

[This chapter is from the book, *Premarital Sex and Love: In the Light of Human Experience and Following Jesus* by Paul Flaman. Copyright 1999 by Paul J. P. Flaman, St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada T6G 0B3. Any feedback you have can be emailed to: pflaman@ualberta.ca **Note:** This chapter has been published as an article with some minor modifications as: "Biblical Perspectives on Sex, Marriage and Love," *Journal of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars / Amicale de Savants Catholiques Canada*, Summer 2003, 2-30.]

CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SEX, MARRIAGE AND LOVE

The Bible is a primary source for Christian (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) theological reflection.¹ Christians generally believe that the Bible is inspired by God, the written "Word of God" in some sense. Indeed, within the Christian scriptures themselves, one finds expressed the belief that, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." (2 Tm 3:16-17 NRSV).² The Bible, however, also gives internal evidence that its human authors each made use of his own abilities (see, e.g., Lk 1:1-4).

A Catholic approach to interpreting the Bible takes both of these aspects into account.

Concerning Sacred Scripture, the Second Vatican Council teaches in part:

Holy Mother Church, relying on the belief of the apostles, holds that the books of both the Old and New Testament in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because, having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ... they have God as their author and have

1. The Catholic and Orthodox "canon" of the Bible contains a few Old Testament books and parts of books not in the Hebrew canon and in many Protestant Bibles. For an explanation of this see, e.g., the preface of *The Revised Standard Version Common Bible* (RSV).

2. "This affirmation about the inspiration of the OT, cf. 2 P 1:21, probably includes some Christian writings also.", NJB, p. 1967, note 3e.

been handed on as such to the Church herself. In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted.

Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation.(DV, n. 11)

...the interpreter of sacred Scripture must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances as he used contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture... The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith....(DV, n. 12)

...prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together...(DV, n. 25 Abbott)³

In this chapter we will focus on some of the most relevant things that some of the human authors (or editors) of the Bible attempted to affirm in their historical and cultural contexts, that have significance for our topics of premarital sex and love. The expression "premarital sex" is not actually found in the Bible. Biblical authors, however, present many profound insights that

3. The Second Vatican Council, DV, Chs. IV and V, also presents a balanced Catholic view of the relevance and mutual relationship of the Old and New Testaments. The Pontifical Biblical Commission presents an excellent overview of many relevant issues in its document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 6 Jan. 1994, 497-524. Part III.D.3 of this document treats "Exegesis and Moral Theology."

are most relevant to our topics and later theological reflection. Besides specific texts bearing on the question of "fornication", the Bible as a whole presents many important elements or a foundation for an integral vision of human sexuality, love and marriage (cf. Ch. 5). The final section of this chapter presents some analyses of the biblical teaching, noting in particular some of the morally relevant values and norms expressed or implied, as well as some of the developments.

A. The Old Testament

1. The General Context

One can better appreciate the development of ancient Israel's insights into human sexuality and marriage by considering the cultural context of the ancient Near East.⁴ Briefly, this was a pre-scientific world in which there existed a variety of myths. These included stories of gods and goddesses which functioned as divine archetypes for things of this world. There existed different groups of myths related to the various aspects or values of human sexuality: fertility, love-passion, marriage. Sexuality's destructive potential was expressed in other myths. There was thus a dissociation between the essential elements of sexuality, a fragmentary rather than an integral view of sexuality. Associated with these myths were cultic rites, symbolic reproductions of divine actions. The purpose of these was to assure (by sympathetic magic) that the experience of human sexuality would be blessed by the gods. With regard to this compare, for example, the

4. The material in this section is mainly summarized from: Raymond Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 7 (1977), 149-52; and Pierre Grelot, *Man and Wife in Scripture*, trans. by Rosaleen Brennan (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 14-32.

fertility cults and ritual prostitutes (alluded to and proscribed in the Hebrew scriptures).

In such a world the biblical tradition developed. Ancient Israel's monotheistic faith in the Lord, the one and only God of Israel (Dt 6:4), contrasted with that of its neighbors. Certain consequences followed with respect to sexuality and marriage. Although there was some polygamy, legalized concubinage, divorce and so on in ancient Israel (as in neighboring civilizations),⁵ there was a radical break with the ideological and ritual background. Forces in the world, including sexual attraction and the vital powers, were not seen as divine but as created. Although there were some lapses into syncretism, the cultic myths were seen to be incompatible with Israel's faith in the Lord, the unique God who had no consort-goddess or other god associated with him. The sole archetypal relationship that remains is that between God and his people.

Another consequence of Israel's monotheistic faith was to view religion and morality together. Moral life was seen as a form of worship. The Israelites owed allegiance in their daily lives to the same God they worshiped. Sexuality was also not seen as an alien experience separate from other aspects of life. Ancient Israel's faith did not admit a fragmentation of life's experiences and the various aspects and values of human sexuality, as was common among the peoples of the ancient Near East.

2. Accounts of Creation of Man and Woman and the Fall

With regard to particular biblical passages that pertain to our topics, we will begin by

5. With regard to understanding such things in the Old Testament from a later Christian faith perspective, the Second Vatican Council, DV, nn. 14 and 15 (Abbott), teaches that although the books of the Old Testament were "written under divine inspiration" and "remain permanently valuable", "they also contain some things which are incomplete and temporary." The Council interprets this as showing us "true divine pedagogy."

reflecting on parts of Genesis, Chs. 2:4b-3:24, the "Yahwist" account of creation and the fall.⁶

Gn 2:7-25 mainly focuses on the creation of man and woman, who share the same nature. They are equal in dignity and complementary. Sexual distinction and the institution of marriage are presented as part of God's plan or creative design. With regard to literary form, this narrative employs literary devices similar to those found in myths to depict the activity of God the creator. The symbols used depict the actual state of human affairs in the only way open to the author.⁷

Gn 2:7 (RSV) reads: "then the LORD God formed man [Hebrew '*adam*'] of dust from the ground [*'adamah*], and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." This verse, in imagery suited to the time, indicates both man's lowly relationship to the earth and his special kind of life from God.⁸ Gn 2:18-25 (RSV) reads:

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.

6. The composition of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, the Jewish Torah, is today generally thought by biblical scholars to have involved a series of stages. It is generally thought to combine material from four traditions: Yahwistic, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomistic. These are conceived of as "traditions", since the written material related to them in the Bible is thought to have drawn from earlier oral and written traditions. The Yahwistic tradition, given this name because it uses the divine name "YHWH" (often translated as "Lord") from the creation narrative onwards, is thought to have originated in Judah. It was probably committed to writing, for the most part, during the reign of Solomon (tenth century B.C.). For an explanation of this (as well as the question of Mosaic authorship) see NJB, 7-11; and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., NJBC, 1:5-8.

7. Grelot (see note 4), 33-34.

8. Eugene H. Maly, JBC, 2:23.

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. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

This passage indicates the social nature of human beings. Man's relationship with animals is contrasted with his relationship with woman. The man's naming the animals depicts his God-given mastery over them. Their nature does not correspond to his - none of them constitute a suitable "helper" for him. The word "help" or "helper" had a strictly personal meaning in the Old Testament (E.g., Ps 33:20 speaks of God as our "help" meaning refuge or support. God is someone in whom we can trust.). The "deep sleep" suggests the mysterious and profound significance of the divine activity. Woman's being fashioned out of man's own self explains the sexual attraction between men and women and woman's correspondence to man. The expressions "rib", "bone of my bones", "flesh of my flesh", and "Woman" (*'ishah*) and "Man" (*'is*), all indicate the unity of nature, the fundamental equal dignity, of man and woman.⁹

Verse 24 expresses a theological conviction of the author (or redactor) - that the unity and

9. Cf. Maly, JBC, 2:25; Richard J. Clifford, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., NJBC, 2:5; and Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1976 ed.), 19.

monogamous nature of marriage are willed by God. "In the biblical perspective, the origin of a reality often defines the reality. God made marriage part of the creation."¹⁰ The expression "man ... cleaves to his wife"(RSV) indicates that they belong to each other. Such a belonging can not be properly expressed in a transitory sexual encounter.

Cleaving implies a devotion and an unshakable faith between humans; it connotes a permanent attraction which transcends genital union to which, nonetheless, it gives meaning. There can be no mistaking the author's intention. He concludes his narrative by interpreting the divinely-ordered sexual differentiation and the sexual drive within the perspective of a permanent social union between man and woman.¹¹

The expression "become one flesh" in verse 24 refers to more than a physical joining of bodies in intercourse. The sexual union is to be an expression of a more profound union. "Flesh" (*basar*) here denotes the whole person. This expression, therefore, refers to a union of persons, a becoming "one" in marriage, a partnership involving a common life.¹²

Gn 2:25 is a transition verse. It indicates the state of innocence. Before sin the couple "were not ashamed." They were at ease with their sexuality, and in harmony with each other and God. The state of this couple in "Eden" (meaning "enjoyment") expressed the will of God before sin. They were presented as a model or prototype for human marriage.¹³

In the third chapter of Genesis the "Yahwist" account presents the "fall" or "original sin".

10. Clifford and Murphy, NJBC, 2:5; cf. also Maly, JBC, 2:25.

11. Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 7 (1977), 153-4.

12. Cf. Schillebeeckx, *Marriage*, 18-19; and Grelot (see note 4), 35.

13. NJB, p. 19, note 2f; and Grelot (see note 4), 36.

With regard to sexuality,

Gen 3 presents a description of the perversion of the sexual life from its primitive integrity. The relationship between man and woman which ideally was to have been a deep and permanent union in mutual love has now given way to the domination of man over woman and the passionate attachment of woman to man. The Yahwist attributes this perversion of human sexuality to man's rejection of Yahweh's Lordship. The Yahwist shares ... the notion that sin embodies its own punishment: i.e. the perversion of the good order of creation intended by God.... the existential situation of the human sexual experience is not as it ought to be.¹⁴

The snake in Gn 3 is a creature of God, probably chosen here because of its role in Canaanite magical fertility cults. The account in its original context probably in part suggested a polemic against these cults. The snake, used here to symbolize a power hostile to human beings, was interpreted in later traditions (e.g. Wis 2:24) as Satan. The snake's question distorts God's command (see Gn 2:16-17), insinuating an unwarranted restriction on God's part. The woman initially sees no problem with the divine command and she corrects the snake, but she adds a distortion of her own ("nor shall you touch it" v. 3 NRSV). The snake denies the inevitability of punishment. Distortion of the truth is involved with sin. The temptation to "be like God, knowing good and evil" (v. 5 NRSV), seems to involve an appeal to seek to reject their status as human beings, as finite creatures of God. Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil seems to symbolize the assertion of moral autonomy - the "right" to decide for oneself what is good and evil, rather than accepting God's order, relying on self rather than on God.¹⁵

14. Collins (see note 11), 154-5.

15. Cf. Maly, JBC, 2:26-27; and Clifford and Murphy, NJBC, 2:5.

By sinning the man and woman lose their innocence. Their nakedness becomes an occasion of shame. They are also afraid to meet God - the intimacy they enjoyed with God before their sin has been disrupted. They attempt to blame someone or something else rather than accept responsibility for their wrongdoing. But their sin is not hidden from God - they are held accountable and just punishment is meted out. Verse 15 implies that humanity's struggle with the power of evil will continue from generation to generation. The author's conviction that humanity will gain the clearer victory ("your head" and "his heel") is "based on his conviction of the saving acts of God in Israel's behalf..."¹⁶

The multiplying of the woman's pain in childbearing and the man's toil in procuring a livelihood (cf. vv. 16-19 NRSV) symbolize a loss of an original ease with oneself and the environment. In the man/woman relationship the disorder of the passions and the tendency to dominate are presented as a consequence of sin (cf. v. 16). Man and woman are banished from "paradise" and prevented from attaining immortality in this life (cf. vv. 20-24).

