

## ABSTRACT

Toward a Protestant Theology of Celibacy:  
Protestant Thought in Dialogue with John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*

Russell Joseph Hobbs, M.A., D.Min.

Mentor: Ralph C. Wood, Ph.D.

This dissertation examines the theology of celibacy found both in John Paul II's writings and in current Protestant theology, with the aim of developing a framework and legitimation for a richer Protestant theology of celibacy. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis. Chapter 2 reviews the Protestant literature on celibacy under two headings: first, major treatments from the Protestant era, including those by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, various Shakers, and authors from the English Reformation; second, treatments from 1950 to the present. The chapter reveals that modern Protestants have done little theological work on celibacy. Self-help literature for singles is common and often insightful, but it is rarely theological. Chapter 3 synthesizes the best contemporary Protestant thinking on celibacy under two headings: first, major treatments by Karl Barth, Max Thurian, and Stanley Grenz; second, major Protestant themes in the theology of celibacy. The fourth chapter describes the foundation of John Paul II's theology of human sexuality and includes an overview of his life and education, an evaluation of Max Scheler's influence, and a review of Karol Wojtyla's *Love and Responsibility* and *The Acting Person*. Chapter 5 treats two topics. First, it describes John Paul II's, *Theology of*

*the Body*, and more particularly the section entitled “Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom.” There he examines Jesus’ instruction in Matt 19:11-12, celibacy as vocation, the superiority of celibacy to marriage, celibacy as redemption of the body, Paul’s instructions in 1 Cor 7, and virginity as human destiny. Second, the chapter reviews John Paul II’s statements regarding celibacy found in various encyclicals, audiences, homilies, and speeches. Finally, chapter 6 summarizes John Paul II’s theology of virginity and reviews several Roman Catholic evaluations of his understanding of human sexuality. The chapter analyzes areas of commonality and contrast between contemporary Protestant thought on celibacy and John Paul II’s thought. In addition, the chapter highlights major areas in need of further development. Chapter 7, the conclusion, reviews discoveries and makes further suggestions.

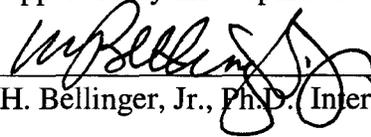
Toward a Protestant Theology of Celibacy:  
Protestant Thought in Dialogue with John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*

by

Russell Joseph Hobbs, M.A., D.Min.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Religion



W. H. Bellinger, Jr., Ph.D., Interim Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Doctor of Philosophy

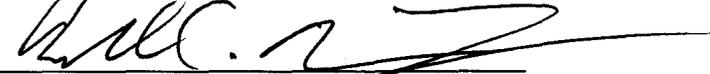
Approved by the Dissertation Committee



Ralph C. Wood, Ph.D., Chairperson

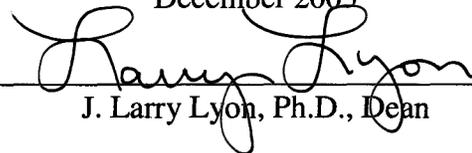


Daniel H. Williams, Ph.D.



Robert C. Miner, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School  
December 2005



J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Copyright © 2005 by Russell Joseph Hobbs

All rights reserved

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
The Purpose of the Dissertation	1
The Significance of the Topic	2
The Development of the Dissertation	5
2. REVIEW OF PROTESTANT WRITINGS ON CELIBACY	7
Important Protestant Theologies of Celibacy Prior to 1950	8
From the Fathers to the Reformation	8
Protestants and Celibacy from 1850-1950	28
Contemporary Protestant Theologies of Celibacy	32
Popular Writings on Singleness and Celibacy	32
Theological and Ethical Works that Address a Theology of Celibacy	44
Conclusion	46
3. MAJOR CONTEMPORARY PROTESTANT TREATMENTS OF CELIBACY: STANLEY GRENZ, KARL BARTH, AND MAX THURIAN	47
Three Significant Contemporary Protestant Theologies of Celibacy	47
Stanley Grenz	47
Karl Barth	49
Max Thurian	52

## Chapter

Major Themes in the Modern Protestant Theology of Celibacy	56
Relationship of Marriage and Celibacy	56
Implications of Christ's Celibacy	59
Eschatological Context of Celibacy	61
Theological Motivations for Celibacy	62
Conclusion	68
4. FOUNDATIONS OF JOHN PAUL II'S THEOLOGY OF HUMAN SEXUALITY	71
Influence on John Paul II's Thought	72
His Home and Country	72
His Formal Education	73
His Informal Education	77
Scheler and Husserl	78
Love and Responsibility	82
Chapter One: The Person and the Sexual Urge	82
Chapter Two: The Person and Love	86
Chapter Three: The Person and Chastity	92
Chapter Four: Justice Towards the Creator	96
Chapter Five: Sexology and Ethics	100
Evaluation	101
The Acting Person	102
Synthesis	108
5. JOHN PAUL II'S THEOLOGY OF CELIBACY	110

## Chapter

The Theology of the Body	110
Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis	113
Blessed Are the Pure of Heart: Catechesis on the Sermon On the Mount	124
St. Paul's Teaching on the Human Body	131
The Resurrection of the Body	135
Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom	137
The Sacramentality of Marriage and Reflections on " <i>Humanae Vitae</i> "	146
John Paul II's Comments on Celibacy outside of <i>The Theology of the Body</i>	146
Various Manifestations of Celibacy	146
Reasons to Choose Celibacy	148
Results of Choosing Celibacy	154
The Superiority of Celibacy	155
Summation	157
6. TOWARD A PROTESTANT THEOLOGY OF CELIBACY	159
Summary of John Paul II's Theology of Celibacy	159
Philosophical/Theological Aspects	160
Biblical Theological Aspects	163
Roman Catholic Evaluations of John Paul II's Theology of Sexuality	169
General Evaluations	169
Evaluations of John Paul II's Moral Reasoning	173

Chapter		
	Evaluations of John Paul II's Theology of Celibacy	176
	Toward a Protestant Theology of Celibacy	178
	Comparing John Paul II's and Contemporary Protestant Theologies of Celibacy	178
	Areas Needing Further Study	182
7.	CONCLUSIONS	201
	Discoveries	201
	Suggestions	202
	The Need	204
	WORKS CITED	205

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Dr. Daniel H. Williams and Dr. Robert C. Miner for their insightful comments on the dissertation. In addition, I thank Dr. Ralph C. Wood for stimulating my interest in John Paul II, and for his diligent efforts to improve this paper. Finally, I want to acknowledge Father Timothy Vavarek of Saint Joseph Church of Bellmead, Texas. He went above the call of duty in reading each chapter and helping me avoid pitfalls common to a Protestant journeying in the writings of a Roman Catholic theologian.

Whenever Monks come back, marriages will come back.

Chesterton, *The Return of Don Quixote*

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *The Purpose of the Dissertation*

Contemporary attitudes towards celibacy neatly divide most Protestants from Roman Catholics. Protestants write about the struggles of single adults, yet seldom write about the theology of virginity. Roman Catholics write extensively about celibacy and its theology, but most frequently they write about it in the context of clerical and monastic practice. At the same time, the number of single adults in Europe and North America has risen dramatically in recent decades. More than ever, the Western Protestant Church needs a thoughtful theological foundation to guide Christian women and men in decisions about marriage or singleness for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

The purpose of this research project is to examine the theology of celibacy found both in John Paul II's *The Theology of the Body*<sup>1</sup> and in current Protestant theology, with the aim of developing a framework for a richer Protestant theology of celibacy. In this dissertation, I define celibacy as a voluntary, lifelong commitment to virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. I do not deal with related themes such as the celibate priesthood; celibacy as an option for Christian homosexuals; sexual dysfunction as a lure to celibacy; or the specifically psychological or sociological dimensions of celibacy. Instead, I engage the more expressly theological features of virginity.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997).

### *The Significance of the Topic*

This research project is significant for at least two reasons. The first is that there exists little seriously developed Protestant theology of celibacy. The second is that John Paul II's thinking on virginity has great potential for the development of a Protestant theology of celibacy. Specifically, he offers the Protestant reader a philosophical foundation, an integration of the Tradition, and a nuanced expression of the motivations and purposes of celibacy.

From 1979-1984, Pope John Paul II gave a series of 129 addresses on human sexuality; these have since been published as *The Theology of the Body*. Behind these addresses are three decades of Karol Wojtyla's thought and writing on human sexuality. In 1960, he published two works dealing with the topic: *The Jeweler's Shop*,<sup>2</sup> a play about three very different marriages, in which he expressed his concern that marriage center around self-giving love; and *Love and Responsibility*,<sup>3</sup> an analysis of love, sexual attraction, marriage, and celibacy designed for the thoughtful, questioning young person who is considering marriage. Wojtyla further contributed to the Catholic dialogue regarding the human person through his participation in Vatican II and the production of two of its documents: *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes*. In addition, in 1969, Wojtyla published his premier philosophical work, *The Acting Person*,<sup>4</sup> in which he expressed in detail the personalism that supports his understanding of human sexuality.

---

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *The Jeweler's Shop: A Meditation on the Sacrament of Matrimony Passing on Occasion into a Drama* [1960], trans. Boleslaw Taborski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* [1960], trans. H. T. Willetts (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* [1969], ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, trans. Andrzej Potocki, *Analecta Husserliana* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979).

In *The Theology of the Body*, he combines important elements of these writings and uses biblical exegesis as a framework to describe his understanding of sexuality as it relates to marriage, temptation, virginity, and the use of contraception. He approaches celibacy from numerous directions, among which are Jesus' instruction in Matt 19:11-12, celibacy as vocation, the "superiority" of celibacy to marriage, celibacy as redemption of the body, Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 7, and virginity as human destiny. John Paul II's philosophical personalism as well as his understanding of the nature of humans as sexual beings encompasses each of these emphases.

The second reason this research project is important is that Protestants have done little serious theological work on the topic of celibacy. This lack of development is surprising in light of the resources—both biblical and traditional, both normative and non-binding—available for such a theology: the example of Jesus Christ himself, the biblical teaching in the Gospels and Pauline literature, the rich tradition of church practice, the steady theological work throughout the pre-Reformation centuries, and the specifically Roman Catholic theological developments since the Reformation.

In spite of the dramatic growth in recent decades of the proportion of unmarried adults in the population of both the United States and Europe,<sup>5</sup> and the corresponding growth in the number of persons within the church who might seek a theological understanding of celibacy, there has been little theological work done to address this need. Self-help literature written by Protestants for singles is common and some of it is insightful and helpful, but it is rarely theological.

---

<sup>5</sup> Kristin Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2002), 1.

In Protestant thought, negative attitudes towards lifelong commitment to virginity frequently overshadow the positive potential of such commitment. Many Protestants seem to share Martin Luther's abhorrence of the "wretched, unchaste celibacy"<sup>6</sup> sometimes found in past and present Roman Catholic priests and monastics and, as a result, shy away from the concept of celibacy. Other Protestants doubt that lifelong sexual abstinence is either possible or desirable. Often, issues such as homosexuality, pedophilia, the exclusion of women from the clergy, marriage, or the special needs of singles so dominate the discussion that virginity for the sake of the kingdom receives no attention at all.

The current Protestant focus on the family can also raise questions about the legitimacy of celibacy. Some ask how it is possible to strengthen families in the midst of a society bent on destroying the family, while at the same time affirming the legitimacy and importance of celibacy. Conservative Protestants in particular often place family as the church's first priority after the worship and service of God, thus granting the church itself a lower priority. The radical nature of virginity for the Kingdom can appear to be a threat to this false priority given to the nuclear family.

In spite of the lack of attention given to celibacy, growing dissatisfaction with the fruits of the sexual revolution cause many in the Protestant churches to seek Christian options for sexual self-understanding and behavior that have eluded our society. Celibacy is exactly such an option. Clearly, the Protestant churches need a theology of celibacy. John Paul II offers a richly nuanced understanding of celibacy that represents the ancient and modern thinking of the Church, thoughtful biblical exegesis, relevant

---

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate [1520]," in *Luther's Works*, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 176.

philosophy, and doctrinal integration. Although his understanding inevitably interfaces with the Roman Catholic Church's mandated clerical celibacy and vowed monastic celibacy, his theology of virginity can be separated from its specifically Roman Catholic elements and remain a robust contribution to an ecumenical conceptualization of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom.

### *The Development of the Dissertation*

Chapter 2 of the dissertation reviews the Protestant literature on celibacy. The review has two foci: first, major treatments of celibacy from throughout the Protestant era, including those by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and various Shakers, in addition to authors who debated clerical marriage during the English Reformation; second, the Protestant treatments of celibacy from 1950 to the present.

In chapter 3, I synthesize the best contemporary Protestant thinking on celibacy. This chapter also has two foci. First, I examine three major treatments of celibacy that deserve special notice: those by Karl Barth, Stanley Grenz, and Max Thurian.<sup>7</sup> Second, I review major Protestant themes in the theology of celibacy.

In the fourth chapter, I describe the foundation of John Paul II's theology of human sexuality. This description includes an overview of his life and education, an evaluation of Max Scheler's influence on him, and a review of Wojtyla's *Love and Responsibility* and *The Acting Person*.

---

<sup>7</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, vol. III, Pt. 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 116-240; Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 181-199; Max Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, trans. Norma Emerton, *Studies in Ministry and Worship* (London: SCM Press, 1959).

Chapter 5 treats two topics that are at the heart of the dissertation. First, it describes John Paul II's, *Theology of the Body*, and more particularly the section entitled "Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom"<sup>8</sup> in which he develops his theology of celibacy. I approach this theology of virginity with an eye on two perspectives: the relationship of his understanding of celibacy to the larger argument of *The Theology of the Body*; and the effect of his view of the human person and human sexuality on his doctrine of celibacy. The second topic treated in this chapter is John Paul II's statements regarding celibacy found outside his *Theology of the Body*. In this section, I review his comments on celibacy found in various encyclicals, audiences, homilies, and speeches.

Finally, in chapter 6, I summarize John Paul II's theology of virginity and review several Roman Catholic evaluations of his understanding of human sexuality. I suggest areas of commonality and contrast between contemporary Protestant thought on celibacy and John Paul II's thought with a view to highlighting major areas in need of further development.

---

<sup>8</sup> Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997), 262-303.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Protestant Writings on Celibacy

Protestantism's relationship with celibacy has never been comfortable. Martin Luther's condemnations of obligatory clerical celibacy set the tone, and today few Protestants have much to say about singleness for the sake of the kingdom. From the time of the Reformation, Protestant uneasiness with celibacy grew steadily, spurred along by the debate regarding clerical marriage in the English Reformation, the self-extinguishing character of American Shaker celibacy, and the late twentieth-century scandal of sexual abuse among Roman Catholic priests. Perhaps such a history is sufficient to explain the scarcity of Protestant literature on the theology of celibacy. Thoughtful, well-developed, contemporary discussion of celibacy is almost nonexistent.

The word 'Protestant' denotes both a relationship and an affirmation. It is a relationship with the one Christian Church combined with an affirmation that its sixteenth-century expression was seriously flawed. Protestantism "denotes the whole movement within Christianity that originated in the sixteenth century Reformation and later focused in the main tradition of Reformed church life—Lutheran, Reformed . . . , and Anglican-Episcopalian,"<sup>1</sup> as well as those of the Radical Reformation who on occasion reject the word Protestant and its implications. Thus, Protestant thinking on

---

<sup>1</sup> D. F. Wright, "Protestantism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1984.

celibacy unavoidably relates to pre-Reformation Christian<sup>2</sup> thought in two ways: as a reaction to it and as a revision of it. In addition, the continued tension between Catholics and Protestants has affected the theology of celibacy of both groups.

In this chapter, I will gather the Protestant literature on celibacy under two major headings: 1) several important historical theologies of celibacy dealt with in chronological order; and 2) the contemporary documents (since around 1950).

### *Important Protestant Theologies of Celibacy Prior to 1950*

#### *From the Fathers to the Reformation*

Protestant theologies of celibacy grew out of the mature and complex thinking of the church in its first 1500 years.<sup>3</sup> Both the reformers' *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* emphases acted as filters through which church traditions passed, yet the reformers' theological inheritance deeply influenced their response to a subject such as celibacy. This inheritance was twofold: the patristic writers<sup>4</sup> and the writers of the Middle Ages.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Church also thought deeply about celibacy, but the direct influence of the Eastern Church on Protestantism's understanding of celibacy is minimal. For this reason, I will say little about Orthodox celibacy. For a brief analysis of the Eastern viewpoint and canonical law see E. Schillebeeckx, *Celibacy*, trans. C. A. L. Jarrott (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 33-37.

<sup>3</sup> A good overview of this thinking can be found in the following: *Ibid.*, 19-72; Philip C. Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart: Martin Luther and the Discourse on Marriage and Celibate Practice in Christian Theology, 1521-1559" (PhD, Duke University, 1994), 1-40.

<sup>4</sup> There is a great deal of scholarly work on marriage and celibacy in this period. For example: Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Elizabeth Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity, Studies in Women and Religion* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986); Elizabeth Clark, *Women in the Early Church, Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983); Christian Cochini, *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*, trans. Nelly Marans (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990); Everett Ferguson, ed., *Christianity and Society: The Social World of Early Christianity* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999); Mark Dorsey Hart, "Reconciliation of Body and Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Deeper Theology of Marriage," *Theological Studies* 51, no. 3 (1990); Stefan Heid, *Celibacy in the Early Church: The Beginnings of a Discipline of Obligatory Continence for Clerics in East and West*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000); David G. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); David G. Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian," *Theological Studies*

Alongside the New Testament comments on celibacy, the earliest Christian writers made a number of incidental observations about celibacy. Ignatius of Antioch commended those who chose virginity<sup>5</sup> in honor of the incarnate Jesus' celibacy; Hermas spoke of the need to resist sexual temptation, and he also exalted the "virginity" of the church; and Justin Martyr held up the life-long Christian virgins as evidence against the accusation of Christian immorality. The first extended treatments of the topic came from Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria. In these treatments, a struggle appeared over questions that would come to characterize the history of celibacy. Is celibacy a superior state to marriage? Is marriage an honorable state? Do ascetic practices (such as celibacy) tend to perfect the Christian? Is some sexual restraint good, much sexual restraint better, and abstinence best? Important voices throughout the patristic period responded with a sometimes-confusing "Yes" to each of these questions. Origen, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>6</sup> Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine, each commented at length on these questions. Some, like Clement of Alexandria and Augustine,<sup>7</sup> were more moderate and thus defended the honor of marriage, although they considered it inferior to celibacy; others, like Jerome<sup>8</sup> were strident and condemned all sexual intercourse—even in marriage—as unclean. Jerome, responded fiercely to

---

48 (1987); David G. Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine," *Church History* 69, no. 2 (2000); Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, celibacy and virginity will be used interchangeably for a lifelong commitment to chastity and not marrying.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory of Nyssa was married yet had much to say regarding celibacy.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine struggled with these issues. In his early commentary on Genesis, he understands the sex act to be the result of the fall. Later on he understands it as part of God's design for procreation, yet without lust.

