses *Tragedy* and *Comedy* into One
  - a. Salvation History: Greatest Drama ever Told (by the Divine Word)
  - b. It begins with a Wedding that Ends in Death (Creation and the Fall)
  - c. It climaxes in a Death that ends in a Wedding (Cross and the New Creation)
  - d. The Hero (Christ) and the Heroine (the Church) both *die* and are *married*

### The Bible Begins with a *Wedding that Ends in Death*

1. The “Wedding” of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:18-25)
  - a. “This at last is flesh of my flesh...”
  - b. “Therefore a Man leaves his father and mother...”
2. Ends in Death of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1-7, 16-19)
  - a. “You Shall Surely Die...”
  - b. “Because you have eaten of the tree... to dust you shall return.”

### The Bible Climaxes with a *Death that Ends in a Wedding*

1. The Crucifixion of Jesus:
  - a. “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:1-11)
  - b. “When the bridegroom is taken away...” (Mark 2:19-20)
  - c. “This is a great mystery” (Eph 5:25-27)
2. The Wedding at the End of Time:
  - a. “The Wedding Supper of the Lamb...” (Rev 19:6-9)
  - b. “I saw the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven...” (Rev 21:1-10)

### The Nuptial Shape of Salvation History

1. The Fundamental Shape of Salvation History is *Nuptial*
  - a. *nuptialis* (Latin, “of or pertaining to marriage”)
  - b. *nuptiae* (Latin, “wedding”)
2. Deepest Mystery: the eternal, unending love of God for mankind
3. God’s Plan: to wed himself to mankind in an everlasting nuptial covenant
4. What do you see when you look at the Crucifix?
5. What do you see when you look at the Eucharist?

## The *Catechism* on the Nuptial Mystery

### The Nuptial Covenant between God and Israel

The *nuptial covenant between God and his people Israel* had prepared the way for the *new and everlasting covenant in which the Son of God, by becoming incarnate and giving his life, has united to himself in a certain way all mankind saved by him, thus preparing for "the wedding-feast of the Lamb"* (Rev 19:7,9). (CCC 1612).

### The Spousal Character of the Human Vocation

By his virginal conception, Jesus, the New Adam, ushers in the new birth of children adopted in the Holy Spirit through faith... The acceptance of this life is virginal because it is entirely the Spirit's gift to man. *The spousal character of the human vocation in relation to God* is fulfilled perfectly in Mary's virginal motherhood. (CCC 505)

### Jesus the Bridegroom and the Nuptial Mystery of the Cross

The Church is the Bride of Christ: he loved her and handed himself over for her. *He has purified her by his blood and made her the fruitful mother of all God's children.* (CCC 808)

### The Church is the Bride of Christ

*The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride...* He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body. (Eph 5:29). (CCC 796, quoting St. Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms* 74:4)

### The Nuptial Union of Christ and Holiness

It is in the Church that Christ fulfills and reveals his own mystery as the purpose of God's plan: "to unite all things in him." (Eph 1:10) St. Paul calls *the nuptial union of Christ and the Church "a great mystery."* ...*Holiness is measured according to the 'great mystery' in which the Bride responds with the gift of love to the gift of the Bridegroom.*" Mary goes before us all in the holiness that is the Church's mystery as "the bride without spot or wrinkle." (CCC 773)

### The Entire Christi Life Marked by Spousal Love

*The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist..* (CCC 1617)

### Death and the Nuptial Garment

*For the Christian the day of death inaugurates, at the end of his sacramental life, the fulfillment of his new birth begun at Baptism, the definitive "conformity" to "the image of the Son" conferred by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and participation in the feast of the Kingdom which was anticipated in the Eucharist- even if final purifications are still necessary for him in order to be clothed with the nuptial garment.* (CCC 1682)

## **The *Catechism* on Human Language and the Mystery of God**

### **How Can We Speak about God?**

In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists. *Since our knowledge of God is limited, our language about him is equally so. We can name God only by taking creatures as our starting point, and in accordance with our limited human ways of knowing and thinking.*

All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. The manifold perfections of creatures - their truth, their goodness, their beauty all reflect the infinite perfection of God. *Consequently we can name God by taking his creatures' perfections as our starting point, "for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator" (Wis 13:5).*

*God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, image-bound or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God--"the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable"--with our human representations. Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God.*

Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; *nevertheless it really does attain to God himself*, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity. *Likewise, we must recall that "between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude";<sup>1</sup> and that "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him."<sup>2</sup> (CCC 39-43)*

### **God Is Pure Spirit and Transcends the Sexes**

In no way is God in man's image. He is neither man nor woman. *God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes.* But the respective "perfections" of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother and those of a father and *husband*.<sup>3</sup> (CCC 370)

We ought therefore to recall that *God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God.* He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father. (CCC 239).

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<sup>1</sup> Lateran Council IV (1215 A.D.).

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1:30.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Isa 49:14-15; 66:13; Ps 131:2-3; Hos 11:1-4; Jer 3:4-19.

## The Mystery of the Crucifixion

### Introduction<sup>4</sup>

1. Contemporary Familiarity with Crucifixion
  - a. Manner in which Jesus was crucified
  - b. Terribly painful and cruel way to die
2. Too Familiar with Crucifixion:
  - a. Greco-Roman world: shock and horror with which crucifixion was regarded
  - b. Jewish world: scandal of a crucified ‘messiah’
3. Seeing the Cross through ancient Jewish eyes:
  - a. History of Crucifixion: what would Jesus death have meant to his disciples?
  - b. Theology of Crucifixion: how could Jesus have described his death as *nuptial*?

### The Cruelty of Crucifixion

1. Crucifixion: the most wretched death:
  - a. Josephus: crucifixion is “the most wretched of deaths” (*War* 7.203).<sup>5</sup>
  - b. Paulus (Roman jurist): “the most severe punishment” (*Sententiae* 5.21.3).<sup>6</sup>
2. Scourging before Crucifixion:
  - a. Leather whips or thong fitted with spikes or pieces of iron or bone (see Josephus, *War* 2.306-307).<sup>7</sup>
  - b. Josephus: one man flogged “until his bones were laid bare” (*War* 6.304)
  - c. Josephus: other scourged “until their entrails were visible” (*War* 2.612).
  - d. Martin Hengel: “the flogging which was a stereotyped part of the punishment would make the blood flow in streams.”<sup>8</sup>
3. Carrying of the Cross:
  - a. Condemned ordinarily forced to carry the cross-beam to execution site
  - b. Often whipped along the way
  - c. Execution site: usually as public as possible, to heighten the shame
4. Execution Site:
 

Quintilian: “Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear” (*Declamations* 274).<sup>9</sup>
5. Crucifixion:

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<sup>4</sup> On crucifixion in ancient Judaism, the definitive work for some time to come will be David W. Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion* (WUNT 2.244; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010). See also Michael O. Wise, “Crucifixion,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 500-501; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2:945-52; Joseph Zias and James H. Charlesworth, “Crucifixion: Archaeology, Jesus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 273-89; Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); Josef Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus* (trans. Isabel and Florence McHugh; Westminster: Newman, 1959), 246-70.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 59.

<sup>7</sup> On the practice, see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (2 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:1119; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1:851-52.

<sup>8</sup> Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 50.

- a. Suspension by nailing, tying, or impaling (Greek *stauroō*)
- b. Condemned affixed to a “cross” (Latin *crux*)
- c. Designed precisely to make the victim suffer *as long as possible*:

*Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long drawn-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying before mounting the cross. (Seneca, Epistle 101 to Lucilius)<sup>10</sup>*

### The Shame of Crucifixion

1. The cross can be called “the tree of shame” (Cicero, *Pro Rabiro* 16).<sup>11</sup>
2. A Punishment for Slaves:
  - a. The “extreme and ultimate penalty for a slave” (Seneca, *In Verrum* 2.5.169).<sup>12</sup>
  - b. The “slaves’ punishment” (Valerius Maximus 2.7.12).<sup>13</sup>
3. Crucifixion as a Form of Mockery:

*I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet. (Seneca, Dialogue 6.20.3)<sup>14</sup>*

[Titus] allowed his soldiers to have their way, especially as he hoped that the gruesome sight of the countless crosses might have moved the besieged to surrender. *So the soldiers, out of the rage and hatred they bore the prisoners, nailed those they caught in different postures to the crosses, by way of jest...* (Josephus, *War* 5:451)<sup>15</sup>

4. Victims ordinarily Crucified Naked:<sup>16</sup>
  - a. Ancient Senses of Modesty in Clothing (esp. Jewish)
  - b. Even modern films do not depict this aspect of ancient crucifixion

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 30-31.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 44.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2:947 and Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Cited and translated in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Cited and translated in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> See Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:1138 (with refs.); Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1:870; cf. Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus*, 253. See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 7.69.2; Artemidorus Daldianus, *Oneirokritika* 2.53; Valerius Maximus, *Facta* 1.7.4. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2:952-53, concludes that we cannot be sure whether Jesus was crucified with or without a loincloth. He notes that there is conflicting patristic evidence, with some sources assuming Jesus was completely despoiled of his clothing (e.g., Melito of Sardis, *On the Pasch* 97), and others depicting him as retaining a loincloth (*Acts of Pilate* 10:1).

*A Roman citizen of no obscure station, having ordered one of his slaves to be put to death, delivered him to his fellow-slaves to be led away, and in order that his punishment might be witnessed by all, directed them to drag him through the Forum and every other conspicuous part of the city as they whipped him, and that he should go ahead of the procession which the Romans were at that time conducting in honour of the god. The men ordered to lead the slave to his punishment, having stretched out both his arms and fastened them to a piece of wood which extended across his breast and shoulders as far as his wrists, followed him, tearing his naked body with whips. The culprit, overcome by such cruelty, not only uttered ill-omened cries, forced from him by the pain, but also made indecent movements under the blows. (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 7.69.1-2)<sup>17</sup>*

*“When he was four cubits from the place of stoning they stripped off his clothes. A man is kept covered in front and a woman both in front and behind. So Rabbi Judah. But the Sages say: A man is stoned naked but a woman is not stoned naked.” (Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:3)*

### **The Mass Crucifixion of Jews**

1. Jesus of Nazareth: just one of many Jewish crucifixions
2. Flaccus: Egyptian leader, flogged and crucified some thirty-eight Jewish elders at one time as part of a “festival” in honor of the emperor (Philo, *Flaccus* 83-84).
3. Alexander Jannaeus: Jewish leader, had *eight hundred* of his Pharisaic opponents crucified in the city of Jerusalem. To the horror of many, he too did this as a form of celebration, and feasted and drank with his concubines while watching the victims being raised up on the crosses (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.380; *War* 1.97).
3. Varus: Greek governor, crucified *two thousand* Jews at one time, in response to their having participated in a military revolt against him (Josephus, *Antiquities* 17:295).
4. Titus: Roman general, crucified up to *five hundred Jews per day* during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70:

When they [the Jewish fighters] were going to be taken (by the Romans), they were forced to defend themselves, and after they had fought they thought it too late to make any supplications for mercy: *so they were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures, before they died and were then crucified before the wall of the city.* Titus felt pity for them, but as their number—given as up to five hundred a day—was too great for him to risk either letting them go or putting them under guard, he allowed his soldiers to have their way... [*In the end,*] *their number was so great that there was not enough room for the crosses and not enough crosses for the bodies.* (Josephus, *War* 5:449-51)<sup>18</sup>

5. The two “thieves” (Matt 27:38-44; Mark 15:27-32; 23:32-43).

<sup>17</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* (7 vols.; Loeb Classical Library; trans. Earnest Cary; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937-50).

<sup>18</sup> Cited and translated in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 25-26. For other mass crucifixions in Judea, see Josephus, *War* 2:75 and *Antiquities* 17:295.

### The Curse of Crucifixion

#### 1. The Pentateuch: Cursed is any Man “hanged on a tree”:

If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, *for a hanged man is accursed by God*; you shall not defile the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 21: 22-23)

#### 2. The Dead Sea Scrolls: interprets Deut 21 as crucifixion.<sup>19</sup>:

If a man passes on information against his people or betrays his people to a foreign nation, or does evil against his people, you shall hang him on a tree and he will die. *On the evidence of two witnesses or on the evidence of three witnesses he shall be put to death and they shall hang him on a tree...* If it happens that a man has committed a capital offence and he escapes amongst the nations and curses his people /and/ the children of Israel, he also you shall hang on the tree and he will die. And their corpse shall not spend the night on the tree; instead you shall bury them that day *because those handed on a tree are cursed by God and man*; thus you shall not defile the land which I give you for an inheritance. (*11QTemple Scroll* 64:6-13)<sup>20</sup>

#### 3. The Mishnah on Crucifixion:

*How did they hang a man? They put a beam into the ground and a piece of wood jutted from it. The two hands were brought together and it was hanged... And they let it down at once: if it remained there overnight a negative command was thereby transgressed, for it is written, “His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him the same day; for that is hanged is a curse of God”* (Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 6:4, citing Deuteronomy 21:23).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion*, 117-153.

<sup>20</sup> Translation in Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 1998), 2:1287.

<sup>21</sup> Translation in Hebert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 390.

## **St. Thomas Aquinas on the Crucifixion**

Whether There Was Any More Suitable Way of Delivering the Human Race than by Christ's Passion?

*Summa Theologiae* Pt. 3, Q. 46, Art. 3

### **Obj. 1. God could have Saved Us simply by His Divine Will**

Objection 1. It would seem that there was some other more suitable way of delivering the human race besides Christ's Passion. For nature in its operation imitates the Divine work, since it is moved and regulated by God. But nature never employs two agents where one will suffice. Therefore, since God could have liberated mankind solely by His Divine will, it does not seem fitting that Christ's Passion should have been added for the deliverance of the human race.

### **Obj. 2. God could have Saved Us without the Violence of the Cross**

Objection 2. Further, natural actions are more suitably performed than deeds of violence, because violence is "a severance or lapse from what is according to nature," as is said in *De Coelo* ii. But Christ's Passion brought about His death by violence. Therefore it would have been more appropriate had Christ died a natural death rather than suffer for man's deliverance.

### **Obj. 3. God could have Saved Us simply by Overpowering the Devil**

Objection 3. Further, it seems most fitting that whatsoever keeps something unjustly and by violence, should be deprived of it by some superior power; hence Isaias says (52:3): "You were sold gratis, and you shall be redeemed without money." But the devil possessed no right over man, whom he had deceived by guile, and whom he held subject in servitude by a sort of violence. Therefore it seems most suitable that Christ should have despoiled the devil solely by His power and without the Passion.

### **St. Thomas' Response**

On the contrary, St. Augustine says (*De Trin.* xiii): "*There was no other more suitable way of healing our misery*" than by the Passion of Christ. I answer that, Among means to an end that one is the more suitable whereby the various concurring means employed are themselves helpful to such end. But in this that man was delivered by Christ's Passion, many other things besides deliverance from sin concurred for man's salvation.

#### **1. The Passion shows Man how much God Loves Him**

*In the first place, man knows thereby how much God loves him, and is thereby stirred to love Him in return, and herein lies the perfection of human salvation; hence the Apostle says (Romans 5:8): "God commendeth His charity towards us; for when as yet we were sinners . . . Christ died for us."*

#### **2. The Passion gives Man an Example of Virtue**

Secondly, because thereby He set us *an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and the other virtues displayed in the Passion, which are requisite for man's salvation.* Hence it is written (1 Peter 2:21): "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps."

### 3. The Passion not only Delivers *from Sin*, but Merits *for Man Grace and Glory*

Thirdly, because Christ by His Passion not only delivered man from sin, but also merited justifying grace for him and the glory of bliss, as shall be shown later (48, 1; 49, 1, 5).

[Q. 48, Art. 1: "The lowliness" of the Passion "merited glory; glory was the reward of lowliness." But He was glorified, not merely in Himself, but likewise in His faithful ones, as He says Himself (John 17:10). Therefore it appears that He merited the salvation of the faithful. I answer that, As stated above (7, 1,9; 8, 1,5), *grace was bestowed upon Christ, not only as an individual, but inasmuch as He is the Head of the Church, so that it might overflow into His members; and therefore Christ's works are referred to Himself and to His members in the same way as the works of any other man in a state of grace are referred to himself...* Consequently Christ by His Passion merited salvation, not only for Himself, but likewise for all His members... *Suffering, as such, is caused by an outward principle: but inasmuch as one bears it willingly, it has an inward principle.*

[Q. 49, Art. 1: On the contrary, It is written (Apocalypse 1:5): "*He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.*" I answer that, Christ's Passion is the proper cause of the forgiveness of sins in three ways. *First of all, by way of exciting our charity, because, as the Apostle says (Romans 5:8): "God commendeth His charity towards us: because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us." But it is by charity that we procure pardon of our sins, according to Luke 7:47: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much."*

### 4. The Crucifixion reveals the Horrible Consequences of Sin

Fourthly, because by this *man is all the more bound to refrain from sin*, according to 1 Corinthians 6:20: "You are bought with a great price: glorify and bear God in your body."

### 5. The Crucifixion Recapitulates the Fall of Man through Death

Fifthly, because it redounded to man's greater dignity, that as man was overcome and deceived by the devil, *so also it should be a man that should overthrow the devil; and as man deserved death, so a man by dying should vanquish death.* Hence it is written (1 Corinthians 15:57): "Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It was accordingly more fitting that we should be delivered by Christ's Passion than simply by God's good-will.

#### Rply. Obj. 1: More than One Means can be used to One End

Reply to Objection 1. Even nature uses several means to one intent, in order to do something more fittingly: as two eyes for seeing; and the same can be observed in other matters.

#### Rply. Obj. 2: The Crucifixion ensured Jesus' Death was Seen by All

Reply to Objection 2. As Chrysostom [Athanasius, Orat. De Incarn. Verb.] says: "Christ had come in order to destroy death, not His own, (for since He is life itself, death could not be His), but men's death. Hence it was not by reason of His being bound to die that He laid His body aside, but because the death He endured was inflicted on Him by men.

But even if His body had sickened and dissolved in the sight of all men, it was not befitting Him who healed the infirmities of others to have his own body afflicted with the same. And even had He laid His body aside without any sickness, and had then appeared, men would not have believed Him when He spoke of His resurrection. For how could Christ's victory over death appear, unless He endured it in the sight of all men, and so proved that death was vanquished by the incorruption of His body?"

**Rply. Obj. 3: The Crucifixion Justly overthrew the Devil by Humility of a Man**

Reply to Objection 3. Although the devil assailed man unjustly, nevertheless, on account of sin, man was justly left by God under the devil's bondage. And therefore it was fitting that through justice man should be delivered from the devil's bondage by Christ making satisfaction on his behalf in the Passion. This was also a fitting means of overthrowing the pride of the devil, "who is a deserter from justice, and covetous of sway"; in that Christ "should vanquish him and deliver man, not merely by the power of His Godhead, but likewise by the justice and lowliness of the Passion," as Augustine says (De Trin. xiii).

## What Were the Jewish People Waiting For?

### Introduction<sup>22</sup>

1. What were the Jewish People waiting For?<sup>23</sup>
  - a. Political Messiah: to set them free from Roman empire (common opinion)
  - b. New Exodus: in which God would save his people (key Jewish hope)
  - c. The New Exodus as a *Future Wedding* between God and his people
2. The Exodus as History (Exodus 1-24)
  - a. Bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt
  - b. Nine Plagues
  - c. Passover Sacrifice
  - d. Journey to Sinai
  - e. Giving of the Decalogue (Exodus 20)
  - f. Covenant Sacrifice at Mount Sinai (Exodus 24)
2. The Exodus as a Love Story in the Prophets
  - a. YHWH: Bridegroom
  - b. Israel: Bride
  - c. Covenant: sacred family bond between God and Israel
3. The Metaphor presupposes that Marriage is a *Covenant*

### Marriage as a Covenant (Proverbs 2, Malachi 2)

1. What is a Covenant? *A Sacred Family Bond*<sup>24</sup>
  - a. Bond: permanent (not temporary) bond between persons
  - b. Family: establishes a familial (not merely social or economic) relationship
  - c. Sacred: invokes divine power through sacrifice and/or oath (not merely a promise)
2. The Adulteress and the Marital Covenant (Prov 2:17)
  - a. The “Strange Woman”
  - b. Forsakes Her Husband: the “companion of her youth”
  - c. Forgets “the covenant (Heb *berith*) of her God”
  - d. Her house leads to spiritual death
3. The Problem of Divorce (Mal 2:13-16)
  - a. God is witness to the “covenant” between “you and the wife of your youth”
  - b. Wife: she is your “*wife by covenant* (Heb *berith*)”
  - c. Purpose of Marriage: “godly offspring”
  - d. The LORD: “I hate divorce” (Heb *shalach*, “sending away”)

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<sup>22</sup> On the historical character of the exodus events, see especially James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); idem, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 241-312; Giuseppe Ricciotti, *The History of Israel* (2 vols.; Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955), 167-229. Also significant is James K. Hoffmeier, “These Things Happened: Why a Historical Exodus is Essential for Theology,” in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture* (eds. James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary; Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 99-134.

<sup>23</sup> Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), chapter 1.

<sup>24</sup> See Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant* (ABRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

**The Exodus as the Honeymoon (Jeremiah 2:1-2)**

1. “I remember the devotion (Heb *chesed*) of your youth”
2. “Your love (Heb *’ahabah*) as a bride (Heb *keluloth*, ‘betrothal time, being a bride’)”
3. The Exodus: the time in “the wilderness”
4. Holiness: Israel was “holy (Heb *qadosh*) to the LORD”<sup>25</sup>

**The Exodus as God’s Betrothal to Israel (Ezekiel 16)**<sup>26</sup>

1. Ezekiel: assumes familiarity with ancient wedding customs and pagan cults.<sup>27</sup>
2. Spreading the Garment: symbolizes intention to take and *protect* a wife (Ruth 3:9)<sup>28</sup>.
3. Betrothal of God and Israel:<sup>29</sup>
  - a. Betrothed means of a “covenant” (Hebrew, *berith*).
  - b. Betrothal could last from one to several years  
(Gen 24:67; 29:15-21; 1 Sam 18:17-19, 26-27; cf. Deut 20:7).
  - c. Legally married, but couple does not yet live together
  - d. Betrothal Vow Formula (exact form unknown):

“She is my wife, and I am her husband from this and forever” (*Aramaic Papyri* 15:4).<sup>30</sup>

“You are her brother (Gk *adelphos*) and she is your own (Gk *autês*)” (Tobit 7:12).

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<sup>25</sup> Intriguingly, when Jeremiah says that Israel was “holy” or “set apart” (Hebrew *qadosh*) to the Lord, this may in fact be marital imagery, since one of the key elements of an ancient Jewish marriage was that the bride was “set apart” (*qadosh*) for the groom. Indeed, in later Jewish tradition, the rite of betrothal itself came to be referred to as “consecration” or “being set-apart” (Hebrew, *qiddushin*) Intriguingly, when Jeremiah says that Israel was “holy” or “set apart” (Hebrew *qadosh*) to the Lord, this may in fact be marital imagery, since one of the key elements of an ancient Jewish marriage was that the bride was “set apart” (*qadosh*) for the groom. Indeed, in later Jewish tradition, the rite of betrothal itself came to be referred to as “consecration” or “being set-apart” (Hebrew, *qiddushin*). Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 89, makes a good point: “Although scholars have tried to make a lot of the fact that, in contrast to sacramental marriage among Christians, marriage in Judaism remained a contractual transaction between the bride and the groom, the use of the word “consecration” (*qiddushin*) to describe both the talmudic tractate which deals with taking of a bride and the action itself indicates that betrothal took on, in addition to its technical legal meaning, a spiritual connotation as well.” I would go even further here: the language of ‘holiness’ is not simply spiritual, but *covenantal* and *sacrificial*. Marriage can be described as “consecration” because a man and woman are set apart for one another by means of the sacred family bond that is a covenant (e.g., Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14).

<sup>26</sup> Because of the abundant English archaisms present in the RSV translation of Ezek 16:8-14, for this passage I have used the NRSV.

<sup>27</sup> For commentary on this passage, see esp. Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (2 vols.; New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 1998), 1:270-80; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (Anchor Bible 22; New York: Doubleday, 1982), 270-80.

<sup>28</sup> See P. A. Kruger, “The Hem of the Garment in Marriage: The Meaning of the Symbolic Gesture in Ruth 3:9 and Ezek 16:8,” *JNSL* 12 (1984): 86; cited in Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 483.

<sup>29</sup> See De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 32-33.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1:483, taken from A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 15:4, and E. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 2:4. Evidence for such formulae spoken by the father-in-law is also contained in Scripture: “Today you shall be my son-in-law” (1 Sam 18:21).