Gn 4:1 is also attributed to the Yahwistic tradition. With regard to the man's "knowing" his wife, the Hebrew language at this time did not have a technical term for sexual intercourse. "Knowing" in Hebrew denotes concrete experience and can express sexual relations. The woman saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."(RSV), shows an appreciation of the power to procreate as a gift of God.¹⁷

The "Yahwistic" tradition in effect presents the condition of human sexuality and marriage as these were understood in ancient Israel. These were seen to be created good, impaired by sin

16. Maly, JBC, 2:28.

17. Cf. Clifford and Murphy, NJBC, 2:6.

and in need of redemption. This account presents a carefully balanced conception of sexuality. It avoids both dualism of flesh and spirit (viewing material flesh as evil) and a facile view of liberation from disorder and suffering, as if these had no basis in reality.¹⁸

Genesis 1:1-2:4a is generally attributed by biblical scholars to the "Priestly" tradition.¹⁹ In this account creation is deliberately fitted into the framework of a week (God's "resting" on the seventh day sets an example to be followed). In this account the creation of heaven and earth, plants, animals and human beings is presented as effortless by the one transcendent almighty God who existed before the world. (This is in marked contrast with Near Eastern pagan epics of creation that were known then, e.g. *Enuma Elish*.) Creation here proceeds in ascending order of dignity with human beings coming last, at the apex of a good creation. Gn 1:26-28 and 31 (NRSV) reads:

Then God said, "Let us make humankind [the Hebrew *'adam* is a collective noun] in our own image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in
his image,
in the image of God he created
them;

18. Grelot (see note 4), 51.

19. See note 6. The "Priestly" tradition, containing mainly laws and concerned with worship and ritual, also includes some narrative material. It is generally thought by biblical scholars to have been committed to writing after the Exile.

male and female he created

them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over.... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good....

God's saying, "Let us", possibly implies a discussion between God and his heavenly court (the angels). "Image" (*selem*) ordinarily means copy or reproduction. "In the ancient Near East, the king was often called the image of the deity and was vested with God's authority; royal language is here used for the human."²⁰ "Likeness" (*demut*), ordinarily meaning resemblance or likeness, weakens the force of "image" here by excluding the idea of equality with God. Human beings, both male and female, share an equal and high dignity as God's representatives on earth. Like God they are personal beings with intellect, will, and authority. God though is not presented here as a sexual being (this opposes what one finds in creation myths that existed at the time).

Procreation is presented in Genesis as a power given to human beings by God, a gift or "blessing". "By using this power, man does not enter into the mythical world of the gods, as in the pagan rite of sacred prostitution, but he fulfills a divine precept."²¹ The "subduing" and "dominion" of human beings over the earth and animals is not as effortless as God's. It does not mean that human beings do not have to respect the environment. Human beings are only God's stewards.

The conclusion in verse 31 that all God made was "very good" implies that nothing evil

20. Clifford and Murphy, NJBC, 2:4.

21. Maly, JBC, 2:21.

comes from God. It opposes a dualistic view of creation. "...Gen 1 is a portrait of what God intends, it is also an eschatological statement. This serene, beautiful world, in which all is ordered to humans, and humans are ordered to God, is how it will be at the end."²² This account thus affirms that the sexual distinction of human beings, male and female, and the power to procreate are good and willed by God.

Genesis 5:1-3 and 9:1-17 are also generally attributed to the "Priestly" tradition. These passages indicate that after the fall, the descendants of the first human parents are still created in the image and likeness of God. The latter passage also affirms that procreation continues to be a blessing and commission of God.

3. Some Narratives of Man/Woman Relationships

The Old Testament from Genesis 12 to 2 Kings presents a number of narratives involving man/woman relationships that are relevant to a theological study of sex and marriage. These involve a type of historical writing that differs greatly from what is the norm today. The biblical historians were often far removed from first hand accounts of the events they narrate. Their purpose was to

consider the happenings in their stories purely from the viewpoint of God's will - so much so that they go far beyond the strict concerns of the historiographer and embrace those of the theologian and moralist. They are in fact masters of wisdom, who use their narratives as a channel for all sorts of teachings. Their task is made all the easier by the plastic character of the traditions they are collecting. Their doctrine is inscribed delicately in both the structure and the significant details

22. Clifford and Murphy, NJBC, 2:4. For commentaries on Gen 1 see also: Collins (note 11), 155-6; and NJB, pp. 17-19.

of their writings.²³

The narratives that we will consider here present both certain ideals as well as problems with regard to the man/woman relationship. We will only consider certain aspects of these narratives that are relevant to our topics.²⁴

The Abraham/Sarah story, Gn 11:27-25:18, is considered to be mainly of the "Yahwistic" tradition, although there are also elements from the "Priestly" and "Elohistic" traditions.²⁵

Abraham, an obscure Semite, is called by God to be the father of nations. Both he and his wife, Sarah, were advanced in years. Sarah was barren. They experience a number of trials.

Abraham grows in trusting God who is shown to protect them and be faithful to his promises.

Abraham also grows in moral integrity. Near the beginning of the narrative, when they are in Egypt, Abraham lies about his "very beautiful" wife. He says she is his sister so the Egyptians will treat him well and spare his life (Gn 12:10-20). Later we see no such duplicity on his part (cf. Gn 21:22-34). Abraham comes to trust God unconditionally (cf. Gn 22:1-19).

A dominant motif in the account is fertility. The barren Sarah offers her slave-girl, Hagar, to her husband (according to Mesopotamian law). This arrangement of "legal concubinage" or "polygamy", however, involves serious conflict between the two "wives" (Gn 16). Later, according to God's promise and intervention, Sarah herself bears a son, Isaac (Gn 21:1-7).

23. Grelot (see note 4), 41.

24. Ibid., 42-47 and 53-55; JBC; NJBC; and the notes in the NJB are my main sources regarding these narratives.

25. See notes 6 and 18. The "Elohistic" tradition uses the common noun Elohim for God. Although it is considered problematic by scholars, it is generally thought to have been committed to writing in the ninth century B.C. in Israel.

Gn 24 relates the finding of a wife for Isaac and his marriage to her. Abraham instructs his servant to choose a wife for his son from his native land and kinsfolk rather than from among the Canaanites. The story points to God's guidance and faithfulness in the choice of Rebekah. It notes that she was very beautiful and "a virgin", with whom no man had sexual relations (v. 16). She was also noble and generous (cf. vv. 18-21). After she agrees to the proposal, her family blesses her. Isaac marries her and loves her.

Jacob, a son of Isaac, falls in love with Laban's younger daughter Rachel, who was "graceful and beautiful" (Gn 29:17-18). In order to marry her Jacob offers to work for her father for seven years. The time seems to pass quickly because Jacob loved her so much. Laban, however, tricks Jacob and gives him his older daughter Leah in marriage. Not long after Jacob marries Rachel as well. He has children from both of them. They also each give a concubine to Jacob to have children. With regard to the man/woman relationship, both love and fecundity are dominant motifs here. Polygamy gives occasion to conflict between Jacob's wives who compete for his love (see Gn 29:15-30:24, generally attributed to the "Yahwistic" tradition with parts possibly from the "Elohistic" tradition).

Gn 34 (possibly of two traditions, "Yahwistic" and "Elohistic," with influences of the "Priestly" tradition) relates the rape of Dinah, daughter of Jacob. Shechem, the man who "lay with her by force"(v. 2), is a foreigner. He falls in love with Dinah, tries to win her heart, wants to marry her, and offers to pay any bridal price. Dinah's brothers were infuriated since Shechem "had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done" (v. 7). They agree to marriage only on the condition that Shechem, his father, and fellow-townsmen be circumcised like them. This arrangement though is only a cunning means

to revenge the dishonoring of their sister, in a manner not unusual for seminomadic tribes of the time. They kill Shechem and all the males of his town and remove Dinah from his house. Jacob rebukes them, fearing a reprisal by the people of the region. They respond, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" (v. 31 NRSV).

Gn 38 ("Yahwistic" tradition) relates the story of Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. Judah's marriage to a Canaanite (non-Israelite) is not censured in the account. Judah fails to fulfill his duty to Tamar regarding the ancient law of the levirate (cf. Dt 25:5-10) by not giving Shelah, his youngest son, to marry her. (His first two sons, Er and Onan had married Tamar, offended God and died in succession. Judah tells her to, "Remain a widow," since he feared Shelah would die like his brothers.) Tamar, apparently desiring offspring, disguises herself as a sacred prostitute. Judah unknowingly sleeps with her and she conceives. When this is revealed Judah acknowledges his greater guilt. His not having further sexual relations with her emphasizes this (v. 26).²⁶

Joseph, a son of Jacob (Israel), had been sold by his envious brothers (Gn 37). Gn 39:7-20 ("Yahwistic" tradition) narrates the attempts of the wife of his Egyptian master to seduce him. Joseph was well built and handsome. She casts her eyes on him and requests that he lie with her. He resists, speaking of his master's trust in him and says, "How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"(v. 9) She continues to tempt him and he continues to resist. On one occasion when they were alone in the house, she grabs his tunic and says, "Lie with me."(v. 12) But he flees leaving his tunic in her clutches. She, whose "lust has turned to

26. Maly, JBC, 2:148.

hatred," uses the tunic as false evidence against him.²⁷ Joseph is put in jail. As the narrative continues it emphasizes that "the Lord was with Joseph" and showed him steadfast love (vv. 21-23 NRSV). Joseph's success (even in jail) and his eventual promotion to governor of Egypt are attributed to God's doing. In Joseph's gift of accurately interpreting mysterious dreams, the Pharaoh recognizes that Joseph is endowed with the spirit of God, and is most intelligent and wise (Gn 41:37-45).

2 Sm 11-12 recounts David's sin of adultery and subsequent repentance.²⁸ King David happens to see Bathsheba, a very beautiful woman, bathing. Although he learns by inquiries that she was married to Uriah (a foreigner in his army), David has her brought to him and "he lay with her" (11:4). She conceives. When David hears of this he tries to cover his tracks by sending for Uriah (with the hope that he will sleep with his wife). When this strategy fails, David arranges to have Uriah killed in battle. After Bathsheba mourns her husband's death, David has her brought to him. She became his wife and bore a son. What David did is presented as very displeasing to the LORD who sends the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan tells a beautiful parable of "a ewe lamb" by means of which David recognizes his injustice (Ch. 12). David frankly confesses his having "sinned against the LORD" (12:13 NRSV) and fasts. Nathan tells

27. *Ibid.*, 2:151.

28. The biblical books of Samuel and Kings are generally thought by biblical scholars to have been composed over centuries ranging from the beginning of the monarchy in Israel to after the Exile. It is thought that these books comprise various narratives, some of which were written soon after the events they narrate. These are thought to have been revised by Deuteronomistic editing before and/or during the exile, with touch-ups afterwards. Cf. the introductions to these books in the JBC and NJBC.

David that God forgives him, but that various unfortunate consequences will follow his sin.²⁹

The next chapter (2 Sm 13) relates the violation of Tamar by Amnon, her half-brother and eldest son of David. Amnon fell in love with Tamar and became obsessed with her. He pretended to be ill and asked that Tamar prepare some food for him. When they were alone he grabbed her and said, "Come, lie with me, my sister!" She replied,

No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile!

As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you. (vv.