<sup>8</sup> Van Vleck mentions that Jerome was, "the early theologian most frequently cited by sixteenth-century Catholic theologians." Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart", 14.

Jovinian's assertion that a virgin was no better, as such, than a wife.<sup>9</sup> For Jerome, the married are those who build hay, wood, and straw on the foundation of Christ; celibates build gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Cor 3:12). Explaining Paul's words, Jerome says, "If it is good not to touch a woman, it is bad to touch one: for there is no opposite to goodness but badness. But if it be bad and the evil is pardoned, the reason for the concession is to prevent worse evil. But surely a thing which is only allowed because there may be something worse has only a slight degree of goodness."<sup>10</sup>

Ambrose typifies the dominant attitudes of the Patristic period. He clearly states that marriage is not in itself sinful; nonetheless, celibacy is superior because, "In the former is the remedy for weakness, in the latter the glory of chastity. The former is not reproved, the latter is praised."<sup>11</sup> With marriage, he says, come abundant difficulties and sorrows from which celibates escape. Furthermore, "those who purpose to marry desire above all things, that they may boast of the beauty of their husband, they must of necessity confess that they are inferior to virgins, to Whom alone it is suitable to say: 'Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured on Thy lips.' Who is that Spouse? One not given to common indulgences, not proud of possessing riches, but He

---

<sup>9</sup> For evidence that Jovinian is best understood as the opponent of Manichaeism rather than the opponent of celibacy see: Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal," 46.

<sup>10</sup> St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, 1.3, 7. St. Jerome, *The Principles Works of St. Jerome*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. W. H. Fremantle, 14, Second Series vols., vol. 6, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954). Brown notes that Jerome's response Jovinian's was considered harsh and extreme at the time it was written: Brown, *The Body and Society*, 377.

<sup>11</sup> St. Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins*, 1.6.24. St. Ambrose, *Some of the Principle Works of St. Ambrose*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. H. De Romestin, 14 vols., vol. 10, Second Series, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955).

Whose throne is for ever and ever. The king's daughters share in His honor."<sup>12</sup> Ambrose maintains that he does not discourage marriage; rather, he encourages virginity. After all, he notes, without marriage there would be no virgins.

Lying behind the later works is the ebb and flow of the ever-returning tide of debate regarding the celibacy of priests and religious. The vow of celibacy required of priests and of those entering religious communities eventually became the framework of all debate regarding virginity. The Reformers also tended to stay within that framework, refuting *clerical* celibacy and promoting *clerical* marriage, and rejecting both the superiority of the ascetic life in general and thus the specific superiority of celibacy. Before turning to the Reformers, however, the contribution of the Middle Ages to the debate should be mentioned.

Schillebeeckx argues that the Patristic motives for clerical celibacy were: 1) desire for closeness to God, and 2) concern for cultic purity, that is, the purity of sexual abstinence demanded of priests understood within the Levitical guidelines for priesthood. From these motives came canon law and the detailed refinements of clerical celibacy. In the Middle Ages a growing understanding of marriage as a sacrament came alongside of the older theology of celibacy. Important thinkers such as Peter Abelard, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Peter Lombard wrote extensively on marriage, and they wrote with an eye to celibacy as well. Their writings, especially those of Aquinas and Hugh of St. Victor, speak of marriage as inferior to celibacy, nonetheless, they also raise marriage a notch when they speak of sacramental marriage consummated in the conjugal

---

<sup>12</sup> Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins*, 1.7.35-36. David Hunter notes that Psalm 45 was used by Ambrose to transfer all the purity of the virgin bride, the church, to the celibate Christian women. This use of Psalm 45, which appears again in Jerome and Augustine, served, says Hunter, to intensify the ideal of the church at a time when the church was in danger of being corrupted. Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church," 286-287, 302.

act, with its unitive and procreative function.<sup>13</sup> Even so, for these writers marriage is remedial, that is, a remedy for concupiscence, while celibacy needs no such remedy. Finally, in the Middle Ages the discussion of clerical celibacy was further complicated, on a more mundane level, when the canonists began to see it as helping the church avoid two problems related to having a family in the manse. First, the cost of clergy families was greater than the cost of celibate clergy. Second, children of clergy made inheritance claims on church property.<sup>14</sup>

With the advent of the Reformation, the understanding and practice of celibacy had come to have a mixed status in the church, though it was regarded in essentially positive terms. 1) Celibacy represented a higher spirituality and greater love for God than marriage. 2) Since the Lateran councils of 1123 and 1129,<sup>15</sup> Celibacy was required of all clergy whether secular (priestly) or religious (in the religious orders) within Roman Catholicism. This requirement stemmed in large part from an insistence on cultic purity. 3) The ascetic life, which embraced celibacy, was considered a surer path to closeness with God. 4) Abuses, such as concubinage (common-law marriages of clergy), children of priests, and prostitution, created scandal for the church. The celibate ideal “found widespread, determined resistance” among the clergy.<sup>16</sup> 5) Marriage was exalted as a

---

<sup>13</sup> Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart", 39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> The convoluted history of official discomfort with the sexual activity of priests, goes back as far as the Council of Elvira in 306 and the decretal of Pope Siricius in 385.

<sup>16</sup> Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart", 38. Schillebeecx notes that even though the Second Lateran Council (1139) established the canon law that made illegal the marriage of all sub-deacons, deacons, or priests, opposition to the law was strong and concubinage “assumed larger proportions” in the fifteenth century. Schillebeecx, *Celibacy*, 45-46. Erasmus-himself the son of a priest-whose research had a profound influence on majesterial reform, found reason to question the Church’s stance on clerical celibacy both from his own experience and in the all-too-common immorality of clergy, yet he did so without denying his Catholic faith. See J. Coppens, "Erasmus and Celibacy," in *Priesthood and Celibacy*, ed. A. M. Charue, et al. (Milano: Editrice Ancora, 1972), 599.

sacrament, and at the same time, it was humbled by being considered a remedy for lack of sexual self-control.

### *Martin Luther*

Martin Luther wrote about celibacy with four concerns: the rampant, official deprecation of marriage; the corresponding exaltation of celibacy; the immorality of many priests and members of religious orders; and the misuse of vows that prohibited marriage. His remedy was the exaltation of marriage.

Marriage, he says, is a blessed gift. Before the fall, God gave Adam a wife and the instruction to procreate;<sup>17</sup> after the fall, this gift of God provided companionship and a medicine for immorality.<sup>18</sup> Of marriage he asserted, “need commands it.”<sup>19</sup> Citing 1 Tim 4:1, Luther concludes that “marriage is a divine kind of life.”<sup>20</sup> He holds up this ensign of marriage against the perceived onslaught of anti-marriage Roman Catholic propaganda. When he was young, he says, “everybody was fully persuaded that anyone who intended to lead a holy life acceptable to God could not get married but had to live as a celibate.” The Roman Catholic tendency<sup>21</sup> was to cajole the young into celibacy.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Marking the difference between pre and post-fall sexuality, he notes that Adam received Eve “without the epileptic and apoplectic lust of present-day marriage; it was a chaste and delightful love.” Martin Luther, “Lectures on Genesis [1535],” in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 1:134.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:115-116.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Luther, “Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7 [1523],” in *Luther's Works*, ed. Oswald C. Hilton (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 28:27. For Luther, women, in particular, needed to marry. He says, “women must be used either for marriage or for fornication,” and “God created woman that she should and must be with man.” Luther, “Commentary on 1 Corinthians,” 28:6.

<sup>20</sup> Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 1:134.

<sup>21</sup> M. Lienhard notes Luther’s accusation that many celibates of his day sought to be justified before God by their works, including celibacy, rather than being justified by the blood of Christ. M. Lienhard, “Luther Et Le Monachisme,” *Foi et Vie* 93, no. 2 (1994): 11.

<sup>22</sup> Luther, “Commentary on 1 Corinthians,” 28:5-6.

Now, due to the grace of God at work in the reforms, “everyone declares that it is something good and holy to live with one’s wife in harmony and peace.”<sup>23</sup> The canonists, said Luther, defined marriage as in accord only with the law of nature. He insisted that marriage is also “according the will and pleasure” of God.<sup>24</sup> Contrary to those in the endowed religious orders, the married couple must trust God for their daily provision; thus, the married are a people of faith, while the religious are without faith, having everything supplied for them.<sup>25</sup> Thus, he said, “we conclude that marriage is gold and the religious orders are dirt, because the one promotes faith and the other unbelief.”<sup>26</sup>

Luther was scandalized by “the wicked and impure practice of celibacy”;<sup>27</sup> true continence forms a stark contrast with such “wretched, unchaste celibacy”<sup>28</sup> in which “many a poor priest is overburdened with wife and child, his conscience troubled.”<sup>29</sup> As Thomas Fudge notes, in Luther’s day the priesthood and sexual chastity were popularly regarded as nearly mutually exclusive.<sup>30</sup> Luther had no doubts about the solution: “My advice is, restore freedom to everybody and leave every man free to marry or not to marry.” No priest should vow celibacy. After all, he says, the desire of some priests for a woman is so urgent that “the pope has as little power to command as he has to forbid

---

<sup>23</sup> Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," 1:135.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 4:222-233. His penchant for vulgarity and hyperbole appears here in his reaction to these canons: “I shall defecate all over the canons and the pope.”

<sup>25</sup> As Thomas Fudge points out, Luther believed greed to be the principle motivation for entering the consecrated life. Thomas A. Fudge, "Incest and Lust in Luther's Marriage: Theology and Morality in Reformation Polemics," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 2 (2003): 323.

<sup>26</sup> Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," 28:21.

<sup>27</sup> Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," 1:135.

<sup>28</sup> Luther, "To the Christian Nobility," 44:176.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 44:175.

<sup>30</sup> Fudge, "Incest and Lust in Luther's Marriage," 327.

eating, drinking, the natural movement of the bowels, or growing fat.”<sup>31</sup> It is presumptuous to make vows regarding a gift that God controls. It is nearly impossible to be certain that one has the gift of celibacy.<sup>32</sup> Not only so, but if priestly vows of celibacy had never been required, much of the current problem would not exist.<sup>33</sup> If indeed celibacy is a counsel—although Luther rejects this idea—then how is it legitimate to require it of anyone?<sup>34</sup>

In fact, Luther contradicted the prevailing opinion that celibacy is an evangelical counsel. Neither Jesus nor Paul counseled celibacy, Luther asserts; instead, both of them discouraged it.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the division of the gospel into counsels and precepts wherein the precepts are for all the baptized and the counsels for the consecrated is faulty.<sup>36</sup> Celibacy is neither a good work nor a state of perfection; it is simply a means to doing good works.<sup>37</sup>

In order to understand Luther’s opinion of celibacy, it is of utmost importance, to remember that he was reacting to the abuses of celibacy<sup>38</sup> and the deprecation of marriage. He did not oppose celibacy per se; he honored it.<sup>39</sup> If he appears to oppose it,

---

<sup>31</sup> Luther, "To the Christian Nobility," 44:178.

<sup>32</sup> Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," 28:17.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 28:23.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Luther, "Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows [1521]," in *Luther's Works*, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 44:262.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 44:261.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 44:256-258.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 44:264. Also see, W. H. Lazareth, *Luther on the Christian Home* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960).

<sup>38</sup> He hints that this is his specific target when he says his attack is on “the religious orders over against the matrimonial order, and not about the state of chastity.” Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," 28:21. Luther desired to honor the Tradition, and so reflected the ancient honor given to celibacy.

<sup>39</sup> He seems less vocal regarding its honor in his later writings. Yet, in 1535, as noted below, he is still able to say, “There are some who can live chastely without marriage. Because they have a greater gift

he does so only in the service of refuting scandalous practices. It is for this end that he aggressively refutes the idea of the superiority of the celibate and seeks to lift marriage out of its profane location and place it on the sacred plane beside or even above celibacy.<sup>40</sup>

His statements above regarding the superiority of marriage on the one hand and celibacy on the other are difficult to reconcile.<sup>41</sup> “Chastity is better,” he said, but if continence is impossible, one should marry.<sup>42</sup> Celibates “have a greater gift than the ordinary folk.”<sup>43</sup> However, if celibacy was superior in any way, it was only so because of practical<sup>44</sup> considerations;<sup>45</sup> the practice of celibacy is not a virtue.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, celibacy is “a beautiful, delightful, and noble gift for him to whom it is given.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, “when one compares marriage and virginity, then of course chastity is a nobler gift than marriage.”<sup>48</sup> He admitted that a rare divine gift of celibacy existed,<sup>49</sup> yet he believed

---

than ordinary folk.” This reflects the Christian position of the Tradition. Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 1:135.

<sup>40</sup> Fudge, “Incest and Lust in Luther’s Marriage,” 345; Luther, “Commentary on 1 Corinthians,” 28:49; Van Vleck, “The Chaste Heart”, 56.

<sup>41</sup> The citations in this paragraph, as in this entire description of Luther’s view, come from a variety of literary contexts and time-periods in his life, each of which influences the interpretation of the citation. Nonetheless, simply listing the citations without reference to their contexts can give a fair, overall view of Luther’s perspectives. A thorough treatment of each passage is beyond the scope of this paper. It is noteworthy that Luther did not marry until 1525.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther, “A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage [1522],” in *Luther’s Works*, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 44:9.

<sup>43</sup> Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 1:135.

<sup>44</sup> Luther, “Commentary on 1 Corinthians,” 28:16.

<sup>45</sup> Luther quips that Paul believes the single state is good “because of the impending distress . . . not on account of a halo in heaven.” Luther, “Judgment on Monastic Vows,” 44:264.

<sup>46</sup> Luther, “Commentary on 1 Corinthians,” 28:11.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 28:16.

<sup>49</sup> Martin Luther, *Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order That They Lay Aside False Chastity and Assume the True Chastity of Wedlock*, ed. Hemut T. Lehmann, vol. 45, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1523), 45:153.

marriage to be a superior, “heavenly, spiritual, and godly” order when compared to the “earthly, worldly and heathenish” celibate religious orders of Catholicism.<sup>50</sup> Responding to Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 7:9 that it is better to marry than to burn, Luther states, “it will be immaterial to God whether you marry or not.”<sup>51</sup> Finally, he does not balk at describing celibates as “those spiritually rich and exalted persons, bridled by the grace of God, who are equipped for marriage by nature and physical capacity and nevertheless voluntarily remain celibate . . . . Such persons are rare,” he says, “not one in a thousand, for they are a special miracle of God.”<sup>52</sup>

As Philip Van Vleck points out, the arguments and counter-arguments of Luther and his opponents regarding celibacy were at times more a matter of posturing, emphasis, and misunderstanding than of substance. For example, Luther’s efforts to show the fundamental purity of marriage by showing its prelapsarian existence were, in a sense, unnecessary. The Church already considered marriage a sacrament, and thus fundamentally good.<sup>53</sup> More significantly, both Luther and Calvin noted the inconsistency between affirming the sanctity of marriage on one hand, and mandatory clerical celibacy on the other;<sup>54</sup> thus they did indeed recognize that part of the thought of the Church was that marriage was good. A second example of basic agreement between Luther and his opponents appears in Luther’s insistence that Gen 1:28 commands

---

<sup>50</sup> Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," 28:20, 28. See comments in Maurice E. Schild, "Marriage Matters in Erasmus and Luther," *Reformed Theological Journal* 39 (1980): 70.

<sup>51</sup> Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," 28:47. Luther, says Thomas Fudge, would not give an opinion whether or not an individual should marry or remain single. Fudge, "Incest and Lust in Luther's Marriage," 323.

<sup>52</sup> Luther, "Sermon on the Estate of Marriage," 45:21.

<sup>53</sup> Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart", 44, 56. How then, asks Luther, can marriage be said to make a priest unfit for ministry? Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," 28:25.

<sup>54</sup> Fudge, "Incest and Lust in Luther's Marriage," 321.

marriage. A refutation by John Eck pointed out that the world was already well populated and humanity had fulfilled the command; therefore, in conclusion, marriage was not obligatory for every person. Luther would have agreed with the conclusion. He believed celibacy was a gift, though exceedingly rare.<sup>55</sup>

Yet, the Church was unwilling to yield to Luther's pushing. Clerical celibacy must remain and the Church would enact its own reform efforts in the monasteries. With time, Luther's few words in favor of celibacy disappeared from view amidst the torrent of his accusations against it, and the Reformation threw out the baby with the dirty bath water. The churches of the Reformation came to view Celibacy itself as a cancer, rather than as a diseased practice needing remedy. Karl Barth notes that Luther's inversion of celibacy over marriage appears in the Reformers as "the universal obligation of marriage on the basis of a supposed order of creation."<sup>56</sup>

### *John Calvin*

John Calvin makes similar arguments. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he explains that the seventh commandment is difficult because of the fall and that the fall makes man's help-meet more necessary than ever. Marriage is the provision for the weakened human condition. "The conjugal relation was ordained as a necessary means of preventing us from giving way to unbridled lust."<sup>57</sup> The truth is that "natural feeling and the passions inflamed by the fall make the marriage tie doubly necessary, save in the case of those whom God has by special grace exempted." Because complete, permanent

---

<sup>55</sup> Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart", 51-52.

<sup>56</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 141.

<sup>57</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., *The Library of Christian Classics* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), bk. 2, ch. 8, num. 41.

self-control is rare, marriage is the remedy. Calvin makes it clear that God's help to abstain from sex cannot be expected by those who have no calling to celibacy. Christ words in Matthew 19:11-12 specify that not all are capable of being eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. Paul, according to Calvin, makes the same claim in 1 Cor 7:7.<sup>58</sup> As a result, Calvin asks a question: Since chastity "is a special grace which the Lord bestows only on certain individuals, in order that they may be less encumbered in his service, do we not oppose God, and nature as constituted by him, if we do not accommodate our mode of life to the measure of our ability?" Without doubt, answers Calvin.