4. Wedding Customs:<sup>31</sup>
  - a. Nuptial Bath: groom washes the bride with water (cf. mikvah)
  - b. Nuptial Anointing: groom anoints the bride with oil
  - c. Nuptial Garments: embroidered cloth, fine linen, rich fabric, bracelets, a chain, earrings, and even a nose-ring! (cf. Isaac and Rebekah Gen 24:22, 30, 47)
5. A Royal Wedding:
  - a. Elizabeth Platt: jewels are “*wedding jewelry for the Queen*”.<sup>32</sup>
  - b. God places “a beautiful crown” (Hebrew, *‘atara*) upon the head of his bride
  - c. Israel is “fit to be a queen,” or “comes to regal estate” (Ezek 16:13 RSV).
  - d. Ancient Crowns: symbol of royal identity (2 Sam 12:30; 1 Chron 20:2; Song 3:11).
  - e. Bride is not just YHWH’s wife; she is his queen
  - f. Exodus is a Royal Wedding (cf. Adam and Eve; Gen 1-2)
6. Wedding Banquet:
  - a. God feeds his Bride: “choice flour” and “honey” and “oil for food” (Ezek 16:13).
  - b. Wedding Feasts: seven to fourteen days (Gen 29:22; Judg 14:10; Tob 7:14).
  - c. Temple Sacrifices: “fine flour” and “oil” (see Lev 2:4, 11; 24:1-8; Num 11:8).<sup>33</sup>

### The Spiritual Adultery of Israel

1. The Love Story between God and Israel:
  - a. Bridegroom and his Bride do not live “happily ever after”
  - b. History of Israel: a long, sordid string of marital infidelities
  - c. Honeymoon doesn’t last very long at all
2. Israelite History: Habitual Idolatry, the sacrificial worship of other gods.<sup>34</sup>
  - a. Idolatry: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod 20:1-6).
  - b. Worship of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32).
  - c. Worship of the gods of the Moabites (Numbers 25).
  - d. Idolatry in the Land (Judges 2, 21:25; 1 Kings 11, 2 Kings 15-17, 24-25).
3. Prophets Describe Idolatry as habitual acts of *spiritual adultery*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> As biblical scholar Daniel Block points out, these acts of “washing and anointing with oil seem to have been part of the wedding ritual itself, a tender expression of love and devotion.” Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1:484, citing S. Greengus, ‘Old Babylonian Marriage Ceremonies and Rites,’ *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 20 (1966): 57, 61, regarding Ur Excavation Texts 5 636, which mentions a “day of bathing” a part of the Ancient Near Eastern marriage ritual. See also the *Zondervan Bible Backgrounds Commentary* on Ezekiel 16 for further ANE parallels. It is worth noting here that in Ezekiel 16 the bridegroom washes the bride rather than the bride washing herself (cf. Ruth 3:3; Suzanna 17).

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Pratt, “Jewelry, Ancient Israelite,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:823-33 (here 825-27).

<sup>33</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 2:485; Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 1:279. See also Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh’s Wife* (SBLDS 130; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 95.

<sup>34</sup> For a helpful overview of the phenomenon of idolatry in Scripture, see G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downer’s Grove: IVP Academic, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> See esp. Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *God’s Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 2; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 83, following N. Stienstra, *YHWH is the Husband of His People* (Kampen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 163: “The actual situation, involving cultic prostitution, interacts with the metaphorical concept. The fact that idolatrous practices actually consisted of sexual acts made the marriage metaphor all the more appropriate for telling the people how badly they behaved with respect to YHWH.” Along similar lines, John Oswalt points out: “The heavily sexual orientation of the Canaanite religion meant that ritual prostitution was a fundamental part of

4. Isaiah: the faithful city “has become a harlot (Heb *zonah*)” (Isa 1:4, 21)
5. Jeremiah: the nation of Israel has become a “faithless wife” (Jer 3:32; 3:20)
6. Ezekiel: God’s bride has become a “harlot” (Ezek 16:15-22)
  - a. She “plays the harlot” (Heb *zonah*)
  - b. Idolatry: makes “shrines” and “images” of other gods
  - c. Cultic Food: she takes “bread” of God and gives to false deities
  - d. Human Sacrifice: Israelites offer their “sons and daughters” in sacrifice (cf. Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kings 17:17; 23:10; Jer 32:35)<sup>36</sup>
  - e. Israel betrays the marital covenant with the LORD (Ezek 16:32).<sup>37</sup>

### The New Exodus and God’s Wedding (Hosea 1-3, Ezekiel 16, Isaiah 54-66)

1. The New Exodus (Hosea 2:14-23)
  - a. God will “allure” Israel and bring her “into the wilderness”
  - b. Courtship: The LORD will “speak tenderly to her”; Israel shall answer
  - c. New Exodus:<sup>38</sup> “as in the days of her youth... as when she came out of Egypt”
  - d. Not “My Baal” (Heb *ba’al*, “lord,” “master,” “owner”)
    - a name given to false gods of the land (cf. Hos 2:18, 21)
  - e. But “My Husband” (Heb, *’ish*, “man,” “husband”)
  - f. New Marriage “Covenant”: God will “betroth” (Heb, *’aras*) Israel to himself
  - g. Marriage Vows: “You are my people” and “You are my God”
  - h. Spiritual Wedding Gifts: righteousness, justice, love, mercy, and faithfulness.<sup>39</sup>
  - i. New Creation: covenant with “beasts of field” and “birds of the air” (Gen 1-2)
2. The New Covenant (Ezek 16:59-63)
  - a. Renewal of Broken Covenant
  - b. Future Covenant: will be “everlasting” or “eternal covenant” (Heb *berith ’olam*)
  - c. Forgiveness of Israel’s Sins: nuptial relationship must be healed by forgiveness
3. The New Jerusalem (Isaiah 54-66)
  - a. New Marriage: “Your Maker is your Husband” (Isa 54:4-8)
  - b. Renewed Covenant: God has compassion on Israel
  - c. Old Name: no longer “Forsaken” or “Desolate”<sup>40</sup>

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worship. Thus it is not merely imagery when it is said [in Isaiah 57:7-8] that those who went to the high places to offer their sacrifices *placed their bed* there.” Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2:478, citing W. F. Albright, “The High Place in Ancient Palestine,” in *Volume du Congrès: Strasbourg, 1956* (Vetus Testamentum Supplements 4; Leiden: Brill, 1957), 242-58. For skepticism in this regard, see “Prostitution (Cultic),” in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

<sup>36</sup> See Daniel Bodi, “Ezekiel,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (ed. John H. Walton; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 439.

<sup>37</sup> It may be worth noting that this imagery of God’s broken marriage with Israel continued in later Jewish tradition, which contains several parables in which “Israel marries, is unfaithful, and then is brought back into covenantal relationship with God.” Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity*, 54, citing *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 3:7 (106a-b); 3:10 (106c), as well as Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 54a, which compares Israel’s idolatrous actions after entering the promised land to the infidelity of a bride upon entering her new husband’s house.

<sup>38</sup> See Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea* (Anchor Bible 24; New York: Doubleday, 1980), 215 (identify this section as a “new exodus”), and 264: “The entire history of Israel will be reenacted, and this time the covenant promises will be kept.”

<sup>39</sup> Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 127-28.

- d. New Name: “My Delight is in Her” (Heb, *Hephzibah*), “Married” (Heb, *beulah*)
- e. So Shall your “Builder” (or “sons”?) Marry You
- f. God: the “Bridegroom” (Heb *chatan*)
- g. Jerusalem: the “Bride” (Heb, *kalah*)
- h. Adam: gives his bride the name “woman” (*ishi*) (Gen 2:23).<sup>41</sup>
- i. New Creation: “new heavens and new earth” (Isa 64:17-19, 23-25)<sup>42</sup>
- j. Curse of Man Undone: “they shall not labor in vain”
- k. Curse of Woman Undone: “they shall not bear children for calamity”
- l. Curse of Serpent: remains in force Undoing the Fall: “they shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity”
- m. God’s Wedding: the *restoration* of the entire *cosmos*

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<sup>40</sup> See D. Anderson, “Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62,” *Biblica* 67 (1987): 75-80; cited in Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2:581.

<sup>41</sup> It is fascinating to note that in each of the encounters between Jesus and women who symbolize the various peoples of the covenant, he too renames them “woman.” See Matt 15; John 2, 4, 8, 19, and 20.

<sup>42</sup> See D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 280-284; David M. Russell, *The “New Heavens and New Earth”: Hope for Creation in Jewish Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Apocalyptic Literature 1; Philadelphia: Visionary, 1996).

## The Song of Songs

### The Title of the Song

1. Hebrew: *Shîr hashîrîm asher lishlomoh* (“Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s”)
2. Greek: *Asma asmatôn* (the “Song of Songs”)
3. Latin: *Canticum Canticorum* (“Canticle of Canticles”)
4. Hebrew Superlative: “The Greatest Song”
  - a. “God of Gods and Lord of lords” (Deut 10:17)
  - b. “Heaven of Heavens” (Ps 148:4)
  - c. “Holy of Holies” (Exod 26:33-34)

### Authorship and Date of the Song

1. King Solomon:
  - a. Traditional author; mentioned several times in the song (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12)
  - b. Reputed as having composed “1005 songs” (1 Kings 4:32; Sir 47:15-17)  
(Cf. Beatles 250 songs; Elvis 500 songs; Rolling Stones, 500 songs)
2. Unknown Author:
  - a. Hellenistic Jew: poet living in post-exilic period (most modern scholars)
  - b. Oral Tradition: a “wedding song” passed down over generations (no single author)
  - c. Modern scholarship: we simply do not know who wrote the song<sup>43</sup>

### The Genre and Uniqueness of the Song

1. Unique among the books of Jewish and Christian Scripture
2. Erotic Imagery: parallels b/w Song and ancient Egyptian love poetry (ca. 1100 B.C.)<sup>44</sup>
3. Not a single *explicit* reference to God, prayer, or religion
4. Except for Genesis and Psalms, more commented on than any other OT book!<sup>45</sup>
5. Yet regarded in both Jewish and Christian tradition as the apex of Sacred Scripture:

### The Song of Songs in Jewish Tradition

1. Rejection of the erotic/literalistic interpretation:

Rabbi Akiba: “He who warbles the Song of Songs in a banquet hall and makes it into a kind of ditty has no place in the world to come.” (Tosefta, *Sanhedrin* 12:10; cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 101a)

2. The Song is the Biblical “Holy of Holies:

Rabbi Akiba: God forbid!—no man in Israel ever disputed about the Song of Songs that it does not render the hands unclean [i.e., is not Scripture], for *all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.* (Mishnah *Yadayim* 3:4)

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<sup>43</sup> Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (AB 7c; Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 27: “The dating game a played with biblical books like Job and the Song of Songs, as well as with many of the Psalms, remains imprecise and the score is difficult to compute. There are grounds for both the oldest and the youngest estimates.”

<sup>44</sup> See Roland E. Murphy, *The Song of Songs* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 42-48.

<sup>45</sup> Davis, *Song of Songs*, 231.

### 3. The Song is an Allegory of God’s Love for Israel:

Rabbi Akiba: Before all the nations of the world I shall hold forth on the beauties and splendor of Him who spoke and the world came to be! For, lo, the nations of the world keep asking Israel, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so adjure us?” (Song 5:9), that for His sake you die, for His sake you let yourselves be slain, as it is said, “Therefore do the maidens love You” (Song 1:3)—they love You to the point of death!—and it is written, “Nay but for Your sake are we killed...” (Ps 44:23)... But Israel reply to the nations of the world: ‘Have you any notion of Him? Let us tell you a little bit of his glory, “My beloved is white and ruddy...” (Song 5:10) And when the nations of the world hear a little bit of the glory of Him who spoke and the world came to be, they say to Israel, “Let us go along with you, as it is said, “Whither is your Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither has your Beloved turn Him, that we may seek Him with you?” (Song 6:1). But Israel reply to the nations of the world: “You have no part of Him; on the contrary, ‘My beloved is mine, and I am His’ (Song 2:16), “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine” (Song 6:3). (*Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael* 3:49-63)<sup>46</sup>

### 4. The Song of Songs and the Passover Festival:

Later rabbinic tradition further classified the Song as the first of five *megillot*, the “Scrolls” that were read during the great feasts of the liturgical year. Associations of the Song with *Passover* accounts for its initial position in the collection.<sup>47</sup>

## The Song of Songs in Christian Tradition

### 1. The Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies:

Origen of Alexandria: Happy is he who enters the Holy of Holies... Likewise, happy is he who understands the songs [of the Bible] and sings them..., but *happier yet is he who sings the Song of Songs.*” (Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*)<sup>48</sup>

### 2. The Song of Songs and the Mystics:

St. John of the Cross: “At the point of death, ‘he interrupted the prior of the Carmelites who had started to read the prayers of recommendation for the soul. ‘Tell me about the Song of Songs!; this other thing is of no use to me...’ When the verses of the Song were read to him, [he said:] “Oh, what precious pearls!”<sup>49</sup>

### 3. St. Francis de Sales:

Francis de Sales was only seventeen years old in 1584 when he took a course in Paris... on the Song of Songs. He was dazzled. “The Song of Songs... became his favorite book. No one perhaps ‘lived’ it as he did.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 13 n. 55 (English archaisms in translation slightly adapted).

<sup>47</sup> Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 6, n. 18-19, citing *Cant. Rab.* 1:9.4-6; *Mek.* 7:83-86; 13:147-149; 14:23-27, etc. See Ludwig Blau, “Megillot, the Five,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 8:429-431.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Cited in Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 38.

## The Interpretation of the Song of Songs<sup>51</sup>

### 1. The Sexual Interpretation

1. Bridegroom/Lover: Man
2. Bride/Lover: Woman
3. Human Sexual Love is the focus of the poem
4. Examples: Theodore of Mopsuestia and many modern commentaries (Roland Murphy)

Theodore of Mopsuestia: [Solomon] took Pharaoh's daughter as his wife. But she was dark, as all the Egyptian and Ethiopian women are... The Hebrews and their beautiful wives, and the other princesses as well, ridiculed her on account of her unseemliness, her small height and her dark complexion. To avoid any irritation on her part and so that no hostility would result between him and the Pharaoh, Solomon exclusively built for her a house of valuable stones [and decorated it] with gold and silver. During the meals he chanted [the Song of Songs] in her presence in order to honor her, and he made know with it that she was dark yet beautiful and loved by him.<sup>52</sup>

Émile Osty: "*The Song celebrates love, human love, and only human love....* The tons of comments poured over this booklet did not succeed in hiding the truth which is so clear to the eyes of the unprepared reader: *in its literal, first and direct meaning, the Song deals with human love uniting man and woman in marriage.*" (1973)<sup>53</sup>

### 2. The Allegorical Interpretation

1. Bridegroom: YHWH
2. Bride: Israel/Jerusalem
3. Love of YHWH for Israel in salvation history
4. Examples: Ancient Rabbis, *The Targum on Canticles*, Origen, some Church Fathers:

Origen of Alexandria: Located in the middle of the Bible, the Song lifts to its height *the great fundamental image*, going from the first chapters of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation: *mankind has become the bride of God.*<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 33-45.

<sup>52</sup> Paraphrase of the Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia, cited in J. Robert Wright, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 9; Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 299-300. Cf. Council of Constantinople II (553): "If anyone defends the impious Theodore of Mopsuestia... and if anyone does not anathematize him or his impious writings... or [those] who assert that his exegesis is orthodox... let him be anathema." II Constantinople, Canon 12, cited in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 14:315.

<sup>53</sup> Cited in Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 34.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 41.

### 3. The Messianic (Christological) Interpretation

1. Bridegroom: Messiah/Christ
2. Bride: New Jerusalem/Church
3. Coming of the Messiah: Israel's longing for messianic age of salvation
4. Examples: Jewish *Midrash Rabbah*; St. Jerome, Pope St. Gregory the Great, etc.

St. Jerome: Solomon, love of peace and of the Lord, corrects morals, teaches nature, unites *Christ and the church*, and sings *a sweet marriage song to celebrate that holy bridal*. (Jerome, *Letter 53.8*).<sup>55</sup>

Jewish Targum: “My beloved, I have laid [it] up for you” (Song 7:14)...When it shall be the good pleasure of the Lord to redeem his people from exile, *He will say to the King Messiah*... “Arise now, and receive the kingdom I have stored up for you.”<sup>56</sup>

### 4. The Spiritual Interpretation

1. Bridegroom: God
2. Bride: Individual Soul
3. Spiritual Relationship between God and the Individual Soul
4. Examples: St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Bl. John Paul II

St. Therese of Lisieux: “If I had time, I would like to comment on the Song of Songs. I have discovered in this book such profound things about the union of the soul with her beloved.” (St. Therese of Lisieux)<sup>57</sup>

Bl. John Paul II: Your personal journey must be like an original new edition of the famous poem in the Song of Songs. (Bl. John Paul II, Address to French Women Religious, May 30, 1980)<sup>58</sup>

### 5. The Liturgical Interpretation:

1. The Bridegroom: God
2. The Bride: multiple referents
  - a. The Tabernacle
  - b. The Temple
  - c. The City of Jerusalem
  - d. The People of Israel
3. The Love between God and Israel as manifested in *Temple worship*
4. Two Senses:
  - a. Literal Sense: allegory of God's love for Israel
  - b. Spiritual Sense: can be applied to God's love for the Church, the individual Soul
5. Examples: Ellen F. Davis

<sup>55</sup> Cited in Wright, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, 290.

<sup>56</sup> Philip S. Alexander, *The Targum of Canticles* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 188.

<sup>57</sup> Cited in Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 39.

<sup>58</sup> Cited in Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love*, 41.

The approach taken in this commentary is that the Song of Songs is, in a sense, the most biblical of books. That is to say, the poet is throughout in conversation with other biblical writers... As we shall see, the Song is thick with words and images drawn from earlier books. By means of this ‘recycled’ language, the poet places this love song firmly in the context of God’s passionate and troubled relationship with humanity (or, more particularly, with Israel), which is the story the rest of the Bible tells. Far from being a secular composition, the Song is profoundly revelatory... Most briefly stated, the Song is about repairing the damage done by the first disobedience in Eden, what Christian tradition calls “the Fall.”<sup>59</sup>

## 6. The Mariological Interpretation

1. The Bridegroom: God
2. The Bride: the Virgin Mary
3. The Love of God for the Blessed Virgin in her splendor and purity:
4. Examples: St. Ambrose, the *Passing of Mary*, the Roman Missal of Paul VI, etc.
5. Cornelius A. Lapide, S.J.: multiple meanings in the Song<sup>60</sup>
  - a. First Sense: Christ and the Church (*totalis et adaequatus*)
  - b. Second Sense: Christ and the Individual Soul (*literalis et partialis*)
  - c. Third Sense: Christ and the Blessed Virgin (*principalis*)

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<sup>59</sup> Davis, *Song of Songs*, 231.

<sup>60</sup> See Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 198.

## What Are We to Make of the Song of Songs?

### Common Questions

1. How should we interpret the Song? Literally? Allegorically?
2. Who is the Bridegroom?
3. Who is the Bride?
4. When is the marriage consummated? Is it?
5. What do we make of the erotic imagery in the Song?

### The Descriptions of the Bridegroom

3 *As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among young men.*  
 With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.  
 4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love...  
 8 The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains,  
 bounding over the hills.  
 9 My beloved is *like a gazelle, or a young stag.*  
 Behold, there he stands behind our wall, *gazing in at the windows,*  
 looking through the lattice. (Song 2:3-9)

### The Descriptions of the Bride

1 Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful!  
 Your eyes are doves behind your veil.  
 Your hair is like *a flock of goats*, moving down the slopes of Gilead.  
 2 Your teeth are like *a flock of shorn ewes* that have come up from the washing,  
 all of which bear twins, and not one among them is bereaved.  
 3 Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely.  
 Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.  
 4 Your neck is like *the tower of David*, built for an arsenal,  
 whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors.  
 5 Your two breasts are like *two fawns, twins of a gazelle*,  
 that feed among the lilies. (Song 4:1-5)

1 How graceful are your feet in sandals, O queenly maiden!  
 Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand.  
 2 Your navel is *a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine.*  
 Your belly is *a heap of wheat*, encircled with lilies.  
 3 Your two breasts are like *two fawns, twins of a gazelle.*  
 4 Your neck is like an ivory tower.  
 Your eyes are *pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rab'bim.*  
 Your nose is like *a tower of Lebanon, overlooking Damascus.*  
 5 Your head crowns you *like Carmel*, and your flowing locks are *like purple*;  
 a king is held captive in the tresses.  
 6 How fair and pleasant you are, O loved one, delectable maiden!  
 7 You are stately as a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. (Song 7:1-7)

## Who is the Bridegroom in the Song of Songs?

### Him Whom My Soul Loves

“Him whom *my soul* loves”

(Song 1:7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4)

### Love the Lord with all Your Soul

Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one... you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and *with all your soul*, and with all your might.

(Deut 6:4-5)

From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him, *if you search after him* with all your heart and *with all your soul*. (Deut 4:29)

### The Bridegroom’s Mouth

O that he would kiss me with kisses *of his mouth!*

(Song 1:2)

### The Lord Speaks Mouth to Mouth

With him [Moses] I speak *mouth to mouth* clearly and not in dark speech; and *he beholds the form of the LORD* (Num 12:8)

### He is a King

Draw me after you, let us make haste; *the king has drawn me into his chambers*. (Song 1:4)

### The Lord is King over Israel

*The LORD is king* for ever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land. (Ps 10:16)

### We Rejoice in Him

*We* will exult and *rejoice* in you (Song 1:4)

### We Rejoice in the Lord

Let us *rejoice* and be glad *in him* [the LORD]! (Ps 118:24)

### He is a Shepherd

Tell me... *where you pasture your flock*, where you make it lie down (Song 1:7)

### The Lord is my Shepherd

*The LORD is my shepherd*, I shall not want, He *makes me lie down* in green pastures... (Ps 23:1-2)

### His Speech is Most Sweet

His speech is *most sweet*, and he is altogether *desirable*... (Song 5:16)

### The Law of the Lord is Sweet and Desirable

The ordinances of the LORD are true... more to be *desired* are they than *gold*; *sweeter also than honey*, and drippings of the honeycomb. (Ps 19:9-10)

### He is Mine, and I am His

I am *my beloved’s* and *he is mine*.

(Song 6:3)

### The LORD is Your and You are His

I will take you for *my people*, and I will be *your God*.

(Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12)

## Who is the Bride in the Song of Songs?

### She's Like the Curtains of Solomon

I am very dark, but beautiful,  
like the tents of Kedar  
*like the curtains of Solomon*  
(Song 1:5)

### She is Like a Vineyard

My own *vineyard* I have not kept!  
(Song 1:6)

### She is Like a Rose of Sharon

I am *a rose* of Sharon,  
(Song 2:1)

### She is Like a Lily of the Valley

I am... *a lily* of the valley  
*a lily* among brambles,  
so is my love among maidens.  
(Song 2:2)

### She Comes Up from the Desert

*What is that coming up from the wilderness,*  
*like a column of smoke...? Behold, it is*  
*the litter [or "bed"] of Solomon!*  
About it are sixty mighty men of  
the mighty men of Israel .... (Song 3:6-7)

### She Smells like Frankincense and Myrrh The Smells of the Tabernacle

*What is that coming up from the wilderness,*  
*perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,*  
with all the fragrant powders of the merchant? ...and you shall make of these *a sacred*

### The Curtain in Solomon's Temple

*[Solomon] made the curtain [in the Temple]*  
of blue and purple and crimson fabrics  
of fine linen, and worked cherubim on it.  
(2 Chron 3:14)

### The Beloved Vineyard of Israel

Israel is a "vine" planted by God  
on the mountain of Jerusalem  
(Exod 15:17; Ps 80:8)

Isaiah's "*love song*" of the "beloved" (God)  
and "*his vineyard*" (Israel)  
(see Isa 5:1-10)

### The Eschatological Rose of Sharon

The desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like *the rose* it shall blossom abundantly,  
the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
*the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.*  
They shall see the glory of the LORD,  
the majesty of our God...  
*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,*  
*and the ears of the deaf unstopped...*  
(Isa 35:1-6)

### The Blossoming Lily of Israel

[Israel] will blossom *like the lily*  
they shall again sit in his shadow  
(Hos 14:5)

### Israel Follows the Pillar of Cloud

And the LORD went before them by day  
*in a pillar of cloud* to lead them along  
the way, and by night in a pillar of fire...  
(Exod 13:21-22)

(Song 3:6)

*anointing oil blended as by the perfumer...  
And you shall anoint with it the tent of  
Meeting and the ark of the testimony, and  
the table and all its utensils (Exod 30:22-27)*

And this is the law of the cereal offering.  
The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the  
LORD, in front of the altar. And one shall  
take from it a handful of the fine flour of the  
cereal offering with its oil and *all the  
frankincense which is on the cereal offering,*  
and burn this as a memorial portion on the  
altar, *a pleasing odor to the LORD.*  
(Lev 6:14-16)

**The Scent of Lebanon**

the scent of your garments is like  
the scent of Lebanon.  
(Song 4:11)

**The Cedars of Lebanon in Jerusalem**

[Solomon] built the house of the Forest of  
Lebanon... with three rows of cedar pillars  
with cedar beams upon the pillars.  
(1 Kings 7:2)

**Like a Garden of Pomegranates**

*A garden locked is my sister, my bride,  
a garden locked, a fountain sealed.  
Your shoots are an orchard of  
Pomegranates with all choicest fruits...*  
(Song 4:12-13)

**The Pomegranates in the Temple**

In front of the house [Solomon] made two  
pillars thirty-five cubits high... He made  
*chains like a necklace* and put them on the  
tops of the pillars; and *he made a hundred  
pomegranates, and put them on the chains*  
(2 Chron 3:15-16)

**Like a Fountain of Living Water**

A garden locked is my sister, my bride...  
A garden fountain, a well of living water,  
And flowing streams of Lebanon.  
(Song 4:15)

**The Living Water of the Sanctuary**

A glorious throne is set on high from the  
beginning is *the place of our sanctuary.*  
O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake  
thee... have forsaken the LORD, *the  
fountain of living water.* (Jer 17:12-13)

On *the holy mount* stands the city he  
founded; *the LORD loves the gates of Zion  
more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.*  
Glorious things are spoken of you, *O city of  
God...* Singers and dancers alike say, "*All  
my springs are in you.*" (Psalm 87:1-3, 7)

**Lovely like Tirzah and Jerusalem**

You are *beautiful as Tirzah,* my love,  
*comely as Jerusalem...* (Song 6:4)

**The Capital Cities of Israel**

Tirzah: capital of Northern Kingdom.  
Jerusalem: capital of Southern Kingdom.