11-13 NRSV)

Amnon could have married her according to ancient custom (Cf. Gn 20:12. Apparently Lv 18:9 and 20:17; and Dt 27:22, which forbid such marriages, involve later legislation.). Instead he rapes her and then rejects her. She considers this rejection to be worse than the other wrong he had done her. Tamar left in grief and remained desolate (vv. 14-19). Absalom, her full brother, hated Amnon for what he had done to his sister. Later when the opportunity arose he had Amnon killed. A biblical scholar, Joseph Jensen, argues that although the story of Amnon and Tamar involves rape, a complicating factor, the details of this story "appear to reveal a strong bias against even pre-marital intercourse."³⁰

1 K 11 begins by noting that King Solomon loved many foreign women and was deeply attached to them. He had hundreds of wives and concubines (apparently primarily for political

29. NJB, p. 409, note 12d, comments on this: "Sin is not only a violation of the moral or social order, but primarily the breach of a personal relationship between human beings and God, see Gn 39:9; Ps 51:f; Is 59:2, which only God can re-establish, Ps 65:3seq..."

30. Joseph Jensen, "Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina," *Novum Testamentum* 20 (1978), 168-9.

reasons and prestige).³¹ When he grew old "his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the LORD his God"(v. 4 NRSV). God forbade him to do this, but he continued to displease God with his syncretism. He even built "high places" for all his foreign wives to sacrifice to their gods (vv. 7-8). The rest of the chapter speaks of the Lord being angry with Solomon, raising foreign enemies against him and a revolt at home, and Solomon's death.

The last biblical man/woman relationship that we will refer to briefly in this section is that of King Ahab and his foreign wife Jezebel. 1 K 21 narrates Jezebel's murder of an innocent man, Naboth, to satisfy her husband's greed. God's foretelling their disastrous end, through the prophet Elijah, is later shown to be fulfilled (1 K 22:29-38; and 2 K 9-10). 1 K 21:25-26 (NRSV) reads: "(Indeed, there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD, urged on by his wife Jezebel. He acted most abominably in going after idols...)" Concerning Ahab and Jezebel, as well as King David and Bathsheba, and some other biblical examples, the Scripture scholar, Pierre Grelot concludes, "All these facts show what is the real situation of sexuality and the human couple in a sinful world; a frail thing, constantly threatened and far removed from its original ideal."³²

4. Some Laws Concerning Sex and Marriage

Next we will consider a few laws of the Jewish scriptures (Old Testament) that have some bearing on our topics.

Ex 22:16-17 (NRSV) reads: "When a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to be married,

31. Cf. Peter F. Ellis, "1-2 Kings," JBC, 10:25.

32. Grelot (see note 4), 54-5.

and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. But if her father refuses to give her to him, he shall pay an amount equal to the bride-price for virgins."³³ The case involves a man persuading, not forcing, an unmarried woman to have sexual relations with him. She is also not engaged to be married to anyone. Such a "deflowered maiden" would not have been readily marriageable then. It would also have been difficult for her father to obtain a respectable bride-price (*mohar*, money given by a betrothed man to the family of his future wife) from a prospective suitor. "Assyrian law required such a seducer to pay three times the normal *mohar*, and even after payment, the father need not give him his daughter in marriage."³⁴ The biblical passage here basically shows a concern for what is best for the unmarried woman and her family in such circumstances. The seducer is held accountable for his actions. Concerning this text Jensen notes, "...for a seducer to have to pay a substantial marriage price, even though the woman may be refused in marriage, is no small penalty; few could afford to repeat the offense.... And, at best, such escapades were necessarily once-only affairs rather than a way of life."³⁵

The Law of Holiness of the book of Leviticus (Chs. 17-26) emphasizes the holiness of the Lord. The Israelites were to be consecrated to God and holy (19:2 and 20:26) in every aspect of

33. Exodus is thought to be a compilation of diverse traditions (including "Yahwistic" and "Elohistic") of various age that were edited by the Priestly redactor in the 6th cent. B.C.: Richard J. Clifford, S.J., "Exodus," NJBC, 3:2.

34. John E. Huesman, S.J., "Exodus", JBC, 3:60. Cf. also Clifford, NJBC, 3:42; and NJB, p. 109, note 22d.

35. Jensen (see note 30), 170-1.

their lives. This included not only legal purity but moral rectitude as well.³⁶ Lv 18 emphasizes the sacredness of sex, the act that communicates human life. The Israelites were not to behave as they do in Egypt and Canaan, but to observe the laws and customs of their God (vv. 3-5). Certain sexual relations are forbidden including intercourse with someone closely related by affinity or blood (incest), a woman during her menstrual period, and the wife of a neighbor. Sodomy among men is considered an abomination and bestiality is called perversion (vv. 22-23 NRSV). Ch. 19 includes regulations to respect one's parents (v. 2). Regarding one's fellow-citizen, one is not to deceive, exploit, treat unfairly, bear grudges or seek revenge, but correct when necessary. One is not to harbor hatred for one's brother, but love one's neighbor as oneself (vv. 11-18). If a man has sexual relations with a woman slave of another man, an inquiry is to be held. He is to bring a guilt offering for himself to the Lord. With the offering the priest is to make atonement so that he may be forgiven for the sin he has committed (vv. 20-22).

Lv 21 contains certain regulations for the levitical priests. Among other things, the priests, who were consecrated to God, were not to marry a woman profaned by prostitution, nor one divorced by her husband (v. 7). A priest's daughter who engages in prostitution is said to profane both herself and her father (i.e. by reason of family solidarity). She was to be burned to death (v. 9). The high priest was only to marry a woman who was still a virgin from among his own people (i.e. from the tribe of Levi), so as not to profane his children (vv. 13-15).³⁷

36. Lv is ascribed to the "Priestly" tradition. It is thought to be the work of many hands through the centuries adapting laws, rituals and feasts to the needs of successive eras. Although it contains some ancient legislation, its present form is thought to date from the period after the return from the exile: Roland J. Faley, T.O.R., "Leviticus," NJBC, 4:3 and 35.

37. Ibid., 4:37-41.

The book of Deuteronomy, Ch. 22:13-21, speaks of tokens or evidence of virginity.³⁸

"...custom demanded that proof of the girl's virginity, presumably in the form of a blood-stained sheet, be handed over to her parents after the wedding night; this, in turn, might become evidence in a legal case."³⁹ If the woman's husband turns against her and publicly charges her with shameful conduct saying, "I married this woman; but when I lay with her, I did not find evidence of her virginity", the girl's parents must take the evidence of her virginity to the elders of the town (vv. 14-15 NRSV). This evidence vindicates the woman. The man for slandering "a virgin of Israel" is to be whipped and pay a fine double the bride-price (cf. v. 29) to the girl's father. He may not divorce her (v. 19). But if the man's accusation is substantiated, the woman is to be stoned to death because she has committed a disgraceful act (*nebala*, a term for a serious disorder, usually of a sexual nature, affecting the whole community⁴⁰) in Israel "by prostituting herself [*liznot*] in her father's house." The passage concludes, "So you shall purge the evil from your midst."(v. 21 NRSV). Concerning this passage Jensen says:

...the motivation on her [the woman's] part to avoid pre-marital sex would have been very great any woman tempted to engage in pre-marital sex would know beforehand that the fact would be revealed to her parents and, if the man were anyone but her future husband, to the man she married; and the last named could publicly repudiate her if she were found not to be a virgin.⁴¹

38. Most scholars consider Dt, the fifth and last book of the Pentateuch or Torah, to have reached its final form (no earlier than about 560 B.C.) as a result of a long period of formation. The preaching and the formulation of the laws in this book have been deeply influenced by prophets: Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Deuteronomy," NJBC, 6:3.

39. Jensen (see note 30), 165.

40. Blenkinsopp, NJBC, 6:40.

41. Jensen (see note 30), 165.

The following verses (Dt 22:22-27) prescribe that if a man has sexual intercourse with another man's wife or betrothed virgin, he is to be put to death. If the woman freely engages in the sexual relations she also is to be put to death. If she is taken by force though, nothing is to be done to her since "she has not committed an offense punishable by death"(v. 26 NRSV). If a man is found to have sexual relations with a virgin who is not betrothed, he must pay her father fifty silver shekels and marry her because he has violated her. He may not divorce her (vv. 28-9; cf. Ex 22:15-16 treated above).

The book of Deuteronomy also presents "The Ten Commandments," including the precepts to honor one's parents, not to commit adultery, and not to covet the wife of one's neighbor (5:1-21; cf. Ex 20:1-21). This section also speaks of the covenant the Lord made with the people of Israel through Moses. The people are to fear the Lord, the great and living God. They must do what he considers right and good, serve him alone, keep all his commandments and instructions, and continuously teach them to their children, in order that they may be happy forever and survive. They are not to follow other gods or intermarry with the peoples who do, lest they be seduced from following the Lord into serving other gods (see Dt 5:22-7:6). This latter section also includes the well known verses: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."(6:4-5 NRSV).⁴²

5. Prophetic Literature

42. Cf. the *shema*, a prayer central to Jewish piety, and the greatest commandment according to Jesus (Mt 22:36-38). "To fear Yahweh" expresses "faithfulness to the covenant." It "combines love in response to God's love" and "absolute obedience to whatever God commands."(NJB, p. 233, notes 6a and 6b).

The Old Testament prophets further develop the biblical understanding of human sexuality and marriage. A comparison is made between God's covenant (*berit*) with his people (Israel) and the covenant of marriage - God and Israel are bound not only by legal ties but also by ties of the heart. The relationship of God and his people is spoken of in terms of man and woman in marriage. The people of God are personified with feminine traits; the Israelites are presented as "sons" of the Lord's "Spouse." The parallel between human marriage (including the tragedy of infidelity) and the relationship between God and his people (including the tragedy of sinning Israel) is developed at length. But there is a difference. God is always faithful to his covenant and promises. His love and fidelity (*hesed*) is creative, more powerful than sin, always ready to pardon. He always desires the return or conversion of his sinful people - to be reunited with them.⁴³ Here we will consider briefly only a few biblical passages related to these themes.

The prophet Hosea is called by God to, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD" (Hos 1:2 NRSV). Hosea's marriage to Gomer, who may have been a sacred prostitute, as well as the names God gives to their three children, symbolize the relationship between God and his people or "wife" (see Hos 1-3). Israel has been unfaithful to God. She has chased after other lovers (2:5, i.e. the fertility gods of Canaan). After she experiences desolation she will desire to return to God, who will woo her and "speak tenderly to her"(2:14 NRSV). God foretells a day when his people will call him, "My husband" (2:16). He will betroth her to himself for ever in uprightness, justice, faithful love, tenderness, loyalty and knowledge (2:19-20). In Chapter 3, which is probably a second account of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, God says to Hosea, "Go, love

43. Grelot (see note 4), 57-9.

a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods..."(v. 1 NRSV). Hosea thus finds in God's constant love, in spite of the infidelities of his "wife," a model for his own marriage. Grelot notes the grandeur of this revelation, especially "in a social environment which punishes a woman's adultery so harshly..."⁴⁴

We will only consider here one verse from the book of Micah:

He [God] has showed you, O man, what is good;

and what does the LORD require of you

but to do justice, and to love kindness [*hesed*],

and to walk humbly with your God?(6:8 RSV)

"This verse is a perfect summary of the teaching of the great 8th-cent. [B.C.] prophets - Amos on righteousness, Hosea on steadfast love, Isaiah on faith and obedience. It ... is a way of life." To love *hesed* "implies fidelity, goodness, or kindness: an expression of love on their part in response to God's love." The image of walking humbly with one's God is used elsewhere in the Bible, although in different words, and means to live in union with God and to serve him.⁴⁵

The book of Jeremiah like Hosea uses marital imagery to depict the relationship of God and

44. Ibid., 61. Hosea's prophetic oracles were given about 750 to after 732 B.C., the last days of Israel, the northern of the two kingdoms into which the Hebrews had divided themselves after Solomon. Most of the book of Hosea is thought to be a collection of his sayings. For a recent scholarly commentary, including a discussion of whether Hos 1-3 recounts a continuous story, see Dennis J. McCarthy, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., "Hosea," NJBC, 14.