Furthermore, the blessing of celibacy may be temporary. If at some point continence becomes impossible, marriage is an obligation. Paul orders all: "If they cannot contain, let them marry." Furthermore, this containing refers not to the body only, but also to the thoughts. Calvin concludes by reminding his readers that it is better to marry than to burn.<sup>59</sup>

In his comments on 1 Cor 7 Calvin reminds "fanatical supporters of celibacy" who condemn as sin all sexual intercourse, even in marriage, that Augustine taught the purity of intercourse in marriage. Calvin and Luther saw what they believed was a contradiction in Catholic teaching: marriage is a sacrament but sex is unclean. The Reformers' response to this contradiction was to reject the Levitical based moral uncleanness of sex.<sup>60</sup> In fact, says Calvin, marriage purifies moderate sexual activity.<sup>61</sup> Like Luther, he insists that celibacy, when possible, is to be preferred but marriage is not

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., bk. 2, ch. 8, num. 42.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., bk. 2, ch. 8, num. 43.

<sup>60</sup> Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart", 177.

<sup>61</sup> John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. John W. Fraser, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 7:6.

unclean. When celibacy is not possible, marriage is the remedy. Not that marriage exists solely for this purpose. The institution of marriage in Genesis 2 is not for the purpose of remedying the tendency to immorality, but for procreation. Calvin notes that in 1 Cor 7 “what is at question . . . is not the reasons for which marriage has been instituted, but the person for whom it is necessary.”<sup>62</sup> He summarizes Paul’s teaching on marriage in 1 Cor 7 as follows:

(1) Celibacy is preferable to marriage, because it gives us freedom, and, in consequence better opportunity for the service of God. (2) Yet no compulsion should be used to prevent individuals from marrying, if they want to do so. (3) Moreover marriage itself is the remedy which God has provided for our weakness; and everybody who is not blessed with the gift of continency ought to make use of it.<sup>63</sup>

Calvin, Luther, and the other Reformers were not alone in their calls for changes in the church’s view of celibacy and marriage. Many who remained within Roman Catholicism joined their voices with the centuries-long chorus of objections to obligatory clerical celibacy. Maurice Schild notes that Erasmus, was among those who did not believe clerical celibacy to be either wise or to have a biblical base.<sup>64</sup> At the council of Trent many contested the legality of the canonical rulings on clerical celibacy, but the rulings were finally upheld. In the canons of Trent, one sees clearly where the point of Reformation teaching on marriage and celibacy had driven home. Canons nine and ten of session twenty-four say:

If any one saith, that clerics constituted in sacred orders, or Regulars, who have solemnly professed chastity, are able to contract marriage, and that being contracted it is valid, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law, or vow; and that the contrary is no thing else than to condemn marriage; and, that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 7:2.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 7:38.

<sup>64</sup> Schild, "Marriage Matters in Erasmus and Luther," 67.

contract marriage; let him be anathema: seeing that God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does He suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able.

If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema.<sup>65</sup>

For the Reformers and the churches that they birthed, it is evident that direct or indirect denial of clerical celibacy often became an article of faith.<sup>66</sup> Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers sowed the seeds that would eventually grow to such a height that by the mid-nineteenth century they would almost totally overshadow Protestantism's ability to view celibacy except negatively.

### *The English Reformation*

Hot polemical debate regarding clerical celibacy accompanied the English Reformation.<sup>67</sup> Intense conflict was particularly common in the decades surrounding the legalization of clerical marriage in 1549, the subsequent retraction of that privilege in 1553, and reinstatement of clerical marriage over the following ten years.<sup>68</sup> Fuel for the debate was often imported from the continent. Helen Parish in *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation* mentions English translations of many works, including several by

---

<sup>65</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. 24, can. 9-10. See also Schillebeeckx, *Celibacy*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> See the Augsburg Confession, part 2, article 2 and its Apology, article 6; Second Helvetic Confession, chapter 29; and later, article 32 of the Thirty-nine Articles (1571); the Methodist Article of Religion (1784) article 21. See Philip Schaff and David S. Schaff, eds., *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, 6th ed., 3 vols., vol. 3 (New York: Harper and Row, 1931).

<sup>67</sup> John Yost describes the complexity of this debate and describe in some detail the literature involved. John K. Yost, "The Reformation Defense of Clerical Marriage in the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI," *Church History* 50, no. 2 (1981): 153.

<sup>68</sup> Eric Josef Carlson notes that "although ultimately made legal, clerical marriage never enjoyed the unalloyed support of the monarchy or the leading clergy." Eric Josef Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), 49. For the process of final authorization of clerical marriage see Carlson: *Ibid.*, 58-59.

Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and Heinrich Bullinger.<sup>69</sup> Accusations of a causal link between sexual immorality and celibacy were common, as were accusations of the immorality of breaking the vow of celibacy, especially in Luther's case.<sup>70</sup> John Bale used descriptions of Catholic priestly immorality to discredit the idea of clerical celibacy. As Parish notes, "Issues of morality and theology were inextricably linked in the minds of many polemicists, both Catholic and Protestant, and allegations of sexual misconduct added weight to doctrinal debate."<sup>71</sup>

This debate focused on clerical celibacy rather than chastity itself. The reformers did not deny the possibility of celibate living. Rather, they abhorred the notion that vows of celibacy be required of clergy. Parish notes that both Catholics and Protestants made heavy use of the Bible: "Despite their opposing view on the relative authority of Scripture and tradition, neither side in the debate questioned the ultimate authority of the Bible."<sup>72</sup> In large part, the Protestant theology of celibacy was based on expositions of 1 Cor 7 and in particular verse 9: "if they cannot contain themselves, then they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn." William Tyndale was among those who followed Luther in emphasizing marriage as a legitimate remedy for those who could not remain sexually pure.<sup>73</sup> These polemicists linked 1 Cor 7 with Heb 13:4 arguing—in light of what they believed to be the extreme rarity of the gift of celibacy—that it is better for clerics to live in honorable marriage than dishonorable fornication. Some Protestants went further and

---

<sup>69</sup> Helen L. Parish, *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent, Policy, and Practice* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 17-20.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 56; William Tyndale, *An Answer Vnto Sir Thomas Mores Dialogue*, ed. Anne M. O'Donnell and Jared Wicks, vol. 3, *The Independent Works of William Tyndale* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 156.

implied that marriage should be a prerequisite for clergy,<sup>74</sup> while others considered the requirement of clerical celibacy to be a sign of the Antichrist.<sup>75</sup>

The intensity of the debate regarding clerical marriage declined sharply after 1563, but the vocabulary and themes established in the heat of the debate would continue to affect the English church and society for years to come. Misogamy and misogyny at times entered into the debate. In an anonymous work printed in 1621 called *A Discovery of the Married and Single Life: Wherein, By discovering the Misery of the One, is Plainly Declared the Felicity of the Other*, celibacy is extolled as easier than marriage due to the many difficulties of marriage. The author asks his or her reader to “consider of that happinesse wherein man lived before he inioyed the company of a woman, and so behold that miserie wherein he is inwrapped since the time he partaked therein.” This author continues by pointing out the essential problem—the woman. Consider, he says, the comparison of qualities, “her wantonnesse, to his sobrietie; her frowardnesse, to his meekenesse; her stubbernesse, to his patience; her pride, to his humilitie; her lightnesse, to his gravitie,” and so forth.<sup>76</sup>

In writing about marriage and celibacy in 1679, Thomas Hodge employed the same anti-Catholic polemical language that Protestants had used a hundred years earlier. He described the Roman church as “the Mother of Fornications” and spoke of Catholic

---

<sup>74</sup> William Turner, *The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox* (Basle: 1543), sig. E7r-v; Tyndale, *Answer to More*, 155. Also, see Parish, *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent, Policy, and Practice*, 62.

<sup>75</sup> Helen L. Parish, “by This Mark You Shall Know Him!: Clerical Celibacy and Antichrist in English Reformation Polemic,” in *The Church Retrospective: Papers Read at the 1995 Summer Meeting and the 1996 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 1997), 255.

<sup>76</sup> These citations are from the portion called “To the Reader” in *A Discourse of the Married and Single Life Wherein, by Discovering the Misery of the One, Is Plainly Declared the Felicity of the Other* [book on-line] (Early English Books Online, 1621 [cited May 2003]); available from <http://80-wwwlib.umi.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/eebo/image17480>.

nuns as “stewed, deceitful, impudent Whores.” Hodges also quotes several Catholic authors opposed to clerical celibacy.<sup>77</sup> Milder references to celibacy can also be found in the sermons of the seventeenth century. In “Married Life,” for example, Jeremy Taylor illustrated the uninformed choice to marry made by certain single persons:

The Stags in the Greek epigram, whose knees were clog’d with frozen snow upon the mountains, cam down to the brooks of the vallies . . . hoping to thaw their joints with the waters of the stream; but there the frost overtook them, and bound them fast in ice, till the young herdsmen took them in their stranger snare.<sup>78</sup>

So it is for many, said Taylor, who find single life difficult and marry for relief, only to find they have been “bound to sorrow by the cords of a mans or womans peevishnesse.”<sup>79</sup>

*John Wesley*

John Wesley was a lifelong proponent of celibacy even though he eventually married. In 1764, thirteen years after his marriage at age forty-eight, he published his most definitive statement on celibacy—a six page pamphlet called *Thoughts on a Single Life*, in which he makes three complementary assertions. First, he asserts that the Catholic prohibition of marriage for those in religious orders and the clergy is a “doctrine of demons” mentioned by Paul.<sup>80</sup> Clearly, says Wesley, marriage is not a bar to holiness.

---

<sup>77</sup> These quotes are from the “Epistle Dedicatory” and the “To the Reader” pages of Thomas Hodges, *A Treatise of Marriage with a Defence of the 32th Article of Religion of the Church of England: Viz. Bishops, Priests and Deacons Are Not Comanded by God’s Law Either to Vow the State of Single Life, or to Abstain from Marriage: Therefore It Is Lawful for Them, as for All Other Men, to Marry at Their Own Discretion, as They Shall Judge the Same to Serve Better to Godliness* [book on-line] (Early English Books Online, 1673 [cited May 2003]); available from <http://80-wwwlib.umi.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/eebo/image/45578>.

<sup>78</sup> Jeremy Taylor, “Married Life,” in *In God’s Name: Examples of Preaching in England from the Act of Supremacy to the Act of Uniformity 1534-1662*, ed. John Chandos (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971), 506.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 507.

<sup>80</sup> This is from Paul’s statement in Titus 4:1.

“Persons may be as holy in a married as in a single state.”<sup>81</sup> Second, having made clear the goodness of marriage,<sup>82</sup> Wesley proceeds to explain his agreement with Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 7:1, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” Celibacy, according to Wesley, is good for the one who has the gift. “He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.” Third, Wesley asserts that “every man is able to receive [the gift] when he is first justified,” and that “every one then receives this gift; but with most it does not continue long” because God withdraws the gift through some “fault” of the believer.<sup>83</sup>

Some twenty years earlier, Wesley had stated this doctrine with greater firmness. Referring to the Greek text of Matt 19:12, he rejected the Catholic view that celibacy is a counsel, not a command: “We allow of no such Distinction as this; because we find it not in Holy Writ. It has no Place in Scripture. And least of all, here. For the Word is Peremptory. *Choreito. Let him receive it.* (Not, He *may* receive it, if he *will*.) How could a Command be more clearly expressed?”<sup>84</sup> Although Wesley moderated this view in the following decades, he continued to maintain that all believers were gifted for celibacy at the time of salvation, although most of them lost the gift through their own lack of circumspection. He readily counseled celibacy to those who could accept it, and

---

<sup>81</sup> John Wesley, “Thoughts on a Single Life,” in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.: Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford*, ed. John Emory (New York: B. Waugh and T. Manson, 1832), 539.

<sup>82</sup> He cites Heb 13:4 saying, “The Holy Ghost says, ‘Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.’” Later, in the final paragraph, he says, “Upon the whole, without disputing whether the married or single state be the more perfect state, (an idle dispute; since perfection does not consist in any outward state whatever, but in an absolute devotion of all our heart and all our life to God,) we may safely say, Blessed are ‘they who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.’” *Ibid.*, 543.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 540. Such a belief, implying the superiority of celibacy, must surely have affected his often-unhappy marriage.

<sup>84</sup> From Wesley’s 1743 *Thoughts on Marriage and a Single Life* cited in Bufford W. Coe, *John Wesley and Marriage* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 59.

he remained celibate until later in life. In *Thoughts on a Single Life*, he lists both the advantages of a celibate life and the means to maintaining the gift of celibacy.

Because of Wesley's strong commendation, celibacy had a significant role in the life of Methodism for many years. For instance, it was not until 1965 that the Wesley Deaconess Order allowed married members.<sup>85</sup> Wesley's position is summed up in his comments on Matt 19:12: "Happy they! who have abstained from marriage (though without condemning or despising it) that they might walk more closely with God! He that is able to receive it, *let him receive it*—This gracious command (for such it is unquestionably, since to say, such a man may live single, is saying nothing. Who ever doubted this?) is not designed for all men: but only for those few who are able to receive it. O let these receive it joyfully!"<sup>86</sup>

Wesley, therefore, presented a positive evaluation of celibacy quite apart from the debate regarding clerical celibacy. Outside of Methodist circles, however, such positive treatment was rare. As noted below, several millennial movements of the late eighteenth century incorporated celibate practices. Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century, a positive Protestant evaluation of celibacy had all but disappeared. It would not appear again for one hundred years with the rise of the sexual revolution and singles literature.

### *The Shakers*

Several religious movements after the Reformation experimented with alternate understandings of marriage and sexuality. In the United States a number of European-

---

<sup>85</sup> Christine Walters, "To the Circuits: The Methodist Diaconal Order," *Epworth Review* 23, no. 1 (1996): 8.

<sup>86</sup> John Wesley, *Notes on the Entire Bible: New Testament*, The Master Christian Library: Ages Digital Library [CD-ROM], (Albany, Oregon: Ages Software, 1996), 84.

based radical movements variously associated with the Pietists, the Anabaptists, and the Quakers practiced celibacy in a range of ways. Three successful celibate groups were the Ephrata Community, founded in 1720 by Johann Conrad Beissel and continuing today in a small group of German Seventh Day Baptists; the Harmony Society founded by Johann Georg Rapp in 1785 and continuing into the early twentieth century; and the Amana Society which came to America from Germany in 1843 and dissolved as a religious community in 1932.<sup>87</sup> In what is perhaps the best-known celibate group, the Shakers, all members practiced celibacy. One of the basic Shaker doctrinal works, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing* (1808), explains Shaker thinking as follows:

What is there in the universe, within the comprehension of man, that has so sensible, so quick and ravishing an operation as a corresponding desire of the flesh in the different sexes? . . . As a gushing fountain is more powerful in its operations than an oozing spring; so that desire of carnal enjoyment, that mutually operates between male and female, is far more powerful than any other passion in human nature. . . . Surely then, that must be the fountain head, the governing power, that shuts the eyes, stops the ears, and stupefies the sense to all other objects of time or eternity, and swallows up the whole man in its own peculiar enjoyment. And such is that feeling and affection, which is formed by the near relation and tie between male and female; and which being corrupted by the subversion of the original law of God, converted that which in the beginning was pure and lovely, into the poison of the serpent; and the noblest of affections of man, into the seat of human corruption.<sup>88</sup>

While imprisoned in Manchester, England, Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers, had a vision of Adam and Eve having sexual intercourse. Through that vision, she realized that the fall of humanity was sexual and that human redemption required celibacy. Shakers sought to eradicate lust—the essence of sin—completely from their

---

<sup>87</sup> Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Work and Hope: The Spirituality of the Radical Pietist Communitarians," *Church History* 39, no. 1 (1970): 76-82.

<sup>88</sup> Cited in Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 21. Foster indicates that it comes from Benjamin Seth Youngs, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing: Containing a General Statement of All Things Pertaining to the Faith and Practice of the Church of God in this Latter Day*, (Lebanon, Ohio: John McClean, 1808), 78-79.

lives, and to replace it with fervent love for Christ. Lee said, “The way of God will grow straighter and straighter; so straight that if you go one hair’s breadth out of the way, you will be lost.—I felt my soul walking with Christ in groves and valleys, as really as if he had been here on earth.—It is good for a man not to touch a woman.”<sup>89</sup> Lee considered herself married to Christ and called herself the Bride of Christ—the Second Eve married to the Second Adam.<sup>90</sup>

Erik Seeman mentions that the Shaker doctrine making sexual intercourse in marriage sinful received four common criticisms from contemporary theological opponents of the Shakers. First, celibacy was unscriptural in light of Gen 1:28 and the command to be fruitful and multiply. Second, celibacy damaged the mental faculties and “as a result . . . crying and singing and dancing was used to sublimate sexual impulses.” Third, the Shaker practice of asking married candidates to renounce their marriage destroyed families. Finally, the female-led Shaker movement turned women against all natural affections.<sup>91</sup>

The justifications of celibacy given by Shaker thinkers in answer to their critics sound somewhat familiar. They hardly resemble at all the Reformation debates or the biblical arguments of Wesley. They are, however, reminiscent of the ancient Christian debates regarding original sin, the impurity of all sexual acts, the heightened spiritual sensitivity of celibates, renunciation of marital relations for the sake of a religious call,

---

<sup>89</sup> *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her, through Whom the Word of Eternal Life Was Opened in This Day, of Christ's Second Appearing, Collected from Living Witnesses, in Union with the Church*, 2nd ed. (Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons & Co., Printers, 1888), 164.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-165.

<sup>91</sup> Erik R. Seeman, "It Is Better to Marry Than to Burn: Anglo-American Attitudes toward Celibacy, 1600-1800," *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 4 (2000): 411-12.

and the higher marriage of the believer to Christ. The similarity, for example, to the disputes surrounding the second century Encratite tradition are striking.<sup>92</sup> But, unlike the Encratites who significantly influenced later Christian thought on celibacy, the Shakers were to leave little imprint on the Protestant theology of celibacy, unless perhaps the Shaker tradition served to provide large nails used to further fasten shut Protestant thought on celibacy.

### *Protestants and Celibacy from 1850-1950*

Within the large expanse of Protestantism, relatively little changed in the hundred years following the mid-nineteenth century peaking of the Shaker movement. Other millenarians with a celibate emphasis such as the Ephrata community, the Harmony Society, and the Amana society experienced slow decline. Occasionally some Methodists chose celibate living. However, major Protestant publishing efforts produced during this time such as *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (twelve volumes), and the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (nine volumes) by John M'Clintock and James Strong mention only clerical celibacy with an emphasis on the early church and the Reformers' debates with the Catholic Church. They never mention celibacy as a Protestant possibility, much less a norm.