## Is the Marriage in the Song Ever Consummated?

### The Bridegroom Disappears

2 I slept, but my heart was awake. Hark! my beloved is knocking.

"Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one;  
for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."

3 I had put off my garment, how could I put it on?

I had bathed my feet, how could I soil them?

4 My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me.

5 I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh,  
my fingers with liquid myrrh, upon the handles of the bolt.

6 *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone.*

My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not;

I called him, but he gave no answer.

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him  
I am sick with love.* (Song 5:2-8)

### The Ending of the Song

1 O that you were like a brother to me, that nursed at my mother's breast!

If I met you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me.

2 I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother,  
and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I would give you spiced wine to drink,  
the juice of my pomegranates.

3 *O that his left hand were under my head, and that his right hand embraced me!*

4 *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up nor awaken love  
until it please...*

6 Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death,  
jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
a most vehement flame.

7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.

If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

8 *We have a little sister, and she has no breasts.*

*What shall we do for our sister, on the day when she is spoken for?*

9 If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver;  
but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

10 *I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;  
then I was in his eyes as one who brings peace.*

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Ba'al-ha'mon; he let out the vineyard to keepers;  
each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.

12 My vineyard, my very own, is for myself; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand,  
and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.

13 O you who dwell in the gardens, my companions are listening for your voice;  
let me hear it.

14 *Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag  
upon the mountains of spices.* (Song 8:1-14)

## The Bridegroom in Jewish Scripture

### Introduction

1. Setting Jesus' words and deeds in context.
2. Bridegroom in Jewish Scripture
3. Bridegroom in Jewish Tradition.
4. Jesus as Bridegroom in the Gospels.

### Adam as the First Bridegroom (Gen 2)

1. Immediately following the creation of "man" (Hebrew *'adam*) (Gen 2:4-16):
2. God addresses the issue of man's need for a bride (Gen 2:18-25)
  - a. "It is not good that man should be alone"
  - b. "I will make him a helper fit for him"
  - c. The creation of Woman (Hb *ishah*) from Man (Hb *ish*)
  - d. Foundation of all Marriages (Gen 2:22)
3. Adam introduced in Scripture as the very *first* bridegroom
4. Woman: "Bone of my bones and *flesh of my flesh*" (Gen 2:23)
5. Flesh and Bone = family
  - a. Laban to Jacob: "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" (Gen 29:14).
  - b. Israel to David: "Behold, we are your bone and flesh" (2 Sam 5:1).

Victor Hamilton: Adam's words act as a kind of "biblical counterpart to the modern marriage ceremony," in which the bridegroom declares both his intention to take a woman as his wife and pledges his fidelity to her as family.<sup>61</sup>

### Adam is No Ordinary Bridegroom (Gen 1-2):

1. A Royal Bridegroom: Adam is *a king*. (Gen 1:28).
  - a. "Have dominion" (*radah*): "royal language" (see Psalm 72:1-11).<sup>62</sup>
  - b. First bridegroom is also the first king of creation.
2. A Priestly Bridegroom: God places Adam in Garden (Gen 2:15)
  - a. To "guard/keep" it (Hebrew *shamar*)
  - b. To "work/serve" it (Hebrew *'abad*)
  - c. Priests "guard" (*shamar*) the sanctuary from intruders
  - d. Priests "work" (*'abad*) in the sanctuary by offering sacrifice  
(Num 3:7-8; 18:26; 18:5-6; 1 Kings 9:6-7; 2 Chronicles 23:19).

G. K. Beale: In Genesis, "the Garden of Eden was the first archetypal temple in which the first man worshipped God" as the primordial priest.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> See Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 1:180; Walter Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone (GN 2:23a)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970): 532-42.

<sup>62</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 1:137-38 (emphasis altered), citing 1 Kings 4:24; Ps 110:2. See also BDB, 921-22.

<sup>63</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66, citing also Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism"; Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 57-103; Parry, "The Garden of Eden," 126-51.

3. A Supernatural Bride-Price: nuptial offering or “marriage gift”
  - a. Bride-price (Hb *mohar*): money or marriage gift from bridegroom
  - b. Adam has no money or possessions to give
  - c. What is Adam’s ‘gift’? *His own “flesh”*
  - c. English translations: somewhat misleading, translate (*tzela*‘) as “rib” (RSV)
  - d. Elsewhere in Scripture, the word *tzela*‘ is translated as “side,”<sup>64</sup>
  - e. More accurate translation:

God “took one of his *sides* and enclosed it with flesh. Then the LORD God built into a woman *the side* that he had taken from the man” (Gen 2:22).

#### 4. First Bridegroom: Miraculous Sacrifice for a Miraculous Bride

#### **The Fall of the Bridegroom (Gen 3)<sup>65</sup>**

1. Why does Adam sin and fall?
  - a. Malice Theory: declaration of war against God (problem: Adam was not evil)
  - b. Naïveté: Adam is confused by the serpent (problem: preternatural intelligence; 1 Tim 2:13-14 “Adam was not deceived”)
2. The Bridegroom Faces Death (Gen 2:8-9, 15-17)
  - a. Eat of the Tree: “You shall *die die*” (Gen 2:15-17)
  - b. “Die Die” = Hebrew superlative, ‘worst death’ (cf. “good good” in Gen 1:31)
  - c. Physical Death vs. Spiritual Death:

Philo of Alexandria: “The death of man is the separation of the soul from the body... but *the death of the soul* is the decay of virtue and the bringing in of wickedness. *It is for this reason that God says not only ‘die’ but ‘die the death’, indicating not the death common to us all, but that special death, which is that of the soul becoming entombed in passions and wickednesses of all kinds. And this death is practically the antithesis of the death which awaits us all.*” (*Legum Allegoriae* 1.105-108)<sup>66</sup>

- d. How would Adam know what death was if he was immortal?

Scott Hahn: Could such threats... hold any meaning to an immortal man? Yes, they could and they did. Though God had made man preternaturally immortal, He had also made Adam’s body, which was mortal by nature, with a healthy, instinctive abhorrence of physical death. Otherwise, His threatened punishment— “the day that you eat of it you will die”— would make no sense.<sup>67</sup>

#### 3. The Bridegroom and the Serpent (Gen 3:1-7)

<sup>64</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 1:179.

<sup>65</sup> In this section, I am deeply indebted to the theological exegesis in Scott Hahn, *First Comes Love: Finding Your Family in the Church and the Trinity* (New York: Image, 2002), 62-79.

<sup>66</sup> Cited in M. Kolarcik, *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991), 77, and in Hahn, *First Comes Love*, 65, 187.

<sup>67</sup> Hahn, *First Comes Love*, 66.

- a. The Serpent addresses both Eve *and Adam!*
- b. Second-Person-Plural Verbs: “*You* (pl.) will not die...” (Gen 3:4)
- c. Adam “was with her” (Gen 3:6; left out in RSV!)

Scott Hahn: “The serpent speaks not to one person, but to the couple. But who responds? Only Eve? Where then is the man whom God commanded to guard the garden. He’s there. The serpent addresses him, but Adam is silent.”<sup>68</sup>

#### 4. Why does Adam remain silent?

- a. The Serpent is an *Evil Angel*
- b. He is Satan, the Devil (cf. Hb *nahash* in Isa 27:1; Job 26:13)

Scripture: And *the great dragon* was thrown down, *that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan*, the deceiver of the whole world... (Revelation 12:7, 9)

Tradition: *Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God...* Scripture and the Church’s Tradition see in this being a *fallen angel*, called “Satan” or the “devil.” The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: “The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing.” (CCC 391)

#### 5. Human Reaction to Angels in the Bible? Always “Fear”

- a. Joshua before “the commander of the army of the LORD” (Josh 5:14)
- b. Isaiah before the Seraphim: “Woe is me! For I am lost!” (Isa 6:5)
- c. Daniel before the Angel: prostrate and “trembling” (Dan 10:2-21)
- d. Mary before Gabriel: “Be not afraid!” (Luke 2:9-11)
- e. Guards at Jesus’ Tomb: “for fear of him... became like dead men” (Matt 27:4)

#### 6. Adam’s Refusal to Pray and Sacrifice:

Scott Hahn: Now, if indeed the serpent was a murderous beast [and an *evil angel*], and if Adam did indeed dread death, then suddenly we can understand our forefather’s silence. *He feared his own death*. Moreover, he feared his physical death more than he feared his spiritual death—that is, offending God by sin. The serpent addressed Adam, but he never responded. *Nor did he call out to God for help. In pride and in fear, he kept silent...* Knowing the serpent’s power, Adam was unwilling to lay down his own life—for the sake of his love of God, or to save the life of his beloved. That refusal to sacrifice was essential to Adam’s original sin...<sup>69</sup>

#### 7. The Devil and the Fear of Death (see Heb 2:14-15)

- a. The Devil: He who “has *the power of death*”
- b. Human Beings: through “*fear of death* were subject to lifelong bondage”

<sup>68</sup> Hahn, *First Comes Love*, 68.

<sup>69</sup> Hahn, *First Comes Love*, 69-70.

## The Customs of the Bridegroom

### The Love of the Bridegroom:

1. Marriages in ancient Israel were often arranged by family members;
2. Nevertheless, bridegroom was often described as being *in love* with his bride.<sup>70</sup>
3. Example: Jacob's Love for Rachel

“So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, *and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her*” (Genesis 29:20).

Raphael Patai: “Nowhere in world literature can one find a more succinct and more touching description of enduring passion.”<sup>71</sup>

4. Song of Songs: “love” (Hebrew *'ahabah*) “as strong as death” (Song 8:6).
5. Psalm 19 and the Bridegroom on his Wedding Morn:

“The heavens are telling the glory of God... In them he has set a tent for *the sun, which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber* (Hb *chuppah*) and like a strong man runs his course with joy” (Psalm 19:5; cf. *ad orietum*)

### The Blood-Sacrifice of the Bridegroom:

1. “Bridegroom”: rooted in ANE word, “one who is circumcised” (Hebrew *chatan*)<sup>72</sup>
2. “Father In Law”= “the one who circumcises” (Hebrew *choten*)  
(Ancient fathers obviously wanted their future sons-in-law to take marriage to their daughters very, very seriously!)
3. Example: Moses and Zipporah:

At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him [Moses] and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched Moses' feet with it, and said, “*Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!*” So he let him alone. Then it was that she said, “You are a bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision. (Exodus 4:24-26)<sup>73</sup>

4. Marriage: associated with a *blood covenant*—a sacred family bond that involved suffering and sacrifice.

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<sup>70</sup> See Raphael Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 47-49.

<sup>71</sup> Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible*, 47.

<sup>72</sup> See Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 368.

<sup>73</sup> For a variety of explanations, see Hamilton, *Exodus*; Blickenstaff, ‘*While the Bridegroom is with Them*’, 17-18.

**The Bride-Price (*Mohar*) of the Bridegroom:**

1. Bridegroom provides a “*marriage gift*” or “bride price” (Hebrew *mohar*)
2. Given to his father-in-law to in order to be able to wed his bride (e.g., Gen 34:12; Exod 22:17; 1 Sam 18:25).<sup>74</sup>
3. Commonplace: jewelry or other valuables, e.g., “fifty shekels of silver” (Deut 22:29).
4. Example: David and King Saul’s daughter Michael:

Then Saul said, “Thus you say to David, ‘*The king desires no marriage present except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines...*’” Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the kings’ son-in-law. Before the time had expired, David arose and went, along with his men, and killed two hundred of the Philistines; and David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. And Saul gave him his daughter Michael for a wife. (1 Samuel 18:25-27)

5. Becoming a bridegroom involved *personal sacrifice*.
6. Becoming a Bridegroom: a *bloody* and *dangerous* business.

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<sup>74</sup> Although the translation of *mohar* as ‘bride-price’ has often led to the idea that ancient Israelite marriage was the equivalent of purchasing property, recent scholarship has shown this to be untrue. See Collins, “Marriage, Divorce, and Family in Second Temple Judaism,” 113-15, citing J. L. Comaroff, ed., *The Meaning of Marriage Payments* (New York: Academic Press, 1980). Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible*, 55-60.

## Tobias the New Bridegroom

### Tobias, His Bride, and the Demon<sup>75</sup>

1. The Book of Tobit:
  - a. Assyrian Exile: Tobit and His Family
  - b. Tobit: righteous Israelite, faithful to the kingdom of Jerusalem
  - c. Mission of Tobias: travel to Media, to retrieve money
  - d. Angel Raphael: “a good angel with go with him” (Tob 5:11)
2. Tobias and the Fish (Tob 6:1-8)
  - a. Incense: heart and liver burned to “make a smoke”
  - b. Anointing Oil: made from the gall, power to “cure” sickness
3. Sarah: Tobias has the familial right to her and her inheritance (Tob 6:9-12)
4. Tobias, Sarah, and the Demon (Tob 6:13-14)
  - a. Seven husbands: died in “the bridal chamber”
  - b. Tobias: *fear of death* at the hand of *an evil angel*

*I am afraid that if I go in [to the bridal chamber] I will die as those before me did, for a demon is in love with her and he harms no one except those who approach her. So now I fear that I may die and bring the lives of my father and mother to the grave in sorrow on my account.* (Tob 6:13-14)

5. Raphael’s Response to Tobias (Tob 6:15-17)
  - a. Obedience: Remember your fathers commandment to take a wife
  - b. Faith: “Do not worry...”; tonight “she will be given to you in marriage”
  - c. Liturgy: burn “incense” from the heart and liver of the fish
  - d. Prayer: “rise up both of you, and cry out to the merciful God”
  - e. Courage: “Do not be afraid, *for she was destined for you from eternity*”
  - f. Love: “*You will save her...*” “*Tobias fell in love with her...*”
  - g. Hope: “I suppose that you will have children by her.”

### Tobias and His Wedding Night

1. The Meeting of Tobias and Raguel (Tob 7:1-8)
2. The Wedding Ceremony: led by the Father (Tob 7:8-15)
  - a. Bridegroom takes the Bride “by the hand”
  - c. Father Gives the bride “to be his wife”
  - d. Bridegroom instructed to take the Bride to his “father”
  - e. Father Blesses the Couple
  - f. Marriage “Contract”: later Jewish tradition, *ketubah*
  - g. Banquet: “then they began to eat”
3. Tobias’ Wedding Night (Tob 8:1-9)
  - a. Angelic Assistance: Exorcism of Asmodeus
  - b. Prayer: “Sister, get u, and let us pray...”
  - c. Chastity: “I am not taking this sister of mine out of lust...”

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<sup>75</sup> For a detailed commentary on this section, see Carey A. Moore, *Tobit* (Anchor Bible 40A; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 215-48.

**Tobias as a *New Adam*: Threefold Effects of the Fall**

1. Explicitly Models His Role on Marriage of Adam and Eve (Tob 8:6)
2. Tobias vs. First Adam:

Adam

1. Fails to protect his bride from the Serpent
2. Says and does nothing In the face of serpent's attack
3. Evil spirit triumphs
4. He and his bride sin and suffer spiritual death

Tobias

1. Protects Sarah from the demon Asmodeus
2. Cries out to God in prayer offers sacrifice in obedience
3. Evil spirit is bound
4. He and Sarah pray and are saved from death

3. Harmony between Man and God: restored because Tobias
  - a. "Remembers the words of Raphael" (Tob 8:2; contrast Adam)
4. Harmony between Man and Woman: restored because of Tobias<sup>76</sup>
  - a. Willingness to Sacrifice Himself (contrast Adam)
  - b. Chaste Intention of Tobias towards His Bride
5. Harmony between Man and Creation:
  - a. Tobias' Prayer: "Let the whole creation bless you..." (Tob 8:5)<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The "language of the body" becomes the language of the liturgy: *it is anchored in the deepest way possible, namely, by being set into the mystery of the "beginning."* *The need for a full purification goes hand in hand with this anchoring.* As they approach the divine source of the "language of the body," the new spouses sense this need and express it. Tobias says, "Now it is not out of lust that I take this sister of mine, but with rightness of intention" (Tob 8:7). (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 606, emphasis added).

<sup>77</sup> On this vast, one can say "cosmic," background, both recall with gratitude the creation of man, "male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 604).

## **Tobias the Bridegroom in John Paul II's *Man and Woman He Created Them*<sup>78</sup>**

### **Their Love Must Face the Test of Life-or-Death on the Wedding Night**

*Thus, from the very first moment, Tobias' love had to face the test of life-or-death. The words about love, "strong as death," spoken by the spouses in the Song of Songs in the transport of their hearts, here takes on the character of a real test. If love proves to be strong as death, this happens above all in the sense that Tobias (and Sarah with him) go without hesitating toward this test. They are later verified, because in this test of life-or-death, life has the victory, that is, during the test of the wedding night, love is revealed as stronger than death. This happens on account of the prayer... (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 596, emphasis added).*

### **The Test: Tobias Must Be Willing to Share His Bride's Lot**

The fact that Tobias loves Sarah "to the point of no longer being able to draw his heart away from her" (Tob 6:19) finds its expression above all *in his readiness to share in her lot and to remain together "for better or for worse," whatever their lot. It is not eros that characterizes Tobias' love for Sarah, but from the beginning this love is confirmed and validated by ethos, that is, by the will and the choice of values. (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 598).*<sup>79</sup>

### **The Nuptial Mystery and the Liturgy**

On their wedding night, they decide above all *to speak in unison*—and this unison is nothing other than prayer. In that unison, which is prayer, man and woman are united not only through the communion of hearts, but also through the union of both in facing the great test, the test of life-or-death... *The prayer of Tobias and Sarah becomes in some way the deepest model of the liturgy, whose words is a word of power...* (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 602, 604, emphasis added)

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<sup>78</sup> On all this, see John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (trans. Michael Waldstein; Boston: Pauline, 2006), 592-612.

<sup>79</sup> I see things a bit differently from John Paul II here: it is not *eros* that characterizes Tobias' love for Sarah, but *agape*, self-sacrificial love, that willingly lays down its life for the good of the other.

## The Riddle of John the Baptist

### The Riddle of John the Baptist (John 3)

1. Jewish Prophets: expectation of a new wedding covenant (golden thread)
2. John the Baptist: “more than a prophet” (Matt 11:9; Luke 7:26)
3. The Message of John:
  - a. Judgment: repentance from sin; wheat and chaff (Matt 3:11-12; Luke 3:15-17)
  - b. Restoration of Israel: signs of a *new exodus*
  - c. New Exodus: “voice crying in the wilderness” (Matt 3:1-3; Mark 1:2-5; Luke 3:1-6; John 1:19-23; compare Isaiah 40)
4. Is John the Baptist the Messiah of Jewish Expectation?
  - a. “I am not the Messiah” (Gk *Christos*) (John 1:19-20)
5. The Riddle of John the Baptist
  - a. I am not the Messiah
  - b. How do you recognize who *is* the Messiah?

You yourselves bear me witness that I said, *I am not the Messiah*, but I am the one who has been sent before him. *He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom.* Therefore this joy of mine is now fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:28-30)<sup>80</sup>

6. Questions:
  - a. Why does John identify the Messiah as the Bridegroom?
  - b. In Jewish Prophecy, isn't *God*—not the Messiah—the Bridegroom?
  - c. What is “the friend of the Bridegroom?”
  - d. What is “the voice of the bridegroom”?

### The Messianic Bridegroom in Jewish Scripture (Isaiah 61)

1. The Messiah is “the bridegroom,” (Greek *numphios*).
2. How to Recognize the Messiah: he “who has the bride” (Greek *numphe*) (John 3:29).
3. John is telling his Jewish audience:
  - a. ‘I am not the Messiah, because I am not the Bridegroom,
  - b. and I do not have the Bride.’
4. John’s Words: appear to be a kind of riddle or “parable.”<sup>81</sup>
  - a. Jewish Prophets: “The” bridegroom is *God*, not the messianic king of Israel (see Hosea 2-3; Isaiah 54, 62; Jeremiah 3, 31; Ezekiel 16, etc.).<sup>82</sup>
  - b. John’s Teaching: “the Messiah” is identified as the bridegroom.
  - c. John is *first explicit witness to the idea of the Bridegroom Messiah*

<sup>80</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>81</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 222.

<sup>82</sup> According to Jeremias, “*numphe, numphios*,” 1101, “Nowhere in the OT [Old Testament] is the Messiah presented as a bridegroom.” As we will see below, this is probably putting it too strongly, since a good case can be made that the messianic figure in Isaiah 61 is compared to a bridegroom.

5. Possible background for John's words in Jewish Scripture (Isa 61:1-4, 10-11)

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion [Jerusalem]—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning... They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations... I will make an everlasting covenant with them... all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed...*

*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall exalt in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself as a priest, and a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. (Isaiah 61:1-4, 10-11)*

- a. "Anointed One" (Hebrew *mashiah*; Greek *christos*) (Isa 61:1)
- b. "Bridegroom" (Hebrew *chatan*; Greek *numphios*) (Isa 61:10).
- c. Messiah will be clothed in "garments," "robe," and "diadem" of a Jewish bridegroom.<sup>83</sup>

**The Bridegroom Messiah in Later Rabbinic Tradition (*Pesikta Rabbati* 37)**

1. Later Rabbinic Tradition not only interprets Isaiah 61 as messianic.
2. It also identifies the Messiah as the Bridegroom:

Another comment: "*As a bridegroom puts on a priestly diadem*" (Isa 61:10). *This text teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, will put upon Ephraim, our true Messiah, a garment whose splendor will stream forth from world's end to world's end; and Israel will make use of his light and say: 'Blessed is the hour in which he was created! Blessed is the womb whence he came! Blessed is the generation whose eyes behold him! Blessed is the eye which yearned and waited for him... Blessed is the eye which merits seeing him, the utterance of whose tongue is pardon and forgiveness for Israel... Blessed are the forbears of the man who merited the goodness of the world, the Messiah, hidden for the eternity [to come].'* (*Pesikta Rabbati* 37:2)<sup>84</sup>

3. Just as John interpreted Isa 61 as a prophecy of the Bridegroom Messiah.
4. So too did some later rabbis expect that God would clothe the Messiah in the glorious garments of a Jewish bridegroom.

<sup>83</sup> See Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*.

<sup>84</sup> Trans. William G. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati: Homiletical Discourses for Festal Days and Special Sabbaths* (2 vols.; Yale Judaica Series; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

**John is the “Best Man” of the Messiah (John 3:29-30)**

1. John the Baptist: “the friend of the bridegroom” (John 3:29).
2. Jewish Scripture: never refers to such a figure
3. Jewish Tradition: Bridegroom’s “Friend”
  - a. Acts as “groomsman” (Heb *shoshbin*) (Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 3:5).<sup>85</sup>
  - b. Betrothal given to *shoshbin* for safekeeping (*Exodus Rabbah* 46:1 on 34:1).<sup>86</sup>
  - c. Acts as witness at the wedding (*Deuteronomy Rabbah* 3:16)  
(cf. contemporary ‘best man’ and ‘maid of honor’)<sup>87</sup>
  - d. Being chosen as such was an honor and a joy (*Exodus Rabbah* 20:8).
4. Ancient Jewish Tradition about Adam’s “Best Man”:

“And he brought her to the man” (Gen 2:22). Rabbai Jeremiah ben Eleazar said: This teaches that [*God*] acted as best man (*Hebrew shoshbin*) to Adam. Here the Torah teaches a maxim of behavior, that a man of eminence should associated himself with a lesser man in acting as best man, and he should not take it amiss. (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 61a)

4. John’s Words: ‘I am not the Messiah, but I *am* his best-man’.<sup>88</sup>
5. John’s Mission:
  - a. To prepare the wedding party for the coming of the bridegroom.
  - b. To recede from view, now that the Bridegroom is coming:
 

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30)  
(cf. priest in the liturgy of the Eucharist)

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<sup>85</sup> On the *shoshbin*, see Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 579-80.

<sup>86</sup> Jeremias, “*numphe, numphios*,” 1101, n. 20.

<sup>87</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:579. Indeed, this role was so God acted as Adam’s “best man” (*Abot. R. Nat.* 8, §23 B; *b. Ber.* 61a ; *Gen. Rab.* 18:3). Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:580.

<sup>88</sup> So Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 223; C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 386. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:579, thinks it possible, but is somewhat less definite. In this regard, it is worth noting that Joachim Jeremias’ theory that John’s reference to the “voice of the bridegroom” refers to the custom of the best man waiting to hear the sounds of the marital consummation on the wedding night is unwarranted. For one thing, as Craig Keener points out, it is the *bride’s shoshbin*, not the groom’s, who gives the evidence of bridal virginity (see *Numbers Rabbah* 18:12). Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:580; Jeremias, “*numphe, numphios*,” *TDNT* 4:1101.