45. The quotations are from Philip J. King, "Micah", JBC, 17:28, and Leo Laberge, O.M.I., "Micah", NJBC, 16:31, respectively. The prophet Micah was the last of the 8th cent. B.C. Hebrew prophets. He was preoccupied with social justice. Biblical scholars think that parts of the book of Micah come from the prophet himself and some other parts are later additions. "Consideration must be given to 6:1-7:6 as being mainly from the prophet himself", Laberge, NJBC, 16:2-3.

Israel. Idolatry is presented as playing the whore with many lovers (2:20 and 3:1). In spite of this, God, who is merciful, calls Israel to conversion, to acknowledge her guilt and rebellion against him. He wants to cure Israel's disloyalty (Ch. 3). Chapter 31 speaks of God's everlasting and faithful love. God promises to rebuild her, "O virgin Israel" (vv. 3-4). He is creating something new on earth: "the Woman [Israel] sets out to find her Husband [the Lord] again." (v. 22 NJB) God promises a time when he will make a new covenant with his people. "I will put my Law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be my people I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." (vv. 31-34 NRSV) There is here a question of "a miracle of divine grace, capable of overcoming the hardness of the human heart and transforming its infidelity into love."⁴⁶

The book of Ezekiel, Ch. 16, includes an allegorical history of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was like an unwanted baby girl that was exposed to die. God, however, cared for her and she grew and developed. When she reached marriageable age, the time for love, God made a covenant with her and she became his. She grew more and more beautiful. But, she became infatuated with her beauty and played the whore, opening her "legs to all comers in countless acts of fornication" (v. 25 NJB; NRSV reads "whoring"). She even sacrificed the children she bore him (i.e. she slaughtered children God regarded as his - see vv. 20-21). Her depravity is "worse than ordinary prostitution because Jerusalem does not even want pay for her favors - she simply gives

46. Grelot (see note 4), 64. For a commentary on the book of Jeremiah see Guy P. Couturier, S.S.C., "Jeremiah," NJBC, 18. The ministry of the prophet Jeremiah lasted about forty years, from about 627 to 587 B.C. He witnessed the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah.

them away out of lust."⁴⁷ The chapter (16), nevertheless, concludes with a note of seriousness and hope. She (Jerusalem) is addressed by God:

...I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant; yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed... I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, in order that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done...(vv. 59-63 NRSV)

The book of Ezekiel also contains a remarkable section with respect to individual responsibility and accountability before God (see Ch. 18). Ch. 34, using the imagery of shepherds and sheep (or flock), criticizes pastors who fail to care truly for God's people. God promises to be a true shepherd himself for his flock and to judge between them. Concerning morality Ch. 36 includes the beautiful promise:

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.(vv. 25-27 NRSV)

Isaiah, Ch. 54, speaks of Jerusalem being restored to God's favor. Again, marriage imagery is included. Like a forsaken, grief-stricken wife, she is called back by her Creator and husband,

47. Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., "Ezekiel," NJBC, 20:45. See this whole article for a commentary on the whole book of Ezekiel. The background of the prophet Ezekiel's ministry (exercised from 593 to 571 B.C. or later) was the turbulent last days of Judah as an independent state.

God of the whole world. God's faithful love will never leave her and she will not be disgraced again. She who was barren will bear many children, who will be taught by God and prosper. Chs. 60-62 of Isaiah speak of the glorious new Jerusalem (or Zion). The restored city, enlightened by God (60:1-2 and 61:19), is to become a light to other nations (60:3-4). The prophet "looks to the total salvation of God's people - bodily and spiritually, individually and socially"⁴⁸ (cf. 61:1-2). God will make an everlasting covenant with them (61:8). Jerusalem herself will be given a new name by God:

You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
 and your land shall no more 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.
 For as a young man marries a young woman,
 so shall your builder marry you,
 and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
 so shall your God rejoice over you. (Is 62:4-5 NRSV)

Concerning the "profound transformation of the city-spouse, the feminine personification of humanity as it faces God," from prostitute (Is 1:21) to virgin and mother of many children,

48. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., "Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah," NJBC, 21:59. Chs. 40-55 of Isaiah are generally attributed to Deutero-Isaiah. This section is addressed to the exiles in Babylon. Jerusalem has been destroyed and now awaits reconstruction. Chs. 56-66, now generally attributed to Trito-Isaiah, address a situation in which Israel is now back again in her own land, with somewhat different problems than before the exile. See NJBC, 21:2-8, for a fuller explanation of this.

Grelot says, "This return to original innocence after God's triumph over sin is a miracle of grace and it is this which is at the heart of the prophetic promises."⁴⁹

Malachi, Ch. 2:10-16, first speaks of marriage with idolaters ("the daughter of a foreign god" - v. 11) as being unfaithful to one's fellow Israelites, "profaning the covenant of our ancestors" (v. 10). It then strongly demands fidelity within marriage:

...the LORD was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel...(vv. 14-16 NRSV)

This passage represents a significant development in the biblical teaching on marriage. The requirement here of fidelity to one's partner in marriage by covenant goes far beyond what the Torah allowed (cf. Dt 24:1). The prophet seems to appeal to the primitive ideal of Genesis (see Gn 2:24 and 1:28) to which "the couple is to return". There is "no doubt that the fidelity" of God towards his people, "whom he has joined with himself" in a covenant, "is implicitly put forward as a model for husband and wife."⁵⁰

6. Wisdom Literature

Wisdom in the Old Testament is a practical skill related to action and its consequences, responsibility, conduct, a moral and good life. It is often concerned with how to live with the problems of experience. Wisdom can be gained by counsel and instruction - the wise person

49. Grelot (see note 4), 66-7.

50. Ibid., 69-70. The book of Malachi is post-exilic, presupposing regular worship at the rebuilt Temple - Aelred Cody, O.S.B., "Haggai Zechariah Malachi," NJBC, 22:52-62.

seeks such whereas the fool hates discipline and refuses to learn. Ultimately, however, wisdom is a gift of God who alone is wise.⁵¹ Here we will consider briefly a few themes in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament that relate to sex, marriage, nonmarital sex and love.

Proverbs, Chs. 5-7, in the form of fatherly advice, warns a man to be on guard and not to be seduced by a loose woman, an adulteress, a woman of bad character who belongs to another. Although her words are sweet and temptation can be very attractive, the end of such a relationship is bitter. Rather, a man should enjoy sexual union with his wife (5:15-17):

...rejoice in the wife of your youth,

a lovely deer, a graceful doe.

May her breasts satisfy you at all times;

may you be intoxicated always by her love.(5:18-19 NRSV)

Proverbs also says a discreet wife is from God (19:14). The book concludes with a poem of praise of the perfect wife (31:10-31), which may also be meant as a personification of Wisdom. She is capable, generous and wise, and her "husband trusts in her" (v. 11). The penultimate verse underlines an important value: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, the woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."(v. 30 NRSV) The book of Proverbs presupposes the unity of marriage, demands marital fidelity, and despite domestic problems (cf., e.g. 21:9), it does not envisage "rupture of the conjugal bond".⁵²

The Song of Songs is a collection of love songs or poems that celebrate the mutual and stable

51. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 929-31.

52. Grelot (see note 4), 70. The book of Proverbs probably dates from the late 6th or early 5th century B.C. It is thought to be a redaction of earlier collections - Thomas P. McCreesh, O.P., "Proverbs," NJBC, 28:5.

love between a man and a woman that leads to marriage. The lover and beloved appreciate the whole beauty of each other, including their various physical attributes (without prudery and with images appropriate to the time), and each other's voice and conversation (see 1:5-17; 2:14; 4:1-11; 5:10-16; 6:4-7; and 7:2-9). Their love is reciprocal and exclusive - they belong to each other (see 2:2-3 and 16; 6:9; and 8:12). The beloved as a bride is "a garden locked, a fountain sealed" (4:12 NRSV, i.e. a chaste virgin). Friends are invited to celebrate at their wedding. The beloved invites her lover to come into "his" garden and he comes. She gives him the gift of her love and the most exquisite fruits which she has preserved for him (4:16-5:1; and 7:13-14). The songs tenderly allude to various aspects of conjugal love including kissing, embracing, petting and fantasy (cf. 1:2; 2:6; 4:11; 7:7-9; and 8:1-2); the yearning of the lover and beloved for each other when apart; and their delight in each other's presence. This strong and passionate love is called "a flame of Yahweh himself." (8:6 NJB) Human conjugal love is, therefore, recognized as somehow sharing in divine love. The songs celebrate the various aspects of human sexuality and conjugal love as a good gift of God.⁵³

The last two Old Testament books that we will refer to here are known as Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical books. They are not part of the Jewish or Protestant canons of the Bible, but they are part of the Catholic (and Orthodox) canon. The *Revised Standard Version Common Bible* (An Ecumenical Edition) includes them.⁵⁴

53. Cf. Raymond Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 7 (1977), 157-8; and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., "Canticle of Canticles," NJBC, 29:8. Internal evidence suggests a dating of the Song of Songs after the Exile, in the fifth or fourth centuries B.C. - NJB, p. 1029.

54. See note 1.

Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) treats many topics including various virtues and vices (e.g. humility and pride), responsibilities towards parents and children, charity to the poor, true and false friendship, and true happiness and wisdom. Included is also advice with respect to associating with women, for example, not to keep company with a prostitute (9:3-9); and lust, promiscuity and sinning against the marriage bed (23:16-27). The wise pray to be protected from pride, shameless desire and lust (23:4-6). The vices of the evil woman are contrasted with the blessings of a modest, chaste and good wife (25:13-26:18). Ch. 42:9-11 speaks of a father's worries concerning his daughter, including that as an unmarried virgin she be seduced or defiled and become pregnant (see also 26:10-12). Vigilance is counseled.⁵⁵

One of the purposes of the book of Tobit is to present a couple who corresponds to the ideal established in the beginning (Gen 1-2). Both Tobias and Sarah and their families are faithful to God. Sarah had been given in marriage seven times before, but a demon, Asmodeus, killed her bridegrooms before they had slept together as man with wife (3:8). According to custom, Tobias has the right to marry her. She is "sensible, brave, and very beautiful..."(6:12 NRSV) Before the marriage the angel Raphael tells Tobias not to worry about the demon. Raphael instructs him on how to exorcise the demon. Before Tobias and Sarah sleep together they are to pray together to God to grant them his grace and protection. Tobias falls so deeply in love with Sarah "that he could no longer call his heart his own."(6:16-18 NJB) The marriage includes drawing up a written marriage contract (7:13). After the exorcism which is successful, the couple pray as

55. Cf. Jensen (see note 30), 171-2; Grelot (see note 4), 70-1; Thomas H. Weber, "Sirach," JBC, 33; and Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M., "Sirach," NJBC, 32. Sirach is thought to have been composed by Jesus Ben Sira, a Jewish teacher, about 180 B.C. The Book of Job, Ch. 31:1-12, also briefly treats lust, deceit and vigilance.

instructed (8:4-8). In his prayer Tobias refers to God's creation of man and wife, and procreation. He concludes, "I now take this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together."(8:7 NRSV) Their prayer is seen to be fulfilled in the rest of the story. The wedding includes joyful celebration with relatives. The story also emphasizes the close relationship established between Tobias and Sarah and their respective parents-in-law.

Concerning Tobit, Grelot says:

The problem raised by the book is basically that of the salvation of the couple. Given the present condition of sinful humanity, every couple is preyed upon by the demonic powers who try to turn them away from the ideal established by God The mutual love of Tobias and Sara is to be a chaste love, sanctified by prayer in man and wife we see repeated the ideal of the prototype... Love, fecundity, mutual help: all these aspects of the couple are united in the institution of marriage Not only does the institution of marriage sanctify love..., but the explicit intention of the partners puts it into a religious perspective and integrates it into spiritual life It is unnecessary to add that polygamy and divorce are out of the question. Without there being, in fact, any allusion to the divine archetype for marriage - God's covenant with his people seen in its eschatological perfection - we find in the union of Tobias and Sara exactly the same characteristics: unity and fidelity, fecundity, indissolubility.⁵⁶

B. The New Testament

The Jewish scriptures (Old Testament) are regarded as the word of God by Jesus and the New

56. Grelot (see note 4), 73-74. The book of Tobit was probably written between 200-180 B.C. - Irene Nowell, O.S.B., "Tobit," NJBC, 38:3.