---

<sup>92</sup> Brown, *The Body and Society*, 101. In the late second century, as the ideal of sexual continence came to be considered by some as necessary for Christian perfection, the Encratites forbade marriage. Orthodox in many other respects, they nonetheless fled sexual contact condemned all conjugal acts and procreation as distracting to and polluting the soul. They believed heirs was the higher life, even the resurrection life. Giulia Sfamemi Gasparro, "Ascetism and Anthropology: Enkrateia and 'Double Creation' in Early Christianity," in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 127-128, 134.

Anglicans, however, continued to debate the advantages of clerical celibacy and the value of a Roman Catholic style of monasticism. In particular, the Oxford Movement (1833-c1860) and the religious orders that sprang from it, such as Anglo-Catholic movements, have strong affinities with Catholicism. Although the movement was Anglican, its understanding of celibacy was a return to Catholic views and not, strictly speaking, Protestant. This is clearly seen in the fact that some priests and laity associated with the movement left it and were received into the Roman Catholic Church. Notable among these was John Henry Newman.<sup>93</sup> In the Episcopal Church in America a similar movement developed; it was associated with Henry Percival and William McGarvey, who together with others formed a society named, “The Companions of the Holy Savior.” Celibacy was likewise a feature of this movement, and McGarvey along with others eventually converted to Roman Catholicism.<sup>94</sup>

Nonetheless, it was in the mid-nineteenth century, that Anglicanism and Protestantism rediscovered religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience;<sup>95</sup> fruit of this discovery exists today. The *Anglican Religious Communities Yearbook, 2002-2003* lists over one hundred communities with a worldwide total of around 2500 Anglican Religious. All these communities include in their rule the commitment to celibacy.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), 1170.

<sup>94</sup> Edward Hawks, *William Mcgarvey and the Open Pulpit: An Intimate History of a Celibate Movement in the Episcopal Church and of Its Collapse 1870-1908* (Philadelphia: The Dolphin Press, 1935).

<sup>95</sup> For an excellent overview of the nineteenth century Anglican religious communities see the following: A. M. Allchin, *The Silent Rebellion: Anglican Religious Communities 1845-1900* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1958); Ralph W. Sockman, "The Revival of the Conventual Life in the Church of England in the Nineteenth Century" (Columbia University, 1917).

<sup>96</sup> *Anglican Religious Communities Year Book 2002-2003*, (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 24.

On a smaller scale, other Protestant denominations also have monastic movements. The Taizé community for men in France and its sister community for women, Grandchamp, in Switzerland, are better-known expressions of the Reformed Church that were founded in the mid-twentieth century. In Germany, St. Mary's Sisterhood in Darmstadt was formed near the same time within the Lutheran Church.<sup>97</sup> A Lutheran Benedictine monastery, St. Augustine's House, established in 1956 in Michigan, continues to function today.<sup>98</sup> These communities and many others like them represent a movement that by its very nature has a somewhat unobtrusive and even hidden character. As might be expected, the communities have produced some devotional literature, yet their specific contribution to the theology of celibacy<sup>99</sup> appears small. A notable exception that is examined in detail later in this paper, is the work by Max Thurian, a founding member of the Taizé community who wrote *Marriage and Celibacy*.<sup>100</sup>

Beyond this interest in monasteries, there was almost no Protestant concern for celibacy from 1850-1950. This one hundred year lull is likely one of the less desirable fruits of the Reformers' revolt against the superior valuation of celibacy and against the

---

<sup>97</sup> Robin Sharp, "Monasticism in Modern Protestantism," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 188 (1963); Frederick S. Weiser, "New Directions in Evangelical Communities," *Una Sancta* 23, no. 3 (1966).

<sup>98</sup> George Weckman, *My Brothers' Place* (Lawrenceville, Virginia: Brunswick Publishing Corporation, 1992).

<sup>99</sup> Thorough research in this devotional literature would without doubt uncover many brief statements regarding aspects of the theology of celibacy. See for example the pages on celibacy in Richard Meux Benson, *Instructions on the Religious Life* (Oxford: Society of S. John the Evangelist, 1927). Nonetheless, as mentioned below, this literature is slightly off topic for this chapter, first because of the close affinity of many of these communities to Roman Catholicism, and second because celibacy is subsumed under the evangelical counsels and life in the religious community. Tim Vivian points to current resources on modern Protestant monasticism in Tim Vivian, "Modern Monastic Spirituality," *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 2 (2001). For an insightful Protestant view of Roman Catholic monasteries in America see Kathleen Norris, *Cloister Walk* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996).

<sup>100</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*.

disgrace of the Church because of the sexual malfeasance associated with late medieval celibacy. It is not until the sexual revolution of the 1950s that Protestants again begin seriously to address celibacy, or as it came to be called, singleness. Almost without fail, however, these contemporary writings studiously disregard Christian thought on celibacy from the end of the New Testament to mid-twentieth century.

### *Contemporary Protestant Theologies of Celibacy*

#### *Popular Writings on Singleness and Celibacy*

Following the beginning of the sexual revolution in the 1950s, a large number of Christian books on singleness appeared. Most of these books attempt to address issues related to being unmarried in the midst of a society obsessed with sexual expression. Typical chapter headings are “Loneliness,” “Sexual Temptation,” “Finding a Marriage Partner,” “Self-Esteem,” “The Church and the Single,” and other such practical topics. Although the majority of these books include discussion of relevant passages from the Bible, very few discuss the theology of celibacy. Typically, one finds a page or two on 1 Cor 7 or Matt 19,<sup>101</sup> but the comments on these passages are theologically undeveloped. Before looking at Protestant theological thought on celibacy, however, a separate category of contemporary Protestant literature on celibacy needs examination—singleness literature with little or no overt theological content.

*Books with no theology of celibacy.* A number of Protestant works on singleness have no theological development of celibacy. This, of course, does not mean they have

---

<sup>101</sup> It is of interest that some, both in the early church and the present day, understand Mat 19:12 to refer to self-castration. Gary Robert Brower, "Ambivalent Bodies: Making Christian Eunuchs" (PhD, Duke University, 1996).

no value. Several of them are thoughtfully written and fulfill their purpose well. More importantly for the purposes of this paper, however, they exemplify the barren state of contemporary Protestant thought on celibacy.

Due to their concern for the difficulties of being a single person, a number of women in the 1960s and 1970s wrote with an eye to providing psychological insight and religious comfort to singles. In 1966, Elizabeth Mitting edited a collection of essays on the woman's experience of singleness.<sup>102</sup> One essay of particular value is the contribution by Margaret Fox called "The Single Woman Missionary." In it, she demonstrates the importance of celibate women in the history of missions. Margaret Adams's 1976 work focuses on the psychology and sociology of singleness.<sup>103</sup> That same year Linda Lawson, in a book designed for use by singles in Baptist Sunday School classes, focused on another often mentioned aspect of the psychological needs of single persons—self-discovery.<sup>104</sup> Britton Wood wrote a useful guide for those wanting to minister to the single men and women in their church, but again, as with all the others in this category, Wood focuses more on social and emotional needs, and does not include a theology of celibacy.<sup>105</sup> In another work written for those who minister to singles, Barbara Sroka focuses on the variety of kinds of singles found in the church, and the problems they face, and she deals with topics such as dating, loneliness, and personal

---

<sup>102</sup> Elizabeth Mitting, ed., *The Single Woman: Comments from a Christian Perspective* (London: Victory Press, 1966).

<sup>103</sup> Margaret Adams, *Single Blessedness: Observations on the Single Status in Married Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

<sup>104</sup> Linda Lawson, *Life as a Single Adult: A Church Study Course Book for Use by Single Young Adults* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1976).

<sup>105</sup> Britton Wood, *Single Adults Want to Be the Church Too* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977).

identity.<sup>106</sup> Writings by Janet Fix and Zola Levitt deal with these same topics. They offer a self-help book for those who are single and who struggle with issues such as self-concept, sexual temptation, loneliness, and dissatisfaction with life as an unmarried Christian.<sup>107</sup>

Almost all of these writers assumed that singleness was usually temporary state. A number of authors share the view explicitly expressed by Elva McAllaster in her book on singleness: "For now, I'm free to be single. Because God's leadings thus far have led me to singleness. Because he is giving me a role as a single to fill for him."<sup>108</sup> That is, singleness is a time of waiting for the right spouse who may or may not appear. The tone of compassion found in many of these works is exemplified in a heartfelt comment in the introduction to a work by Margaret Clarkson: "If there are singles who find the waters of singleness dark and deep, who feel, 'I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head; all his waves go over me,' this is my message to you concerning singleness: 'Be of good cheer, my brother, my sister; I feel the bottom, and it is good.'"<sup>109</sup> Clarkson describes in detail the faithfulness of God to her as a single. She, like others before her, includes chapters on loneliness, depression, fulfillment, and the need to express affection. The occasional bits of theology in her book are sometimes cryptic. For example, after reviewing Gen. 2:18-23 she says, "Singleness is one of the results of sin in the world--one of a host of evils in which we all share."<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Barbara Sroka, *One Is a Whole Number* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1978).

<sup>107</sup> Janet Fix and Zola Levitt, *For Singles Only* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1978).

<sup>108</sup> Elva McAllaster, *Free to Be Single* (Chappaqua, N.Y.: Christian Herald Books, 1979), 44-45.

<sup>109</sup> Margaret Clarkson, *So You're Single!* (Wheaton, IL: Howard Shaw, 1978), 11. Here she is quoting John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

In the eighties and nineties, works on singleness authored or coauthored by men began to appear; the women also continued to contribute. Keith Miller and his second wife Andrea Ward Miller wrote on their experience after divorce from their first spouses and before their marriage to each other. Much of their writing focused on understanding and coping with the sexual pressure experienced by single adults.<sup>111</sup> Not all singles, however, are as oppressed by sexual desire as the Millers seem to have been. For example, Luci Swindoll wrote a lively description of her philosophy of the Christian life, especially as it related to the freedom she experienced as a single woman.<sup>112</sup> James E. Towns' 1984 book returns to the perennial themes of singleness when he describes how the suffering group of Christians called "singles" can find full life. A proper understanding of self-esteem, self-acceptance, dating, and marriage is central to successful living as a single. These issues, however, are not unique to singles. In reality, Towns deals with basics of Christian living that apply to both single and married people.<sup>113</sup>

A common, current Protestant understanding of singleness is that it is a time of waiting for the right mate. This attitude appears in J. Clark Hensley's book where he quotes a single person as saying, "At thirty-four years of age, I am still praying that--if it is His will--the Lord will lead me to the man of my life with whom I can share. But until that time, I will enjoy the full life He has given me."<sup>114</sup> This quote characterizes the approach to singleness taken by Hensley and others. Rick Stedman is even more explicit

---

<sup>111</sup> Keith Miller and Andrea Wells Miller, *The Single Experience* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1981).

<sup>112</sup> Luci Swindoll, *Wide My World: Narrow My Bed* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982).

<sup>113</sup> James E. Towns, *Singles Alive!* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co., 1984). Towns had previously written two books: James E. Towns, *One Is Not a Lonely Number* (Dallas: Crescendo Press, 1977); James E. Towns, *Solo Flight* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1980).

<sup>114</sup> J. Clark Hensley, *Good News for Today's Singles* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1985), 24.

about the temporary nature of celibacy as he understands it. He says, "Note carefully that, since most singles eventually will marry, celibacy is only *for a while*. I am not advocating that singles take a vow of celibacy as a permanent, lifelong lifestyle. We are not hoping to establish a new order of evangelical monasteries and convents."<sup>115</sup>

According to these authors, during this time of waiting for marriage, sexual health is important. The title of Stedman's book, *Pure Joy: The Positive Side of Single Sexuality*, clearly indicates that the book focuses on helping singles maintain healthy sexual attitudes. The title of Harold Ivan Smith's book, *Single and Feeling Good*, goes to the heart of the approach taken by the majority of those writing about and for Christian singles: being single is difficult but one can still be single, chaste, and happy.<sup>116</sup>

What all these works have in common is a concern for the welfare of adult unmarried Christians. The instruction and advice given is very practical, for it derives from the sociology and psychology of the times. Generally, however, they say almost nothing to provide the single person with a theological perspective on the nature of singleness—much less on the nature of celibacy for the kingdom. The following works, however, briefly address such theological issues

*Books and articles with briefly developed theologies of celibacy.* Several works that appeared during these same decades include brief references to a theology of celibacy. Although each work has a distinct emphasis, most of these works also include comment on Gen 1-2; Matt 12:19; 22:29; and 1 Cor 7.

---

<sup>115</sup> Rick Stedman, *Pure Joy: The Positive Side of Single Sexuality* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), 62.

<sup>116</sup> Harold Ivan Smith, *Single and Feeling Good* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987).

An early contribution is E. G. Knapp-Fisher's article that addresses the specific question of whether celibacy can be a vocation. He writes from within the Anglican tradition and exemplifies a new twist in that communion's ongoing debate regarding clerical celibacy. By the time of his essay (1957), he confesses that some "suspect that a celibate can be neither quite normal nor completely at home in the Church of England." In fact, Knapp-Fisher's concern is that some speak of marriage as the only "proper and natural condition for all men and women." This stands in stark contrast to Anglican attitudes towards celibacy three centuries earlier. He concedes that in the order of creation, marriage is the norm. In the order of redemption, however, Christ teaches and models renunciation. In addition, notes Knapp-Fisher, Matt 22:30 indicates that marriage is a temporary, not an eternal, relationship.<sup>117</sup> He concludes the article with a threefold counsel regarding celibacy for those entering the ministry: take your time, look to yourself, look to your situation.<sup>118</sup>

In the 1970s, several thoughtful works appeared. Margaret Evening presented themes that are repeated, and sometimes quoted, by later authors. She calls on her readers to accept their vocation, whatever it may be. With the vocation will come divine empowerment. Citing 1 Cor 7 she notes the practical advantages of celibacy, but more important to her is the celibate character of the "new creation." Jesus is the "Proper Man" and his celibacy indicates the inauguration of a new creation in which biological sexuality is deemphasized (here she quotes Gal 3:28). Going further than most others, Evening notes her belief that the results of genetic research indicate that in human being there is a blurring of the strict dualism of male and female. There exists, she says, an

---

<sup>117</sup> E. G. Knapp-Fisher, "Celibacy," *Theology* 60, no. 442 (1957): 145-150.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*: 148.

intermediary type between male and female, and not only so but each person is a mix of male and female.<sup>119</sup> Another brief theology of celibacy appears in the work of Ada Lum's book. She notes three implications of Mat 22:29: marriage is not eternal, married life is lived within the larger life relationship with Christ, and the Christian's highest fulfillment is in Christ.<sup>120</sup> In a volume edited by Gary Collins, Nancy Hardesty focuses on the Christian's identity as a member of the new family, the church. She believes kinship ties are now secondary to ties to the family of God; therefore, since the beginning of the church, singleness has been an option. She also expresses with some intensity her conviction that the church has treated single women badly.<sup>121</sup> In another chapter in the same volume, Mark W. Lee describes in detail his understanding of the application of Matt 19:12. The causes of singleness, he says, are situations arising from birth, from life experiences, or from religious commitment. Birth situations can include birth defects as well as genetic predispositions. Life situations can include physical mutilation as well as psychological scarring resulting from abuse. According to Lee, once a person makes a decision for singleness, then God grants the single person the gift of self-control enabling him or her to live continently. Lee further notes that because the biblical Adam first lived as a single, the single life is not foreign to humanity.<sup>122</sup>

In 1977 a Baptist journal, *Review and Expositor*, dedicated the entire winter issue to singleness. That issue includes the following contributions: Bill J. Leonard wrote an

---

<sup>119</sup> Margaret Evening, *Who Walk Alone: A Consideration of the Single Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), 112-133.

<sup>120</sup> Ada Lum, *Single & Human* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 18-23.

<sup>121</sup> Nancy Hardesty, "Being Single in Today's World," in *It's O.K. To Be Single*, ed. Gary R. Collins (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1979), 11-21.

<sup>122</sup> Mark W. Lee, "The Church and the Unmarried," in *It's O.K. To Be Single: A Guidebook for Singles and the Church*, ed. Gary R. Collins (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1979), 41-57.

interesting article on the history of Christian celibacy;<sup>123</sup> several authors contributed articles dealing with the practical needs of singles; and Frank Stagg dealt at length with the biblical data regarding celibacy. Stagg begins his article with a review of the Old Testament treatment of marriage and concludes by noting that marriage was normative and nearly universal in the ancient Jewish context. Stagg then describes in detail evidences of celibacy in the New Testament. The article, however, contains no development of a theology of celibacy other than that which is implicit in the scriptural expositions.<sup>124</sup>

Additional works appeared in the 1980s, and each one has its own emphasis. Allen Hadidian's emphasis is biblical exposition. His work on the single life contains a theology of celibacy almost entirely based on the exposition of 1 Cor 7. He emphasizes the practical advantages of being single both as Paul describes them and as Hadidian himself understands them. He also gives a detailed explanation of the nature of the gift of celibacy. In his explanation, he notes that a person may choose to remain single simply because he or she believes in the benefits of the single life, even though he or she does not have the gift of celibacy. The gift is a specific supernatural empowerment for lifelong commitment to singleness. However, even without such an empowerment, one may choose to temporarily, or for an extended period, remain unmarried. In fact, he says, 1 Cor 7 focuses on persuading precisely those who do not have the gift of celibacy but who are nonetheless open to remaining single.<sup>125</sup> Don Meredith's emphasis is application

---

<sup>123</sup> Bill J. Leonard, "Celibacy as a Christian Lifestyle in the History of the Church," *Review and Expositor* 74, no. 1 (2001): 21-32.

<sup>124</sup> Frank Stagg, "Biblical Perspectives on the Single Person," *Review and Expositor* 74, no. 1 (1977): 5-20.