**The “Voice of the Bridegroom” (Jeremiah 33)**

1. John: “rejoices” at the sound of the Messiah’s “voice” (John 3:29).
2. Natural Interpretation: rejoices at the coming of the focus of the wedding party.
3. Ancient Jewish Scripture: allusion to a biblical prophecy:<sup>89</sup>:

Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, ‘It is a waste without man or beast’, in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate... *there shall be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness/joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride*, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD... For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD. Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. *In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.* In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely... For thus says the LORD: *David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel...* (Jeremiah 33:10-11, 14-17)

**The Voice of the Bridegroom in Jewish Tradition: Wedding Blessing**

1. Traditional Jewish “blessing of bridegrooms” (Hebrew *berakoth chatanim*).
2. Assumed in earliest rabbinic writings (Mishnah, *Megillah* 4:3; Tosefta, *Meg.* 3:14).
3. The Final Blessings Echo the Words of Jeremiah 33 and John the Baptist:

5. Blessed are you, O Lord our King, God of the universe, who has created *joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride*, rejoicing, song, mirth, delight, love, brotherhood, peace, and companionship.

6. *Soon, O Lord our God, may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; the voice of the singing of the bridegrooms from their canopies, and of youths from their feasts of song. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makes the bridegroom to rejoice with the bride.*” (Babylonian Talmud, *Ketuboth* 7b-8a).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Above all, see McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God*, 50-58.

<sup>90</sup> Soncino Talmud translation, slightly adapted.

## The Wedding at Cana

### The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11)<sup>91</sup>

1. There was a “Wedding” or “Marriage Feast” (Gk *gamos*) at Cana (John 2:1)
2. Mary’s Implicit Request: “They have no wine” (John 2:3)
3. Jesus’ (Strange) Response (John 2:4)
  - a. “Woman, what [is that] to you and to me?” (Gk *ti emoi kai soi*;)
    - b. “My hour (Gk *hora*) has not yet come.”
4. Mary’s Directions: “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5)
5. The Six Stone Jars of Water (John 2:6-8)
  - a. For the “Jewish rites of purification (Gk *katharismos*)
  - b. Size: “twenty or thirty gallons” (b/w 120-180 gallons!)
  - c. Filled and Given to the “steward of the feast” (Gk *architriklinos*)
6. The Steward’s Response (John 2:9-10)
  - a. Unaware of the source of the wine
  - b. Calls “the bridegroom” (Gk *numphios*)
  - c. Custom: serve the “good wine” first, then “the lesser”
  - d. Bridegroom: “you have kept the good wine (Gk *kalon oinon*) until now”
7. Questions:
  - a. What exactly is Mary’s request?
  - b. Why does Jesus respond in the way he does? Over-reaction? Rude?
  - c. What does Jesus mean by his “hour”?
  - d. After appearing to reject her request, why does Jesus still provide wine?
  - e. What is the meaning of the miracle and the steward’s response?
  - f. Why is this “the first of his signs”?

### Mary’s Words and Jesus’ Response

1. The Problem of Running Short on Wine:
  - a. Wedding Feast: 7 Days; food and drink are major concern
  - b. Jewish context: wine a necessary part of festive occasions (cf. *Tosefta* 3:8).<sup>92</sup>
  - c. Wine not just for pleasure, but certain Jewish blessings:
    - (e.g., “blessing of the bridegroom” (b. *Ketuboth* 7a-8b).<sup>93</sup>
2. Mary’s Words:
  - a. A simple statement of fact by an observant female guest.
  - b. An implicit request for Jesus to do something about the problem.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:492-492-516; Adeline Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 23-42.

<sup>92</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:501. For example, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls describes a Jewish wedding as “a feast for seven [day]s, and ate and drank during the feast, and rejoiced” (*4QVisions of Amram*<sup>c</sup> [4Q545 frag. 1 col. 1:6]). See also Goodenough and the ABD on Wine in ancient Judaism, and Safrai, “Home and Family,” 747.

<sup>93</sup> See Safrai, “Home and Family,” 759.

<sup>94</sup> As Craig Keener points out: “Simply stating the need, as she does, is an adequately explicit request.” Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:503.

3. Jesus Addresses Mary as “Woman”:
  - a. “Woman” (Greek *gunai*): *sounds* disrespectful in English translation, but isn’t
  - b. Jesus uses “Woman” to address other women, without any apparent disrespect (John 4:21; 20:13-15; Matt 15:28; Luke 13:12; 22:5).
  - c. Jesus addresses his mother as “Woman” (*gunai*) on the Cross (John 19:26).
  - d. “Honor your mother”: one of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20).<sup>95</sup>
4. Jesus’ Question: “What is that to me and to you?”
  - a. Greek: “What to me and to you?” (*ti emoi kai soi*;)
    - b. Hebrew parallels: often negative, a rebuke, a rebuff, or to distance two people (cf. Judges 11:12; 1 Kings 17:18; 2 Kings 3:13)

Craig Blomberg rightly notes, “Jesus’ reply is not quite as rude in the Semitic original that it reflects as in some English translations...”<sup>96</sup>

- c. Meaning of Expression: largely determined by *context* and tone
  - d. Most plausible interpretation: a respectful dismissal of the problem of the wine running short as not being a concern for him or Mary.
5. But why does Jesus Say His “Hour” Has Not Yet Come?

### **Mary’s Request and the Wine of the Messianic Banquet**

1. Mary’s Words: more than a mundane observation; an allusion to Jewish Scripture
2. Isaiah’s prophecy of the people longing for the wine of salvation:

*The wine mourns, the vine languishes, all the merry-hearted sigh. The mirth of the timbrels is stilled, the noise of the jubilant has ceased, the mirth of the lyre is stilled. Nor more do they drink wine with singing; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it. The city of chaos [=Jerusalem] is broken down, every house is shut up so that none can enter. There is an outcry in the streets for wine; all joy has reached its eventide; the gladness of the earth is banished. (Isaiah 24:7-11)*

3. Eschatological banquet: God’s response to this outcry for “wine”:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth... It will be said on that day, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (Isaiah 25:6-9)

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<sup>95</sup> For texts on honoring one’s parents in Judaism, see Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:505 n. 135, for an extensive list.

<sup>96</sup> Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel*, 86.

## 4. What is Mary's Request: the hour of the messianic banquet:

Frank Moore Cross: The account of the miracle at Cana has frequently been held to have Eucharistic overtones. In any case Jesus' reply to his mother when told that the wine had failed is obscure, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." Normally, "*the hour*" refers elsewhere in John to his Passion and death. Why does Jesus refuse (at least at first) to provide the wine at the feast because his "hour" has not come? Perhaps Jesus is portrayed here as alluding to the day when he properly will provide wine as host at the Messianic feast.<sup>97</sup>

5. Implication: the Messianic Banquet is a *wedding banquet*.**Jesus' Response and the Hour of His Passion**

1. Jesus' Response: clearly assumes some weighty *implicit* request.
2. This alone explains the reply: "my hour has not yet come."
3. Mary's implicit request: places Jesus in the role the Jewish bridegroom
3. Jesus declares that his own "hour" has not yet come.<sup>98</sup>

Adeline Fehribach: "What does this problem of no wine have to do with you and me? My wedding hour has not yet come."<sup>99</sup>

5. Jesus "hour": his passion and death (Matt 26:45; Mark 14:41; John 12:27-36).
6. Jesus' puzzling response to Mary's request seems to compare the "hour" of his future death to *his wedding day*.<sup>100</sup>

**The Steward's Response and Jesus' Identity**

1. The Steward's Response (John 2:9-10)
  - a. Unaware of the source of the wine
  - b. Calls "the bridegroom" (Gk *ho numphios*)
  - c. Custom: serve the "good wine" first, then "the lesser"
  - d. Bridegroom: "you have kept the good wine (Gk *kalon oinon*) until now"
2. Implication: Jesus is the true Bridegroom, since *he* has provided the wine

<sup>97</sup> Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 168 n. 5.

<sup>98</sup> For Jewish texts using the expression "wedding hour" or "hour of marriage," see Philo, *On the Creation of the World* 103 and Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.244; 12.186-87.

<sup>99</sup> Paraphrasing Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 31.

<sup>100</sup> See Adeline Fehribach, S.C.N., *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom: A Feminist Historical-Literary Analysis of the Female Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 30-32.

## The Parable of the Bridegroom

### The Parable of the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35)<sup>101</sup>

1. Setting: Why do John's disciples and Pharisees' disciples fast? (2:18)
  - a. John's Disciples: ascetic diet, "locusts and wild honey" (Matt 3:4)
  - b. Pharisees: probably twice a week (cf. Luke 18:12)
2. Present Days of Rejoicing (2:19)
  - a. "Wedding Guests" = "sons of the bridechamber" (Gk *huiioi tou numphōnos*)
  - b. While the "Bridegroom" (Gk *ho numphios*) is with them
3. Coming Days of Fasting (2:20)
  - a. When the Bridegroom is "taken away" from them
  - b. They will fast "in that day"
4. Questions:
  - a. Who are the "sons of the bridechamber"?
  - b. Who is the "Bridegroom"?
  - c. When is he "taken away"?

### The Wedding Feast in Jewish Tradition

1. Jewish Wedding Celebrations lasted an entire week!
  - a. Jacob and Leah: seven days (Gen 29:27)
  - b. Samson and his wife: seven days (Judge 14:12)
  - c. Tobias and Sarah: seven day celebration doubled (Tob 8:20; 10:7)
  - d. Joseph and Aseneth: seven days (*Jos. Asen.* 21:6-7)
2. The Wedding was a Time for Feasting:

The wedding celebration was called "the week of celebration for a son." (Tosefta, *Sotah* 15:10).

### Exemption from Obligations During a Wedding Feast in Jewish Tradition

Bridegrooms and all those engaged in [the performance of] commandments are exempt from [the obligation of] reciting the *shema* and the Prayer, as Scripture states, "When you sit in your house"; this excludes those who are engaged in [fulfilling] commandments; and "when you walk by the way" (Deut 6:7); this excludes bridegrooms. (Tosefta *Berakoth* 1:3; cf. Mishnah, *Berakoth* 2:5; cf. *b. Ber.* 16a)

### The Bridegroom and His Friends in Jewish Tradition

The sons of Jambri are celebrating a great wedding, and are conducting the bride... with a large escort.... They raised their eyes and looked, and saw a tumultuous procession with much baggage; and *the bridegroom came out with his friends and his brothers to meet them with tambourines and musicians and many weapons.*" (1 Maccabees 9:37, 39)

They saw them conducting the maid and *her bridegroom and a great company of friends*, as is usual at a wedding. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:20)

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<sup>101</sup> See Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 299-301.

### **The Bride-Chamber in Jewish Tradition**

If a man sold his fellow a place to build him a house (so, too, if a man received it from his fellow to build him a *bridal-house* for his son... he must build it four cubits by six... Rabbi Ishmael says: *The height thereof should be [the sum of half its length and half its breadth]. The Sanctuary affords proof for this* [see 1 Kgs 6:2-17]. Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel says: *Should all [houses] be according to the building of the Sanctuary?* (Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 6:4)

### **The Night of the Consummation in Jewish Tradition**

And after this Pharaoh gave a marriage feast and a great dinner and a big banquet *for seven days*. And he called together all the chiefs of the land of Egypt and all the kings of the nations and proclaimed to the whole land of Egypt, saying, “Every man who does (any) work during the seven days of Joseph and Aseneth’s wedding shall surely die.” *And it happened after this, Joseph went in to Aseneth, and Aseneth conceived from Joseph, and gave birth to Manasseh and Ephraim, his brother, in Joseph’s house. (Joseph and Aseneth 21:8-9)*

A bridegroom is exempt from reciting the *Shema*’ on the first night, or until the close of the [next] Sabbath if he has not consummated the marriage. (Mishnah, *Berakoth* 2:5)

### **The Darkness of the Consummation Night in Jewish Tradition**

In the evening they came to lead her [Leah] [into the bridal chamber] and extinguished the light. “What is the meaning of this?” [Jacob] demanded, and they replied: “Think you that we are shameless, like you?” The whole of that night he called her ‘Rachel’ and she answered him. In the morning, however, “Behold, it was Leah” (Gen 39:25). Said he to her: “What, you are a deceiver and the daughter of a deceiver!” “Is there a teacher without pupils,” she retorted: “Did not your father call you ‘Esau’ and you answered him! So did you too call me and I answered you!” (*Genesis Rabbah* 70:19).

### **The Identity and Passion of Jesus**

1. Jesus is the Bridegroom:

Craig Keener: The Gospels’ readers would probably catch an allusion that Jesus’ first hearers missed: Jesus is the groom of God’s people in the coming messianic banquet foreshadowed in their table fellowship (22:2; 25:10-13).<sup>102</sup>

2. The Passion is Jesus’ Wedding Night:

Craig Keener: The “taking” of the bridegroom, of course, is a veiled reference to the impending crucifixion.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Keener, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 300.

<sup>103</sup> Keener, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 300.

## The Passion of the Bridegroom

### Jesus is Anointed for Burial

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Laz'arus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Laz'arus was one of those at table with him. *Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.* But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, "*Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial.* The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." (John 12:1-8)

### The Royal Bridegroom is Anointed on His Couch<sup>104</sup>

#### Royal Bridegroom

The king "reclines" on his couch.  
(Song 1:12 LXX)

Anointed with "*nard*"  
by his bride.  
(Song 1:2 LXX)

For your love is better than wine  
*Your anointing oils are fragrant,*  
*Your name is oil poured out;*  
Therefore the maidens love you.  
(Song 1:3)

Moreover, I will banish from them...  
the voice of the bridegroom  
and the voice of the bride,  
the grinding of millstones  
and *the fragrance of the perfume.*  
(Jer 25:10 LXX)

#### Jesus

Jesus is "reclining" at table.  
(cf. John 12:2)

Anointed with "*nard*"  
by Mary of Bethany  
(John 12:3)

Mary took a pound of costly perfume  
of pure nard and anointed the feet of  
Jesus and wiped her feet with her hair.  
*And the house was filled with the fragrance  
of the ointment.* (John 12:3)

Jocelyn McWhirter: Like the bride in Song 1:12, Mary bears fragrant nard to a reclining royal bridegroom... [However,] Mary's nard does more than perfume the bower of the king. Jesus wants Mary to "keep it for the day of my burial" (v. 7). The scent that Mary has so lavishly poured on Jesus' feet will be saved for use as his embalming fluid. It serves as a shocking remind that this royal bridegroom will die.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>104</sup> See Jocelyn McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God* (SNTSMS 138; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78-88.

<sup>105</sup> McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God*, 86, following Hoskyns, Brown, Dodd, etc.

**Jesus is Crowned with Thorns**

Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him. *And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and put it on his head*, and arrayed him in a purple robe; they came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again, and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no crime in him.” *So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold, the man!”* (John 19:1-5)

**The Jewish Bridegroom is Crowned like a King**

1. Contemporary Bridegrooms: wear tuxedos or suits
2. Ancient Bridegrooms: wear *crowns*; i.e., they dress *like kings*:

During the war of Vespasian [immediately before Temple destruction], they forbade *the crowns of the bridegrooms* and the [wedding] drum. (Mishnah, *Sotah* 9:14)

In the war against Vespasian *they decreed concerning the wearing of wreaths by bridegrooms*. And what are the sort of bridegroom’s wreaths [against which they decreed]? Those made of salt or brimstone. But those made of roses and myrtles they permitted. (Tosefta, *Sotah* 15:8)

3. Why no crowns during these times? Public signs of royal identity *politically* dangerous
4. Ancient Jewish tradition: How do you recognize a Jewish Bridegroom?
  - a. He wears a crown
  - b. Michael Satlow: the Jewish bridegroom is “king for a day.”<sup>106</sup>

**Jesus Carries the Cross to Golgotha**

*So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull*, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. (John 19:17)

**Jewish Wedding Processions turned into a Funeral Procession**

The young women who had recently entered the bridal chamber for the society of married life exchanged their joy for wailing [at the exile of the Jews in Alexandria], and, with their perfume-drenched locks covered in dust, they were carried away unveiled and all joined in singing a dirge instead of a wedding hymn, as it torn asunder by the brutal mangling of the heathen. And in full view of everybody they were forcibly dragged along in bonds until they were embarked on board ship. *Their husbands, in the full bloom of youth, their necks girded with halters in the place of garlands, spent the remaining days of their wedding festival not in glad celebration and youthful recreation but in dirges, seeing the grave already yawning at their very feet*. They were put on board like animals, driven along under the constraint of iron bonds. (3 Maccabees 4:6-9)

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<sup>106</sup> Paraphrasing Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity*, 172.

### Jesus Wears a Seamless Tunic

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. *But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.”* This was to fulfill the scripture, “They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” So the soldiers did this. (John 19: 23-25)

### The Seamless Garment of the High Priest

#### 1. The High Priest’s Garment was “Seamless” and Not to Be Torn”

And you shall make the robe [for the priest] of the ephod all of blue. *It shall have in it an opening for the head, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a garment, that it may not be torn.* (Exodus 28:31-32; cf. Lev 21:10)

#### 2. Seamless Garment of High Priest in Second Temple:

Now this vesture [of the high priest] was not composed of two pieces, nor was it sewed together upon the shoulders and the sides, but it was one long vestment so wove as to have an aperture for the neck... (Josephus, *Ant.* 3.161)<sup>107</sup>

### The Jewish Bridegroom is Dressed like a Priest

1. Jewish Bridegroom: Not only “king for a day, but also “priest for a day”
2. The Jewish Bridegroom dressed as *a priest*.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation, *he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland...* (Isaiah 61:10)

He has covered me in the robe of righteousness, *as a bridegroom dresses himself like a priest* (Hebrew *kkwhn*)... (*IQIsaiah<sup>a</sup>* 61:10)

Jerusalem said, I will greatly rejoice in the *Memra* (Aramaic for “Word”) of the LORD, my soul shall exult in the salvation of my God; for he has clothed me with garments of salvation, he has wrapped me with a robe of virtue, *as the bridegroom who prospers in his canopy, and as the high priest who is prepared is his garments...* (*Targum Isaiah* 61:10)<sup>108</sup>

#### 3. Priestly Attire:

- a. “Holy garments” worn by the priests when ministering (Exod 28:2-4)
- b. Priestly “headdress” or “garland” (Hebrew *pe’er*) (Exod 39:28; Ezek 44:18).<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> See John Paul Heil, “Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57 (1995): 729-45.

<sup>108</sup> Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (Aramaic Bible 11; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1987), 119.

<sup>109</sup> Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2:570 n. 41.

### The Death of Jesus

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of common wine stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. *When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.* Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness -- his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth -- that you also may believe.* (John 19:25-35)

### The Jewish Bridegroom is a New Adam

#### 1. Traditional Jewish "blessing of bridegrooms" (Hebrew *berakoth chatanim*):

1. Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has created all things to His glory;
2. *And the Creator of Adam, and who has formed Adam in His image, in the image of the likeness of His form, and has prepared for him out of himself a building forever. Blessed are You, Lord, Creator of Adam.*
3. May the barren one greatly rejoice and exult when her children will be gathered in her midst in joy. Blessed are You, Lord, who makes Zion joyful with her children.
4. *May You make the companions of love greatly to rejoice, even as of old You did gladden all in Eden. Blessed are You, Lord, who makes bridegroom and bride to rejoice.*
5. Blessed are you, O Lord our King, God of the universe, who has created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, rejoicing, song, mirth, delight, love, brotherhood, peace, and companionship.
6. *Soon, O Lord our God, may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; the voice of the singing of the bridegrooms from their canopies, and of youths from their feasts of song. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makes the bridegroom to rejoice with the bride.*" (Babylonian Talmud, *Ketuboth* 7b-8a).

1. Protology: looks *back* creation of Adam by God; joy of "Eden"; return to Paradise
2. Eschatology: Blessing looks *forward* to the future age of salvation (Jer 33:10-16).
3. Jewish Wedding:
  - a. Recapitulates joy of Prelapsarian State (Eden before the Fall)
  - b. Anticipates the joy of the World to Come (days of the Messiah)
4. Jewish Bridegroom: dressed as priest and king
  - a. A New Adam
  - b. A Symbol of the Messiah himself and messianic age (see Isa 54; Jer 33)

## The Burial of the Bridegroom

### Jesus is Buried in a Garden Tomb

After this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing *a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight*. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. *Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid*. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:38-42)

### Myrrh and Aloes in Jewish Scripture

I have decked my couch with coverings, colored spreads of Egyptian linens,  
*I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.*  
 Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love.  
 (Proverbs 7:16-18)

To the choirmaster: *according to Lilies*. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah: *A love song*.  
 My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king;  
 my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.  
 You are the fairest of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips;  
 therefore God has blessed you for ever.  
 Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty!  
 In your majesty ride forth victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right;  
 let your right hand teach you dread deeds!  
 Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you.  
 Your throne, O God, endures for ever and ever.  
 Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity; you love righteousness and hate wickedness.  
*Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows;*  
*your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.*  
 From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; daughters of kings are among  
 your ladies of honor; *at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir...*  
 The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes;  
 in many-colored robes she is led to the king,  
 with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train (Psalm 45:1-9, 13-14)

*A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed.*  
 Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits,  
 henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,  
 with all trees of frankincense, *myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices --*  
 a garden fountain, a well of living water,  
 and flowing streams from Lebanon. (Song of Solomon 4:12-15)

### **The “Womb” and the Tomb in Jewish Scripture**

*For thou didst form my inward parts,*

*thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb (Hb beten),*

I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works!

*Thou knowest me right well; my frame was not hidden from thee,*

*when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.*

Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psa 139:13-16)

Cursed be the day on which I was born!

The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!

Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father,

"A son is born to you," making him very glad.

Let that man be like the cities which the LORD overthrew without pity...

*because he did not kill me in the womb;*

*so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb for ever great.*

Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow,

and spend my days in shame? (Jeremiah 20:14-18)

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish,

saying, "I called to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me;

*from the womb of Sheol I cried (Hb beten sheol),*

and thou didst hear my voice...

The waters closed in over me, the deep was round about me;

weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me for ever;

yet thou didst bring up my life from the Pit, O LORD my God.

When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD;

and my prayer came to thee, into thy holy temple...

And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying,

“Arise, go to Nineveh...” (Jonah 2:1-2; 2:7-3:1)

### **Jesus and the 3 Days in the Tomb**

But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. *For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Gk tē kardias tēs gē)* The men of Nin'evah will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Matthew 12:39-41)

1. “Heart” (Gk *kardia*) in the Greek Old Testament:

a. Often translates “Heart” (Hb *leb*)

b. Can also translate “Womb” (Hb *womb*).

**The Ancient Hebrew Gospel of Matthew**

He said to them: An evil and wicked generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as was in the bowels of the fish three days and three nights, so will the Son of man be *in the womb of the earth* (Hb *beten ha'aretz*), for three days and three nights. (Matt 12:40; Shem Tob edition)<sup>110</sup>

**St. Jerome on the Tomb of Jesus**

Christ himself is a virgin. His mother is also a virgin. In fact, though she is his mother, she is still a virgin. For Jesus has entered in through the closed doors, and in his sepulcher—a new one hewn out of the hardest rock—no one is laid either before him or after him. (Jerome, *Letter* 48:21)

**St. Augustine on the Tomb of Jesus**

As in the womb of the Virgin Mary no one was conceived before him and no one after him, so in this sepulcher there was no one buried before him and no one after him. (Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 120:5)

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem and the Nuptial Burial**

A garden was the place of his burial, and a vine was what was planted there, as he said, “I am the vine” (John 15:1). He was planted therefore in the earth in order that the curse that came because of Adam might be rooted out... And what will he that is buried in the garden say? “I have gathered my myrrh with my spices” (Song 5:1); and again, “myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices” (Song 4:14). Now these are symbols of burial. (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 14:11)<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Trans. in George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995), 59.

<sup>111</sup> For all quotations from the Church fathers cited above, see Joel C. Elowsky, *John* (2 vols. ACCS, NT IVb; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007).

## The Bride in Jewish Scripture

### Introduction

1. Setting Jesus' words and deeds in context.
2. Bride in Jewish Scripture and Tradition.
3. Who is Jesus' bride in the Gospels?

### Eve as the First Bride (Gen 2)

1. Reason for Eve's Creation (Gen 2:18)
  - a. "Not good that the man should be alone"
  - b. "I will make a *helper* (Hb *'ezer*) fit for him"
  - c. Hebrew *'azar* "help," "succor" (cf. Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7-29; Ps 33:20)
2. Eve contrasted with the Birds and Beasts:
  - a. Domestic Animals: beasts of the field and birds of the air
  - b. None of them give the companionship God desires for man
3. The Creation of Woman:
  - a. Good took "one of Adam's *sides*" (Hb *sela'*)
  - b. "Closed up its place with *flesh*"
  - c. From the "*side*" of Adam he "built" (Hb *bana*) a *woman*
4. The Betrothal of Adam and Eve:
  - a. God initiates their union: he "brought her to the man" (cf. role of father)
  - b. Foundation of Marriage: "they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24)
4. The Bride shares his Human Nature:
  - a. "This at last is *bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*"
  - b. She is his family, my 'flesh and blood' (cf. Gen 29:14; 2 Sam 5:1)
5. The Bride shares his Name:
  - a. Adam gives a "name" (Hb *shem*) to every living creature
  - b. "She shall be called *Woman* (Hb *ishah*),"
  - c. "Because she was *taken from Man* (Hb *ish*)"

### Eve is No Ordinary Bride (Gen 1-2):

1. A Royal Bride:
  - a. "Have dominion" (Hbradah): "*royal language*" (Gen 1:28).<sup>112</sup>
  - b. Eve is the first queen of creation.
2. A Supernatural Bride:
  - a. Eve is not descended from a separate human family
  - b. She is *created* from Adam's own "side"
  - c. She is taken from his "*flesh*"
3. A Temple-Like Bride:
  - a. The "Side" of Adam is taken by God
  - b. God "built (Hb *banah*) into a woman)
  - c. Adam is to "guard/keep" it (Hebrew *shamar*)—Temple imagery
  - d. Adam is to "work/serve" it (Hebrew *'abad*)—Temple imagery  
(Num 3:7-8; 18:26; 18:5-6; 1 Kings 9:6-7; 2 Chronicles 23:19).