Testament authors. Their world was for the most part the world of the Old Testament. For the New Testament authors, too, human sexuality is seen simply as one aspect of created reality for which human beings are responsible. In first century Judaism chastity was highly valued. The biblical commandment not to commit adultery was understood widely to prohibit various sexually immoral activities. Concerning our topics, the following words of Philo, a first century Jew, are significant:

We, the descendants of the Hebrews, have excellent customs and laws. Other nations allow their young men of fourteen years of age to go to prostitutes and to other women who sell their bodies. But according to our laws, all *hetairas* are condemned to die. Until there can be legitimate relations, we do not have intercourse with a woman. Both parties enter marriage as virgins, and for us the purpose of marriage is not pleasure but the propagation of children.⁵⁷

1. The Teaching of Jesus According to the Gospels

Here we will only consider some of the teachings of Jesus (as presented in the four New Testament Gospels) that are relevant to our topics.

In the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus begins his public ministry by proclaiming the good news from God saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mk 1:15 RSV; cf. Mt 4:17) Jesus announces the near arrival of God's future rule over all creation, saving humanity and establishing justice, love and peace. This demands repentance (Greek *metanoia*, a change of mind, to turn from sin to God, a reorientation of life) and believing in the gospel (*euangelion*, good news). All of Jesus' attitudes and

57. From Philo, *De Josepho*, IX:42-43, following the translation of Raymond F. Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality II," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 8 (1978), 4. Cf. also Jensen (see note 30), 176-7.

teachings (including those regarding human sexuality and marriage) are related to this proclamation of the reign of God.⁵⁸

In Mt 5:17 Jesus says that he has not come to abolish "the Law or the Prophets" (i.e. the whole collection of Old Testament books), but "to fulfill."(NRSV) Jesus thus shows a fundamentally positive attitude toward the Jewish religious inheritance. He, however, implies that Old Testament teaching is incomplete and that he will complete it. An example of this, related to our topics, is found in Mt 5:27-28 where Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."(RSV) Jesus moves here from the level of action to the level of intention. It is not enough for his disciples, to be faithful to God, to merely avoid evil external actions (e.g. adultery). They must also not consent to and repel evil thoughts

58. Cf. Collins (see note 56), 5. It is beyond our purposes to treat here the various questions regarding the composition of the four New Testament Gospels. For scholarly treatments of some of these questions see NJBC: Frans Neirynck, "Synoptic Problem," 40; Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., "The Gospel According to Mark," 41:2; Benedict T. Viviano, O.P., "The Gospel According to Matthew," 42:2-4; Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., "The Gospel According to Luke," 43:2-3; and PHEME PERKINS, "The Gospel According to John," 61:2-12. Cf. also NJB, 1599-1607 and 1737-43. The Gospel according to Mark was probably composed in Rome between 65-70 AD for Christians of pagan origin. The Gospel according to Matthew (Greek) represents a Jewish-Christian outlook and was probably composed between 80-90. The Gospel according to Luke was probably composed in Antioch between 80-85. The Gospel according to John was probably composed in the 90's. All four Gospels contain material from earlier traditions. According to the Second Vatican Council, DV, 19, the four Gospels "faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven (see Acts 1:1-2). Indeed, after the ascension of the Lord the apostles handed on to their hearers what He had said and done. This they did with that clearer understanding which they enjoyed after they had been instructed by the events of Christ's risen life and taught by the light of the Spirit of truth. The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explicating some things in view of the situation of their churches, and preserving the form of proclamation but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus."(Abbott)

and desires (e.g. unchaste ones). His words do not condemn any thinking about sexual matters, but deliberately lustful thinking.

To be faithful to God in matters of sexual morality, therefore, will require a complete control over our appetites at whatever cost. In other words, Jesus is setting forth the true and full significance of the commandment against adultery by showing how it rules out the least consent to lust in thought, word or deed.⁵⁹

Indeed, to be children of God, one's Father in heaven, one must be perfect in love as one's heavenly Father. One must love all people (including one's enemies), seek their good and pray for them (see Mt 5:43-8).⁶⁰

Mk 7:21-23 presents Jesus as saying,

For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication [Greek *porneiai*, plural form referring to various kinds of sexual immorality, wanton or lewd behavior, including fornication⁶¹], theft, murder, adultery [*moikeiai*, plural form of adultery], avarice, wickedness,

59. Marcel A. Gervais, *Journey* (London, Ontario: Divine Word Centre, 1980), 28:23.

60. Cf. John L. McKenzie, "The Gospel According to Matthew," JBC, 43:34-41; Viviano, NJBC, 42:26-36; and Gervais (see note 58), 28:21-25.

61. Bruce Malina in "Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication," *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972), 10-17, considers a number of biblical texts. He concludes that the Greek term *porneia* means "1) unlawful sexual intercourse; 2) specifically, sexual intercourse with a cultic or commercial prostitute; 3) unlawful conduct in general" and that "it would appear that in no case is pre-betrothal, non-commercial, non-cultic heterosexual intercourse (what is commonly called 'fornication' today) prohibited"(14-15). Joseph Jensen in "Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina," *Novum Testamentum* 20 (1978), 161-184, finds fault with almost every part of Malina's article. Jensen presents much evidence, both biblical and non-biblical. He concludes that since *porneia* (and Greek forms related to it) "has quite a range of meanings (marriage within forbidden degrees of kinship, commercial or cultic prostitution, figurative term for idolatry, impure behavior in general, including fornication), it is difficult to be apodictic in many specific cases"(180). He, however, says that the inclusion of "fornication" within the range of meanings is defensible in the following New Testament texts: Mt 15:29/Mk 7:21; 1 Cor

deceit, licentiousness [*aselgeia* meaning sensuality, covetousness, lewdness], envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."(NRSV; cf. Mt 15:19-20)

This text in its context (see Mk 7:1-23) emphasizes that immoral actions and dispositions, since they touch the inner core of the person, are what really defile a person. This text clearly implies that adultery is not the only sin of a sexual nature. It, however, treats sexual sins simply as sins among other sins.⁶² In relation to this text, we can also consider one of Jesus' beatitudes (Mt 5:8). Jesus calls the "pure in heart" "blessed" or happy and promises them a reward - "they shall see God" (RSV).

Concerning sin, including sexual sins, the theme of divine mercy, which is emphasized in the Gospels, should be noted here. The Gospel according to Luke, Ch. 15, relates three of Jesus' parables concerning God's mercy. Jesus tells the parables in response to a complaint that he "welcomes sinners and eats with them."(v. 2) The first two parables, of the lost sheep and coin, illustrate how God's love seeks the return of the sinner. They speak of rejoicing in heaven (among the angels of God) over one sinner repenting. In the parallel version of the first parable in Matthew (18:12-14), Jesus concludes: "...it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost."(NRSV) Regarding the third parable, of the prodigal and 'righteous' sons and of the merciful father (Lk 15:11-32), we can note that the prodigal's sin

5:9,10,11; 6:9; 7:2; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5; 1 Thes 4:3; 1 Tm 1:10; Heb 13:4; Rev 2:14,20,21; 9:21; 21:8; 22:15 (180-1). He considers 1 Cor 7:2 in context closely and concludes that *porneia* here certainly includes the meaning of fornication (181-183). I think Jensen presents a solid case. In the light of the biblical data that we are considering in this chapter (including some texts yet to be considered, especially 1 Cor 7:2-9), my own conclusion is that the Bible clearly excludes any approval of fornication, including premarital sexual intercourse.

62. Cf. Collins (see note 56), 8-9; Mally, JBC, 42:48; and Harrington, NJBC, 41:47.

involved squandering his inheritance "in dissolute living [Greek *zon asotos* meaning unrestrained sensuality and spendthrift extravagance]", "with prostitutes"(vv. 13,30 NRSV). Of note, the prodigal acknowledges that he has sinned against his father and heaven (i.e. against God). God's mercy, which breaks through human restrictions, is illustrated in the father's running (undignified behavior for an elderly Oriental gentleman) to greet his returning son while he is still a long way off, embracing and kissing him, and celebrating his return with a feast. Worth noting is also the father's response to the 'righteous' son who refuses to accept the prodigal's return and to speak of him as his brother. The father explains that it is right that they rejoice, "this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."(Lk 15:32 NRSV)⁶³

Concerning Jesus' attitude towards sinners, the accounts of Jesus' encounters with a woman who had a bad name - perhaps a prostitute - (see Lk 7:36-50) and with a woman who had been caught committing adultery (see Jn 8:1-11) are significant. The first passage points out the connection between being forgiven and loving. In the second passage Jesus responds to the woman's accusers by saying, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."(Jn 8:7) After they leave (no one condemns the woman), Jesus says to her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."(Jn 8:11 NRSV) The lesson of this episode is "not that sin is of no importance, nor that God does not punish sin, but that God extends mercy to the sinner that he [she] may turn from his [her] sin."⁶⁴ Elsewhere the Gospel according to John speaks of God having sent his Son (Jesus) into the world not to condemn but

63. Cf. Stuhlmueller, JBC, 44:118-19; and Karris, NJBC, 43:146-7.

64. Vawter, JBC, 63:108.

to save. God loves the world (of sinful people) so much that he gives his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. Whoever does not believe in Jesus is condemned already (see Jn 3:16-21).

Jesus' teaching concerning divorce helps us come to a better understanding of his view of sexuality and marriage. Matthew 19:3-9 (NJB) reads:

Some Pharisees approached him [Jesus], and to put him to the test they said, 'Is it against the Law for a man to divorce his wife on any pretext whatever?' He answered, 'Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning *made them male and female* and that he said: *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh?* They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide.

They said to him, 'Then why did Moses command that a writ of dismissal should be given in cases of divorce?' He said to them, 'It was because you were so hardhearted, that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but it was not like this from the beginning. Now I say this to you: anyone who divorces his wife - I am not speaking of an illicit marriage [*porneia*] - and marries another, is guilty of adultery.'

The questions of the Pharisees probably reflect a rabbinical dispute at the time concerning the interpretation of Dt 24:1. According to the school of Shammai adultery was the only acceptable ground for divorce. According to the school of Hillel, a man could divorce his wife for even trivial reasons. Jesus quotes from Gen 1:27 and 2:24 and uncompromisingly asserts the indissolubility of marriage. "Two" becoming "one flesh" also implies monogamous marriage. In the kingdom of God which Jesus is inaugurating,

the institution of marriage regains the perfection which the consequences of sin in human history

had caused it to lose once the economy of grace has been introduced into history, the human couple must return to its primitive rules of conduct, which alone conform to the fundamental intention of the Creator.⁶⁵

Jesus' intent is to set out a clear vision of "marriage as a covenant of personal love between spouses which reflects the covenant relationship of God and his people."⁶⁶ Any repudiation followed by remarriage is therefore regarded as "adultery".