<sup>125</sup> Allen Hadidian, *A Single Thought: God's Word on Singleness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 19-75.

rather than exposition or theology. His theological thoughts on celibacy appear in comments attached to a list of the typical passages relating to celibacy in addition to a less often discussed passage—Isa 56:35.<sup>126</sup> Dorothy Payne’s treatment is theological, though without much direct interaction with the Bible, as she mixes her theology with practical advice on recognizing the gift of celibacy.<sup>127</sup> David E. Garland, like Hadidian above, is more exegetical. He wrote an article in 1983 explaining marriage and celibacy as portrayed 1 Cor 7. Via direct interaction with the Bible, he provides a useful overview of Paul’s thought, although he talks mostly about marriage and relatively little about celibacy.<sup>128</sup> Julia Duin’s book is both theological and mystical. When she speaks of the theology of celibacy, she reflects a mysticism similar to that of many Catholic authors. She also quotes the mystical Protestant author, Basilea Schlink<sup>129</sup> of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary. Duin asserts that the celibate’s “undivided ‘bridal’ love for Christ is possible for any believer.” Thus, she does not believe the gift of celibacy is necessary for one to take a vow of celibacy.<sup>130</sup> What she apparently means is that the gift—the rare, supernatural empowerment given by God to a few—makes celibacy more bearable. Any person, however, can choose to “surrender sexual desire to the Lord and find freedom.”<sup>131</sup>

From the 1990s to the present, several additional works have appeared. The Lutheran, French theologian, Jean Ansaldi, wrote an article that is primarily theological

---

<sup>126</sup> Don Meredith, *Who Says Get Married? How to Be Happy and Single* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981), 42-47.

<sup>127</sup> Dorothy Payne, *Singleness* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 19-21, 90-91.

<sup>128</sup> David E. Garland, "The Christian's Posture toward Marriage and Celibacy: 1 Corinthians 7," *Review and Expositor* 80, no. 3 (1983): 351-362.

<sup>129</sup> Basilea Schlink, *My All for Him* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1971).

<sup>130</sup> Julia Duin, *Purity Makes the Heart Grow Stronger: Sexuality and the Single Christian* (Ann Arbor, MI.: Vine Books, 1988), 130-133.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

and secondarily psychological. His concern, however, is quite specific: sexual identity and its relationship to celibacy. The Jews, he says, focused on producing descendants, but regarding this focus Jesus declares, "It is finished." Procreation is now peripheral, not central, to sexuality. Since the coming of Christ, sexuality centers on the energy produced by human sexual desire. The celibate draws together his or her past and present sexual desire and then sublimates this desire in order to channel it toward the experience of God. Christian celibate sexual identity, says Ansaldi, requires two steps: first, an abandonment of the demanding sexual object and, second, the use of the resulting psychic energy to aim at another object that is non-sexual, that is, to aim at the love of God.<sup>132</sup>

Stephen Vantassel, an Assemblies of God minister, examines the current Protestant attitude towards celibacy in an article in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* in which he reminds his readers of the existence and importance of the gift of celibacy. He offers five reasons why the Protestant church neglects celibacy: the Reformation heritage of anti-celibacy; the belief that celibate ministers cannot effectively serve as pastors to families; the sense of sinful insecurity in relating to people who differ from us; the sensual influence of our society; and the idea that God effectively calls to celibacy, so that there is no need to preach celibacy.<sup>133</sup> William L. Isley, Jr. emphasizes application to a specific situation. He brings a particular context for celibacy forward: missionary service. He contends that the missionary calling involves a summons to serve those outside of one's own culture and an eschatological orientation. Following 1 Cor 7, Isley

---

<sup>132</sup> J. Ansaldi, "Célibat Pour Christ' Et Sexualité," *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 67, no. 3 (1992): 403-415.

<sup>133</sup> Stephen Vantassel, "Celibacy: The Forgotten Gift of the Spirit," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 12, no. 3 (1994): 20-23.

argues that celibacy fits well with this combination of commitments. American Protestant Christianity, he says, should give a more positive presentation to Celibacy as a charism appropriate for missionaries.<sup>134</sup>

Albert Hsu's<sup>135</sup> valuable book on Christian singleness contains elements of a theology of celibacy scattered throughout it, and some of this theology is carefully developed. After an informative review of the history of celibacy, he proceeds to emphasize four things. First, he calls on his readers to reject the traditional view of the gift of celibacy that sees it as a supernatural empowerment to remain single; rather, Hsu affirms that all unmarried Christians have the gift of celibacy. He emphatically states: "*If you are single, then you have the gift of singleness. If you are married, you don't.*" He finds no evidence in the New Testament of two categories of singles: some who have the gift of celibacy and some who do not. In addition, for Hsu, this "gift" of celibacy does not require extraordinary supernatural grace to remain celibate; the grace available to celibates is available to all believers. Hsu bases his position in part on a fresh exegesis of 1 Cor 7:7. Second, God has no specific will considering whether a Christian marries. To discover whether it is best to marry or remain single one should do the following: avoid rashly committing (vowing) oneself to celibacy because it can take decades to sense God's call; try being single if it seems like a practical thing to do, and discover whether you are fruitful as a single.<sup>136</sup> Third, Hsu challenges Christians to give serious thought to

---

<sup>134</sup> William L. Isley, "A Spirituality for Missionaries," *Missiology* 27, no. 3 (1999): 299-309.

<sup>135</sup> Hsu is a church leader in a Christian and Missionary Alliance church. His book is perhaps the best Protestant overview of celibacy in print; nonetheless, it would be stronger with less eclectic, more systematic theological analysis. His book has been translated into French as *Pour une valorisation du célibat dans la société et dans l'église*, Marne La Vallée: Farel, 2001.

<sup>136</sup> Albert Y. Hsu, *Singles at the Crossroads: A Fresh Perspective on Christian Singleness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 77-82.

the freedom and productivity that can accompany celibacy. Fourth, Hsu asks that we remember that marriage is no more normative for Christians than is singleness. Thus, singles should be careful to avoid the inordinate veneration of or desire for marriage.<sup>137</sup> John Poirier's exegetical article moves a direction similar to that of Hsu in attempting to expose the root of the concept of a gift of celibacy. He proposes that the gift Paul mentions in 1 Cor 7:7 is Paul's own prophetic charism. Poirier's key arguments proceed as follows: Paul was a prophet, being a prophet required celibacy (ritual purity), the gift mentioned in 1 Cor 7:7 is Paul's prophetic gift; therefore, celibacy per se is not a gift either in the New Testament or in its environment.<sup>138</sup>

Kristin Aune has written an evaluative text dealing with the following themes: a social analysis of the single phenomena in Britain, a critique of the churches' response to singles, a discussion of sexual issues, a treatment of the dating single, and a set of recommendations for the church. In addition, Aune offers a brief theology of celibacy.<sup>139</sup> She describes the important role of single women in the New Testament, touches on Matt 19:12, and then draws extensively on 1 Cor 7. Like Hsu, Aune believes all singles have the gift and denies that the gift implies special empowerment. She develops this further by stating that 1 Cor 7:1-2 simply teaches, on the one hand, that those who fornicate should marry, and on the other hand, that if a dating couple can keep from having sex, then they should remain single.<sup>140</sup> In the development of her arguments,

---

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 48-62, 110-125.

<sup>138</sup> John C. Poirier, "Celibacy and Charism in 1 Cor. 7:5-7," *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 1-18. . Poirier's argument would be more persuasive if it were not for several tenuous links in his chain of ideas and his dismissal of 1 Clem. 38:2 which speaks of celibacy as a gift.

<sup>139</sup> Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* 96-129.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 122.

Aune appears to move steadily towards an exaltation of the single state,<sup>141</sup> despite her late attempt at the end of the chapter to put marriage and celibacy on equal footing.

Finally, Aune emphasizes that celibate Christians are a crucial prophetic voice declaring that the primary human relationship is with God.

### *Theological and Ethical Works that Develop a Theology of Celibacy*

#### *Brief Treatments*

The contemporary Protestant works reviewed so far have all had as their primary focus singleness or celibacy and are written, on the whole, by lesser known authors. The following works are representative of theological and ethical works that only incidentally mention celibacy but are written by more widely known Protestant thinkers. It is noteworthy, however, that although several of these works discuss individual features of a theology of celibacy, none thoroughly develops such a theology. In his *Theology of the New Testament*, Rudolf Bultmann makes passing comments about the high view of chastity found in Rev 14:1-5. Bultmann believes this view of chastity grew out of sexual asceticism as exemplified in 1 Cor 7,<sup>142</sup> and then became the perfectionism that appears in writings of the apostolic fathers such as 1 Clement and Didache.<sup>143</sup> Helmut Thielicke's *The Ethics of Sex* is entirely silent on celibacy except for a brief remark regarding sexual sublimation.<sup>144</sup> Joachim Jeremias' *New Testament Theology* likewise

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 126. she says, "Gone was the importance of the biological family: all Christians are equally brothers and sisters in Christ. Gone was the association of marriage and motherhood with ideal womanhood: Jesus exalted celibacy as an equally, and in some ways superior, status to marriage."

<sup>142</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1:103.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 2:224.

<sup>144</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), 57.

only makes brief mention of celibacy, such as his comment on the fact that Jesus commended it.<sup>145</sup> James B. Nelson's work on sexuality and Christian theology emphasizes Jesus' humanity as seen in his sexuality. For Nelson, the docetic tendency in theology denies that Jesus was fully, warmly, and masculinely sexual. Even if Jesus was celibate, and Nelson leaves the question open, Nelson emphasizes that Jesus was still male.<sup>146</sup> In his later work, *Between Two Gardens*, Nelson affirms that God's androgynous nature indicates that "no individual absolutely needs another of the opposite gender in order to be whole."<sup>147</sup> In the book, *God and Marriage*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley makes only a few comments on celibacy. Marriage, he says, is the normal state, but celibacy is a gift that can take precedence over marriage. Commenting on Matt 19:12; 22:30; and 1 Cor 7, he concludes that marriage, at times, must yield to a call to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God.<sup>148</sup> Erhard S. Gerstenberger and Wolfgang Schrage speak of celibacy in the context of opportunities for service. Celibacy is a gift granted for the purpose of intensive commitment to the kingdom of God. Even though the Jews absolutized marriage, Jesus relativized it by bringing out the various options enabled by the rule of God. Gerstenberger and Schrage further note that Paul does not deal with celibacy from the standpoint of "timeless dogmatic or ethical considerations," rather he deals with it from the perspective of gift and practicality.<sup>149</sup> Richard Foster devotes a few

---

<sup>145</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: Part One; the Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971), 224.

<sup>146</sup> James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 74-77.

<sup>147</sup> James B. Nelson, *Between Two Gardens: Reflections on Sexuality and Religious Experience* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983), 104.

<sup>148</sup> Geoffrey Bromiley, *God and Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 40-41, 58-59.

<sup>149</sup> Erhard S. Gerstenberger and Wolfgang Schrage, *Woman and Man*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, *Biblical Encounter Series* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 174-179.

lines to celibacy in *Freedom of Simplicity*,<sup>150</sup> as well as *Money, Sex, and Power*.<sup>151</sup> His focus in both works is on celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, that is, celibacy for the sake of focusing life's energies on God's rule.

### *Conclusion*

Two conclusions arise from this chapter. First, the historical background plays a major role in current Protestant attitudes towards celibacy. Generally, Protestant interest in celibacy has steadily declined in the last four hundred years. With the demise of monasteries, came a general disinterest in virginity for the sake of the Kingdom. Nonetheless, in the second half of the twentieth century the role of unmarried Christians again came to the forefront.

Second, modern Protestant thought on celibacy is weak. The contemporary Protestant writers reviewed above show little knowledge of each other's thought and little systematic theological thought. In addition, a pervasive underlying theme exists almost without exception in these writings: all single men and women are hoping for marriage. For all practical purposes, celibacy for the kingdom of heaven as a lifelong choice and as an alternative to marriage has largely disappeared from the thought of the Protestant church. There are two exceptions: first, the modern Protestant monastic movement, which, as mentioned above, falls slightly outside the parameters of this paper; and second, the three Protestant writers highlighted: Max Thurian, Karl Barth, and Stanley Grenz. The writings of these three men are examined in some detail in the pages that follow.

---

<sup>150</sup> Richard Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 136-137.

<sup>151</sup> Richard Foster, *Money, Sex, and Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 131-132.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Major Contemporary Protestant Treatments of Celibacy: Stanley Grenz, Max Thurian, and Karl Barth

One must perform two tasks in order to bring the clearest and strongest contemporary Protestant understandings of celibacy to the surface. First, one must chronicle three Protestant treatments that rise above the rest: those of Max Thurian, Karl Barth, and Stanley Grenz. Second, one must seek out and synthesize several major themes found in these three Protestant writers, but also here and there in other contemporary Protestant writers.

#### *Three Significant Contemporary Protestant Theologies of Celibacy*

Three contemporary Protestant works on celibacy deserve special attention. In each case, the author takes significant steps toward developing a theology of celibacy; nonetheless, in each case the theology falls short of full development. Even though Stanley Grenz's work is the most recent, here it will be treated first for two reasons: 1) it is less well developed than either Karl Barth's or Max Thurian's treatments; 2) Thurian's frequently cites Barth, and therefore it is best to treat them together.

*Stanley Grenz.*

In *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*,<sup>1</sup> Stanley Grenz offers a theology of celibacy that is directly related to his larger theology of human sexuality and marriage. After briefly describing the history of Christian celibacy as well as the Old Testament and

---

<sup>1</sup> Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 181-199.

New Testament passages relating to celibacy, he begins to develop a theology of singleness and then finishes with a one-page theology of celibacy. Grenz distinguishes between singleness and celibacy in the following way: celibacy is being single specifically for the sake of the kingdom; singleness is being single for any other reason. Grenz affirms that singles are fully sexual and thus experience the drive toward bonding which is God's intent in sexual differentiation. As males or females humans are fundamentally incomplete and are motivated towards joining others in intimacy and love. God has thus designed humans for the same community experienced in the Trinity. In marriage, this instinct towards union expresses itself in an exclusive, covenanted relationship. For the single person this drive expresses itself in broader, non-exclusive relationships, primarily in the church and secondarily with friends. Grenz also notes that the "marriage relationship derives its meaning not only from salvation history . . . but also from creation."<sup>2</sup> The experience of the single person, however, relates solely to salvation history and God's mandate for community in the church. Those who are not simply single but celibates for the sake of the kingdom find additional theological significance in their status. Their sacrifice of marriage and family, says Grenz, reflects the self-sacrifice of Christ. Grenz's theology of marriage, singleness, and celibacy rests on the foundation described in his larger work, *The Social God and the Relational Self*.<sup>3</sup> There he defines the *imago dei* and describes its relationship to human sexuality. Overall, Grenz has established a foundation on which to construct a theology of celibacy, but more work needs done.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 267-303.

*Karl Barth.*

Karl Barth took some first steps towards a theology of celibacy in the *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>4</sup> From his Reformed position, influenced by Calvin and other sixteenth and seventeenth century reformers, he develops a theology of human sexuality in two major parts.<sup>5</sup> First, he describes the nature and significance of male/female relationships regardless of marital status. Second, he develops in detail a theology of marriage. In the midst of these topics he touches on celibacy in a few pages of seminal ideas. Marriage, says Barth, is the *telos* of the male/female relationship; nonetheless, marriage is not necessary for the realization of the divine command regarding human sexuality. The divine command as expressed in Genesis chapters one and two applies to every relationship between a woman and a man, regardless of whether or not they are married. The state of celibacy, therefore, remains an option within the divine command. Thus, Barth speaks of marriage as being decentralized. The ethical question of being male or female in light of the command of God holds for both the married and the unmarried. Marriage is the center of the circle that circumscribes the divine command regarding sexuality, but it is not necessary for every individual to arrive at the center. By creation, every person is oriented to marriage because humanity is irrevocably fellow-humanity; nonetheless, not to marry is a valid option.<sup>6</sup>

Barth further notes that the Old Testament world knew nothing of celibacy as a simple option. The continuance of the seed of Abraham, which was to result eventually

---

<sup>4</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 116-240.

<sup>5</sup> Both Calvin and Luther end up saying a good deal more about marriage than celibacy, and Barth reflects their emphasis by drawing much of his theology of celibacy out of his theology of marriage. For Barth, Calvin, and Luther human sexuality was a backdrop for both marriage and celibacy; nonetheless the light of marriage illuminates celibacy and not vice versa.

<sup>6</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 140-142.

in the Messiah, was the obligation of all. Once the Messiah was born, this obligation disappeared. Nonetheless, Barth points out that underlying Gen 2:24 and the union of husband and wife is the union of Yahweh in covenant relationship with Israel. Thus the union of marriage is relative to and based on a deeper union of God with his people. Because of the coming of Christ, singleness can express the union of God with his child, and marriage therefore becomes only one of two possibilities.<sup>7</sup>

For Barth, Christ relativized the value of marriage. After the coming of the Messiah, Barth says, entrance into the community of God is no longer by physical birth into ethnic Israel but by spiritual birth into the universal church. Biological procreation has lost its primacy; marriage is no longer an obligation. Jesus provides an example of one whose beloved was the community of believers. Jesus' makes clear in Mark 12:25, Luke 14:26, and Matt 19:12 that marriage is optional. In addition, Barth reminds his readers of Paul and others in the primitive church who substituted celibate membership in the community for marriage. Paul described the nature of this choice in some detail in 1 Cor 7 where he was careful to avoid forbidding marriage and also careful to clarify the justifiable motives for both marriage and celibacy. Marriage is but one way to avoid the impossible situation of immorality that occurs in uniting the spirit joined to the Lord with a prostitute (1 Cor 6); the second way is godly celibacy. Sex in marriage is not a form of legitimated carnality; marriage is "of supreme dignity." Being unmarried, however, is also a great good, and as Barth points out, Paul prefers it for two reasons. First, since "the history of salvation has reached its goal in the death of Jesus Christ" all things of this world are provisional and passing away.<sup>8</sup> Only urgent matters should occupy the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 142-143.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 144-46.

believer. In fact, the light of the future resurrection, in which there will be no marriage, shines into the present. Second, believers must actively wait, work, and watch; marriage with its responsibilities can be a distraction. In light of these two reasons, marriage is relativized and made subject to the same special call and vocation that applies to celibacy, both of them chosen in the freedom of the Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

Barth warns of certain tempting dangers in this understanding of human sexuality. One is the danger of exalting androgyny. This belief entails the possibility of a man or woman living in isolation from the opposite sex and declaring freedom from the need of the opposite sex. For instance, a man holding this belief may see in himself sufficient femininity to make his understanding of humanity complete without the interaction with women. Barth objects. The divine command requires male and female complementarity for the proper understanding of humanity. The outward neutralization or inward duality of sexuality cannot truly portray humanity. For Barth, belief in an androgynous human being is akin to the error of monarchianism; just as God cannot be properly understood apart from the relational Trinity, so humanity cannot be understood apart from the relationship of the sexes.<sup>10</sup> Both celibacy and marriage, therefore, should be expressed in relationship and dependence, not in isolation and independence. “There is no such thing as a self-contained and self-sufficient male life or female life.”<sup>11</sup> The divine command requires three actions from all men and women: 1) to desire to know the opposite sex, 2) to be open to questions from the opposite sex, and 3) to answer to the opposite sex for all of one’s actions and attitudes.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 147-48.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 157-158.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 163.