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<sup>112</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 1:137-38 (emphasis altered), citing 1 Kings 4:24; Ps 110:2. See also BDB, 921-22.

**The Fall of the Bride (Gen 3)**

1. Satan's Deception of Eve (cf. 1 Tim 2:15)
  - a. Expands God's prohibition: "any tree of the garden"
  - b. Mixes Truth with Lie: "You will not die" (physical death)
  - c. Truth: "Your eyes will be open... knowing good and evil"
  - d. Lie: "You will be like God/gods (Hb *elohim*)"
2. The Threefold Lust:
  - a. Pleasure: "good for food"
  - b. Possessions: "delight to the eyes"
  - c. Power: "desirable to make one wise"
3. The Fall of the Bride:
  - a. Sins First: Eve took of the fruit "and ate"

From a woman sin had its beginning;  
*and because of her we all die.* (Sirach 25:24)

- b. Entices Adam to Sin: she "gave some to her husband"
  - c. Eyes Opened: "they knew they were naked (Hb *'arumim*)"
  - d. They are "naked" like the Serpent was "cunning" (Hb *'arum*)"
4. The Penance of the Bride:
  - a. Physical Suffering: pain in Childbirth
  - b. Domestic Suffering: desire for Her Husband; yet he shall "rule" over you
5. The Bride's Name: "Eve" (Hb *havvah*), meaning "life"

**Eve as the First Bride in Ancient Jewish Tradition**

"And the LORD God *built* the rib..." (Gen 2:22)... "Rabbi Aibu... said: "*He [God] adorned her [Eve] like a bride and brought her to Him [Adam],* for there are places where coiffure is called building. Rabbi Chama son of Rabbi Chanina said: What think you, that He brought her to him from under a carob tree or a sycamore tree? Surely He first decked her out with twenty-four pieces of finery [cf. Isa 3:18-24] and then brought her to him! Thus it is written, "Thou wast in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering..." (Ezek 28:13). (*Genesis Rabbah* 18:1)

What is meant by the words? "*And the Lord built the rib*"? *It teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, plaited Eve's hair and brought her to Adam...*" (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 61a)

## Sarah the New Bride

### Sarah the Virgin Bride and the Demon<sup>113</sup>

1. Sarah: daughter of Raguel (Tob 3:7)
2. Widowhood and Demonic Oppression (Tob 3:8)
  - a. She has had seven husbands
  - b. All slain by “the evil demon Asmodeus”
3. Virginitly: “Before they had been with her as his wife” (Tob 3:8)
4. Sarah’s Shame (Tob 3:8)
  - a. Suspected of “strangling” her husbands
  - b. Equal to a Barren woman: she has not “borne the name” of any of them
5. Domestic Strife (Tob 3:9)
  - a. Sarah is accused of “beating” her maids
  - b. Maids hate her and curse her: “May we never see a son of yours!”
6. Sarah’s Prayer (Tob 3:10-15)
  - a. Contemplates Suicide
  - b. Praise: “Blessed are you, O Lord my God...”
  - c. Supplication: she asks to die
  - d. Innocence of Sarah
  - e. Supplication: take away her shame and reproach
7. Deliverance of the Bride: the angel Raphael sent (Tob 3:16-17)
  - a. Exorcism: to “bind” the evil demon
  - b. Marriage: “*because* Tobias was entitled to possess her”

### Sarah and Her Wedding Night

1. The Meeting of Tobias and Sarah: “she wept” (Tob 7:7)
2. The Marriage of Sarah (Tob 7:8-15)
  - a. Father gives the Bride away: “taking her by the hand he gave her to Tobias”
  - b. Bride goes with Husband: “take her with her to your father”
  - c. Bride and Groom “blessed” by the Father
  - d. Marriage Contract: sealed by the parents
3. Wedding Night (Tob 7:17)
  - a. Fear: “the girl began to weep”
  - b. Courage: “Be brave, my child”
  - c. Blessing: “the Lord grant you joy in place of *this sorrow of yours...*”

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<sup>113</sup> For a detailed commentary on this section, see Carey A. Moore, *Tobit* (Anchor Bible 40A; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 215-48.

**Sarah as a New Eve**

1. Eve is explicitly referred to in Tobias' Prayer (Tob 8:6)
2. Danger from the "Demon" Harkens back to Eve and the Serpent (Tob 8:3)

Eve

1. Attacked by a Demon on her wedding night (?)

2. Speaks with the demon; entices her husband to sin

3. Sins and dies physically

4. Covers herself in shame at her nakedness

5. Wedding turned into a funeral

Sarah

1. Attacked by a Demon on her wedding night

2. Remains silent in the face of demon; follows her husband's lead in prayer: Her only words: "Amen" (Let it be)

3. Prays and delivered from emotional death

4. Taken in chaste love by her Bridegroom; sleeps peacefully with him

5. Funeral turned into a Wedding feast

But Raguel arose and went and *dug a grave*, with the thought, "Perhaps he too will die." Then Raguel went into his house and said to his wife Edna, "Send one of the maids to see whether he is alive; and if he is not, *let us bury him without anyone knowing about it.*" So the maid opened the door and went in, and found them both asleep. And she came out and told them that he was alive. Then Raguel blessed God... *Then he ordered his servants to fill in the grave. After this he gave a wedding feast for them which lasted fourteen days.* (Tobit 8:9-14, 18)

**John Paul II: Tobias and Sarah *Both* Offer Themselves in a Nuptial Sacrifice**

On the very threshold of marriage, the criterion of these values becomes the test of life-or-death that both must face already during their first night. Both. *Even if the demon's victim is to be Tobias alone, it is nevertheless easy to imagine what sacrifice of heart Sarah would have had to undergo.* (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 599-600)<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Here we find a stunning typology of the new Adam and the new Eve: Tobias, like Christ, must be willing to lay down *his physical life* in order to save his bride from the power of the devil. But Sarah, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, must be willing to sacrifice her *heart*, to undergo *interior sacrifice and suffering*, for the salvation of Israel. That is why the "sword" spoken of by Simeon pierces the "soul" of the Virgin Mary (cf. Luke 2:35).

## Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

### 1. The Encounter at the Well<sup>115</sup>

#### Jacob Encounters Rachel

*Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east. As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and lo, three flocks of sheep lying beside it; for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place upon the mouth of the well. Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him." He said to them, "Is it well with him?" They said, "It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!" He said, "Behold, it is still high day, it is not time for the animals to be gathered together; water the sheep, and go, pasture them." But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep." While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. (Gen 29:1-9)*

#### Jesus Encounters the Samaritan Woman

*[Jesus] left Judea and departed again to Galilee. He had to pass through Samar'ia. So he came to a city of Samar'ia, called Sy'char, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. (John 4:1-7)*

#### Women, Wells, and Weddings in Jewish Scripture

1. Abraham's Servant meets Rebekah at a well (Gen 24:1-67)
2. Jacob meets Rachel at a well ([Gen 29:1-20](#))
3. Moses meets Zipporah and her sisters at a well (Exod 2:15-22)

Adeline Fehribach: The story... contains the initial elements of a betrothal type-scene. Jesus travels to a foreign land, meets a woman at a well that has come to "draw water," asks for a drink... Supporting the assumption that a betrothal type-scene is implied is the astonishment (*ethaumazon*) of the disciples at seeing Jesus speaking with a "woman" (4:27) and their subsequent urging (*ērōtōn*) Jesus to eat (4:31). Elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel the disciples are not astonished when they see Jesus talking with a woman (cf. 11:15, 17-27). This discrepancy supports the argument that the reader would have interpreted the astonishment of the disciples on the basis of...

Male Foreigner + Woman + Well = Betrothal

Likewise, because betrothals in such scenes were usually completed after a meal with the woman's family, the reader may have interpreted the disciples' efforts to get Jesus to eat something as an attempt to circumvent such a betrothal.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>115</sup> The following outline closely follows McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, 58-76.

## 2. The Drink of Water

### Jacob Waters the Flocks

While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. Now when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, *Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.* Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud. (Genesis 29:9-11)

### Jesus asks the Samaritan Woman for a Drink of Water

There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. *Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."* For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" *For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.* Jesus answered her, "*If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.*" The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? *Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?*" Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." (John 4:8-15)

### The Miraculous Water of Jacob's Well<sup>117</sup>

And when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother... Jacob drew near and, with one of his arms, rolled the stone from the mouth of the well; *and the well began to flow, and the waters came up before him,* and he watered the flock of Laban... *and it continued to flow for twenty years.* Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and raised his voice and wept. (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 29:10-11*)<sup>118</sup>

When Jacob had gone, the shepherds stood by the well but found no water. And they waited three days (to see) if perhaps it might flow. But it did not flow. Therefore Laban was told on the third day, and he knew that Jacob had fled, *because it was through his merits that it had flowed for twenty years.* (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 31:22*)

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<sup>116</sup> Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 50-51.

<sup>117</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:604.

<sup>118</sup> Trans. Michael Maher, M.S.C. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992).

**The “Living Water” of Ritual Purification<sup>119</sup>**

*For the unclean they shall take some ashes of the burnt sin offering, and living water shall be added in a vessel; then a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the furnishings, and upon the persons who were there, and upon him who touched the bone, or the slain, or the dead, or the grave; and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; thus on the seventh day he shall cleanse him, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and at evening he shall be clean. But the man who is unclean and does not cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, since he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD; because the water for impurity has not been thrown upon him, he is unclean. (Numbers 19:17-20)*

**The “Living Water” in the Song of Songs**

How sweet is your love, *my sister, my bride!*  
 how much better is your love than wine,  
 and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!  
 Your lips distil nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue;  
 the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.  
*A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed.*  
 Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits,  
 henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,  
 with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices --  
*a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.*  
 (Song of Solomon 4:10-15)

**The “Living Water” of the Nuptial Bath**

And Aseneth rose and stood on her feet. And the man said to her, “Proceed unhindered into your second chamber and put off your black tunic of mourning, and the sackcloth put off your waist, and shake off those ashes from your head, and wash your face and your hands with living water (Gk *hydati zōnti*), and dress in a new linen robe (as yet) untouched and distinguished and gird your waist (with) the new twin girdle of your virginity. And come (back) to me, and I will tell you what I have to say.” And Aseneth hurried and went into her second chamber where the chests containing her ornaments were, and opened her coffer, and took a new linen robe, distinguished (and as yet) untouched, and undressed the black tunic of mourning and put off the sackcloth from her waist... And she shook off the ashes from her head, and washed her hands and her face with living water (Gk *hydati zōnti*). And she took an (as yet) untouched and distinguished linen veil and covered her head. (*Joseph and Aseneth* 14:12-17)<sup>120</sup>

<sup>119</sup> See Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:604, citing E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1990), 31-32, 214-27

<sup>120</sup> Trans. David Cook (slightly adapted). For the Greek, see Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:604 n. 213.

### 3. The Marital Status of the Samaritan Woman

#### The Marital Status of Rachel

Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethu'el your mother's father; and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your descendants with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings which God gave to Abraham!".... Thus Isaac sent Jacob away; and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, the son of Bethu'el the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. Now when Jacob saw *Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother*, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. *Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud.* (Genesis 28:1-5, 29:10-11)

#### The Marital Status of the Samaritan Woman

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "*Go, call your husband, and come here.*" The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "*You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly.*" (John 4:15-18)

#### What is the Samaritan Woman's "Past"?

1. What is the past of the Samaritan woman?
2. Widowed five times? Possible, but unlikely
  - a. Being widowed five times would be extraordinary (cf. Sarah in Tobit)
  - b. Even if she were widowed, murder would be assumed (cf. Tob 3:8)
3. Infertility and Divorce? Possible, but unlikely remarriage (cf. *m. Yeb.* 6:6)
4. Adultery and Divorce? Likely, given grounds for divorce
  - a. Reasons for Divorce unclear (cf. Deut 24:1-4)
  - b. Later Jewish texts suggest reasons for divorce (Sir 7:26; 25:26)
5. Fornication? Living with a man "not her husband"<sup>121</sup>
6. Question: Who are her five husbands?
  - a. Individual/Literal Level: five male companions
  - b. Corporate/Symbolic Level: five pagan deities of Samaritans<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> On the immorality of premarital and/or extramarital sexual relations in ancient Judaism, see Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:594, citing *Jos. Ag. Ap.* 2:199; *1 En.* 8:1-2; *Jub.* 20:4; 33:20; *T. Ab.* 10:8A; *Ascen. Isa.* 2:5; *t. Sanh.* 13:8; *Sipre Deut* 258.2.3; cf. CD 4:17-18; 7:1; 8:5; 1QS 4:10.

<sup>122</sup> E.g., Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 190; Edwyn Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), 1:265.

### **The Origin of the Samaritans in Jewish Scripture**

The people of Israel walked in all the sins which Jerobo'am did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day. *And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sephar-va'im, and placed them in the cities of Sama'ria instead of the people of Israel; and they took possession of Sama'ria, and dwelt in its cities.* And at the beginning of their dwelling there, they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. So the king of Assyria was told, "The nations which you have carried away and placed in the cities of Sama'ria do not know the law of the god of the land; therefore he has sent lions among them, and behold, they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land." Then the king of Assyria commanded, "Send there one of the priests whom you carried away thence; and let him go and dwell there, and teach them the law of the god of the land." So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Sama'ria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. *But every nation still made gods of its own, and put them in the shrines of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they dwelt; the men of Babylon made Suc'coth-be'noth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashi'ma, and the Av'vites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sephar'vites burned their children in the fire to Adram'melech and Anam'melech, the gods of Sephar-va'im.* They also feared the LORD, and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. *So they feared the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away.* To this day they do according to the former manner... So these nations feared the LORD, and also served their graven images; their children likewise, and their children's children -- as their fathers did, so they do to this day. (2 Kings 17:22-34, 41)

### **The Samaritan Woman and the Five Gods of Samaria**

Adeline Fehribach: The first-century reader would have perceived Jesus' reference to the *five* husbands as a symbolic reference to the foreign gods of the five groups of people brought in by the Assyrians to colonize Samaria (cf. 2 Kgs 17:13-34). Although some scholars reject this notion, the basic objection to the five husbands symbolizing the former gods of those who colonized Samaria is that 2 Kgs 17:13-34 actually refers to seven gods, with two groups having two gods. This problem, however, could be resolved if one accepted Gerard Sloyan's interpretation of 2 Kgs 17:13-34. Sloyan implies that two of the seven deities are consorts. This would make the number of male gods to be five, and only the male gods of the Samaritan people would have been symbolized by the woman's five former husbands.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 65-66, citing Gerard Sloyan, "The Samaritans in the New Testament," *Horizons* 10 (1983): 10. It is worth noting that Josephus emphasizes the number five with reference to the cults of the Samaritans: "But now the Cutheans, who removed into Samaria, (for that is the name they have been called by to this time, because they were brought out of the country called Cuthah, which is a country of Persia, and there is a river of the same name in it,) each of them, according to their nations, which were in number five, brought their own gods into Samaria, and by worshipping them, as was the custom of their own countries, they provoked Almighty God to be angry and displeased at them, for a plague seized upon them, by which they were destroyed; and when they found no cure for their

**“The One You Have Now is Not Your Husband”**

Adeline Fehribach: “Jesus’ statement to the woman, ‘the one you now have is not your husband’ (4:18), [is] a reference to YHWH. YHWH is not a true husband of the Samaritan people because Samaritan Yahwism has been tainted by the influence of the worship of the false gods. Jesus’ statement, ‘You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know....’ is then viewed as being in agreement with the spiritualized interpretation of the Samaritan’s woman present *anēr* [“man/husband”]...”

Sandra Schneiders: “[I]f the scene itself is symbolically the incorporation of Samaria into the New Israel, the bride of the new Bridegroom..., then the adultery/idolatry symbolism so prevalent in the prophetic literature for speaking of Israel’s infidelity to Yahweh the Bridegroom would be a most apt vehicle for discussion of the anomalous religious situation of Samaria.<sup>124</sup>

**The Samaritan Woman as a Symbol of Her People**

[The focus on her past] makes her actual life history with men a symbolic representation of her people’s history, *just as the sexual life history of Hosea’s wife, Gomer, reflects the apostasy of a nation....* [cf. Hos 1-2] As “woman,” “Samaritan,” and “woman who has had five men/husbands and now has one who is not her husband,” the Samaritan woman enters into a metaphorical betrothal/marital relationship with the messianic bridegroom.<sup>125</sup>

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miseries, they learned by the oracle that they ought to worship Almighty God, as the method for their deliverance. So they sent ambassadors to the king of Assyria, and desired him to send them some of those priests of the Israelites whom he had taken captive. And when he thereupon sent them, and the people were by them taught the laws, and the holy worship of God, they worshipped him in a respectful manner, and the plague ceased immediately; and indeed they continue to make use of the very same customs to this very time, and are called in the Hebrew tongue Cutlans, but in the Greek tongue Samaritans. And when they see the Jews in prosperity, they pretend that they are changed, and allied to them, and call them kinsmen, as though they were derived from Joseph, and had by that means an original alliance with them; but when they see them falling into a low condition, they say they are no way related to them, and that the Jews have no right to expect any kindness or marks of kindred from them, but they declare that they are sojourners, that come from other countries. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.14.3)

<sup>124</sup> Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 190, cited in Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 67.

<sup>125</sup> Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 69 (emphasis added).

## 4. The Bridegroom Reveals His Identity

### Jacob Reveals His Identity

Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud. *And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father.* (Genesis 29:11-12)

### Jesus Reveals His Identity

The woman said to him, "*Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*" Jesus said to her, "*Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*" The woman said to him, "*I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.*" Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." (John 4:19-26)

### Where to Worship: Mount Gerizim vs. Mount Jerusalem

Craig Keener: The Samaritans regarded Mount Gerizim as the holiest of mountains (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.85). Even in the mid-thirties C.E. a prophetic figure could rally Samaritan masses around an eschatological hope for the recovery of the hidden vessels of the tabernacle, and probably a rebuilt temple, on Gerizim (Josephus *Ant.* 18.85-87).<sup>126</sup>

### The “Living Water” of the New Jerusalem<sup>127</sup>

On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east... *Then the LORD your God will come, and all the holy ones with him.* On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the LORD), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. *On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one...* But Jerusalem shall remain aloft upon its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Han'anel to the king's wine presses. *And it shall be inhabited, for there shall be no more curse; Jerusalem shall dwell in security.* (Zechariah 14:4-11)

Boers: “The new reality brought by Jesus transcends both expectation: the eschatological river of life flows neither from Mount Gerizim nor from Mount Zion, but is to be found in Christ himself.”<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:61.

<sup>127</sup> See Dale C. Allison Jr., “The Living Water (John 4:10-14; 6:35c; 7:37-39),” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 30 (1986): 143-57.

<sup>128</sup> Hendrikus Boers, *Neither on This Mountain Nor in Jerusalem: A Study of John 4* (SBLMS 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 167, cited in Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:605.

## 5. The Woman's Report

### Rachel's Report to Her Family

*And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father. (Genesis 29:12)*

### The Samaritan's Report to Her Kinsmen

Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" *So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"* They went out of the city and were coming to him. (John 4:27-30)

## 6. The Betrothal

### The Betrothal of Jacob and Rachel

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful and lovely. Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. (Genesis 29:15-20)

### The "Betrothal" of the Messiah and Samaria

Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." *Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."* So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." After the two days he departed to Galilee. (John 4:31-43)

## 7. The Church Fathers on the Samaritan Woman

### St. Augustine: The Samaritan Woman a “Type of the Church” (4<sup>th</sup> Century)

It is pertinent to the image of the reality that this [Samaritan] woman, *who bore the type of the church*, comes from strangers, for the church was to come from the Gentiles, an alien from the race of the Jews. *In that woman, then, let us hear ourselves, and in her acknowledge ourselves and in her give thanks to God for ourselves.* (Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 15:10)<sup>129</sup>

### Romanus Melodus: She Bears “the Features of the Church” (6<sup>th</sup> Century)

The woman said, “I think that I have no husband,” and the Creator said to her: “Truly do you have none? You have five, *the sixth you do not possess*, So that you may receive exceeding great joy and redemption.” O wise enigmas! O wise characteristics! *In the faith of the holy woman is pictured all the features of the church* in true colors that do not grow old; *for the way in which the woman denied a husband when she had many, is just the way the church denied many gods, like husbands, and left them and became betrothed to one Master in coming forth from the water.* She had five husbands and the sixth she did not have; and leaving the five husbands of impiety, she now takes Thee, as the sixth, as she comes from the water, exceeding great joy and redemption.... *The espoused church of the nations, then, left these things, and she hurries here to the well of the baptismal font and denies the things of the past, just as the woman of Samaria did;* for she did not conceal what had formerly been true from Him who knows all in advance, but she said, “... Even if I formerly had husbands, I do not now wish to have these husbands which I did have; for now I possess Thee who hast now taken me in Thy net; and I am by faith rescued from the filth of my sins that I may receive exceeding great joy and redemption.” (Romanus Methodus, *Kontakion on the Woman of Samaria* 9:11-12, 14)<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Cited in Elowsky, *John*, 2:146-47.

<sup>130</sup> Cited in Elowsky, *John*, 2:156-57.

## Jesus and Mary of Bethany

### Key Questions

1. What does Mary's anointing of Jesus reveal about her?
2. Who exactly are the *Ioudaioi* (Greek)?
  - a. "Jews" = descendants of Israel who practice the Jewish religion
  - b. "Judeans" = descendants of Judah who live in southern territory  
(as opposed to Galileans in the north or Samaritans in mid-country)

### Mary of Bethany as Bride of the King<sup>131</sup>

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Laz'arus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Laz'arus was one of those at table with him. *Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard (Gk nardou pistikēs) and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance (Gk osmēn) of the perfume.* But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples [objected...] Jesus said, "*Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial.* The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." (John 12:1-8)

### The Song of Solomon<sup>132</sup>

While *the king* was on his couch, *my nard (Gk nardos mou) gave forth its fragrance (Gk osmēn...* (Song 1:12)

"The fragrance of a good perfume spreads from the bedroom to the dining room." (*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7:1)<sup>133</sup>

### The Perfumed Hair of the Jewish Brides

The young women who had recently entered the bridal chamber for the society of married life exchanged their joy for wailing [at the exile of the Jews in Alexandria], and, *with their perfume-drenched locks covered in dust*, they were carried away unveiled and all joined in singing a dirge instead of a wedding hymn. (3 Maccabees 4:6)

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<sup>131</sup> See Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 93. Intriguingly, Fehribach points out in this context that "Whether Mary was perceived by a first-century reader as simply betrothed to Jesus or already married to him makes no difference because a woman who was betrothed to a man was already perceived to be his wife. She merely continued to live in her own father's house until after the wedding ceremony." Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 84 n. 4. It seems to me that this is precisely what is being describe in John's Gospel: the consummation of the marriage does not take place until the Passion of Jesus (cf. John 19:35), but Jesus betroths himself to the female representatives of the people during his public ministry

<sup>132</sup> See Jocelyn McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God* (SNTSMS 138; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78-88.

<sup>133</sup> Cited in Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 88.

**Martha, Mary, and the Remnant of the “Judeans”**

Now when Jesus came, he found that Laz'arus had already been in the tomb four days. *Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.* When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, *while Mary sat in the house.* Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world." When she had said this, *she went and called her sister Mary, saying quietly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.* Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. *When the Jews (Gk Ioudaioi) who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; and he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"* Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Laz'arus, come out." The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." *Many of the Jews (Gk Ioudaioi) therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him; but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.* (John 11:17-45)

**Theodore of Mopsuestia on Mary's Love (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D.)**

As Mary came to Jesus, she immediately fell at his feet saying the same things as Martha, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Martha is not actually said to have fallen at his feet but only to have come to him, so that it seems to many that Mary had a greater love for the Lord. This also appears from the fact that while the Lord was at their house, Martha was intent on her service, whereas Mary, because of her great love, sat at his feet, as she did not want to be separated from her teacher even for a short time. Therefore the Lord exalted her in his praise more than Martha. (*Commentary on John* 5.11.32)<sup>134</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Cited in Elowsky, *John*, 2:19.