The exceptive clause in Mt 19:9, literally "not for *porneia*,"(see also Mt 5:31-32), is not found in the parallel passages in Mk 10:1-12 and Lk 16:18 concerning divorce and remarriage. Three main interpretations of this clause have been proposed. One view (the so-called Greek Orthodox solution) holds that the clause provides a real exception (i.e. one of the spouses committing adultery) to the absolute prohibition of divorce and remarriage. *Porneia* includes a range of meanings (see note 60 of this chapter; cf.. also various translations of the Bible - e.g. RSV translates *porneia* in Mt 19:9 as "unchastity"). It can include the meaning of adultery but is not the technical word for it (*moicheia* is and the corresponding verb *moichatai* is used later in the same verse for "commits adultery" RSV). A difficulty with this interpretation is that if Matthew understood adultery as a legitimate ground for divorce and remarriage, the text should read *moicheia* not *porneia*. This view would also put Jesus on the side of the school of Shammai. The reaction of the disciples to Jesus' teaching, "If that is how things are between husband and wife, it is advisable not to marry" (Mt 19:10 NJB), would then be difficult to explain.

A second view (the so-called classical "Catholic" solution) understands the clause to allow

65. Grelot (see note 4), 86.

66. Viviano, NJBC, 42:32.

for separation without remarriage in the case of adultery (cf. 1 Cor 7:10-11). But again, if Matthew meant "adultery" here, why did he not use *moicheia* (noun) which he uses later (verb form) in the same verse? A third view (cf. J. Bonsirven, many biblical scholars and the NJB translation cited above) interprets *porneia* in this clause to refer to "illicit marriage" or unlawful sexual union, as marriage within forbidden degrees of kinship (cf. Lv 18:6-18 and Acts 15:23-29). Such unlawful sexual unions were designated by the Hebrew word *zenut* which was translated by the Greek *porneia*. This interpretation fits the text best, the Jewish-Christian context of the Gospel according to Matthew, and the disciples' reaction to Jesus' teaching noted above (Mt 19:10).⁶⁷

The disciples' initial reaction is to consider the single state preferable to entering a marriage that is indissoluble (Mt 19:10). Jesus responds that not everyone can accept this saying (cf. RSV), "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 others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."(Mt 19:11-12 NRSV) This passage notes that not all who remain single do so by choice. But there are also those who voluntarily refrain from marriage (making themselves eunuchs is here used metaphorically) in order to devote themselves more fully to God's reign. Jesus' saying "to whom it is given"(v. 11) implies that "it is God who gives the capacity to remain single for

67. Cf. *Ibid.*; and McKenzie, JBC, 43:38. The Gospel according to Mark also speaks of a woman divorcing her husband and marrying another as committing adultery. This is commonly understood to relate to the Roman context of Mark's Gospel. Roman law provided for a woman to divorce her husband but Jewish law did not (note that Matthew's Gospel does not speak of a woman divorcing her husband) - cf. Harrington, NJBC, 41:62; and Mally, JBC, 42:60.

the sake of the kingdom."⁶⁸

The verses immediately following (Mt 19:13-15) speak of Jesus welcoming little children and laying his hands on them in prayer. The parallel passage in Mk 10:13-16 also speaks of Jesus embracing and blessing them and saying in part, "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."(NRSV) These passages imply that the kingdom is a gift God offers, not something we can create, and that we ought to receive it gladly and simply. They also show that Jesus takes little children seriously as persons and that they can enjoy a relationship with him. "Jesus is unique among ancient religious and philosophical teachers in receiving children as significant."⁶⁹

Mt 22:23-33 (cf. the parallel passages in Mk 12:18-27 and Lk 20:27-40) presents an incident where some Sadducees who do not believe in the resurrection pose a case to Jesus involving the ancient levirate law concerning marriage (cf. Dt 25:5). Jesus' response further illustrates his understanding of human sexuality and marriage. Jesus clearly affirms the reality of the resurrection of the dead based on the power of God. He says in part, "For at the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven."(Mt 22:30 NJB). This verse implies that although marriage (and hence also sexual relations and procreation within marriage) is good and part of the created order, it is nevertheless "of this world" and not part of the future world of the resurrection (see Lk 20:34-6), the definitive establishment of the kingdom of God. Grelot also relates this teaching of Jesus to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God:

Voluntary continence anticipates the state into which we will all enter after the resurrection of the

68. Viviano, NJBC, 42:117. Cf. McKenzie, JBC, 43:132.

69. Viviano, NJBC, 42:118; cf. also Harrington, JBC, 41:63.

body. Seen in this way it has a symbolic function: it attests that the kingdom of God is not only a future reality which will come about on the last day; but that it is also a present reality...⁷⁰

Above all, however, Jesus gives priority to loving God and human beings. When asked which is the greatest commandment of the Law, Jesus says:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. (Mt 22:34-40 RSV; cf. Mk 12:28-34 and Lk 10:25-28)

Although Jesus here quotes from Dt 6:5 and Lv 19:18, his combining these two commandments in such a way appears to be original. These two provide the foundation, source and support for all Christian morality, for all the other commandments. God is to be loved because of his nature as the one God. One's love for God is to be undivided. One is to love God with all available resources. Such love (Greek *agape*) is not primarily a matter of feeling but of covenant fidelity, of obedience and service to God, of willing and doing. In the Gospel according to Luke, love of neighbour is exemplified in the parable of the good Samaritan (10:29-37). Here an outcast Samaritan, rather than a priest and a Levite who fear becoming defiled, shows himself to be a true neighbor by his compassionate love for the man who was beat and left half dead by bandits. The Samaritan's love responds to the needs of the other. It is unselfish, personal, kind and effective. Jesus here preaches a universal love of human beings that is rooted in God's all-embracing and merciful love.⁷¹

70. Grelot (see note 4), 94. Cf. also Collins (see note 56), 6.

71. For a fuller treatment of the great commandment see Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (London: Burns & Oates, 1975), 90-109; and the related

The Gospel according to John presents Jesus as giving his disciples a "new" commandment, "his": "...love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."(15:12-13 NRSV; cf. 13:34-35) By such love others will recognize them as his disciples. Such love, in effect, is to love as God loves since Jesus previously said, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you..."(15:9 NRSV; cf. also the Prologue, Jn 1:1-18, which speaks of Jesus as the fullest revelation of God, as the incarnation of the eternal Word of God, who always was with God and was God). Those who love Jesus keep his commandments, his word (see Jn 14:15 and 23). A disciple is called to keep all the teaching of Jesus (see Mt 28:19-20: keeping the ten commandments (see Mt 19:17-19; par. Mk 10:19-20 and Lk 18:20-21); not neglecting to respond appropriately to the real needs of others (see Mt 25:31-46); seeking God's kingdom and justice first and trusting in divine providence (see Mt 6:25-34; par. Lk 12:22-32); being a peacemaker and seeking reconciliation with others (see Mt 5:9 and 23-24); always being ready to forgive others (see Mt 18:21-22; par. Lk 17:4); prudent fraternal correction (see Mt 18:15-17 and Lk 17:3; cf. also Mt 10:16), but correcting one's own life first so that one is able to truly help the other become better (see Mt 7:3-5); treating others as one would like to be treated (see Mt 7:12); following Jesus by taking up one's cross daily and renouncing one's self for Jesus' sake (see Mt 10:38-9; par. Mk 8:34-35 and Lk 9:23-26); subordinating one's love of people including family members and a spouse to love of Jesus (see Mt 10:37; par. Lk 14:26-27); praying with proper motives (see Mt 6:5-13); and so forth.

Only those who do the will of the heavenly Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (see Mt 7:21). Jesus calls those who love him and keep his commandments his "friends." He promises

commentaries in the JBC and NJBC.

to reveal himself to them and to come and abide in them. He also promises to give them the Holy Spirit who will lead them into the complete truth and show the world how wrong it was about sin (see Jn 14:15-26, 15:10-17 and 16:7-15). With regard to living according to the demands of the kingdom, Jesus notes that some things are impossible for human beings, but with God all things are possible (see Mt 19:26; par. Mk 10:27 and Lk 18:27). Jesus also prays for the perfect unity of all those who will come to believe in him, that they may share an intimacy with God and each other like that which exists between the Father and himself (see Jn 17:20-23).⁷²

2. Some Pauline Teachings

We will next consider a few texts from the letters of the apostle Paul. The general context of these letters is first century Hellenism in which a dualistic anthropology and ethics were dominant. Some considered the body evil and adopted a rigid asceticism. Others who considered the body valueless adopted an open libertinism. In opposition to these extremes Paul saw human sexuality as basically good, as a God-given gift. He advocated sexual responsibility based on a holistic anthropology. Paul's understanding of human sexuality was formed largely from the Jewish biblical view.⁷³

Let us first consider 1 Th 4:1-8 (NRSV except as noted):

Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of

72. For a fuller treatment of God and Jesus as models and for commentaries on the various Gospel texts referred to here see Schnackenburg (see note 70), 161-7; and the related sections in the JBC and NJBC.

73. Cf. Collins (see note 56), 10-12.

God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication [Greek *porneia* - can refer to all kinds of unchastity including fornication]; that each one of you know how to control your own body [*skeuos ktasthai*, literally means "to get a vessel"; RSV following a common alternate interpretation of the metaphor translates the phrase as "know how to take a wife for himself"] in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion [*epithumia*], like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit [*pleonexia* - greed, covetousness, commonly associated with *porneia* in the New Testament] a brother or sister in this matter [*pragma* can mean "business dealings" but here probably refers to "matters" of unchastity given the context], because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity [*akatharsia* - impurity, uncleanness, immorality] but in holiness. Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Thessalonians is considered to be a type of personal letter of the apostle Paul, in 50 or 51 AD, to the new Christian community in Thessalonica, an important northern Greek port city. The letter was occasioned by a visit and report of Timothy, a co-worker of Paul. This letter is considered to be the first written book of the New Testament. In the above passage Paul notes that Christ is the norm and authority of his teaching. Paul considers Christian morality to be a matter of "the will of God". Sanctification means a growing in holiness (likeness to God). With respect to this passage, the biblical scholars Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz say that for Paul, God's will for our sanctification "includes sanctification of the body too and thus excludes any acceptance of fornication".⁷⁴ God's will includes giving one's body (or wife) the respect which is its (or her)

74. "Porne," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 6, ed. by Gerhard Kittel et al., tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 593. For more details concerning 1 Th (and Ch. 4:1-8 in particular) see J. Terence Forestell,

due. The Christians of Thessalonica came from a pagan society that considered sexual promiscuity normal. Paul, however, notes that sexual immorality not only offends against human beings but against God. Regarding God's giving the Holy Spirit, the use of the present participle underlines the continuity of the gift. The Holy Spirit is a present and active reality in the lives of Christians.

The Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians contains a number of passages regarding sex, marriage, and love. This letter is thought to have been written between 54-57 AD. It is a response to certain problems and questions of the Christian community in Corinth, a prominent Greek city. Paul's replies attempt to help them to an authentic understanding of life in Christ.⁷⁵

In 1 Cor 5:1-13 Paul responds to a reported case of incest involving a Christian living with his father's wife (i.e. stepmother). This was condemned by both Jewish (see Lv 18:8) and Roman law (the early Christian council of Jerusalem also forbade such unions - see Ac 15:20). Paul speaks of it as a kind of sexual immorality (*porneia*) not even found among pagans. He criticizes the community's lack of action concerning the case and with apostolic authority commands the man's excommunication (exclusion from the community). This is aimed at the man's salvation and to purify the community of the corruptive influence of evil.

1 Cor 6:9-11 (NRSV) reads:

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived!

C.S.B., "The Letters to the Thessalonians," JBC, 48; and Raymond F. Collins, "The First Letter to the Thessalonians," NJBC, 46.

75. For more detailed introductions to this letter as well as commentaries see Richard Kugelman, C.P., "The First Letter to the Corinthians," JBC, 51; and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., "The First Letter to the Corinthians," NJBC, 49.

Fornicators [*pornoi*], idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers - none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Paul warns that committing such sins exclude one from God's kingdom. The vices listed were characteristic of the pagans (cf. also Gal 5:21; Ep 5:5; Rv 21:8 and 22:15). Some of the Corinthian Christians were once given to such shameful behavior. Paul reminds them that through baptism (i.e. incorporation into Christ) they have been really changed - "washed" (purified from sin), "sanctified" (consecrated and made holy) and "justified" (the justice of Christ has been imparted to them). The Christians' lives should be in keeping with their dignity.