A second error against which Barth warns is that of equating the roles for male and female. Since, according to Barth, the only two options in a relationship are either order or disorder, it is necessary that the divinely established order be observed. In the divine order, the role of the man is to act as “inspirer, leader and initiator,” and the role of the woman is to create the environment in which the man can thus act.<sup>12</sup> This order applies both inside and outside marriage.

*Max Thurian*

The Swiss theologian Max Thurian has presented the most thorough contemporary Protestant theology of celibacy. When he wrote *Marriage and Celibacy*<sup>13</sup> in 1955, he was a Reformed pastor and theologian as well as a founding member of the ecumenical, male, and all-celibate Taizé community in France. Throughout his life, Thurian has continued to fulfill his lifelong commitment to Taizé. In 1987, after becoming a Roman Catholic he was ordained as a priest.

Like both Barth (whom Thurian often quotes) and John Paul II, Thurian treats marriage and celibacy together. He believes that the theology of the one intertwines with the theology of the other; they cannot properly be studied separately.<sup>14</sup> The non-dialogical practice of the modern Protestant church in speaking almost exclusively of marriage has created an environment in which marriage appears as normal and ordinary. Since the coming of Christ, however, “nothing is normal or ordinary any longer.”<sup>15</sup> Marriage, says Thurian, involves a permanent, exclusive, and lifelong vow. Similarly,

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>13</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 23.

the vow of chastity and lifelong commitment to a religious community may be permanent and exclusive. In the time of the Old Testament, marriage and procreation were an obligation. Now in the New Covenant, since the birth of the Messiah, marriage is one of two ways to proclaim the unity of Christ and the church. Marriage proclaims this unity through the relationship of the husband and wife, celibacy proclaims it by the exclusive commitment of the celibate to Christ and his body. Nature, says Thurian, inclines to “free marriage” or polygamy, but Christian marriage is not merely a creation of nature; in Christ, marriage is a vocation from God. Celibacy is also a vocation, but unlike marriage, celibacy does not belong to the natural order. “In order that Christian marriage may be considered as a holy vocation and not just as a reality in the natural order to be blessed and sanctified, the call to religious celibacy for the kingdom of heaven’s sake must be sounded.”<sup>16</sup> According to Thurian, the foundation of the call to celibacy is the life of Jesus Christ. In him, the order of creation and law is fulfilled, and the ending of this world’s order, including marriage, is begun. In anticipation of the coming new order, believers “accept sacrifice, renunciation, discipline and asceticism” into their lives.<sup>17</sup> Celibacy is a sign reminding the believer and the church of the coming kingdom. Thurian reminds his readers that Ignatius’ *Letter to Polycarp*, called on those who could do so to remain chaste “for the honour of the Lord’s body.”<sup>18</sup> That is, they were to remain humbly celibate in respectful “imitation and glorification” of Christ’s celibacy.

For Thurian, the call to celibacy is a permanent vocation. Just as marriage vows are exclusive, permanent, and irrevocable, so are vows to celibacy. The call to celibacy

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 52.

signifies to the church the “absolute demands of Christ.” In Matt 19:12, Jesus illustrates the nature of celibacy by comparing it to the permanent conditions of birth defects or castration. Thurian asks, “What other reason can there be to justify Jesus’ use of the same word to describe eunuchs by birth or accident and celibates for the sake of the kingdom than that he wishes to point out the *permanent* nature of that state?”<sup>19</sup> In summary, notes Thurian, celibacy for the kingdom has three characteristics: it is voluntary, it requires a gift, and it signifies something unique. It is voluntary in that a man or woman exerts his or her will to choose celibacy, it is a gift in that it is an empowering grace available to any who ask for it, and it signifies the new dispensation in Christ.<sup>20</sup>

Thurian believes that Paul, in 1 Cor 7, counters the two contrary forces of “asceticism” and “wild libertinism” of the Corinthians by presenting marriage and celibacy as two legitimate options for believers. Paul recognizes two orders: that of nature and that of redemption. In nature’s order, it is neither good nor normal for man to be alone; in the order of redemption, it is good and normal for some men and women to remain celibate. Although Paul would like to see all the Corinthians enjoy the benefits of celibacy, he clearly recognizes that gifts vary and he in no way desires to remove their freedom. According to Thurian, when Paul states in 1 Cor 7:38 that “he who does not give [his virgin] in marriage will do better,” Paul is addressing only the specific situation in which a young woman is vowed to celibacy and has placed herself under the care of a reliable man. Paul says it is better for her to keep her vow, but due to the complexity of

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

the living situation—she could not live on her own and there were no celibate communities for her to join—she could marry without sin.

Thurian acknowledges that Paul prefers celibacy for the sake of ministry, but Thurian does not believe Paul considers celibacy to be an intrinsically superior state.<sup>21</sup> Paul's reasons for preferring celibacy are practical, not moral or spiritual. "In other words, the state of celibacy is not more favourable to salvation or to obedience in the Christian life."<sup>22</sup> The benefits of celibate living are two: a celibate man or woman can more fully engage in ministry, and he or she can "give himself entirely to intimacy with Christ." Thus, "in the sight of God and in relation to salvation and obedience, marriage and celibacy are two equally valid ways of life, although they involve different values and meanings."<sup>23</sup>

For Thurian, marriage, like celibacy, is a vocation, and as such, it is a gift. The Christian man or woman can identify these gifts in four ways: by recognizing the "interior witness of the Spirit," by observing the "circumstance of life," by choosing a vocation by faith, and by listening to the spiritual direction of the Christian community.<sup>24</sup> Acceptance of either gift is to be distinguished from the state of indecision or waiting. For Thurian, waiting for a marriage partner is different from accepting the lifelong vocation to celibacy. Finally, Thurian describes three meanings of Christian celibacy: the practical, the interior, and the theological. Practically, celibacy frees a person for fuller service to the church. Celibacy enables the Christian to have a completely unattached

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 68-78.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

love for men and women, and to devote him or herself to people's needs.<sup>25</sup> The interior meaning of celibacy is that the celibate has opportunity to focus entirely on pleasing the Lord in a singleness of concentration of one's whole being.<sup>26</sup> Theologically, Christian celibacy announces a new order. In this new order, marriage is no longer necessary, the church becomes one's family, the expectation of Christ's return is visibly declared, and the nature of the resurrection is exemplified.<sup>27</sup>

### *Major Themes in the Modern Protestant Theology of Celibacy*

The major themes of contemporary Protestant thought on celibacy found in Grenz, Barth, Thurian, and some others fall under four headings: 1) the relationship of marriage and celibacy, 2) the implications of Christ's celibacy, 3) the eschatological context of celibacy, and 4) theological motivations for celibacy. The latter requires more extensive treatment due to its centrality in the Protestant theology of celibacy.

### *The Relationship of Marriage and Celibacy*

The two most influential biblical passages that address celibacy, Mat 19: 3-12 and 1 Cor 7, also address marriage. Most contemporary Protestant treatments of celibacy mention marriage, but few thoroughly relate the two. Among these few are Grenz, Barth, and Thurian.<sup>28</sup> They consider marriage and celibacy as the two faces of human sexuality. This trio holds that the sexual complementarity of men and women constitutes

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 105-108.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 108-112.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 112-114.

<sup>28</sup> A notable Roman Catholic example of this practice is Schillebeeckx's two volumes: Schillebeeckx, *Celibacy*; E. Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

a fundamental feature of humanity. They also believe that celibacy must contain that complementarity, not erase it.

Two dissenting contemporary Protestant understandings of the relationship of sexuality to celibacy require further elaboration. According to Margaret Evening, in the New Testament era the historic interdependence of male and female began to be erased. Paul bluntly stated that in Christ “there is no difference . . . between male and female.”<sup>29</sup> The opposition of male and female becomes irrelevant in Christ, who is complete in himself. God, says Evening, reveals in Christ, the “Proper Man,” one who is freed from the bonds of male/female interdependence. Since the time of Christ, the believer may be called to transcend the biological functions of sexuality and in addition may be called to express the “man-woman polarity” in a single person. Evening turns to science to support this concept. She says, “Modern genetical research has taught us that nature recognizes a great range of intermediary types neither clearly male or female. Perhaps the arrival of the unisex is not altogether a joke. All human beings are a combination of both sexes.”<sup>30</sup> Evening’s understanding of celibacy implies that a married person expresses his or her biological maleness or femaleness, whereas a celibate person seeks (or at least may seek) to express an androgynous humanity.

Similarly, James Nelson is concerned that the idea that men and women have complementary natures binds them to culturally defined roles. God, he says, both contains and transcends sexual distinctions. Likewise, God intends humans to “become more fully human in [their] own androgynous capacities.”<sup>31</sup> All humans are capable of

---

<sup>29</sup> Gal 3:28

<sup>30</sup> Evening, *Who Walk Alone*, 128.

<sup>31</sup> Nelson, *Between Two Gardens: Reflections on Sexuality and Religious Experience*, 104.

both autonomy and dependence, both rationality and intuition, as well as the other traits typically designated as either male or female. “No individual,” says Nelson, “absolutely needs another of the opposite gender in order to be whole.”<sup>32</sup> Jesus’ own example affirms this. He was a whole, single person<sup>33</sup> whose eros was expressed in non-genital “intimacy and communion” that did not require complementarity through relationships with females.<sup>34</sup>

Grenz, Barth, Thurian, and various others would heartily disagree. In general, five major themes regarding the relationship of marriage to celibacy appear in contemporary Protestant writings. First, the Genesis account of the creation of a complementarity—a man and a woman—in the image of God leads to the conclusion that bonding is essential to every human person,<sup>35</sup> whether in marriage or in celibacy. Barth says marriage is the *telos* of male/female relationship; nevertheless, “the sphere of male and female is wider than that of marriage, embracing the whole complex of relations at the centre of which marriage is possible.”<sup>36</sup> Second, the creation of men and women in the image of the three-in-one unity called the Trinity indicates that God calls human beings to a unity in diversity that expresses itself in marriage as well as in celibate service to others. Third, God’s desire to live in covenant with humanity is a further theological

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Here Nelson assumes for the sake of his argument that Jesus was single although he believes Jesus could have been married and widowed.

<sup>34</sup> Nelson, *Between Two Gardens: Reflections on Sexuality and Religious Experience*, 104-105.

<sup>35</sup> Thurian does not discuss anything similar to Barth’s concept of fellow-humanity or Grenz’s concept of essential human incompleteness. This may be in part because he discusses only single-sex communal expressions of celibacy. Barth, on the other hand, mentions specifically that no true fellow-humanity can be lived in isolation from the opposite sex, Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 163.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 140.

resource for understanding marriage and celibacy.<sup>37</sup> Yahweh's wife is Israel. Christ's bride is the church. Marriage is a sign of these divine relationships;<sup>38</sup> the celibate's exclusive commitment to Christ is also a sign of these divine relationships. Fourth, Christ's work of redemption established a new order<sup>39</sup> in which marriage was moved from the center of the circle of God's salvific work related to human sexuality, and celibacy was placed beside marriage to form an ellipse.<sup>40</sup> Finally, God calls believers to salvation, obedience, sacrifice, and so forth. He also calls them to marriage or celibacy. Thus, these two acts can receive God's blessing and God's grace.

### *Implications of Christ's Celibacy*

Contemporary Protestant thought on celibacy gives surprisingly little attention to the theological import of Christ's celibacy. Almost every Protestant author writing on singleness or celibacy mentions Jesus' celibacy; nonetheless, these authors provide little developed comment.

Evening and Thurian, however, develop the theme somewhat. Thurian, for example considers Christ's celibacy to be "the valid foundation of the vocation of celibacy in the new era."<sup>41</sup> This foundation consists of three pieces. First, Christ's celibacy called into question the Jewish understanding of why there is disorder in

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>38</sup> Hsu emphasizes that marriage is no more normative than celibacy. Everyone, he says, is single for part of his or her life and singleness is a normal state. Hsu does not distinguish between the implications of creation order and those of redemption. Hsu, *Singles at the Crossroads*, 59, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Lee notes that in Gen 2 Adam's singleness preceded marriage, Lee, "The Church and the Unmarried," 48. John Paul II develops the relationship of original solitude to celibacy in the addresses "the Effective and Privileged Way of Continence," and "The 'Superiority' of Continence Does Not Devalue Marriage," in Pope John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 270-275.

<sup>40</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 49.

creation and nature, and how to solve this problem. For Jewish persons, notes Thurian, the law was the solution to the problem of man's "disordered passions;" for Christians, however, there was a new solution—the ideal of perfection found in the Sermon on the Mount and exemplified in Christ. In light of the inadequacy of the law and in light of this new solution, Jesus invited his followers to renunciations, and in particular, for some, the renunciation of marriage. Second, Christ's celibacy declares the coming end of the order of creation and nature and the inauguration of a new order, the kingdom of God. Thus, Thurian says to his readers, "While we wait for the return of Christ which will give us holiness, we have to live in the world; and, to signify and make real that expectation, we must accept sacrifice, renunciation, discipline and asceticism into our life."<sup>42</sup> Celibacy—Christ's and that of his followers—is a concrete instance of this discipline. Third, one way Jesus both modeled and taught what it was to be in the world but not of the world was by being celibate. That is, by being celibate he lived as a sign of God's heavenly kingdom. So today some of his followers, responding to his example and invitation, observe celibacy, "not in order to choose a *morally* better way, but because, in the new order of the end of time in which we live, God places in his Church the signs of the kingdom of heaven, of which celibacy is one." This they do, reflecting Ignatius' thought, "in honor of the Lord's flesh."<sup>43</sup>

In summary, contemporary Protestants find Christ's celibacy to be theologically significant in several ways. First, by giving men and women an alternative to marriage, Christ broke the mold of Jewish practice in his day. As Barth said, now "there are those for whom entrance into the married state is not only not commanded but temporarily or

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>43</sup> Ignatius, *Letter to Polycarp*, V, 2. Ibid., 51-52.

even permanently forbidden.”<sup>44</sup> The older theology of marriage was forced to make room for new understandings of how the fallen human passions can be held in check and how men and women made in the image of God the Redeemer can live out their redemption. That is, the import of Christ’s celibacy is neither the denunciation of marriage nor the institutionalization of celibacy. Rather, Christ’s celibacy removed the obligation to marry that existed in ancient Judaism. Second, according to Evening, Christ’s celibacy radically altered the older concept of human sexuality, opening the way for androgynous expression of humanity. She describes Christ as the “Proper Man” who is “the norm of the new realm.” Christ redefines human life by, in part, blurring the sharp duality of male and female.<sup>45</sup> Third, Christ’s celibacy proclaimed the inaugurated and coming kingdom of God in which there will be no marriage. Finally, Christ’s celibacy made it clear that the priority for believers is not the physical family, but the new family, the church. As Hsu noted, “Dignity and personhood come not from marriage and progeny but from identity within the kingdom of God.”<sup>46</sup>

### *Eschatological Context of Celibacy*

Jesus’ comment in Mat 22:30<sup>47</sup> places celibacy in an eschatological context. In the resurrection, there is no marriage. Most contemporary Protestant writings on celibacy do no more than quote this verse, nonetheless, some themes do appear. First,

---

<sup>44</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 144.

<sup>45</sup> Karl Barth would almost certainly disagree. He says, “The nature of man as created by God has not been changed by the dawn of the last time.” *Ibid.*, 145. He also specifically rejects anything that “necessarily entails effeminacy in the male or mannishness in the female.” Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 157.

<sup>46</sup> Hsu, *Singles at the Crossroads*, 35.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Mark 12:25 and Luke 20:35.

marriage is not eternal. It began in Eden and will end in the resurrection.<sup>48</sup> Second, ultimate human fulfillment comes from God alone, not from marriage.<sup>49</sup> Third, Paul emphasizes the present distress and the nearness of the eschaton. Thus, as Barth notes, “marriage stands under the shadow of this imminent end.”<sup>50</sup> For that reason, we live provisionally, with reservations, in either marriage or celibacy.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, as Thurian notes, celibacy reminds the Church of the need to avoid “being possessed by the attractions of the world.”<sup>52</sup> Because we live in the end time celibacy is an appropriate means of carrying out Christ’s purposes.

### *Theological Motivations for Celibacy*

The most prominent contemporary Protestant theme in the theology of celibacy relates to its theological motivations. What theological impulses bring men and women to choose celibacy? According to current Protestant thought, four are prominent.

*To manifest love for God.* The first, among the specifically theological motivations for celibacy is love for God. Some Protestant writers speak of celibacy as a voluntary commitment motivated by love for God. Rather than giving deep, exclusive love to another human being, some believers choose to give this profound love directly to God through celibacy. Thurian celebrates this love. He extols the privilege that celibate men and women have of giving themselves entirely to an intimacy with Christ in which

---

<sup>48</sup> See for example, Lum, *Single & Human*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 49, 105, 114-115.

<sup>50</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 147.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.

<sup>52</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 113.

deep love for God and a bond with God find unique expression.<sup>53</sup> This bond, says Thurian, mirrors two fundamental relationships mentioned in Scripture: the Old Testament relationship of Yahweh with his people—he is their faithful Lover and Husband; and the New Testament relationship of Christ as the bridegroom of the church. Barth notes that, whereas in the Old Testament, *marriage* provided men and women with a living example of the bond of God and his people, now, because of the coming of Christ and his celibate practice and teachings, *celibacy* can also provide men and women with an example of this bond.<sup>54</sup> This bond is, as Julia Duin describes it, a love that offers the whole self. It is “undivided ‘bridal’ love for Christ.”<sup>55</sup> J. Ansaldi describes the psychological mechanism that takes place in this commitment: the celibate redirects psychic/sexual energy from a human object to God. According to these Protestant authors, then, celibacy is a unique vehicle for exhibiting love for Christ.