### **Mary as Bride of the Messiah on Behalf of the Judeans**

Adeline Fehribach: Given the literary and cultural milieu of the first-century... and the previous portrayals of women in this Gospel... the first-century reader would have perceived Mary of Bethany as the betrothed/bride of the messianic bridegroom on behalf of the Jews, just as the Samaritan woman would have been perceived as the betrothed/bride of the messianic bridegroom on behalf of the Samaritan people.<sup>135</sup>

### **The Bridal Crown: A Miniature Golden Jerusalem**

During the war of Quietus they decreed against crowns worn by brides (Mishnah *Sotah* 9:14). What means ‘*crowns worn by brides*’?—Rabbah ben Bar Hanah said in the name of Rabbi Johanan: ‘*A miniature golden city*’. There is a teaching to the same effect: What are ‘*crowns worn by brides*’?—*A golden city*. (Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 49b)

With what may a woman go out and with what may she not go out [on the Sabbath]? A woman may not go out with bands of wool... nor with forehead-band or head-bangles if they are not sewn... Nor [may she go out] with a ‘*golden city*’... (Mishnah, *Shabbath* 6:1)<sup>136</sup>

What is meant by “with a golden city”?—Rabbah ben Bar Hanah said in Rabbi Johanan’s name: ‘*A golden Jerusalem*’, such as Rabbi Akiba made for his wife. (Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 59a-59b)

### **The Judean Leaders’ Response to the Raising of Lazarus**

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Ca'iaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year *he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad*. So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death. *Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called E'phraim; and there he stayed with the disciples.* (John 11:45-54)

### **St. Chromatius on Mary as a Type of the Church (5<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.)**

See the humility of this holy woman. She does not anoint his head but his feet... And she wipes his feet not with a towel but with her hair so that she might exhibit even greater service to the Lord.... *Allegorically, the woman was anticipating the figure of the church who truly in the fullness of faith brings its devotion to Christ. And this he freely receives as a very precious perfume.* (Chromatius of Aquilea, *Sermon* 11.2-3)<sup>137</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 84-85.

<sup>136</sup> Trans. Danby, *The Mishnah*, 104. Danby identifies this as “a tiara shaped like Jerusalem.”

<sup>137</sup> Cited in Elowsky, *John*, 2:43.

## Jesus and Mary Magdalene

### Mary Magdalene Seeks Jesus

Now on the first day of the week Mary Mag'dalene came to the tomb *early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb*. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."*

Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. (John 20:1-10)

### The Bride Goes Forth in Search of Her Bridegroom<sup>138</sup>

Upon my bed *by night I sought him whom my soul loves;*  
*I sought him, but found him not;*  
 I called him, but he gave no answer.  
*"I will rise now and go about the city,*  
*in the streets and in the squares;*  
*I will seek him whom my soul loves."*  
*I sought him, but found him not.*  
 The watchmen found me, as they went about in the city.  
 "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" (Song of Solomon 3:1-4)

### Mary Magdalene Encounters the Risen Jesus

*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.* They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, *"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."* Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" *Supposing him to be the gardener,* she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." *Jesus said to her, "Mary."* *She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rab-bo'ni!" (which means Teacher).* Jesus said to her, *"Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."* *Mary Mag'dalene went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.* (John 20:11-18)

<sup>138</sup> See Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 149-50; Carolyn Grassi and Joseph Grassi, "The Resurrection: the New Age Begins; Mary Magdalene as Mystical Spouse," in *Mary Magdalene and the Women in Jesus' Life* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1986), 114-15.

### The Bride Encounters the Bridegroom

The watchmen found me,  
as they went about in the city.  
"Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"  
*Scarcely had I passed them,*  
*when I found him whom my soul loves.*  
*I held him, and would not let him go*  
until I had brought him into *my mother's house,*  
and into the chamber of her that conceived me. (Song 3:3-4)

### Why Does Jesus Tell Mary "Do Not Hold Me"?

1. How should we explain Jesus' prohibition?
  - a. A Textual Error? "Do not fear" (*mē ptoou*)
  - b. Mary is trying to 'hold Jesus back'?<sup>139</sup>
  - c. New Adam?<sup>140</sup>

### Jesus Fulfills the Role of Bridegroom in the Song of Songs

Jocelyn McWhirter: I argue here that the apparent difficulty of Jesus' prohibition can be explained... by comparing John 20:17 with Song 3:4. Jesus' abrupt prohibition, while creating dissonance with John's resurrection narrative, maintains consonance with Song 3:4.... Whereas the Song's bride intends to carry her man off into the chamber of her mother, Mary Magdalene has no such option. She cannot even hold Jesus, because he is ascending to the Father."<sup>141</sup>

### Jesus Goes to His "Father's House"<sup>142</sup>

Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In *my Father's house* are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? *And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* (John 14:1-3)

### Rufinus of Aquileia on Mary and the Song (5<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D.)

[Mary of Magdalene's love] was foretold in the Song of Songs: "On my bed I sought the one my soul loves. I sought him in the night and did not find him." (Song 3:1) Of those also who found him and held him by the feet, it is foretold, in the same book, "I will hold the one my soul loves and will not let him go" (Song 3:4). (Rufinus, *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*, 30)<sup>143</sup>

<sup>139</sup> See McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God*, 95, for these options.

<sup>140</sup> See Mary Rose D'Angelo, "A Critical Note: John 20:17 and Apocalypse of Moses 31," *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1990): 529-36. *Apocalypse of Moses* 31:1-3.

<sup>141</sup> McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God*, 96.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah and the People of God*, 105.

<sup>143</sup> Cited in Elowsky, *John*, 2:344.

**First Reading: Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (July 22, Missal of Paul VI)***First Reading:*

Upon my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves;  
 I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.  
 "I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares;  
 I will seek him whom my soul loves." I sought him, but found him not.  
 The watchmen found me, as they went about in the city.  
 "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" Scarcely had I passed them,  
 when I found him whom my soul loves.  
 I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house,  
 and into the chamber of her that conceived me. (Song of Songs 3:1-4)

**Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 63) Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (July 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

O God, thou art my God,

*I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee,*  
 as in a dry and weary land where no water is.

So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary, beholding thy power and glory.

Because thy steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise thee.

So I will bless thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on thy name.

My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat, and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips,  
*when I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of the night...*

for thou hast been my help, and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.

*My soul clings to thee; thy right hand upholds me.*

But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth...

(Psalm 63:1-8)

**Gospel Reading, Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (July 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

John 20:1-2, 11-18

**The Two Angels and the Holy of Holies**

*And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends.*

The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. *There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.*  
 (Exodus 25:18-22)

## The Mystery of Holy Matrimony

### The Problem with St. Paul

*Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord... As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.* (Ephesians 5:22-24)

1. One extreme: Paul the misogynist: tyrannical husbands and abused wives
2. Another extreme: mutual submission with no authentic headship for husbands
3. How should Catholics interpret these words?<sup>144</sup>

*The inspired books teach the truth...* “[A]ll that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirms should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit... (CCC 107)

### St. Paul on Mutual “Submission” to One Another

“Be subject (*hypotassomenoi*) to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Eph 5:21)

1. Problem of Translation:
  - a. Greek: *hypotassomai* (lit., “to place oneself under”)
  - b. “Submit” (from Lat., *sub-missio*) (KJV, NIV)
  - c. “Be Subject” (Douay-Rheims, RSV)
  - d. “Be subordinate” (NAB)
2. St. Paul begins with the principle of *mutual submission* within Marriage

### Pope John Paul II on Mutual Submission in Ephesians:

This relationship [between spouses] is nevertheless not one-sided submission. According to the teaching of Ephesians, marriage excludes this element of the contract, which weighed on this institution and at times does not cease to weigh on it. *Husband and wife are, in fact, “subject to one another,” mutually subordinated to one another.* The source of this reciprocal submission lies in Christian pietas and its expression is love.<sup>145</sup>

### Mutual Submission: A “Challenge” to Culture

*But the challenge presented by the "ethos" of the Redemption is clear and definitive. All the reasons in favour of the "subjection" of woman to man in marriage must be understood in the sense of a "mutual subjection" of both "out of reverence for Christ".* The measure of true spousal love finds its deepest source in Christ, who is the Bridegroom of the Church, his Bride. (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 24)

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<sup>144</sup> For a very fine recent Catholic exegesis of this passage, see Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 154-178. For a classic exposition, see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Petersham: St. Bede's, 1966), 216-226, and St. John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life* (trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson; Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1986), 43-64.

<sup>145</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (trans. Michael Waldstein; Boston: Pauline,

### **The Hellenistic Context**

“We have wives to bear us children, concubines for the daily care of our persons, mistresses we keep for the sake of our pleasure.” (Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* 122, 4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.)<sup>146</sup>

### **Pope Leo XII on Male Domination in Marriages (1880)**

But the corruption and change which fell on *marriage among the Gentiles* seem almost incredible, inasmuch as it was exposed in every land to floods of error and of the most shameful lusts. All nations seem, more or less, to have forgotten the true notion and origin of marriage; and thus everywhere laws were enacted with reference to marriage, prompted to all appearance by State reasons, but not such as nature required. Solemn rites, invented at will of the law-givers, brought about that women should, as might be, bear either the honorable name of wife or the disgraceful name of concubine; and things came to such a pitch that permission to marry, or the refusal of the permission, depended on the will of the heads of the State, whose laws were greatly against equity or even to the highest degree unjust. Moreover, plurality of wives and husbands, as well as divorce, caused the nuptial bond to be relaxed exceedingly. *Hence, too, sprang up the greatest confusion as to the mutual rights and duties of husbands and wives, inasmuch as a man assumed right of dominion over his wife, ordering her to go about her business, often without any just cause; while he was himself at liberty "to run headlong with impunity into lust, unbridled and unrestrained, in houses of ill-fame and amongst his female slaves, as if the dignity of the persons sinned with, and not the will of the sinner, made the guilt." When the licentiousness of a husband thus showed itself, nothing could be more piteous than the wife, sunk so low as to be all but reckoned as a means for the gratification of passion, or for the production of offspring.* Without any feeling of shame, marriageable girls were bought and sold, like so much merchandise, and power was sometimes given to the father and to the husband to inflict capital punishment on the wife. Of necessity, the offspring of such marriages as these were either reckoned among the stock in trade of the common-wealth or held to be the property of the father of the family; and the law permitted him to make and unmake the marriages of his children at his mere will, and even to exercise against them the monstrous power of life and death. (Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter On Christian Marriage, *Arcanum* no. 7)

### **Sacrificial Love (Gk *Agape*) and Submission**

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. *Love does not insist on its own way*; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

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<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Williamson, *Ephesians*, 162.

## St. Paul's Message for Christian Wives

### Exhortation to Christian Wives

*Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.* (Ephesians 5:22-24)

1. Exhortation: Wives be “submissive” or “subject (Gk *hypotassomai*)
2. Reason: Husband is the “head” of the wife, as Christ is “head” of the Church
3. Husband works for salvation of the wife, as Christ is the “savior”
4. Let wives be submissive “in everything,” as Church is to Christ

### Being “Submissive” Does Not Mean “Inferior”, but a Voluntary act of Love<sup>147</sup>

And [Jesus] went down with them [Mary and Joseph] and came to Nazareth and was subject (Gk *hypotassomenos*) to them. (Luke 2:51)

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power... When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected (Gk *hypotagêsetai*) to him who subjected all things to him (Gk *hypotaxanti*), that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24, 28)

### Christ's “Headship” is Not About “Superiority” but Authority

But I want you to understand that the head (Gk *kephalê*) of every man is Christ, the head (Gk *kephalê*) of a woman is her husband, and *the head (Gk kephalê) of Christ is God.* (1 Corinthians 11:3)

[The Father] has put all things under [Christ's] feet and has made him the head (Gk *kephalê*) over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22)

### John Chrysostom: Headship Means Spiritual Leadership and Peace

God's purpose in ordering marriage is peace. *One takes the husband's role, one takes the wife's role, one in guiding, one in supporting.* If both had the very same roles, there would be no peace. The house is not rightly governed when all have precisely the same roles. *There must be a differentiation of roles under a single head.* (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians 20:5:33*).<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> “It is worth noting that Paul says ‘subordinate yourselves’ rather than ‘obey,’ the word he uses in his introduction to children and slaves in 6:1, 5... Paul's word choice indicates that he views the relationship of wives to husband to be different from that of children to parents or slaves to masters. The *voluntary subordination* Paul envisions is familial rather than military or task oriented.” Williamson, *Ephesians*, 158-59.

<sup>148</sup> Cited in Edwards, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, 200.

**Wives Must Not Submit to Unlawful Acts (Theodoret, 6<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.)**

We must not be submissive to those who command us to act unlawfully. But to those who call us to live with piety, we must be subject to one another. Having laid down this general law of obedience, Paul next advises the Ephesians in detail on their duties to another. (*Epistle to the Ephesians* 5:21)<sup>149</sup>

**Pope Leo XIII on the Nature of the Wife's Submission (1893)**

"The man is the ruler of the family, and the head of the woman; but because she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, *let her be subject and obedient to the man, not as a servant but as a companion*, so that nothing be lacking of honor or of dignity in the obedience which she pays. *Let divine charity be the constant guide of their mutual relations, both in him who rules and in her who obeys, since each bears the image, the one of Christ, the other of the Church.*" (Leo XIII, Encyclical *Arcanum* no. 11, cited in Pius XI, *Casti Connubi* no. 28)

**Pope Pius XI on the Roles of Husband and Wife (1930)**

Domestic society being confirmed, therefore, by this bond of love, there should flourish in it that "*order of love*," as St. Augustine calls it. This order includes both the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children, the ready subjection of the wife and her willing obedience, which the Apostle commends in these words: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ is the head of the Church." *This subjection, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her most noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband's every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors, to whom it is not customary to allow free exercise of their rights on account of their lack of mature judgment, or of their ignorance of human affairs. But it forbids that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family; it forbids that in this body which is the family, the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the proximate danger of ruin. For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.* Again, this subjection of wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place and time. In fact, if the husband neglect his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family. *But the structure of the family and its fundamental law, established and confirmed by God, must always and everywhere be maintained intact.* (Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter on Christian Marriage, *Casti Connubi* nos. 26-28)

Husband

Head of the Family

Chief Place in Leading

Wife

Heart of the Family

Chief Place in Love

<sup>149</sup> Cited in Mark J. Edwards, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, NT VIII; Downer's Grove: IVP, 1999).a

### **How the Wife Should Respect Her Husband**

And when you hear Paul say “fear” or “respect,” ask for the respect that is due you 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. (John Chrysostom, *Marriage and Family Life*, p. 56).

### **The Goal of Submission: Harmony and Peace in the Home**

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 neighbors, friends and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both for families and states, are thus produced. When it is otherwise, however, everything is thrown into confusion and turned upside-down. (John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, p. 44-45)

Paul placed the head in authority and the body in obedience for the sake of peace. Where there is equal authority, there never is peace. *A household cannot be a democracy, ruled by everyone, but the authority must necessarily rest in one person.* The same is true for the Church: when men are led by the Spirit of Christ, then there is peace. (John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, p. 53)

### **Appendix: Further Instructions to Wives**

John Chrysostom:<sup>150</sup>

1. Wives should not contradict or rebel against their husbands (p. 56)
2. Wives should not nag their husbands and tear them down (p. 59-60)
3. Wives should not be disrespectful and extravagant (p. 62)
4. She should banish the idea of “mine” and “yours” with regard to money and possessions (p. 62-63)

Pope Pius XII<sup>151</sup>

1. Wives primary role is to make “a happy home” with the “atmosphere of family” (as in Proverbs 31) (p. 153)
2. Wives should make it a “spiritual home” (p. 154)
3. Wives shall be sanctified and saved through bearing children (1 Tim 2:15) (p. 155)
4. Wives should not usurp the authority of the husband (p. 161)
5. Wives should not just submit, but “love” the authority of their spouse as a gift (p. 165)

<sup>150</sup> Page numbers from John Chrysostom, *Marriage and Family Life*.

<sup>151</sup> Page numbers from Pope Pius XII, *Dear Newlyweds: Pope Pius XII Speaks to Young Couples* (trans. J. F. Murray and B. M. Murray; New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1961).

## St. Paul's Message for Christian Husbands

### Saint Paul's Message for Christian Husbands

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one." This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:25-33)*

1. Husbands should love their wives *as* Christ loved the Church
2. How Christ loved the Church:
  - a. He sacrificed himself for her
  - b. He made her holy
  - c. He cleansed her with water
  - d. He cleansed her with the word
  - e. His goal: that she might be "holy" and "without blemish"
3. How Husbands should love their Wives
  - a. He should nourish and cherish her as his own "body"
  - c. Union of Persons: "The Two shall become One" (Gen 2:24)
  - d. Rooted in the "great mystery" of Christ and the Church
4. Conclusion: Husbands should love, and wives respect their spouses.

### How Christ Loved the Church

He gave himself up for her that "He might cleanse and sanctify her..." (v. 26). So the Church was not pure. She had blemishes, she was ugly and cheap. Whatever kind of wife you marry, you will never take a bride like Christ did when he married the Church; you will never marry anyone estranged from you as the Church was from Christ. Despite all this, he did not abhor or hate her for her extraordinary corruption. Do you want her corruption described? Paul says, "For once you were in darkness" (Eph 5:8). Do you see how black she was? Nothing is blacker than darkness. Think of her shamelessness; she passed her day in malice and envy, Paul says. Look at her impurity; she was foolish and disobedient. But what am I saying? She was foolish, her tongue was evil, but even though her wounds were so numerous, he sacrificed himself for her in her corrupted state, as if she were in the bloom of youth, as if she were dearly beloved, and a wonderful beauty. St Paul marveled at this, and said, "Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. God showed his love for us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:7-8). Though she was like this, Christ accepted her and made her beautiful. He washed her, and did not hesitate even to sacrifice himself for her. (John Chrysostom, *Marriage and Family Life*, pp. 47-48)

### **The Jewish Nuptial Bath and the Splendor of the Bride**

I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. *Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil...* And I decked you with ornaments and put bracelets on your arms, and a chain on your neck... You grew exceedingly beautiful, and came to regal estate. And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, *for it was perfect through the splendor which I had bestowed upon you*, says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 16:8-9, 12)

### **How Christ Cleansed the Church with Water and the Word**

“By the washing of water” he washes away her impurities. “With the word” he says. What word? “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 20).

### **How the Church is Christ’s Body**

How is she his flesh? Listen: “This at last is bone of my bones,” said Adam, and “flesh of my flesh!” (Gen 2:23), and also, “They become one flesh” (Gen 2:24)... It is obvious that he shares our nature, but how do we share his? How are we members of his flesh? We are truly members of Christ because through him we were created, and *we are truly members of his flesh because we are recreated by partaking of his mysteries....* (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 20)

### **The “Great Mystery” of Christ and the Church**

“This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the Church” (Eph 5:32). What does this mean? 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” (1 Cor 6:17). (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 20)

### **How the Husband Should Give Himself for His Wife**

Have you noted the measure of obedience? *Pay attention to love’s high standard. If you take the premise that your wife should submit to you, as the church submits to Christ, then you should also take the same kind of careful, sacrificial thought for her that Christ takes for the Church.* Even if you must offer your own life for her, you must not refuse. Even if you must undergo countless struggles on her behalf and have all kinds of things to endure and suffer, you must not refuse. Even if you suffer all this, you have still not done as much as Christ has for the church. For you are already married when you act this way, whereas Christ is acting for one who has rejected and hated him. So just as he, when she was rejecting, hating, spurning and nagging him, brought her to trust him by his great solicitude, not by threatening, lording it over her or intimidating her or anything like that, so you must also act toward your wife. Even if you see her looking down on you, nagging and despising her, you will be able to win her over with your great love and affection for her. (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians* 20:5:25).<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Cited in Edwards, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, 195

### **How the Husband Should Love His Wife as His Own Body**

Paul has precisely described for husband... that he should love her as his body. But how is this behavior achieved? That is must be is clear; now I will tell you how. It will be achieved if we are detached from money, if we strive above everything for virtue, if we keep the fear of God before our eyes... *Love her not so much for her own sake, but for Christ's sake.* That is why he says, “subject, as to the Lord.” Do everything for the Lord’s sake, in a spirit of obedience to him. *These words should be enough to convince us to avoid quarrels and disagreements...* And what if you devote the day to your work and your friends, and the evening to your wife, and she is still not satisfied, but is jealous for more of your time? Don’t be annoyed by her complaints; she loves you, she is not behaving absurdly—her complaints come from her fervent affection for you, and from fear. Yes, she is afraid that her marriage bed will be stolen, that someone will deprive her of her greatest blessing, that someone will take from her him who is her head. (John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, p. 58-59).

### **How the Husband Should Make His Wife Beautiful**

“By the washing of water” he washes away her impurities. “With the word” he says. What word? “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). And he has not merely honored her, but he has presented her to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Let us also, then, strive to attain this beauty, and we shall be able to create it within ourselves. Don’t expect your wife to have things that are beyond her power. Remember that the Church received everything from her Lord’s hands: by him she was made glorious, by him she was purified and freed from blemish. Don’t turn your back on your wife because she is not beautiful. Listen to what Scripture says: “The bee is small among flying creatures, but her product is the best of sweet things” (Sir 11:3). Your wife is God’s creation. If you reproach her, you are not condemning her but him who made her. What can the woman do about it? If your wife is beautiful, don’t praise her for it. Praise, hatred, and even love based on outward beauty come from impure souls. *Seek beauty of soul, and imitate the Bridegroom of the Church.* Outward beauty is full of conceit and licentiousness; it makes men jealous, and fills men with lustful thought. But does it give any pleasure? Perhaps for one or two months, or a year at most but then no longer. Familiarity causes admiration to fade. Meanwhile the evils arising from outward beauty remain; pride, foolishness, contempt of others. However, where outward beauty is of no concern none of this is to be found. *The love that began on honest grounds still continues ardently, since its object is beauty of soul, not of the body...* And if by some chance disease comes too, then all is immediately lost. Look for affection, gentleness, and humility in a wife; these are the tokens of beauty. But let us not seek lovely physical features, nor reproach her for lacking things over which she has no control. No; let us not reproach her for anything, or be impatient or sullen. Haven’t you seen how many men, living with beautiful wives, have ended their lives in misery, and how many who have lived with those with no great beauty, have lived to extreme old age with great enjoyment? *Let us wipe off the “spot” and smooth the “wrinkle” that is within, as it is written; let us do away with the blemishes that are on the soul. Such is the beauty God requires. Let us make her fair in God’s sight, not in our own.* (John Chrysostom, *Marriage and Family Life*, pp. 47-49).

### **How the Husband Should Make His Wife Holy**

*Beginning on their wedding night, let him be an example of gentleness, temperance, and self-control; and she will be likewise. He should advise her not to decorate herself with golden earrings, necklaces, or other jewelry, or to accumulate expensive clothes. Instead, her appearance should be dignified, and dignity is never served by theatrical excess... If the bridegroom shows his wife that he takes not pleasure in worldly excess, and will not stand for it, their marriage will remain free from evil influences that are so popular these days. Let them shun the immodest music and dancing that are currently so fashionable... When your bride sees your manner of life, she will say to herself, "Wonderful! What a wise man my husband is! He regards this passing life as nothing; he has married me to be a good mother for his children and a prudent manager of his household..." She will retain her modesty if you retain yours... Tell her that you love her more than your own life, because this present life is nothing, and that your only hope is that the two of you pass through this life in such a way that in the world to come you will be united in perfect love. Say to her, "Our time here is brief and fleeting, but if we are pleasing to God, we can exchange this life for the Kingdom to come. Then we will be perfectly one both with Christ and each other, and our pleasure will know no bounds." (John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, pp. 60-61.*

*[M]aking her "holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:27) refer to headship. Do both these things, and everything else will follow... Instruct your wife, and your whole household will be in order and harmony. Listen to what Paul says: "If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home" (1 Cor 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... Teach her to fear God, and all other good things will flow from this one lesson as from a fountain and your house will be filled with ten thousand blessings. (John Chrysostom, *Marriage and Family Life*, p. 57)*

### **How the Husband Should Cherish His Wife**

*Finally, never call her by her name alone, but with terms of endearment, honor, and love. If you honor her, she won't need honor from others; she won't desire praise from others if she enjoys the praise that comes from you. Prefer her before all others, both for her beauty and her discernment, and praise her. She will in this way be persuaded to listen to none that are outside, but to disregard all the world except for you. (John Chrysostom, *Marriage and Family Life*, p. 63).*

#### Husbands' #1 Complaint

'She doesn't respect me'

#### Saint Paul's Solution

Wives, be *submissive* to your husbands

#### Wives' #1 Complaint

'He never chooses me'

#### Saint Paul's Solution

Husbands, *love* your wives

## Appendix: Jesus on Marriage and Divorce

### Jesus' on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage<sup>153</sup>

Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "*Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?*" He answered, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [cf. Gen 1:27; 2:24] *So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.*" They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" [cf. Deut 24:1-4] He said to them, "*For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.*" (Matthew 19:2-9)

### The Jewish Context: Debate over Legitimate Grounds for Divorce

The School of Shammai say: 'A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, "Because he has found in her *indecent* in anything" (Deut 24:1). And the School of Hillel say: '[He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, "Because he has found in her indecent in *anything*" (Deut 24:1) Rabbi Akiba says: 'Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written: "And it shall be if she find no favor in his eyes" (Deut 24:1). (Mishnah, *Gittin* ['Bills of Divorce'] 9:10.)<sup>154</sup>

### Divorce and Remarriage in the Law of Moses

When a man takes a wife and marries her, *if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecent* (Hebrew, '*erwath dabar*, "nakedness," or "shame of a thing") *in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD....* (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

### Jesus: Marriage is Indissoluble and Remarriage is Adulterous

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:11-12)

"Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." (Luke 16:18)

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<sup>153</sup> For a concise but excellent overview of the interpretation of Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage, see esp. the essay, "Jesus on Marriage and Divorce," in Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 41. For a more in-depth overview of interpretations, see Raymond Collins, *Divorce in the New Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002).