In 1 Cor 6:12-20 Paul deals with the problem of some kind of "fornication." He presents some of the theological implications of such practice for Christians who are members of Christ. The passage begins with "All things are lawful for me" (NRSV). Since the vocabulary in the Greek here is not customary for Paul, a number of commentators conclude that this is a libertine Corinthian slogan to which Paul responds, "but not all things are beneficial. ...I will not to be dominated by anything."(v. 12 NRSV) "The libertines argued that sexual gratification is simply the satisfaction of a natural appetite, as permissible as eating and drinking. Paul refutes the fallacy, appealing to the dignity and role of the Christian's body in the divine economy of salvation."⁷⁶ Verses 13-14 (NRSV) of the passage read, "... The body is meant not for fornication [*porneia*] but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power." Paul affirms that since God will raise our bodies as he raised

76. Kugelman, JBC, 51:32.

Christ's (see also 1 Cor 15), "God must attach importance to actions performed in and through the body."⁷⁷

In the passage (1 Cor 6:12-20 NRSV) Paul continues:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute [*porne*, refers to the female partner in an illicit sexual union whether she is a Christian or pagan or prostitute⁷⁸]? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." [Gen 2:24] But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication. Every sin that a person commits is outside the body [some commentators think this is another Corinthian slogan to which Paul responds⁷⁹]; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (vv. 15-20)

With his Hebrew background Paul understands the "body" as the whole "self" of the person. The body is the means by which the person expresses and manifests himself or herself and relates to others. In the above passage Paul stresses the direct individual personal relationship of Christ with each Christian. The faithful Christian in his or her totality is related to Christ as a member of his Body (cf. also 1 Cor 12:12-30), drawing life and nourishment from him. Christ and the Christian belong to each other. The imagery in the passage implies that the union

77. Murphy-O'Connor, NJBC, 49:32.

78. Cf. M. Miguens, "Christ's 'Members' and Sex (1 Cor 6, 12-20)," *The Thomist* 39 (1975), 47.

79. Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, NJBC, 49:32.

between Christ and the Christian is "marital". This union, however, unlike the union between man and woman, has nothing to do with sex and nature. The expression "one spirit with him" (i.e. the Lord, Christ) stresses the supernatural character of this union. The Christian who is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a possession of Christ and not his own possession, has no right to take a member of Christ (his body/person) and make it a possession of a *porne* by becoming "one flesh" with her. This would involve a kind of "adultery" or sacrilege. For Paul sex can only be right (not sinful) in a marital relationship (see 1 Cor 7 treated below) which is natural and according to the Creator's will. "...only this sexual relationship can be taken up by Christ who, through his 'body' vivifies the 'members' attached to him; the life Christ infuses in his members can perform and further only that relationship which is according to the plans of God the Creator." In sinful sexual activity (or any other wrong doing) a member of Christ's body "is making use of itself in a manner which is unnatural in some way, as it is doing something against the very nature of the 'body' which provides its (supernatural) life."⁸⁰

1 Cor 7:1-9 (NRSV) reads:

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." But because of cases of sexual immorality [*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 have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer [an example of an appropriate reason for periodic abstinence for the married], and then come together

80. Miguens (see note 77), 41 and 42 respectively.

again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. This I say by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift [*charisma*] from God, one having one kind and another a different kind.

To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

Today most commentators consider the phrase, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman"(v. 1), to reflect the view of certain Corinthians who considered marriage evil or that married couples should totally abstain from sexual relations.⁸¹ The apostle Paul responds teaching that sexual relations within marriage are good. They should involve mutual giving and not be used selfishly. In marrying spouses have handed over their bodies to each other. Husband and wife have equal rights concerning conjugal relations.

Concerning the unmarried and widows the apostle prefers that they remain single or celibate. He is, however, a realist and realizes that not everyone has this gift. He considers both marriage and celibacy to be *charismata* (i.e. gifts of God). Paul also sees marriage as a protection against sexual immorality including fornication and a remedy for concupiscence. It is better to marry than to be continually burning with sexual desire. Concerning 1 Cor 7:1-9 Jensen says in part:

It is to be noted that marriage and *porneia* are here posed as alternatives (licit and illicit), with no acceptable middle ground, which would not be the case if fornication were not included in *porneia*. So also in vs. 9 the alternatives (both licit) are marriage and self-control (*egkrateuein*), which here must mean "continence". Combining the contents of these verses, we end up with *porneia* and *egkrateia* as opposites, with marriage as the only acceptable middle ground. It is

81. Cf. Kugelman, JBC, 51:36; and Murphy-O'Connor, NJBC, 49:35.

interesting to see that the same opposites appear in Gal. v 19.23, where *porneia* appears among the "works of the flesh" [*sarx*, the Greek term here refers to the tendency to sin within us and does not imply that the body is evil] and *egkrateia* among the "fruits of the Spirit".⁸²

In 1 Cor 7:10-11 Paul presents the indissolubility of Christian marriage as the ruling of the Lord. He only presents the separated spouse with two options: remain unmarried or be reconciled with one's spouse. In virtue of his apostolic authority, Paul then presents his own instructions concerning marriage where only one partner has converted to Christianity (vv. 12-16). He considers such marriages and the children of such marriages to be legitimate. Although he does not consider such marriages to be indissoluble, he thinks they should be maintained unless the non-Christian partner (the unbeliever) is unwilling to live in peace with the Christian partner (the brother or sister). He is concerned that the Christian life be lived in peace and that opportunity of salvation be afforded the non-Christian spouse (see also 1 Pet 3:1-2).⁸³

In 1 Cor 7:25-38 Paul offers his opinion regarding people remaining virgin. He thinks "it is well for a person to remain as he is" (v. 26 RSV) because of the present time of troubles between

82. Jensen (see note 30), 182. Concerning the apostle Paul's use of the term *porneia*, Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. by Gerhard Kittel et al.), Vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 594, conclude that, "Severe though Paul's condemnation of fornication may be, there is no doubt that for him it is forgiven through Christ like all other sins." See also John J. O'Rourke, "Does the New Testament Condemn Sexual Intercourse Outside Marriage?", *Theological Studies*, 1976 (37), 479. Regarding 1 Cor 7:1-9 he, too, concludes that "*porneia* includes what is meant by 'fornication' as it is used today. Thus Paul does not provide support for lessening of standards regarding premarital conduct."

83. "Since the 4th cent. Christian tradition, with some hesitation, has concluded from this passage [1 Cor 7:12-16] that the Christian convert is free to contract another marriage if the unbeliever refuses to cohabit peacefully." Canonists call this the "Pauline Privilege". Kugelman, JBC, 51:40.

the first coming of Christ and his return.⁸⁴ The unmarried person can give his or her mind to the Lord's affairs, whereas the married person also has to give attention to the affairs of this world and how to please one's spouse. Paul would also like to spare them the hardships of married life. The motive of his advice is not to restrict them, but to urge them to give their unhindered devotion to the Lord (v. 35). Although Paul considers it a good thing to marry, he considers it better to remain virgin or celibate.

The widow (or widower) is "free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord [i.e. she should marry a Christian]." Paul, however, thinks "she is happier if she remains as she is." (1 Cor 7:39-40 RSV; cf. Rm 7:2) This advice is in accord with the whole chapter. His speaking of marrying "in the Lord" is a clear affirmation of the goodness of Christian marriage.⁸⁵

In 1 Cor 13 Paul exalts the supreme value of love (*agape* - refers to the love of God which the Holy Spirit pours into the hearts of those who have received him - see Rm 5:5). Without such love other gifts of God including skills, power, knowledge, and even the faith that removes mountains, are without real value to the bearer.

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 [*aletheia* "is a synonym here for justice, moral rectitude"⁸⁶]. Love bears all things, believes

84. It seems Paul hoped for the return of Christ in his lifetime (see 1 Th 4:16-17 and 1 Cor 15:51-52). In any case, his apostolic teaching here remains valid for Christians of all times. "The parousia of the Lord may come at any moment. The Christian, therefore, must live as the Lord admonished him: in prayer and watchfulness awaiting the return of his Lord (Mt 24:43-44; 25:13; 1 Thes 5:1-2)." Ibid., 51:46.

85. Cf. Collins (see note 56), 13.

86. Kugelman, JBC, 51:78.

all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends....(1 Cor 13:4-8 RSV)

Such love is for the asking since the Holy Spirit, who gives human beings such love, is for the asking (see Lk 11:13). Obedience to God is, however, a condition (see Ac 5:29-32; cf. also Ac 19:1-7 which speaks of the reception of the Holy Spirit with Christian baptism). With respect to *agape* love we can also note here the wonderful assurance contained in The apostle Paul's letter to the Romans: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose."⁸⁷(8:28 RSV)

Here we will only consider one other passage from the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, which addresses some sexual issues, among others:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith....

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools...

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped

87. For commentaries on Acts see Richard J. Dillon and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., JBC, 45; and Dillon, NJBC, 44. For commentaries on Romans see Fitzmyer, JBC, 53; and Fitzmyer, NJBC, 51.

and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die - yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them. (Rm 1:16-32 NRSV)

With regard to this passage, the biblical scholar Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., says in part that, in a missionary sermon:

[The apostle Paul explains] what happens to human beings without the gospel.... Paul echoes a current Jewish idea of the culpability of pagans in not acknowledging and reverencing God as they should have.... Paul seeks to establish an intrinsic relation between sin and punishment; impiety brings its own retribution (see Wis 11:15-16; Ezek 23:28-30). Idolatry, the consequence of failure to honor God duly, is the source of immorality, for it is the "big lie" (Wis 14:22-31).... Idolatry leads not only to sexual perversion, but to all sorts of immoral conduct.... [Regarding the phrase "deserve to die" - v. 32] Paul is probably thinking of total death (5:12,19), the lot of all sinners; it amounts to exclusion from God's kingdom (1 Cor 6:10; Gal 5:21).... In this entire section Paul is not saying that every individual pagan before Christ's coming was a moral failure. He speaks

collectively and describes a *de facto* situation....⁸⁸

Chapters 4-6 of the letter to the Ephesians contain some practical applications of the Christian life.⁸⁹ Those called to partake in the great mystery of Christ are to lead lives worthy of such a vocation. Christians are to build up the body of Christ (i.e. the Church) in love and the unity of the Spirit with humility, gentleness, patience and peace. They are to live by the truth. As God's holy people they are to exercise their diverse gifts in service and grow together in unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son until they are mature, "to the measure of the full stature of Christ."(Ep 4:13,1-16 NRSV)

Ep 4:17-5:20 (cf. 1 Pt 4:1-6) contrasts the thoughtless, shameful, futile lives of ungodly pagans with the life that becomes Christians. As God's children they are to imitate him and model their love on Christ's self-giving sacrificial love (5:1). They are to put aside their "old self" which is "corrupt and deluded by its lusts" and put on "the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."(4:22-24 NRSV - this refers to the Christian being incorporated into Christ; cf. 2 Pt 1:4 regarding the Christian sharing in the "divine nature") Christians should be generous, sympathetic and forgive one another. They are not to lie or engage in foul talk but speak the truth to one another in a way that benefits others. Every kind of malice must be far removed from them. Since Christians are a dwelling-place of the Spirit of God, an offense against another would involve grieving the Holy Spirit (4:30; cf.

88. Fitzmyer, NJBC, 51:22-27. The apostle Paul probably wrote Romans "in Corinth or in Cenchreae, sometime in the winter of AD 57-58...", *ibid.*, 51:2.