Ada Lum expands this idea when she notes that celibates serve as an important witness to Christian married persons. Celibacy chosen as love for Christ reminds all believers that the primary love of one’s life must be love for God. The fact that marriage is eschatologically temporary (Mat 22:30) implies the existence of a deeper, eternal love-relationship with Christ.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, as Kristin Aune notes, the man or woman who chooses the celibate expression of love for Christ becomes a prophetic voice declaring to all that the primary human relationship is with God and eternity.

Christian singleness acts as a prophetic sign that ‘the time is short’ and Jesus is returning soon. Christian singles should model their singleness in such a way as to

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>54</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 143. See the same idea in Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 44.

<sup>55</sup> Duin, *Purity Makes the Heart Grow Stronger*, 132.

<sup>56</sup> Lum, *Single & Human*, 19.

remind the church and to warn the world that judgment is approaching. Jesus cautioned people against becoming like those for whom the future is meaningless and all that matters is marriage. In Luke 17:27 Jesus warns his followers not to be like those in the days of Noah who were ‘eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until . . . the flood came and destroyed all of them.’”<sup>57</sup>

*To follow a divine vocation.* The second theological motivation for celibacy that is mentioned by some contemporary Protestants is a divinely given call. The “call” or “vocation”, as understood by Protestants, typically implies a long-term, though not necessarily irrevocable, commitment. Protestant authors vary greatly, however, in their view of the nature of the vocational commitment to celibacy. For instance, on the one hand, Tim Stafford denies that celibacy is a special calling. Anyone, he says, can choose singleness, and he or she should expect neither a call to it nor a special empowerment in it.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, E. G. Knapp-Fisher reminds the Anglican Church that “the call to the unmarried state is a true and proper vocation” and that with the call comes the special grace to respond to it.<sup>59</sup> Margaret Evening concurs: divine empowerment accompanies the vow to remain single.<sup>60</sup> Thurian specifies yet further the definition of the call. Like marriage, he says, celibacy is a permanent, exclusive, and lifelong commitment.<sup>61</sup> Thurian sharply distinguishes celibacy from “mere waiting for marriage.”<sup>62</sup>

As is apparent, questions regarding the *call* to celibacy closely relate to questions regarding the *gift* of celibacy. Although most of the following authors would agree to

---

<sup>57</sup> Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* 118.

<sup>58</sup> Tim Stafford, *Sexual Chaos* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 145.

<sup>59</sup> Knapp-Fisher, "Celibacy," 144.

<sup>60</sup> Evening, *Who Walk Alone*, 113, 115.

<sup>61</sup> He bases this in part on Jesus’ comparison of eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom with the permanent condition of eunuchs by birth defect and castration. Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 55.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

define the “gift” of celibacy as a special divine empowerment for living the celibate life, there are at least three perspectives<sup>63</sup> on the relationship of the gift to celibacy.

1) Hadidian, for example, believes the gift of celibacy leads to the decision to remain celibate. That is, God first grants the gift, and then the Christian recognizes that he or she has the gift, and finally the Christian chooses the lifelong exercise of the gift. The gift in this case is a potential to be actualized. Nonetheless, Hadidian also notes that the gift is not necessary for choosing celibacy, and therefore, one may choose celibacy with or without the gift. Factors such as the fear of marriage or an aversion to persons of the opposite sex, says Hadidian, can lead one to remain single even though one does not have a special endowment of grace for celibacy.<sup>64</sup> 2) Thurian believes that anyone who asks for the gift of celibacy receives it, and that the gift is necessary for faithful celibate living.<sup>65</sup> This is also similar to the position of both Evening and Lee, who say that the gift comes with the vocation; that is, when one receives the call one also receives the gift. There is nonetheless a difference between Thurian and the other two writers. Thurian believes the call to celibacy is general and thus any believer can choose celibacy. Upon choosing it, that is, upon responding to the call, the gift is granted. Evening and Lee, however, see the call as specific to an individual man or woman, and see the gift as accompanying the call.<sup>66</sup> 3) Poirier, Aune, and Hsu deny that the gift, as traditionally understood, exists. Poirier makes his stand on an exegetical foundation. He says that in

---

<sup>63</sup> Wesley, although not a contemporary Protestant, deserves mention for his distinct view that all believers begin their Christian lives with the gift of celibacy, although most soon lose it through personal defects. Wesley, "Thoughts on a Single Life," 540.

<sup>64</sup> Hadidian, *A Single Thought: God's Word on Singleness*, 58-59. Duin seems to agree. Duin, *Purity Makes the Heart Grow Stronger*, 132.

<sup>65</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 55.

<sup>66</sup> Evening, *Who Walk Alone*, 121; Lee, "The Church and the Unmarried," 49.

1 Co 7:7 Paul refers to his own gift of prophecy and his observance of “prophetic celibacy;”<sup>67</sup> the verse does not refer to a separate gift of celibacy.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, for Poirier, there is no such thing as a gift of celibacy. Aune equates the gift of celibacy with the state of singleness. That is, she believes that single women and men, by virtue of the fact that they live in singleness, have the gift of celibacy; likewise, she says, married women and men, by virtue of the fact that they are married, have the gift of marriage.<sup>69</sup> Hsu agrees. In a chapter dedicated to this issue, he says that the gift of celibacy is not a special empowerment, it is not a spiritual gift, but rather it is simply another way of referring to the fact of singleness. Thus, he says, there are not two tiers of singles—those who have the gift and those who do not; all singles have the gift. As a result, there is no special divinely given propensity for singleness that points to a divine vocation to celibacy, nor is there a special empowerment for faithful celibate living. The power to live celibately is the same power available in Christ to all believers. Furthermore, the gift has no necessary permanence; being and staying single is a choice freely made at any time.<sup>70</sup>

These postures taken toward the issue of gift and calling come, in part, from the context of the authors. Thurian’s and E. G. Knapp-Fisher’s Anglican context reflects the ancient tradition of the church on two key points: 1) the call is general, consequently anyone can choose celibacy; 2) the empowerment is granted upon accepting the call. For these two men, the concept of vocation, especially as it relates to the vows associated

---

<sup>67</sup> Poirier draws from the discussion of prophetic celibacy in Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973).

<sup>68</sup> Poirier, "Celibacy and Charism in 1 Cor. 7:5-7," 7.

<sup>69</sup> Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* 110.

<sup>70</sup> Hsu, *Singles at the Crossroads*, 58-62.

with a religious order, lies in the background of their analysis. Hsu, Aune, and Lee on the other hand, from a more contemporary evangelical<sup>71</sup> perspective, readily reject or ignore tradition where they believe it conflicts with either their interpretation of Scripture or the needs of single men and women.

*To bond with the believer's new family, the church.* A few contemporary Protestant writers mention a third reason men and women choose celibacy: recognition of the church's role as spiritual family. Beginning with Christ, believers have a new family—the church. Hardesty notes that kinship ties are now secondary. The celibate Christian can choose the wider family of faith over blood ties.<sup>72</sup> For Thurian, it is because of this new family that marriage is no longer a requirement; the church can become the celibate's family where “human brotherhood and sonship of God are of a spiritual kind.”<sup>73</sup> The bonds of community essential to human nature were previously expressed primarily in the family; now they are available in the church. Grenz approaches this somewhat differently. Marriage, he says, is “intended to form a reflection of God as the One who loves. Specifically, the exclusive nature of divine love is presented in the marital bond. . . . Singleness, on the other hand, constitutes an equally powerful image of yet another dimension of the divine reality as the One who loves, namely, the universal, nonexclusive, and expanding nature of the divine love.”<sup>74</sup> Within

---

<sup>71</sup> R. V. Pierard defines evangelicalism as “the movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency.” R. V. Pierard, “Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984).

<sup>72</sup> Hardesty, “Being Single,” 16.

<sup>73</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 112-114.

<sup>74</sup> Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 195.

the church, both aspects of divine love are reflected: married couples reflect God's exclusive love, celibate women and men reflect God's nonexclusive love.

*To enjoy the practical benefits of celibacy as compared to marriage.* A final motivation that leads some men and women choose celibacy—its practical advantages over marriage—is mentioned by many Protestant authors. In fact, most contemporary Protestant authors writing on celibacy make mention of 1 Cor 7 and Paul's description of practical advantages of remaining single.<sup>75</sup> Because Paul's comments are relatively straightforward, there is wide agreement among authors regarding the general benefits related to the single life. The most frequently quoted passages from 1 Cor 7 are verse 28 and verses 32-35. Thurian's analysis captures well the thought of his fellow authors in two statements. First, "Celibacy permits a freedom and an unattachedness in the Christian life and in the ministry which make it very appropriate to the service of the Church."<sup>76</sup> That is, the demands of the Christian life lived to the full often work against the concerns of family life. Second, "Celibacy is well suited to the contemplative life."<sup>77</sup> That is, celibate men and women are able to offer undistracted devotion to the Lord (1 Cor 7:35).

### *Conclusion*

In general, the strength of contemporary Protestant work on celibacy is twofold: a willingness to treat the texts of the New Testament seriously, and a concern for the spiritual and psychological wellbeing of single men and women. Nonetheless, four

---

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, the following: Hadidian, *A Single Thought: God's Word on Singleness*, 19-75. Carolyn A. Koons and Michael J. Anthony, *Single Adult Passages: Uncharted Territories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 74-76. Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 147-148.

<sup>76</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 105.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

things are missing. First, although nearly all the potential features of a theology of celibacy can be found scattered like seeds among the Protestant writings, the writers exhibit a serious lack of awareness of each other's work. Second, Protestants writing on celibacy seldom acknowledge the philosophical, theological, and ecclesiastical framework that underpins their understanding of celibacy, and thus this framework is seldom available for critique. Third, too often the Protestant authors simply reword biblical statements without joining these statements to larger biblical or theological themes such as the nature of vocation, the divinely given role of the church in the world, and the purpose of sexuality in both the present and future kingdom. Finally, Protestants do not reflect sufficiently on the historical development of the theology of celibacy from the first to the present century.

Thurian, Grenz, Barth, and to some extent Hsu, are partial exceptions to these four weaknesses. Nonetheless, none of their writings openly reflect dependence on the broader church's work on celibacy. In addition, each of them has significant individual weaknesses. Grenz has taken one clear idea—"God has designed humans for bonding"—and constructed a theology of marriage on it with an appended theology of celibacy. As a result of this singular focus, his theology of celibacy lacks breadth. Barth's theology of celibacy is perhaps broadest in that he approaches celibacy from a number of theological perspectives; yet his treatment lacks thoroughness and unity. He intersperses comments on celibacy throughout his comments on marriage and often only hints at ideas that need fuller explanation. Hsu offers a wide-ranging understanding of celibacy, but his philosophical, theological, and historical framework seems more eclectic than systematic.

Thurian's work has many strengths yet it is hard to categorize. In evaluating Thurian's place among contemporary Protestant theologies of celibacy, it becomes apparent that his reflections could be placed in a separate category due to the Roman Catholic perspectives that appear in them—for example, his focus on celibate communities. He seems to have been on his way from the Anglican Church and towards Catholicism when he wrote *Marriage and Celibacy*, even though he was not ordained as a Catholic priest until some thirty years later. Thurian's work often seems broadest and most developed at those very points where he is drinking from the Roman Catholic, or at least the Anglo-Catholic, well.

In conclusion, there is no fully developed Protestant theology of celibacy, much less competing Protestant theologies of celibacy. The work of producing such a theology remains yet to be done. Therefore, there is room for the evaluation and even the partial appropriation of the thorough theology of celibacy of John Paul II for Protestant thought and life in the twenty-first century.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Foundations of John Paul II's Theology of Human Sexuality

During his lifetime, Pope John Paul II wrote thousands of pages and spoke to many audiences around the world. His prodigious output sprang from deep and hard-won theological, pastoral, and philosophical convictions. Only a tiny part of his output specifically addresses his theology of celibacy, yet that part is a thread in a complex, integrated pattern of thought. One may easily misunderstand John Paul II. In order to understand him, one must understand something of his larger conceptual framework. Thus, those who acquaint themselves with his pattern of thought will more readily see the richness of his theology of celibacy.

*The Theology of the Body* contains the text of 129 weekly general audiences given at the Vatican by John Paul II between September 1979 and November 1984 that contain the premiere expression of his theology of celibacy. This chapter will look into John Paul II's life through three important windows that reveal the development of his thinking on celibacy. First, his home and country background in addition to his formal and informal education will be examined. Second, the chapter will review two of his major works: *Love and Responsibility*, and *The Acting Person*. Finally, the chapter will analyze his relationship to Max Scheler, especially in the light of John Paul II's book, *An Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethic on the Basis of the System of Max*

*Scheler*.<sup>1</sup> Each window is important if one is to understand John Paul II's theological personalism as applied to human sexuality in general and to virginity in particular.

### *Influences on John Paul II's Thought*

The thinking of John Paul II typically draws from the confluence of three streams of his life: his context, his formal education, and his experience of life.

#### *His Home and Country*

John Paul II's context is the Roman Catholicism of Poland blended with Polish national and cultural identity. Karol Wojtyla was born in 1920 into an environment that was ready to receive and train him deeply in all that it is to be a Roman Catholic Christian. His parents' strong relationship and their faithful practice of Catholicism nurtured him. After his mother's death when he was eight and the death of his only sibling, an older brother, when Karol was eleven, he both prayed and played with his father. Nine years later, his father died, and Wojtyla left alone.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the views about life and sexuality that had been given him in his home corresponded to a broader network that included school, friends, community, and nation with Roman Catholicism at the heart of it all. In 1939, Polish independence ended due to the invasion by Nazi Germany. Six years later, the Red Army pushed out the Germans and stayed in power until 1989. Life under totalitarian rule taught Wojtyla much about the need to affirm the

---

<sup>1</sup> This work has been translated into Spanish, German, and Italian, but not into English. See footnote 26 on page 876 in George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999). The edition cited in this dissertation is Karol Wojtyla, *Max Scheler Y La Ética Cristiana*, trans. Gonzalo Haya, *Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, Chap. 1 passim.

dignity and freedom of persons, the resilience of Roman Catholicism, and the importance of social solidarity.

### *His Formal Education*

Wojtyla's formal education was in drama, theology, and philosophy. Throughout his teenage years he had a great interest in drama. During high school he was tutored in both Polish dramatic literature and the art of acting; later he briefly studied drama at the Jagiellonian University of Krakow prior to its closure during the Nazi occupation.<sup>3</sup> During the occupation, Wojtyla's formal theological training began when he became a student for the priesthood in a clandestine seminary. Later, from 1946-1948 he traveled to Rome and studied Thomistic theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Thomas Aquinas (also known as the Angelicum) under the renowned Thomist, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. In his dissertation, *The Doctrine of Faith According to St. John of the Cross*,<sup>4</sup> Wojtyla joins the attempt of Garrigou-Lagrange and others to properly understand the relation of St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross; that is the relation of the dogmatic and the mystical.<sup>5</sup> For St. John of the Cross, the experience of God in this life is made possible by faith. God is experienced as a person "in a bare way, without any

---

<sup>3</sup> Wojtyla's interest in poetry and drama continued through many years. The same year he published *Love and Responsibility* he published *The Jeweler's Shop*, a play in which three couples explore their marriage relationships in light of their relationship to God. George Huntston Williams says Wojtyla wrote *The Jeweler's Shop* "in order to make his points [made in *Love and Responsibility*] in the modality of the living word." George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), 162.

<sup>4</sup> The original text bears the title, *Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce*. It is available in English as: Karol Wojtyla, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, trans. Jordan Aumann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, trans. Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 46.

emotional content,”<sup>6</sup> and without intellectual content even though faith is “the union of the soul (that is the intellect) with God.”<sup>7</sup> Wojtyla sought to understand what exactly John of the Cross meant when he spoke of experiencing God through faith. A subject-centered phenomenology appears as an undercurrent in this dissertation.<sup>8</sup> Like God, human persons are essentially subjects, and must not be treated as objects. Furthermore, knowledge of God and knowledge of a human person occur in an encounter that can be phenomenologically analyzed.

At the Angelicum Wojtyla also deepened his understanding of the possibilities in Aquinas’s thought for connecting this subjective knowledge with an ontology of the human person.<sup>9</sup> According to Aquinas, the human mind exhibits some qualities essentially unrelated to matter, the first among which is the intellect, an immaterial power.<sup>10</sup> The intellect expresses the rational nature and functions with the will in seeking its proper end: the good, and in particular, the good of existence. Wojtyla develops this

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>7</sup> Wojtyla, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Gerald McCool notes that categories used by Wojtyla in *Faith According to St. John of the Cross* are more traditionally Thomistic than Wojtyla’s later writing upon his return from Rome when he sought to integrate his theology more firmly with concrete human experience. The change would be toward “a metaphysics whose starting point was man as a unique free subject.” Gerald A. McCool, “The Theology of John Paul II,” in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, ed. John M. McDermott (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993), 36.

<sup>9</sup> Rocco Buttiglione notes that in *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla intended to “create an organic synthesis of ontology and phenomenology.” Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 83. Jean-Guy Page notes that John Paul II’s understanding of the human body/soul is specifically an addition to the Thomistic anthropology. That is, it is founded on Aquinas but modified by John Paul II’s own deep examination of the embodied person, especially in the *Theology of the Body*. Jean-Guy Page, “La Pensée De Karol Wojtyla Sur La Relation Homme-Femme,” in *Karol Wojtyla: Filósofo, Teólogo, Poeta*, ed. Pietro Rossano (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1984), 264.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas S. Hibbs, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), vii.

ontology by amplifying it in light of contemporary Continental philosophical concerns;<sup>11</sup> that is, he adds a deep exploration of human experience and consciousness.<sup>12</sup> For example, he refuses to focus simply on nature and the teleological ethical arguments, but rather includes in his system the roots of ethics in human experience.<sup>13</sup> Gerald McCool even makes the following claim: “Wojtyla’s later Thomism had become a philosophy centered upon the dignity of the conscious self-determining agent and, through the self-giving love made possible by that dignity, on the community formed by man’s participation in the lives of other persons. The older Thomisms, as Wojtyla saw it, could no longer meet the needs of modern man because they could not do full justice to these vital elements of human experience.”<sup>14</sup>

Later when Wojtyla again attended the Jagiellonian University, he studied philosophy for a second doctorate, writing his *Habilitationsschrift* on *An Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethic on the Basis of the System of Max*

---

<sup>11</sup> Adrian J. Reimers, "The Thomistic Personalism of Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)," in *Atti Del IX Congresso Tomistico Internazionale, 6, Studi Tomistici; 45* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), 365.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald Modras, "The Moral Philosophy of Pope John Paul II," *Theological Studies* 41 (1980): 685.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.: 686. For example, John Conley notes that in his 1981 apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II opposes contraception not so much based specifically on natural law, as based on the internal contradiction and denial of the whole truth of the body. John J. Conley, "The Philosophical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II: A Response," in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, ed. John M. McDermott (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993), 27. For John Paul II this truth of the body stems from human experience as well as revelation.