<sup>154</sup> Translation Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 321.

**What Does Jesus Mean by “Except for *Porneia*”?**

I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, *except for unchastity* (Greek, *porneia*), and marries another, commits adultery." (Matt 19: 9)

**Protestant View: Jesus Allows Divorce *and* Remarriage in Certain Cases<sup>155</sup>**

W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison: “According to Erasmus and most Protestant scholars since his time [15<sup>th</sup> century], Matthew allows the innocent party to divorce *and* remarry in the event of adultery. According to the almost universal patristic as well as Roman Catholic opinion, *Matthew permits only separation for adultery, not remarriage.*”<sup>156</sup>

**Levitical View: Jesus Allows Separation in Invalid Marriages<sup>157</sup>**

1. Jesus allowed for divorce in the cases of *invalid* marriages b/c of *near blood relations*:

You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or born abroad.... (Leviticus 18:6-18)

2. However, Jesus did *not* allow for *remarriage* after divorce.

3. In the case of a near-blood relation, there was no lawful marriage to begin with (Compare, for example, a declaration of nullity [= ‘an annulment’]).

4. The New American Bible translation:

“I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9; NAB)

5. Weakness: There is no patristic support for the translation ‘incest’.

**Patristic View: Jesus Allows Separation for Adultery but Forbids Remarriage**

1. Jesus allowed for ‘divorce’ *as separation* in cases of serious sexual sin (*porneia*)

2. However, Jesus did *not* allow for *remarriage* after the separation of spouses.

3. Spouses may separate, but are not free to remarry.

But I say to you that *every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.* (Matthew 5:31-32)

*To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) -- and that the husband should not divorce his wife.* (1 Corinthians 7:10-11)

<sup>155</sup> E.g., Andreas Köstenberger, “Marriage and Family in the New Testament,” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical Word* (ed. Ken M. Campbell; Downer’s Grove: IVP, 2003), 256-64, following David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>156</sup> See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 1991, 1998), 1:530.

<sup>157</sup> E.g., Joseph Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974) 208-211.

**Confirmation of Patristic Interpretation: Disciples “It is Better Not to Marry”!**

[Jesus said:] And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery."

The disciples said to him, "*If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry.*" But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. *For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.* He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." (Matthew 19:9-12)

**The Catechism on the Old Testament Preparation for Indissoluble Marriage**

Seeing God's covenant with Israel in *the image of exclusive and faithful married love*, the prophets prepared the Chosen People's conscience for a deepened understanding of *the unity and indissolubility of marriage*. The books of Ruth and Tobit bear moving witness to an elevated sense of marriage and to the fidelity and tenderness of spouses. Tradition has always seen in the Song of Solomon a unique expression of human love, insofar as it is a reflection of God's love - a love "strong as death" that "many waters cannot quench." (CCC 1611)

**The Catechism on Jesus and the Indissolubility of Marriage**

In his preaching *Jesus unequivocally taught the original meaning of the union of man and woman as the Creator willed it from the beginning*: permission given by Moses to divorce one's wife was a concession to the hardness of hearts (cf. Matt 19:8). *The matrimonial union of man and woman is indissoluble*: God himself has determined it "what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt 19:6).

*This unequivocal insistence on the indissolubility of the marriage bond* may have left some perplexed and could seem to be a demand impossible to realize. However, Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy - heavier than the Law of Moses. *By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, he himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God*. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to "receive" the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. *This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian life.* (CCC 1614-1615)

## Holy Virginity in Sacred Scripture<sup>158</sup>

### **Pope Pius XII: What is Holy Virginity? (1954)**

Innumerable is the multitude of those who from the beginning of the Church until our time have offered their chastity to God. *Some have preserved their virginity unspoiled, others after the death of their spouse, have consecrated to God their remaining years in the unmarried state, and still others, after repenting their sins, have chosen to lead a life of perfect chastity; all of them at one in this common oblation, that is, for love of God to abstain for the rest of their lives from sexual pleasure.* May then what the Fathers of the Church preached about the glory and merit of virginity be an invitation, a help, and a source of strength to those who have made the sacrifice to persevere with constancy, and not take back or claim for themselves even the smallest part of the holocaust they have laid on the altar of God. And while this perfect chastity is the subject of one of the three vows which constitute the religious state, and is also required by the Latin Church of clerics in major orders and demanded from members of Secular Institutes, *it also flourishes among many who are lay people in the full sense: men and women who are not constituted in a public state of perfection and yet by private promise or vow completely abstain from marriage and sexual pleasures,* in order to serve their neighbor more freely and to be united with God more easily and more closely. (Pope Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, nos. 5-6)

### **Sexual Abstinence of Priests in the Old Testament**

“If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening.” (Leviticus 15:18)

And the priest answered David, “I have no common bread at hand, but there is holy bread, if only the young men have kept themselves from women.” (1 Samuel 21:4)

### **Consecrated Virgins in Ancient Israel**

Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. (1 Samuel 2:22; cf. Num 4:23; 8:24).

Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel says in the name of Rabbi Simeon son of the Prefect: The veil was one handbreadth thick and was woven on seventy-two rods... Its length was forty cubits and its breadth twenty cubits; it was made by eighty-two virgins, and they used to make two in every year; and three hundred priests immersed it. (Mishnah, *Shekalim* 8:5; trans. Herbert Danby)<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> See above all the magnificent study of Lucien Legrand, M.E.P., *The Biblical Doctrine of Virginity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963) and Mary Jane Klimisch, O.S.B., *The One Bride: the Church and Consecrated Virginity* (trans. Ignatius Hunt; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

<sup>159</sup> Trans. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933). So too the Talmud: “The women who wove the [Temple] curtains... There were thirteen curtains in the second Temple, seven corresponding to the seven gates, one for the entrance to the *Hekal* [Holy Place], one for the entrance to the

### Jesus' Teaching on Celibacy for "The Sake of the Kingdom"

"Whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery." The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry." But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. *For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.*" (Matthew 19:8-12)

### No Marriage in the Resurrection

The same day Sad'ducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies, having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.' Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will she be wife? For they all had her." But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. *For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.* And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living." And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching. (Matthew 22:23-33)

### Holy Virginity as a Charism

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality (Gk *porneia*), each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. *I say this by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift (Gk *charisma*) from God, one of one kind and one of another.* To the unmarried (Gk *agamois*) and the widows (Gk *chērais*) I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion (Gk *purousthai*, lit., "to burn"). (1 Corinthians 7:1-9)

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*Ulam* [the Temple porch], two to the *Debir* [Holy of Holies] and two corresponding to them in the upper story." (Babylonian Talmud, *Ketuboth* 106a)

### **Virginity and the Passing Away of This World**

Now concerning virgins (Gk *parthenōn*), I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. *I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he is.* Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin. *Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away.* (1 Corinthians 7:25-31)

### **Virginity and Undivided Devotion to God**

I want you to be free from anxieties. *The unmarried man (Gk *agamos*) is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman (Gk *hē gunē he agamos*) or virgin (Gk *parthenos*) is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband.* I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:32-35)

### **Marriage is Good, Virginity is Better**

If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his virgin (Gk *parthenos*), if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry -- it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his virgin (Gk *parthenos*), he will do well. *So that he who marries his virgin (Gk *parthenos*) does well (Gk *kalōs*); and he who refrains from marriage will do better (Gk *kreittōn*).* (1 Corinthians 7:36-38)

### **The 144,000 Virgins in Revelation**

Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. *It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.* (Revelation 14:1-4)

## Holy Virginity in Tradition and the Magisterium<sup>160</sup>

### The Disciples' Response to Jesus' Teaching

For when the disciples thought that the obligations and burdens of marriage, which their Master's discourse had made clear, seemed extremely heavy, they said to Him: "If the case stands so between man and wife, it is better not to marry at all" (Matt 19:10). Jesus Christ replied that His ideal is not understood by everybody but only by those who have received the gift; for some are hindered from marriage because of some defect of nature, others because of the violence and malice of men, while still others freely abstain of their own will, and this "for the kingdom of heaven." And He concludes with these words, "He that can take it, let him take it" (Matt 19:12). *By these words the divine Master is speaking not of bodily impediments to marriage, but of a resolution freely made to abstain all one's life from marriage and sexual pleasure.* For in likening those who of their own free will have determined to renounce these pleasures to those who by nature or the violence of men are forced to do so, is not the Divine Redeemer teaching us that chastity to be really perfect must be perpetual? Here also it must be added, as the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have clearly taught, that virginity is not a Christian virtue unless we embrace it "for the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:12); that is, unless we take up this way of life precisely to be able to devote ourselves more freely to divine things to attain heaven more surely, and with skillful efforts to lead others more readily to the kingdom of heaven. *Those therefore, who do not marry because of exaggerated self-interest, or because, as Augustine says, they shun the burdens of marriage or because like Pharisees they proudly flaunt their physical integrity, an attitude which has been condemned by the Council of Gangra lest men and women renounce marriage as though it were something despicable instead of because virginity is something beautiful and holy, - none of these can claim for themselves the honor of Christian virginity.* (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, nos. 10-12)

### The Undivided Heart of the Virgin

And here We think it opportune, Venerable Brothers, to expose more fully and to explain more carefully why the love of Christ moves generous souls to abstain from marriage, and what is the mystical connection between virginity and the perfection of Christian charity. From our Lord's words referred to above, it has already been implied that this complete renunciation of marriage frees men from its grave duties and obligations. Writing by divine inspiration, the Apostle of the Gentiles proposes the reason for this freedom in these words: "And I would have you to be without solicitude. . . But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided." *Here however it must be noted that the Apostle is not reproving men because they are concerned about their wives, nor does he reprehend wives because they seek to please their husbands; rather is he asserting clearly that their hearts are divided between love of God and love of their spouse, and beset by gnawing cares, and so by reason of the duties of their married state they can hardly be free to contemplate the divine.* (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, no. 20)

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<sup>160</sup> See esp. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, On the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and the World (25 March, 1996).

### **The Central Idea of Consecrated Virginity**

Moreover, the Apostle of the Gentiles, writing under divine inspiration, makes this point... [Quotes 1 Cor 7:32-35]. *This then is the primary purpose, this the central idea of Christian virginity: to aim only at the divine, to turn thereto the whole mind and soul; to want to please God in everything, to think of Him continually, to consecrate body and soul completely to Him.* (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, no. 15)

### **Virginity as Spiritual Marriage to Christ**

Moreover the Fathers of the Church considered this obligation of perfect chastity as a *kind of spiritual marriage, in which the soul is wedded to Christ*; so that some go so far as to compare breaking the vow with adultery. Thus, St. Athanasius writes that the Catholic Church has been accustomed to call *those who have the virtue of virginity the spouses of Christ*. And St. Ambrose, writing succinctly of the consecrated virgin, says, "She is a virgin who is *married to God*." In fact, as is clear from the writings of the same Doctor of Milan, *as early as the fourth century the rite of consecration of a virgin was very like the rite the Church uses in our own day in the marriage blessing*. For the same reason the Fathers exhort virgins *to love their Divine Spouse more ardently than they would love a husband had they married*, and always in their thoughts and actions to fulfill His will. Augustine writes to virgins: "Love with all your hearts Him Who is the most beautiful of the sons of men: you are free, your hearts are not fettered by conjugal bonds . . . if, then, you would owe your husbands great love, how great is the love you owe Him because of Whom you have willed to have not husbands? Let Him Who was fastened to the cross be securely fastened to your hearts." And this in other respects too is in harmony with the sentiments and resolutions which the Church herself requires of virgins on the day they are solemnly consecrated to God by inviting them to recite these words: "The kingdom of this earth and all worldly trappings I have valued as worthless for love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I have seen, loved, believed, and preferred above all else." It is nothing else but love of Him that sweetly constrains the virgin to consecrate her body and soul entirely to her Divine Redeemer; thus St. Methodius, Bishop of Olympus, places these beautiful words on her lips: "*You yourself, O Christ, are my all. For you I keep myself chaste, and holding aloft my shining lamp I run to meet you, my Spouse*." Certainly it is the love of Christ that urges a virgin to retire behind convent walls and remain there all her life, *in order to contemplate and love the heavenly Spouse more easily and without hindrance*; certainly it is the same love that strongly inspires her to spend her life and strength in works of mercy for the sake of her neighbor. (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, nos. 17-18)

### **Virginity as Imitation of Christ**

As for those men "who were not defiled with women, being virgins," (Rev 14:4) the Apostle John asserts that, "they follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev 14:4). Let us meditate, then, on the exhortation Augustine gives to all men of this class: "*You follow the Lamb because the body of the Lamb is indeed virginal*. . . Rightly do you follow Him in virginity of heart and body wherever He goes. *For what does following mean but imitation?* Christ has suffered for us, leaving us an example, as the Apostle Peter says 'that we should follow in his footsteps'" (1 Pet 2:21). *Hence all these disciples and*

*spouses of Christ embraced the state of virginity, as St. Bonaventure says, "in order to become like unto Christ the spouse, for that state makes virgins like unto Him."* It would hardly satisfy their burning love for Christ to be united with Him by the bonds of affection, but this love had perforce to express itself by *the imitation of His virtues*, and especially by *conformity to His way of life*, which was lived completely for the benefit and salvation of the human race. If priests, religious men and women, and others who in any way have vowed themselves to the divine service, cultivate perfect chastity, it is certainly for the reason that their Divine Master remained all His life a virgin. St. Fulgentius exclaims: "This is the only-begotten Son of God, the only-begotten Son of a virgin also, the only spouse of all holy virgins, the fruit, the glory, the gift of holy virginity, whom holy virginity brought forth physically, to whom holy virginity is wedded spiritually, by whom holy virginity is made fruitful and kept inviolate, by whom she is adorned, to remain ever beautiful, by whom she is crowned, to reign forever glorious." (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, no. 19)

### **Virginity as an Eschatological Sign of the Union of between the Church and Christ**

Virginity fully deserves the name of angelic virtue, which St. Cyprian writing to virgins affirms: "What we are to be, you have already commenced to be. *You already possess in this world the glory of the resurrection; you pass through the world without suffering its contagion.* In preserving virgin chastity, you are the equals of the angels of God." To souls, restless for a purer life or inflamed with the desire to possess the kingdom of heaven, virginity offers itself as "a pearl of great price," for which one "sells all that he has, and buys it." Married people and even those who are captives of vice, at the contact of virgin souls, often admire the splendor of their transparent purity, and feel themselves moved to rise above the pleasures of sense. When St. Thomas states "that to virginity is awarded the tribute of the highest beauty," it is because its example is captivating; and, besides, by their perfect chastity do not all these men and women give a striking proof that the mastery of the spirit over the body is the result of a divine assistance and the sign of proven virtue? *Worthy of special consideration is the reflection that the most delicate fruit of virginity consists in this, that virgins make tangible, as it were, the perfect virginity of their mother, the Church and the sanctity of her intimate union with Christ.* In the ceremony of the consecration of virgins, the consecrating prelate prays God: "that there may exist more noble souls who disdain the marriage which consists in the bodily union of man and woman, *but desire the mystery it enshrines, who reject its practice while loving its mystic signification.*" *The greatest glory of virgins is undoubtedly to be the living images of the perfect integrity of the union between the Church and her divine Spouse.* (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas* nos. 29-30)

### Virginity and the Crucified Life

Hence, perfect chastity demands, first, a free choice by Christians before they consecrate themselves to God and then, from God, supernatural help and grace. Our Divine Redeemer Himself has taught us this in the following words: "All men take not his word, but they to whom it is given. . . He that can take it, let him take it" (Matt 19:12). St. Jerome, intently pondering this sacred phrase of Jesus Christ, exhorts all "that each one study his own powers, whether he can fulfill the precepts of virginal modesty. For of itself chastity is charming and attractive to all. But one's forces must be considered, that he who can may take it. The Lord's word is as it were an exhortation, stirring on His soldiers to the prize of purity. He that can take it, let him take it: let him who can, fight, conquer and receive his reward." For virginity is a difficult virtue; that one be able to embrace it there is needed not only a strong and declared determination of completely and perpetually abstaining from those legitimate pleasures derived from marriage; but also a constant vigilance and struggle to contain and dominate rebellious movements of body and soul, a flight from the importunings of this world, a struggle to conquer the wiles of Satan. How true is that saying of Chrysostom: "*the root, and the flower, too, of virginity is a crucified life.*" For virginity, according to Ambrose, is as a sacrificial offering, and the virgin "an oblation of modesty, *a victim of chastity.*" Indeed, St. Methodius, Bishop of Olympus, compares virgins to martyrs, and *St. Gregory the Great teaches that perfect chastity substitutes for martyrdom*: "Now, though the era of persecution is gone, yet our peace has its martyrdom, because though we bend not the neck to the sword, yet with a spiritual weapon we slay fleshly desires in our hearts." Hence a chastity dedicated to God demands strong and noble souls, souls ready to do battle and conquer "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, nos. 49)

### Virginity and Spiritual Fecundity

Turning next to the fruitful effects of virginity, our appreciation of its value will be enhanced; for "by the fruit the tree is known." We feel the deepest joy at the thought of the innumerable army of virgins and apostles who, from the first centuries of the Church up to our own day, have given up marriage to devote themselves more easily and fully to the salvation of their neighbor for the love of Christ, and have thus been enabled to undertake and carry through admirable works of religion and charity... Hence it often happens that a child, immediately after birth, is placed in the care of consecrated persons, who supply in so far as they can for a mother's love; at the age of reason he is entrusted to educators who see to his Christian instruction together with the development of his mind and the formation of his character; if he is sick, the child or adult will find nurses moved by the love of Christ who will care for him with unwearying devotion; the orphan, the person fallen into material destitution or moral abjection, the prisoner, will not be abandoned... Who can ever praise enough the missionaries who toil for the conversion of the pagan multitudes, exiles from their native country, or the nuns who render them indispensable assistance?" To each and every one We gladly apply these words of Our Apostolic Exhortation, "Menti Nostrae:" ". . . *by this law of celibacy the priest not only does not abdicate his paternity, but increases it immensely, for he begets not for an earthly and transitory life but for the heavenly and eternal one.*" (Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, no. 25-26)

## **Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity (Together with Religious Profession for Nuns)<sup>161</sup>**

### **Calling of Candidates**

Be wise, make ready your lamps.  
Behold, the Bridegroom comes;  
go out to meet him.

### **Scripture Readings<sup>162</sup>**

Song of Songs 2:8-14

“Arise my love, my beautiful one, come!”

Hosea 2:16, 21-22:

“I will espouse you to me forever.”

1 Corinthians 7:25-35

“A virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord.”

Matthew 19:3-12

“For the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven”

Matthew 25:1-13

“Behold the Bridegroom, Come out to meet him!”

### **Homily**

The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, through baptism has already made you temples of God’s glory and children of the Father. Today through our ministry he anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title. *He gives each one of you the dignity of being a bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last for ever.*

The Church is the bride of Christ. *This title of the Church was given by the fathers and doctors of the Church to those like you who speak to us of the world to come, where there is not marrying or giving in marriage. You are a sign of the great mystery of salvation, proclaimed at the beginning of human history and fulfilled in the marriage covenant between Christ and his Church.*

Your joy and your crown, even here on earth, will be Christ, the Son of the Virgin and *the Bridegroom of virgins*. He will call you to his presence and into his kingdom, where *you will sing a new song as you follow the Lamb of God wherever he leads you.*

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<sup>161</sup> See *The Rites of the Catholic Church: Volume Two* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 153-96

<sup>162</sup> For a selection, see *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, 190-192.

**Prayer of Consecration**

Among your many gifts you give to some the grace of virginity.  
Yet the honor of marriage is in no way lessened.  
As it was in the beginning, your first blessing still remains upon this holy union.  
*Yet your loving wisdom chooses those  
who make sacrifice of marriage  
for the sake of the love of which it is the sign.  
They renounce the joys of human marriage, but cherish all that it foreshadows.*

**Giving of the Veil and the Ring**

Dearest daughters,  
receive the veil and the ring  
that are the insignia of your consecration.  
*Keep unstained your fidelity to your Bridegroom,*  
and never forget that you are bound  
to the service of Christ and of his body, the Church.  
They all reply together: Amen.

**Giving of the Ring**

*Receive the ring that marks you as a bride of Christ.  
Keep unstained your fidelity to your Bridegroom,  
that you may one day be admitted to the wedding feast of everlasting joy.*

**Singing of Psalm 45**

Hear O daughter, consider, and incline your ear; the king will desire your beauty.  
Since he is your lord, bow to him...  
The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes;  
in many-colored robes she is led to the king,  
with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train.  
With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.  
Instead of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.

**Antiphon**

*I am espoused to him whom the angels serve; sun and moon stand in wonder at his glory.*

**Presentation of the Liturgy of the Hours**

Receive the book of the liturgy of the hours, the prayer of the Church;  
may the praise of our heavenly Father be always on your lips;  
pray without ceasing for the salvation of the world.

**[The Catechism on the Liturgy of the Hours]**

The Liturgy of the Hours “is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father.” (CCC 1175)

## The New Wedding Banquet

### The Parable of the Royal Wedding Banquet

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast’. But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to those servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the streets and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find’. And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’. For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:1-14)

### The Wedding of the World to Come in Jewish Tradition

*It can be compared to a king who betrothed a woman and promised her but few presents in writing; but when he actually took her unto himself, he promised her many more presents as her husband. Similarly, this world is like the betrothal, for it says: “And I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness” (Hos 2:22). Hence He gave them only the moon, as it says, “This month shall be unto you” (Exod 12:2). The actual marriage ceremony will take place in the days of the Messiah, as it says: “For thy Maker is thy husband” (Isa 54:5), and then He will hand everything over to them, as it says: “And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12:3). (Exodus Rabbah 15:31)<sup>163</sup>*

### What is the Wedding Garment?

1. The garment signifies *deeds of righteousness*.<sup>164</sup> This view is supported by Jewish parallels in which the metaphor of clothing is used to signify the good works or “the robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10; Bar 5:1-4; Sir 27:8; Wis 5:18).

2. The garment signifies *divine favor and salvation*.<sup>165</sup> This view is supported by Jewish parallels which speak of a “garment of salvation” (Isa 61:10; cf. Isa 52:1; Ezek 16:10-13; *I En.* 62:16).<sup>166</sup>

<sup>163</sup> For the sake of consistency, I have adapted the translation “Messianic days” to “days of the Messiah,” which is the more standard translation of the Hebrew phrase.

<sup>164</sup> Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom*, 235.

<sup>165</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 189.

<sup>166</sup> Intriguingly, this imagery is frequently linked to priestly vestments (Isa 61:10; Ps 132:15; 2 Chron 6:41). See Blickenstaff, ‘*While the Bridegroom is with Them*’, 72 n. 92.

3. The garment signifies *the glory of heavenly beings*.<sup>167</sup> This view is supported by Jewish parallels in which heavenly beings such as God or the angels are depicted as wearing special garments of light (Ps 104:1-2; *1 En.* 62:13-16; *T. Mos.* 20:1-3; *Apoc. Zeph.* 8:3-4)<sup>168</sup>

### **The Garments of Glory in Jewish Tradition**

And he took me [Isaiah] up into the seventh heaven, and there I saw a wonderful light, and also angels without number. And there I saw the holy Abel and all the righteous. And there I saw Enoch and all who (were) with him, stripped of robes of the flesh; and I saw them in their robes of above, and they were like the angels who stand there in great glory. (*Ascension of Isaiah* 9:6-9)

And the righteous and the chosen will be saved on that day; and the faces of the sinners and the unrighteous they will henceforth not see. And the Lord of Spirits will abide over them, and *with that Son of Man they will eat*, and they will lie down and rise up forever and ever. *And the righteous and the chosen will have arisen from the earth*, and have ceased to cast down their faces, *and have put on the garment of glory*. And this will be your garment, *the garment of life* from the Lord of Spirits; and *your garments will not wear out*, and your glory will not fade in the presence of the Lord of Spirits (*1 Enoch* 62:13-16)<sup>169</sup>

### **The Garments of Glory in Christian Tradition**

Among the saints none is naked,  
for they have put on glory,  
nor is any clad in those leaves,  
or standing in shame,  
*for they have found, through our Lord,*  
*the robe that belonged to Adam and Eve.*  
(St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* 6:9).<sup>170</sup>

### **Vesting Prayer for Priests**

[During vesting with the stole, the long band that fits around the neck, the priest says:]  
Restore to me, O Lord,  
*the state of immortality which was lost to me by my first parents,*  
and, although I am unworthy to approach your sacred mysteries,  
grant me nevertheless eternal joy.

<sup>167</sup> Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:204.

<sup>168</sup> Intriguingly, this imagery seems to suggest that by means of the garment of glory, God restores to the righteous what Adam had lost in the fall. See *1 En.* 62:15-16; *Asc. Isa.* 7:22; 8:14, 26; 9:9, 24-26; 11:40; *L.A.B.* 20:1-3; Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:204 n.55.

<sup>169</sup> See Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 189.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted in Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 117.