89. Some contemporary scholars defend the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, but others conclude that it was written (or modified) by someone else who was thoroughly schooled in the Pauline literature. In any case the letter represents a mature development of Pauline theology. For commentaries see Joseph A. Grassi, JBC, 56; and Paul J. Kobelski, NJBC, 55.

3:21-22). Along similar lines Ep 5:5-6 and 10 (NRSV) reads:

Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words... Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.

"Uncontrolled desires pay to creatures ... a worship due to God alone and thus turn them into idols."⁹⁰ Christians are to lead wise not foolish lives (Ep 5:15).

Ep 5:21-6:9 (cf. Col 3:18-4:1 and 1 Pt 3:1-7) presents a code of conduct for the Christian home. The sacrificial love and submission (freely given), or mutual self-giving, of Christ and the Church is presented as a model for husband and wife. Imagery is used that presents Christ as the bridegroom who cleanses the Church, his bride, in the waters of baptism. (Regarding bridegroom/bride imagery concerning the relationship of Christ and the Church see also Mt 9:15, 22:1-14, 25:1-13; Mk 2:19-20; Lk 5:34-5; Jn 3:29; Rv 19:7-9, 21:2 and 9.)⁹¹ The author of Ephesians speaks of a man and woman becoming "one flesh" in marriage (Gn 2:24 is quoted) as a great mystery that applies to Christ and the Church (Ep 5:31-32). The author sees a hidden deeper meaning in the text of Gn - the marital union foreshadows the union of Christ and the Church. Raymond Collins, a biblical scholar, speaks of Ep 5:22-33 as the most profound New Testament text on the significance of marriage. He says:

By use of the single verb *agapan* to describe both the husband's love for his wife and Christ's love for the Church, the author of Ephesians implies that the marital love of Christian spouses participates in the love of Christ for the Church. ...the use of the household code in this letter

90. NJB, 1937, note 5a.

91. For a developed treatment of the nuptial symbolism in the New Testament see Grelot (see note 4), 100-118.

implies that the sexual relationship must be seen within the context of the Lordship of Christ, Who unites all things in Himself (Eph 1:10). That realization implies the goodness of human sexuality and the marital relationship to which it gives occasion.⁹²

Ep 6:1-4 teaches that uprightness demands that children obey their parents and exhorts parents to "not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."(NRSV)

3. Some Other New Testament Texts

Heb 13:4 (NRSV) reads: "Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators [*pornoi*] and adulterers [*moichoi*]."⁹³ This verse first of all points to the importance or great value of marriage from the Christian perspective. It also implies that not only adultery but also other forms of sexual immorality including fornication corrupt the purity or perfection of conjugal relations. Heb 12:14-17 also presents sexual immorality as one of the things that is opposed to the grace of God and the holiness

92. Collins (see note 56), 16. Regarding Ep 5:21-33 Pope John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988), n. 24, says the mutual submission, out of reverence for Christ, advocated in v. 21, applies to husbands as well as wives. Christ is the model of both love and submission. "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'". Pope John Paul II analyzed Eph 5:21-33 in more detail in several of his general audiences, beginning July 28, 1982. See *The Theology of Marriage & Celibacy* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1986), pp. 171ff. Our voluntary submission or obedience to God out of self-giving love, of which Jesus is the model, does not in any way denigrate the human person. Since God is not an arbitrary dictator, but is perfect love and truth, it basically means to live according to the requirements of true love, to love as Jesus/God loves. This ennobles the human person.

93. The identity of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews is unknown. Internal evidence suggests the author was a Christian of Hellenistic background. Today most scholars do not think the apostle Paul was its author, either directly or indirectly. For a commentary see Myles M. Bourke, NJBC, 60. Regarding Heb 13:4 cf. Jensen (see note 30), 180.

without which no one will see the Lord.

Heb 13:7-16 calls the readers of the letter to maintain faith in the word of God, following the example of their leaders, to the end of their lives, to offer God through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise, to share one's resources and keep doing good. Although the leaders who preached the word of God to them have died, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."(v. 8) It is to him that Christians owe their allegiance.⁹⁴ They are to be careful not to be "carried away by all kinds of strange teachings."(v. 9 NRSV) Christians are also to obey and pray for their present leaders, making their responsibility of watching over them a joy rather than a grief (Heb 13:17-18). (Regarding New Testament texts that speak of proper dispositions and obedience to legitimate religious and/or civil authorities see also Mt 22:15-22, 23:1-3; Rm 13:1-7; 1 Tm 2:1-2; 1 Pt 2:13-17. Ac 5:29 complements these texts noting that if someone in a position of human authority commands one to do something contrary to God's will, one should obey God, the supreme authority.)

We will conclude this chapter by considering some of the teachings of 1 John concerning love (*agape*).⁹⁵ If one loves the "world" (i.e. the world of sin which fails to love as God wills), the love of the Father (God) is not in one. Everything in the world,

...the lust of the flesh [i.e. disordered human passions, ones not in harmony with God] and the lust of the eyes [i.e. any kind of disordered desires pertaining to sensuality, greed, and the like] and the

94. NJB, 1988, note 13c.

95. For commentaries on 1 Jn see Bruce Vawter, C.M., JBC, 62; and PHEME PERKINS, NJBC, 62. Although scholars generally agree that 1 Jn (also 2-3 Jn) is related to the Gospel according to John, they are not agreed on the order of writing. In any case 1 Jn seems to be an epistle to several churches written towards the end of the first century AD.

pride of life [i.e. arrogance, complacency, pride or a false sense of security in one's own resources], is not of the Father..."(2:16 RSV)

The world and its disordered desires are passing away but whoever does the will of God remains forever.(see 1 Jn 2:15-17)

The children of God are upright as he is (cf. 1 Jn 2:29 and 3:7). The author of the letter writes that because of the

...great love the Father has lavished on us we are already God's children, but what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed. We are well aware that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is. Whoever treasures this hope of him purifies himself [herself], to be as pure as he is.(1 Jn 3:1-3 NJB)

Although God's saving love is already a present reality for the Christian, he or she hopes in an even greater future salvation by which his or her configuration to God will be completed. This has moral consequences. The Christian is more and more to live a life in accordance with the attributes of God/Jesus. Earlier in the letter, in line with this theme, we read: "If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 Jn 1:8-9 RSV)

As Jesus proved his love in laying down his life for us, the author of the letter continues, "...we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers [and sisters] our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine."(1 Jn 3:16-18 NJB) A Christian's love, modeled on that of Jesus, is to be concrete, involving sharing and an opening of one's heart to those in need (cf. 3:17). Ch 4:7-12 (NRSV) reads:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was

revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son [Jesus] into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

God is not only the source and model of love. Indeed, God is love (*agape*). God's love for us is wholly gratuitous, not because we deserve it. To know God, to share in the divine life, and to live in unity with God, it is necessary that we follow his example and love each other.

C. Analysis

Sex, marriage and love in the Bible, as we considered in this chapter, are approached from several perspectives. The treatment is very rich and varied. Although biblical authors present a number of norms in this area, the Bible as a whole presents much more: a profound vision of God and ourselves, including human sexuality, marriage and love. This section does not repeat all the details and themes that are treated above. Rather, some of the morally relevant values and norms are highlighted, and a few of the developments are noted.

With respect to values, God is first of all presented in the Bible as supremely good. The one living God is the Lord and perfect: all loving, good, holy, knowing, wise, truthful, upright, just and faithful. He created all else as originally good. Everything that God created, especially human persons created in God's image, is good. The human body, sexual differentiation and complementarity, procreation, love and marriage are also good. The goodness of marriage, including sexual relations within marriage, is underscored by marriage being presented as a

symbol of God's personal loving relationship with his people or Christ's relationship with his bride, the Church.

With respect to human sexuality, an appreciation of various sexual attributes including physical beauty, strength, fertility, and the enjoyable conversation of one's beloved, is shown in the Bible. The power of sexual attraction as well as the beauty and depth of true, chaste, faithful, passionate and exclusive conjugal love, are also appreciated. The mutual help and fidelity of spouses are valued, as well as the unity and stability of marriage.

Virtue is highly esteemed in the Bible. Various books of the Bible speak highly of such things as: having unconditional faith and trust in God, self-giving love and service of God and people, tenderness and purity of heart, holiness, responsibility, accountability, discipline, self-control, generosity, patience, fidelity, loyalty, fairness, uprightness, truthfulness, wisdom, gentleness, humility, gracefulness, discretion, fear of the Lord, chastity, obedience to God or doing God's will, proper respect for legitimate human authorities, charity to the poor, modesty, vigilance and sincere prayer. Virtues, like other good things, are seen as gifts of God. Friendship, peace, unity and harmony with God and others, and the rest of creation, are valued too. Having various good things or abilities, however, without the love of God is without real value to the bearer. Such things as pride, rebelliousness, self-righteousness, idolatry, hypocrisy, folly, irresponsibility, deceit, unchastity or sexual immorality, lust, greed, envy, theft, injustice, "lording it over others", and infidelity are presented as vices or sinful.

With respect to norms, Jesus teaches that all the specific requirements of morality are related to loving God and human beings in a properly ordered way. He calls us to love as he loves, as God loves. This teaching is found elsewhere in the Bible: we are to be holy and pure

and upright as God is. Although this is impossible for us by our own human power alone, this becomes possible with God, with the reception of God's Holy Spirit and our transformation in Christ. Christians are called to live by the truth and to build up the Church, the body of Christ, in love and unity, to grow into the full maturity of Christ. When there is a rupture in unity with God and others, repentance, reconciliation and forgiveness are in order. Parents are exhorted to bring up their children according to God's ways.

With respect to human sexuality, the Bible in no place explicitly approves of human sexual relations outside marriage. Various kinds of nonmarital sex including adultery, prostitution, bestiality, homosexual acts, and fornication, are proscribed in the Bible. Within marriage sexual relations as an expression of chaste conjugal love are to be enjoyed by the spouses. Temporary sexual abstinence within marriage is permitted, by mutual agreement, for reasons such as to devote oneself to prayer. Spouses, however, are to give to the other what the other has a right to expect. The values that these sexual moral norms are meant to protect or foster include the dignity of human persons created in God's image, marriage as a good gift of God, marital fidelity, God's (or Christ's) faithful love as a model for spouses and marriage as a sign of God's relationship with his people (the Church), fairness, modesty, purity and holiness. Sin, including various kinds of sexual immorality, is seen as an obstacle to becoming holy or loving as God or Christ is, to entering God's Kingdom or union with God. God is rich in mercy though. Through Christ God wants to save sinners, to become their friend and Spouse, to empower them to love as he loves, and to give them eternal life.

Within the Bible, one can find certain developments. From a Christian perspective, these are understood in the light of stages of God's progressive revelation, which is completed in

Christ. For example, while human beings, sexuality, marriage, procreation, and the rest of God's creation, are presented as good from the beginning of the Bible, and that human beings are to act responsibly with respect to God's gifts; the New Testament also presents the Christian as incorporated into Christ, his or her body as a temple of the Holy Spirit, and the marriage of Christians as participating in Christ's "marriage" with his Bride, the Church, and as indissoluble. The New Testament also presents, among other things, voluntary celibacy for the sake of God's Kingdom as a good gift of God, and God's plan of salvation as realized in Jesus Christ.

In concluding this chapter, we can note that all of the Bible, if properly understood, can help us to understand better God, ourselves and our relationships. The Bible, in various ways, presents many morally relevant values and norms. It is thus still very relevant with respect to the proper formation of conscience, and moral and theological reflection. This is true not only with respect to premarital sex and love, our topics, but also many other contemporary issues. For the Christian who wants to become a more knowledgeable, mature and faithful follower of Jesus, we can note the following words of a saint and biblical scholar of the early Church, St. Jerome: "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."⁹⁶

96. St. Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah, Prol.*, PL (*Patrologia ... latina*), 24: 17, as cited in Vat.II, DV, n. 25.