## The Coming of the Bridegroom

### The Parable of the 5 Wise and 5 Foolish Virgins

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (Matthew 25:1-13)*

### The Meaning of the Parable

As to the particular explanation and application of the parable, the bridegroom is Christ, the bride is the Church, whose espousals take place in this life, but the eternal marriage shall be in the future glory of the resurrection. The virgins are all believers or Christians. They are called virgins because they are sound in the faith, according to the words of St. Paul, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2)... They are ten in number, because ten is the symbol of a multitude and totality, and it is familiar in sacred scripture because of the Decalogue of the divine law.<sup>171</sup>

### The Jewish Context of the Wedding Procession

Until the judgment scene, the setting is largely realistic, fitting what Jesus' Galilean hearers knew of weddings, the sort of details Jesus used in other parables. Wedding processions from the bride's to the groom's home, accompanied by song and dancing, normally happened at night, hence requiring light. The lamps here are not the small, hand-held Herodian period lamps, which would generate very little light, but torches (as in weddings in the rest of the Mediterranean world). In poorer villages these torches may have been sticks wrapped with oiled rags, as in traditional Arab weddings. Although details differ from one village to the next, traditional Palestinian village weddings in recent centuries climax with women torchbearers leading the bride to the bridegroom's home, and the torchbearers going out to meet the groom and his male friends. Presumably the bridesmaids wait outside the bride's home for his coming to escort her en route to his home. Greek and Roman weddings also included the torchlit procession to the groom's residence; the groom's residence was usually his parents' home, which would for a time after the banquet become the new couple's residence.<sup>172</sup>

### The Jewish Context of the Bridegroom's Delay

<sup>171</sup> Cornelius A. Lapide, *The Great Commentary: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, Volume II* (Fitzwilliam: Loreto, 2008), 469.

<sup>172</sup> Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 596-97 (slightly adapted).

In traditional Palestinian Arab weddings, messengers might repeatedly announce the bridegroom's coming, yet it might be delayed for hours... delays occur while the bride's relatives haggle over the value of the presents given them emphasizing the bride's great value.... That the bridesmaids would be sleepy around midnight is not surprising; because ancient light tended to be poorer than today, most people were asleep by midnight. All the virgins would have been ready for the groom had he arrived when they expected, but grooms' delays were common enough that they should have anticipated it; this provides clear warning that the parousia might be delayed...<sup>173</sup>

### **The Meaning of the Oil and the Lamps**

The virgins are all believers. "The prudent" are those who have faith together with works of mercy, charity, and other virtues; "the foolish," those who have faith alone without good works... Thus their lamps are dying out, yea, as the Syriac hath it, "they have been extinguished," according to the words of St. James (2:26), "Faith without works is dead."

### **Why Don't the 5 Wise Virgins Share Their Oil?**

Craig Keener: The unwillingness of the wise virgins to share their oil reflects their concern for their friend's wedding. Having only enough for their own torches, sharing would cause *all* the torches to be extinguished, ruining the whole procession.<sup>174</sup>

Anthony Maas, S.J.: The answer of the wise virgins shows that no one can expect to be saved by the merits of his neighbor. "Lest perhaps there not be enough" implies that even the just shall have to fear the divine judgment, though they be not conscious of great sins.<sup>175</sup>

Cornelius A. Lapidus, S.J.: As St. Jerome says upon this passage, "In the day of judgment no one's virtues will be able to give any assistance to other men's faults." And the *Interlinear Gloss* adds, "The wise say this not out of avarice, but out of fear. For in that day the testimony of each shall scarcely suffice for himself, much less for himself and his neighbor also."

### **Why is Heaven like a Wedding?**

Because marriage joy is, among men, the chief of all, the celestial happiness of the elect is here likened to it. Therefore, St. Hilary says, "Marriage is the putting on of immortality," when says the *Interlinear Gloss*, the soul is joined to the Word of God as her bridegroom.

Hear what St. Adelinus, bishop, relates of S. Opportuna the abbess in her *Life* in Surius (April 22). "When St. Opportuna was very sick, there came to her SS. Cecilia and Lucy, to whom she spoke fondly. 'Hail, Cecilia and Lucy, my sisters', she cried; 'what does the Virgin Mary, the Queen of all, bid her handmaid do?' 'She is awaiting', they answer, 'your presence in heaven, that you may be united to her Son. Therefore, you must be decked with a crown of glory, and meet, with burning lamp, the bridegroom and

<sup>173</sup> Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 597.

<sup>174</sup> Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 598.

<sup>175</sup> Anthony J. Maas, S.J., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (St. Louis and London: Herder, 1928), 249.

the bride'. She was happy, therefore, when she beheld the Blessed Virgin coming to her, and, as it were, embracing her; she gave up her spirit into her hands, to be beatified with everlasting glory."<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> A. Lapidé, *The Great Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew*, 2:476-77.

## The New Jerusalem and the Wedding Supper of the Lamb

### The Wedding Supper of the Lamb

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, *for the marriage (Gk *ho gamos*) of the Lamb has come, and his Bride (Gk *he gune*) has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure*" --for the *fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints*. And the angel said to me, "Write this: *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper (Gk *to deipnon tou gamou*) of the Lamb.*" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (Revelation 19:6-9)

### The New Jerusalem Comes Like a Bride

Then I [John] saw *a new heavens and a new earth*; for *the first heaven and the first earth had passed away*, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling (Gk *skene*, "tabernacle") of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and *death shall be no more*, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. And he who sat upon the throne said, "*Behold, I make all things new.*" Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:1-5)

### The Catechism on the New Heavens and the New Earth

At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign forever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. *The universe itself will be renewed... Sacred Scripture calls this mysterious renewal, which will transform humanity and the world, "new heavens and a new earth."*... In this *new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem*, God will have his dwelling among men. (CCC 1042-44)

For man, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been "in the nature of a sacrament." *Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, the "holy city" of God, "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."* *She will not be wounded any longer by sin, stains, self-love, that destroy or wound the earthly community.* The *beatific vision*, in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect, will be the ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion. For the cosmos, Revelation affirms the profound common destiny of the material world and man... *The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, "so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just," sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ.* (CCC 1045-47)

### **The Nuptial and Cultic Meaning of *Apokalypsis***

Scott Hahn: [Regarding the word-study of *apokalypsis* by Albrect Oepke Hahn writes:] “Of the many meanings [of *apokalypsis*], the only one that has theological significance is *that of ‘head-covering’ or ‘veil’* (p. 558); yet he cite a number of cultic texts where a “veil” has sacred uses: “ ‘Cover’ e.g., for the tent of revelation, Ex. 27:16, also before the Holy of Holies, Ex. 40:5...” *In sum, not only Jewish brides, but Israel’s holiest places or persons were typically veiled.*<sup>177</sup>

### **The Unveiling of the Wife of the Lamb**

And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death."

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "*Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.*" *And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* (Revelation 21:6-11)

### **Jerusalem, the Bride of God in the Old Testament**

For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall not be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight is in her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and *your land shall be married... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you...* The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: “I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; but *those who garner it shall eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.*” (Isaiah 62:1-5, 8-9)

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<sup>177</sup> Scott Hahn, “The Word as Wedding,” in *Catholic for a Reason IV: Scripture and the Mystery of Marriage* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road, 2007), 10 n. 6.

### **What Will be the Measurements of the New Jerusalem Be?**

And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. *The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth*; and he measured the city with his rod, *twelve thousand stadia* [= nearly 1500 miles]; its length and breadth and height are equal. He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And *the twelve gates were twelve pearls*, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. (Revelation 21:16-21)

### **The Holy of Holies: A Golden Cube**

The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. *The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high; and he overlaid it with pure gold.* (1 Kings 6:19-20)

### **The Jewels of the High Priest's Breastplate**

"And you shall make *a breastpiece of judgment*, in skilled work; like the work of the ephod you shall make it... It shall be *square and double*, a span its length and a span its breadth. And you shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel; they shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes... *So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment upon his heart, when he goes into the holy place, to bring them to continual remembrance before the LORD.* And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD; *thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually.* (Exodus 28:15-30)

### **The Spiritual Light of the New Jerusalem**

And I saw no temple in the city, for *its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.* And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day -- and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:22-27)

### **The New Eden and the Vision of His Face**

Then he showed me *the river of the water of life*, bright as crystal, *flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb* through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, *the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit*, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; *4 they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads*. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. And behold, I am coming soon." Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:1-7)

### **The Living Water = the Holy Spirit**

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and let he who believes in me drink. *As the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water."* Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

### **The Catechism on the Trinity and the Divine Economy**

*The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity.* But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity: "If a man loves me", says the Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him" (CCC 260).

### **The End of the Apocalypse**

I John am he who heard and saw these things... "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood. "I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." *The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."* And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price. I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!* (Revelation 22:8-21)

**The Wedding of the World to Come**

Oecumenius: In the present age the marriage of the Lord with the church is still in the stage of courtship and is not yet a consummated marriage. The holy apostle indicates this when he writes his second letter to the Corinthians and says, “For I betrothed you as a pure bride to one husband to present you to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2). Therefore, the time of courtship [=betrothal period] remains. For “I betrothed” refers to courtship, and we receive the pledge of the Spirit as a sign of courtship. However, when the church becomes one spirit with Christ, as a husband becomes one body with his wife, then will the marriage be perfected... For this reason, the holy angels say, “The marriage of the Lamb has come,” signifying that the marriage, which is now in the stage of courtship, will then be consummated. And the Gospel also clearly gives this understanding to us. For on one occasion it introduces the wedding festivities of a son, prepared by his father who is a king. Although many have been invited to the banquet, some partake of the feasting while others excuse themselves from the supper, and one person is excluded because he is not dressed in a wedding garment (Matt 22:2-14). On another occasion the Gospel speaks of ten virgins, five of whom are wise and they enter with the bridegroom into the blessed bridal chamber. The other [virgins] are locked outside since they did not fill up their lamps with sufficient oil (Matt 25:1-13). It is not suitable to regard any of this as referring to the present time; it rather refers to that which is coming. Therefore, the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride, the church, is presented as ready to receive those ineffable gifts that come by union with Christ. (Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 19:6-9; 6<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D.).<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> In William C. Weinrich, *Revelation* (ACCSNT XII; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 302.

## The Nuptial Mystery and the *Nexus Mysteriorum*<sup>179</sup>

### 1. The Mystery of Christ

#### The Incarnation

The *nuptial covenant* between God and his people Israel had prepared the way for the new and everlasting covenant in which *the Son of God, by becoming incarnate and giving his life, has united to himself in a certain way all mankind saved by him*, thus preparing for "the wedding-feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7,9). (CCC 1612).

#### The Cross

The Church is the Bride of Christ: he loved her and handed himself over for her. *He has purified her by his blood and made her the fruitful mother of all God's children.* (CCC 808).

#### The Savior

All over the world there is a dramatic or romantic tradition that a bridegroom is in a sense a conqueror. He is first and foremost a conqueror of the bride. He has to 'win' her heart... She is won, not by conquering her, but by his conquering something or someone else who has her in thrall... Such an idea of the Conquering Bridegroom is that which we found in the forty-fifth Psalm, and in its Messianic interpretation... St. Augustine, "He hath therefore his Bride whom he hath rescued from the bondage of the devil." *This is the meaning of Ephesians V, where St. Paul says that Christ is the "Saviour" of the Bride, and it is the central theme of the second half of the Apocalypse, in which the Lamb, or Word of God, first overcomes the Serpent and the Beast, and then marries the Bride.* Thus the Nuptial Idea is the sequel to the Idea of Salvation *Christus Victor* becomes *Christus Sponsus*. (Claude Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 103)

#### The Redemption

There is here another Idea, complementary to the Idea of Salvation and Victory; it is the Idea of Redemption—'he bought her' (Claude Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, 104). "You are not your own, you were bought with a great price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:13, 19-20)

### 2. The Mystery of the Church

#### The Church

The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within *a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride...* "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her" (Eph 5:25-26). He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body. (Eph 5:29). (CCC 796)

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<sup>179</sup> This summary is inspired by Claude Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ: An Enquiry into the Nuptial Element in Early Christianity* (London: Religious Book Club, 1939), 99-109. The phrase *nexus mysteriorum* is used by Vatican I to describe the "mutual connections between the dogmas" of faith and their "coherence." See CCC 90, n. 51.

### **The Individual**

The bride is the Church, just as for the Prophets the bride was Israel. She is therefore a collective subject and not an individual person. This collective subject is the People of God, a community made up of many persons, both women and men. *"Christ has loved the Church" precisely as a community, as the People of God. At the same time, in this Church, which in the same passage is also called his "body" (cf. Eph 5:23), he has loved every individual person.* For Christ has redeemed all without exception, every man and woman... Christ [is] ...the Bridegroom who "has given himself". "To give" means "to become a sincere gift" in the most complete and radical way: "Greater love has no man than this" (Jn 15:13). *According to this conception, all human beings - both women and men - are called through the Church, to be the "Bride" of Christ, the Redeemer of the world.* In this way "being the bride", and thus the "feminine" element, becomes a symbol of all that is "human", according to the words of Paul: "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 25)

## **3. The Mystery of the Sacraments**

### **Baptism**

The entire Christian life bears the mark of *the spousal love* of Christ and the Church. *Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist.* (CCC 1617)

### **The Eucharist**

*We find ourselves at the very heart of the Paschal Mystery, which completely reveals the spousal love of God.* Christ is the Bridegroom because "he has given himself": his body has been "given", his blood has been "poured out" (cf. Lk 22:19-20). In this way "he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). *The "sincere gift" contained in the Sacrifice of the Cross gives definitive prominence to the spousal meaning of God's love.* As the Redeemer of the world, Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. *The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our Redemption. It is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.* The Eucharist makes present and realizes anew in a sacramental manner the redemptive act of Christ, who "creates" the Church, his body. *Christ is united with this "body" as the bridegroom with the bride. All this is contained in the Letter to the Ephesians.* The perennial "unity of the two" that exists between man and woman from the very "beginning" is introduced into this "great mystery" of Christ and of the Church. (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 26)

### **Holy Order**

*Since Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the Apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is "feminine" and what is "masculine".* It is a relationship willed by God both in the mystery of creation and in the mystery of Redemption. *It is the Eucharist above all that expresses the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts "in persona Christi", is performed by a man.* (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 26)

**Holy Matrimony**

God who created man out of love also calls him to love: the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. *Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man.* (CCC 1604)

“[O]ur Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony." Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ," and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. *In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb.* (CCC 1642)

**Death**

For the Christian the day of death inaugurates, at the end of his sacramental life, the fulfillment of his new birth begun at Baptism... *even if final purifications are still necessary for him in order to be clothed with the nuptial garment.* (CCC 1682)

**4. The Mystery of Life in Christ****Holiness**

In the context of the "great mystery" of Christ and of the Church, *all are called to respond - as a bride - with the gift of their lives to the inexpressible gift of the love of Christ*, who alone, as the Redeemer of the world, is the Church's Bridegroom. The "royal priesthood", which is universal, at the same time expresses the gift of the Bride.... *And holiness is measured according to the "great mystery" in which the Bride responds with the gift of love to the gift of the Bridegroom.* She does this "in the Holy Spirit", since "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 27)

**5. The Mystery of Prayer****Jesus Thirst For Us**

*The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being.* It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. *Jesus thirsts*; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, *prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.* (CCC 2560)

**The Liturgy of the Hours**

Celebrated in "the form approved" by the Church, *the Liturgy of the Hours "is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father."* (CCC 1174).

## The Mystery of the Holy Spirit<sup>180</sup>

### **The Mystery of the Trinity: the Central Mystery of the Christian Faith**

*The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith". The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men... (CCC 234)*

### **1. No Gender within the Godhead**

#### **The Catechism: “God Is Neither Man Nor Woman”**

By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. *God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature.* The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that *God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father.* (CCC 239)

#### **Scott Hahn: the Holy Spirit is not “Feminine”**

We must raise a caution here. None of what the saints have said implies that we should now address God as “Mother.” Divine revelation does not call upon God by that name, and there are probably very good reasons why the title never gained widespread use among the fathers... *Nor should we infer that there is gender within the Godhead.* Rather, God created the human forms of physical gender and sexuality to be *created reflections of the purely immaterial relations* unique to each member of the Trinity. In the relations of the human family, the life of the Trinity is reflected more truly and fully than anywhere else in the natural order. In other words, *the analogy of bridal motherhood is relational and familial, not physical or sexual* (much less political)...Once again: *God is not feminine by nature. Nor is the Holy Spirit feminine.* “God is not a human being” (Num 23:19). *He is a pure spirit, and as such He has neither sex nor gender.* Nevertheless, the God Whom we call Father possesses all perfections within Himself and, as the *Catechism* makes clear, these include perfect motherhood (cf. CCC 239).<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> What follows is a summary statement of the Appendix found in Scott Hahn, *First Comes Love: Finding Your Family in the Church and the Trinity* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 152-174, with notes on 199-210.

<sup>181</sup> Hahn, *First Comes Love*, 166-67 (some emphasis added).

## 2. The Spirit of God and Lady Wisdom

### The Spirit in Jewish Scripture and Tradition

1. The “Spirit” of God—Hebrew *Ruah* (feminine noun)
2. The “Wisdom” of God—Hebrew *Hokmah* (feminine noun)
3. The “Glory Cloud” of God—Hebrew *Shekinah* (feminine noun)

### Lady Wisdom and Creation in Proverbs 8

*Does not wisdom (Hb hokmah) call, does not understanding raise her voice? “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth... When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep... when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always...”* (Proverbs 8:1, 21-24, 27, 30)

### Lady Wisdom and the Holy Spirit in Wis Sol 7-9

*Wisdom (Gk sophia), the fashioner of all things, taught me... For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. Though she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things... She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well. I loved her and sought her from my youth, and I desired to take her for my bride, and I became enamored of her beauty... Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory send her, that she may be with me and toil, and that I may learn what is pleasing to thee. For she knows and understands all things... Who has learned thy counsel, unless thou hast given wisdom (Gk sophian) and sent thy holy Spirit (Gk to haion sou pneuma) from on high?”* (Wisdom of Solomon 7:21-22, 25-27, 8:1-2, 9:10-11, 17)

### Lady Wisdom and the Glory Cloud in Sirach 24

*Wisdom (Hb hokmah) sings her own praises, and will glory in the midst of her people. “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures... I dwelt in high places, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. Then the Creator of all things... said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’ In the holy tabernacle I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion... “Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my produce.”* (Sirach 24:1-21)

### Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger: Wisdom and the Primordial Type of the Feminine

In both Hebrew and Greek, ‘wisdom’ is a feminine noun, and this is no empty grammatical phenomenon in antiquity’s vivid awareness of language. ‘Sophia’, a feminine noun, stands on that side of reality which is represented by the woman, by what is purely and simply feminine... Because of the teaching about the Spirit, one can as it were practically have a presentiment of the primordial type of the feminine, in a mysterious, veiled manner, within God himself.”<sup>182</sup>

<sup>182</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983), 26-27.

### 3. The Spirit and the Mystery of Eve

#### **Both Man and Woman in God's "Image"**

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

#### **The Catechism on Finite Perfections of Man and Woman Reflected in God**

In no way is God in man's image. *He is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit* in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. *But the respective "perfections" of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother and those of a father and husband.* (CCC 370)

#### **The Creation of Eve from Adam's Side**

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...." (Genesis 2:21-23)

#### **Matthias Scheeben: the Holy Spirit as the "Rib" of the Word**

Scripture says that God formed the woman out of the rib taken from the side of Adam; the Fathers teach that Christ formed the Church out of the water and blood streaming from His side: in like manner, we may say that the Father and the Son have taken and formed the Holy Spirit from their side, their heart. *And as Eve can, in a figurative sense, be called simply the rib of Adam, since she was formed from the rib of Adam, St. Methodius goes so far as to assert that the Holy Spirit is the costa Verbi....* 'By the rib' says St. Methodius, 'we rightly understand the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth... quite properly called *the rib of the Logos.*'<sup>183</sup>

#### **Anastasius of Sinai: The Procession of Eve from Adam**

*Eve, who proceeded from Adam, signifies the proceeding person 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. (Anastasius of Sinai, *On the Image and Likeness*).<sup>184</sup>

#### **Scott Hahn: the Mystery of Eve and the Filioque**

In a fascinating meditation, one of the ancient Church fathers, St. Methodius of Olympus, related that dual procession of the Holy Spirit to a primordial earthly analogue. He said that, *as Eve processed from her Father God and from the side of His son Adam, so the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the eternal Son.* As the Father made Eve from the rib of Adam, so Methodius called the Holy Spirit the "rib of the Word"—the uncreated principle of maternity.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Matthias Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity* (trans. Cyril Vollert; St. Louis: Herder, 1946), 185, citing St. Methodius, *Convivius decem virginum* III. C.8; PG XVIII, 73.

<sup>184</sup> Cited in Helen Hull Hitchcock, ed., *The Politics of Prayer: Feminist Language and the Worship of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 305.

<sup>185</sup> Hahn, *First Comes Love*, 169-70.

**Scott Hahn: the Two Processions**

In the family, too, we can observe these principles at work (though here it is difficult to simplify without falling into stereotypes). Traditionally we identify fatherhood, the masculine principle, with law, logic, and objectivity. Motherhood we associate with love, wisdom, and profound subjective insight. Said Pope Pius XI: “If the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.”

With the two processions of the Trinity, we have associated a number of contemporary pairs of terms. For example:

PROCESSION OF THE SON	PROCESSION OF THE SPIRIT
Knowing	Loving
Intellect	Will
Law	Liturgy
Justice	Holiness
Order of Authority	Order of Love
Husband/Father	Wife/Mother
Head	Heart <sup>186</sup>

**Jean Corbon: the Unveiling of the Spirit in the Book of Revelation**

In this light-filled silence in which the vision of the Church of the last times culminates, the angel seems to whisper to John the Theologian, “*You have seen the Bride of the Lamb? You have seen the Spirit!*” ...The “vision” of the Spirit that began in Christ is completed in the Church: “It is the bridegroom who has the Bride” (Jn 3:29). The one whom the Precursor [John the Baptist] points out is the Lamb, and in this Lamb he reveals the *kenosis* [self-emptying] of the Son of God (Jn 1:34 variant). *The one whom the Theologian contemplates is the Bride of the Lamb, and in her he reveals to us the kenosis of the Spirit.* For in the last times it is the Spirit himself in person who is sent and given. Pentecost produces the Church because the Spirit of Jesus here begins his ultimate kenosis of love. Henceforth the Church is the “event” that manifests him. “You have seen the Bride of the Lamb? You have seen the Spirit!” *The fact that the Bride is transparent for the Spirit to shine through is explicable only because she is the living locus of the kenosis of the Holy Spirit.* And she herself shares in that kenosis because it is what makes her the Bride of the Lamb... *This, then, is the last times: the Spirit and the Bride. In this transparent indwelling the Church manifests the Holy Spirit because she is his kenosis. Kenosis and manifestation: this is the unfathomable paradox of divine agape.* In this period, which is the last times, all the torrents of the divine compassion flow together into the river of life; the suffering love of the Father and the Passion of the Son pour out into the depths of our death through the kenosis of the Spirit that is manifested in the Church. (Jean Corbon, *Wellspring of Worship*, 84-85)<sup>187</sup>

<sup>186</sup> Hahn, *First Comes Love*, 172.

<sup>187</sup> Jean Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), 84-85.

## The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Bride

### The *Catechism* on Mary and the Bride of Christ

*Mary goes before us all in the holiness that is the Church's mystery as "the bride without spot or wrinkle."* (CCC 773)

### The *Catechism* on Mary as the Seat of Wisdom

Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is *the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time*. For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the dwelling place where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among men. *In this sense the Church's Tradition has often read the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary*. (Prov 8:1-9:6; Sirach 24). Mary is acclaimed and represented in the liturgy as the "Seat of Wisdom." In her, the "wonders of God" that the Spirit was to fulfill in Christ and the Church began to be manifested. (CCC 721)

### St. Edith Stein: Love's Image in Mary

[In] womanhood devoted to the service of love, is there really a divine image? Indeed, yes... Such love is properly the attribute of the Holy Spirit. Thus we can see the prototype of the feminine being in the Spirit of God poured over all creatures. *It finds its perfect image in the purest Virgin who is the bride of God and mother of all mankind.*"<sup>188</sup>

### Angels Sang the Song of Songs at Mary's Assumption

And when the Lord's day came, at the third hour, just as the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles in a cloud, so Christ descended with a multitude of angels, and received the soul of his beloved mother. *For there was such splendor and perfume of sweetness and angels singing the Songs of Songs, where the Lord says, "As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters,"* (Song 2:2), that all who were there present fell on their faces... and for a whole hour and a half no one was able to rise. But when the light went away, and at the same time with the light itself, *the soul of the blessed virgin Mary was taken up into heaven with psalms, and hymns, and songs of songs*. And as the cloud went up the whole earth shook, and in one moment all the inhabitants of Jerusalem openly saw the departure of St. Mary. (Anonymous, *The Passing of Mary* 1; unknown date)<sup>189</sup>

### The Bride in the Song of Solomon: Eyes like "Doves"

Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; *your eyes are doves*. (Song of Songs 1:15)

*My dove, my perfect one*, is only one, the darling of her mother, flawless to her that bore her. The maidens saw her and called her happy.,they praised her. "Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun...?" (Song of Songs 6:9-10)

<sup>188</sup> St. Edith Stein, *Essays on Woman* (Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1987), Vol. 2 of *Collected Works*, p. 191.

<sup>189</sup> Cited in J. Robert Wright, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Old Testament IX; Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 311; cf. ANF 8:593.