<sup>14</sup> McCool, "The Theology of John Paul II," 38. McCool also notes that “Wojtyla can be numbered among the late twentieth century Thomists who . . . have made it their aim to expand and, if need be, revise Thomistic metaphysics by centering it on the knowledge of the individual conscious subject derived from philosophical reflection on interpersonal activity.” McCool, "The Theology of John Paul II," 53. Philippe Jobert prefers to say that John Paul II is not a Thomist. The striking emphasis of John Paul II, says Jobert, is the internal and subjective; the emphasis of Aquinas is external and objective. Philippe Jobert, "Iniciación a La Filosofía De Juan Pablo II," *Revista de Filosofía* 18, no. 53 (1985): 223, 230.

*Scheler*.<sup>15</sup> Scheler added to Wojtyla's understanding of the human person that is a prominent theme throughout Wojtyla's twenty-two years as professor of ethics at the Lublin University,<sup>16</sup> providing the foundation of his 1969 philosophical treatise, *The Acting Person*.<sup>17</sup>

What springs from Wojtyla's mixture of St. John of the Cross, St. Thomas, and Scheler is a Christian existential personalism.<sup>18</sup> The richness of full human experience, ranging from faith to shame, is open to phenomenological analysis. These experiences are all integrated into an ontological reality,<sup>19</sup> a person<sup>20</sup> who is the *imago dei* and therefore should never be turned into an object. "The person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end."<sup>21</sup> By God's design, the person exists for his or her own sake, and is both free and responsible.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the human person is designed for self-giving in love; this

---

<sup>15</sup> As mentioned above, this work is not translated into English. The Spanish translation used in this dissertation is Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*.

<sup>16</sup> Williams speaks of the "Transcendental Thomist Personalism of the Catholic University of Lublin." Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Simpson lauds the philosophical and ethical foundation on which Wojtyla stands. "At all events at the core of the book [*Love and Responsibility*] is a principle of ethics that has a virtually unlimited application." Peter Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2001), 47. Simpson's twenty page analysis of *Love and Responsibility* is insightful.

<sup>19</sup> Simpson summarizes the claims about the person that underlie Wojtyla's thought. "They are: that the person is an objective reality in the world, that he has a unique interior life that revolves around truth and goodness, that he possesses the power of free self-determination." Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> In *Love and Responsibility*, the word "person" plays a key role. Williams gives a helpful analysis of the various Polish terms relating to person and their meanings. Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 153.

<sup>21</sup> Kant defines morality only in terms of going beyond the categorical imperative. Wojtyla believes natural law exists and that it implies objective moral values. Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> John F. Crosby, "John Paul II's Vision of Sexuality and Marriage: The Mystery of "Fair Love"," in *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His Contribution to Catholic Thought*, ed. Geoffrey Gneuchs (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 54.

too reflects the image of God. The positive statement of the norm is similar: “the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.”<sup>23</sup>

### *His Informal Education*

Wojtyla's *informal education* also significantly affected his thought. As a priest for a university oriented parish, Wojtyla served as confessor for many young people and married couples, and he gained knowledge of the sexual lives of his parishioners through times of spiritual counsel. This contact and his other parish responsibilities encouraged him to form significant relationships with a group of couples, families, and unmarried persons<sup>24</sup> that he called his *Srodowisko*.<sup>25</sup> The members of this group shared their lives intimately with him over many years. Wojtyla began writing about human sexuality as a result of the challenges faced by his *Srodowisko*, his own challenges in being committed to celibacy, as well as the challenges faced by fellow celibates. Also, a special group of university friends formed around Wojtyla. Over time as the members of the group married and had children, Wojtyla was given privileged access to the intimate joys and struggles of their lives as sexual beings.<sup>26</sup> The sexual revolution that took place in Poland in the years following World War II seemed, in part, to be a response to the popular idea that traditional Roman Catholicism denigrated sexual love. In addition, the communist state seemed intent on promoting sexual experimentation and encouraging the growing

---

<sup>23</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 41.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II continued to be involved with this group of around 200 throughout his papacy.

<sup>25</sup> Weigel notes that this hard to translate Polish word means something like “environment” or “milieu.” Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 98.

<sup>26</sup> Crosby notes that “as archbishop of Krakow, he set up an institute for marriage and family, as he did later in Rome in the first years of his pontificate.” Crosby, “Vision of Sexuality,” 53.

divide in people's minds between sexual activity and procreation.<sup>27</sup> In such a context, Wojtyla knew that he must not simply lay down rules for his parishioners; rather he must thoroughly validate these rules. His task was "not only to command or forbid but to justify, to interpret, to explain."<sup>28</sup>

### *Scheler and Husserl*

Max Scheler was an important influence on Wojtyla's philosophy of ethics and the person. Scheler deepened Wojtyla's application of phenomenology,<sup>29</sup> enabling him to use it as a method while rejecting it as a system.<sup>30</sup> Scheler limits ethical knowledge to events in which a person encounters an object with either attraction or avoidance. Thus for him, a person is a "place where values are made manifest."<sup>31</sup> Wojtyla accepts this aspect of Scheler's understanding of the person but adds to it the ontological consistency that comes from his Thomistic understanding of the character of the person. That is, the phenomenological description of the ethical experience is the same for Scheler and Wojtyla, but Wojtyla insists that actions also manifest the nature of the person. In 1953, when Karol Wojtyla presented his doctoral dissertation on the ethic of Max Scheler, Edmund Husserl had been dead some fifteen years, and Max Scheler dead some twenty-

---

<sup>27</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 140-141.

<sup>28</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 16.

<sup>29</sup> As Buttiglione states, Wojtyla "wants to begin from man rather than from dead objectivity." Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 87.

<sup>30</sup> Williams seems to accuse Wojtyla of shoddy scholarship in a number of philosophical areas treated in *Love and Responsibility*. It is noteworthy, however, that Wojtyla's purpose in the book seems more popular than scholarly. Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 157. Andrew N. Woznicki upholds Wojtyla as a scholar. The 127 item bibliography of Wojtyla's work prior to 1978 also demonstrates his written output. Andrew N. Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyla's Existential Personalism* (New Britain, Ct.: Mariel Publications, 1980), 73-80.

<sup>31</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 58.

five years. Nonetheless, phenomenology<sup>32</sup> was one of the most prominent philosophies in Europe. Even from today's perspective, "of the major philosophical movements of the twentieth century phenomenology has been one of the most influential, and . . . it is still far from dead."<sup>33</sup> No small part of its continuing influence comes from its impact on the thought of John Paul II, spiritual leader of one-sixth of the world's population.

The phenomenology Wojtyla discovered in Max Scheler was an expansion of Husserl's narrower, purer phenomenology. Husserl understood himself to be in rebellion against all previous philosophy. "Most recently," he confessed, "the need for an utterly original philosophy has re-emerged, the need of a philosophy that—in contrast to the secondary productivity of renaissance philosophies—seeks by radically clarifying the sense and the motifs of philosophical problems to penetrate to that primal ground on whose basis those problems must find whatever solution is genuinely scientific."<sup>34</sup> Husserl's suggested a philosophy that amounted to a "science of consciousness." Assuming the validity of logic, and bracketing all questions about the existence of the external world (or even the existence of the observer), he examines with great rigor the experience of phenomena which show up in consciousness. Rather than pursuing this examination either with a traditional philosophy distorted sometimes by its naturalism and other times by its skepticism, or tainted by psychology with its necessary ontology of

---

<sup>32</sup> For a valuable and accessible overview of phenomenology see: Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> Paul Gorner, *Twentieth-Century German Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>34</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Pure Phenomenology, Its Method and Its Field of Investigation," in *Husserl, Shorter Works*, ed. Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 10.

subjects in relation to an external world, Husserl proposes a “phenomenological reduction” capable of providing indubitable reports of consciousness.<sup>35</sup>

Scheler added a significant feature to phenomenology: the validity of values. Scheler noted the prominent role values play in the thoughts and actions of persons. Consequently, in Scheler’s thought pure logic stands alongside pure values, and just as reason appeals to axioms of logic, so emotional perception appeals to axioms of ethics.<sup>36</sup> So, like an ethical version of the law of non-contradiction, one can value the same thing both positively and negatively only if different aspects of the thing are in consideration. Furthermore, the values that manifest themselves in human emotions are ubiquitous in humanity both in the past and present; therefore, phenomenology can look for an intelligible order in the variety of human values. What appears as a result is like a “palette daubed with paint,” that when seen from a correct distance and with proper understanding, may assume the interconnection of a grandiose painting, or at least of the fragments of one. In this painting, one will be able to see mankind, mixed as it is, beginning to take possession, through love, feeling, and action, of a reality that is independent both of mankind and of its own manifestations; furthermore, one will be able to see mankind draw this reality into its inner existence.<sup>37</sup> And just as there are primary

---

<sup>35</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, ed. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 14.

<sup>36</sup> Manfred S. Frings, *Max Scheler: A Concise Introduction in the World of a Great Thinker* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1965), 49-50.

<sup>37</sup> Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values; a New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, trans. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 296.

colors so are there primary values: love, community, and human solidarity. The greatest among them, said Scheler, is love.<sup>38</sup>

It is not hard to see why some Catholics were taken with Scheler's ethical system. For him, values are "objective, unchanging, a priori, non-formal, and objects of emotions and feelings rather than reason."<sup>39</sup> In fact, for a time, although of "partly Jewish origins," Scheler became a professing Catholic; however, he later lapsed.<sup>40</sup> As a young philosopher, Edith Stein was moved towards her own conversion, in part, by hearing Max Scheler speak on religion and phenomenology.<sup>41</sup> She also joined Scheler and Roman Ingarden in resisting Husserl's turn away from realism.<sup>42</sup> Wojtyla, then, was in good company in adapting certain aspects of Schelerian phenomenology to complement his realism. As it would turn out, Scheler and Wojtyla's analysis of human persons would coincide in several features: 1) Humans are communal, and the concept of person must involve community; 2) there is an absolute order of values; 3) love is a deep spiritual act which takes persons furthest from the animal and deepest into spirit; and 4) conscience

---

<sup>38</sup> Alfons Deeken, *Process and Permanence in Ethics: Max Scheler's Moral Philosophy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> M. J. Inwood, "Max Scheler," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> See, Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 126. Near the end of his life Scheler made the following comments regarding Western monotheism: "We reject all these conceptions on philosophical grounds. We must do so for the simple reason that we deny the basic presupposition of theism: a spiritual, personal God omnipotent in his spirituality. For us the basic relationship between man and the Ground of Being consists in the fact that his Ground comprehends and realizes itself directly in man, who, both as spirit and as life, is but a partial mode of the eternal spirit and drive." Max Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 92.

<sup>41</sup> Waltraud Herbstrith, *Edith Stein: A Biography*, trans. Bernard Bonowitz (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 46-49.

<sup>42</sup> If Sokolowski describes typical phenomenology today, then this turn away from realism was largely defeated. He says, "Phenomenology is the science that studies truth. It stands back from our rational involvement with things and marvels at the fact that there is disclosure, that things do appear, that the world can be understood, and that we in our life of thinking serve as datives for the manifestation of things." Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 185.

must involve authority.<sup>43</sup> Finally, Wojtyla would adopt much of Scheler's positive evaluation of the role of shame in the life of love.

### *Love and Responsibility*

Wojtyla's first major book, *Love and Responsibility*,<sup>44</sup> expressed his life-long interest in the human person, and especially in human love. The work draws from all of the above-mentioned streams to present a detailed understanding of it.<sup>45</sup> Published in 1960, this work was recognized as important long before Wojtyla became pope.<sup>46</sup> Three Polish editions were published between 1960-1965. A French edition with a foreword by Henri de Lubac appeared in 1965, followed by Spanish and Italian editions in 1969. An English translation was published in 1981.<sup>47</sup> During the years immediately following the writing of *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla further contributed to the Catholic dialogue regarding the human person through his participation in Vatican II and especially in the production of two of its documents: *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes*.<sup>48</sup>

### *Chapter One: The Person and the Sexual Urge*

*The sexual urge and using others as a means.* Wojtyla begins *Love and Responsibility* by defining the verb "to use" in order to demonstrate its relationship to

---

<sup>43</sup> John H. Nota, "Max Scheler and Karol Wojtyla," in *Existential Personalism, Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Assoc; V 60* (Washington: American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*.

<sup>45</sup> The intended audience for the book seems to be Catholic young people and young married couples. Wojtyla does not openly engage other Christian ethical systems of sexuality, although he is quite thorough in dealing with many secular views. Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 154.

<sup>46</sup> John F. Crosby notes that Wojtyla's ability to show theological and philosophical initiative has continued throughout his papacy; this is a rare trait for a pope. Crosby, "Vision of Sexuality."

<sup>47</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 83.

<sup>48</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 164-169.

persons and the sexual urge. To “use,” he says, means to employ something for an end and thus to subordinate it to an agent.<sup>49</sup> Humans make use of many things in the world, but it is clear, he says, that “a person must not be merely the means to an end for another person.”<sup>50</sup> Using a person instrumentally is to commit an act of violence against the person; loving a person is the opposite of using a person. When love is present, rather than one person seeing another as a means to an end, two persons join in seeking a common aim, a common good. For Wojtyla, love eliminates utilitarian motives. Love subordinates itself to the good that the other person represents and to the end they both seek.<sup>51</sup>

Wojtyla notes that many people believe that the verb “to use” can have a more positive meaning of “to enjoy.” Would it not be legitimate to seek pleasure for oneself and others, that is, if both were seeking enjoyment? Utilitarianism responds, “Yes.” Seeking maximum pleasure for the maximum number of people is utilitarianism’s motto. This motto, says Wojtyla, inevitably leads to simple egoism. Even if a principle of the “harmonization of egoisms” is applied, utilitarianism eventually reduces to egoism. For if men and women limit their own pleasure so that more people can have more pleasure, they will do so only as long as such self-limitation gives them pleasure. Love, argues Wojtyla, cannot stand on such a weak foundation. Love requires a personalist principle:

---

<sup>49</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 25. In this work, Wojtyla seldom cites the underlying sources of his ideas. The English edition includes notes produced after the initial publication of the book; this is obvious from the frequent references to *The Acting Person* published in 1969. On occasion, he refers to Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and a few others in the text or in the notes, but his obvious indebtedness to many others goes without specific mention. His frequent citation of Latin terms also carries within it implicit reference to the Church’s development of these ideas.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 26. In footnote 6 he notes his revision of Kant.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

“the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.”<sup>52</sup> The New Testament command to love others corresponds to this love between persons; thus the personalist principle and the command to love interpenetrate each other. Combined, they can affirm the need for a justice that concedes “to each human being that which he or she can rightfully claim by virtue of being a person.”<sup>53</sup> It is in this context that sexual ethics must be constructed.

*Interpretation of the sexual urge.* The human sexual urge is universal,<sup>54</sup> human sexual expression is particular. Unlike animals, notes Wojtyla, men and women can control their actions related to their sexual urge. The urge occurs involuntarily, but the actions are voluntary. Both psychological and physiological differences exist between men and women so as to form a complementary relationship and an attraction. One possible manifestation of the sexual urge occurs when two self-determining, responsible individuals choose to love each other and then to join bodily in expression of that love. The move towards such love is a natural tendency formed from the material of the sexual urge.

Wojtyla places great emphasis on the purpose of the sexual urge. Its obvious largest purpose, he argues, is the continued existence of the species. “Now, existence is the first and basic good for every creature.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the basis of the sexual urge goes beyond the realm of biology to that of philosophy. If then “the sexual urge has an

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 43-44. He notes here the Augustine’s distinction between *uti* and *frui*.

<sup>54</sup> Wojtyla does not intend to deny that persons exist who have no sexual urge. Rather, he means that the sexual urge is the rule, not the exception, and that it readily influences all the varieties of relationships between men and women.

<sup>55</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 51.

existential character, if it is bound up with the very existence of the human person—that first and most basic good—then it must be subject to the principles which are binding in respect to the person.”<sup>56</sup> This love between men and women flows through the sexual urge, and procreation is central to that urge.

For Wojtyla, the biological explanation of the sexual urge gives way to the philosophical, which in turn gives way to the theological. God’s work of creation is continual. A person has no power either to bring about or to sustain his or her own existence; consequently, procreation by humans is a collaborative work with God. Bodily procreation alone could not give existence to the “spiritual and immortal soul”<sup>57</sup> of a person. In fact, Wojtyla asserts, in every case of conception, “the love of the Creator decided that a new person would come into existence in the mother’s womb.”<sup>58</sup> Philosophically, procreation is an existential act foundational to the continuance of the human race; theologically, procreation is co-creation with God. Nonetheless, it would be just as wrong to take a puritanical posture that sees the duty of procreation as having the regrettable side effect of sensual pleasure, as it would be to react to the puritanical posture with a “libidinic” posture that understands the sexual urge as solely a drive for pleasure. Similarly, says Wojtyla, it would be incorrect to allow the problems of overpopulation to push to one side the procreative nature of the sexual urge. Puritanical, libidinic, and demographic approaches to sexuality all end up as utilitarianism—using a person as a means to an end. They do not solve the main problem: “how to use

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 56.

sex[uality] without treating the person as an object for use.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, for Wojtyla, two understandings are necessary. First, the single, united aim of the marital union involves a three-level hierarchy. The primary end of conjugal relations is *procreatio*, the secondary end is *mutuum adiutorium*, and the tertiary end is *remedium concupiscentiae*.<sup>60</sup> Second, each level of this hierarchy functions within the personalist principle and its corollary, the command of love. Love rules the three ends of marriage. In the next chapter, he describes his understanding of the nature of this love.

### *Chapter Two: The Person and Love*

*Metaphysical analysis of love.* Love, notes Wojtyla, means a great variety of things. Love can even be considered in its cosmic aspect as a *telos* at work in nature. Wojtyla, however, undertakes a metaphysical analysis of love between a man and a woman to reveal several important aspects of love.

Love is an attraction. When one person attracts another it means that one regards another as a good. This is what a man usually means when, for instance, he says he likes a woman. Love as attraction involves cognitive, emotional, and voluntary reactions. The process is something like this: based on the sexual urge the woman (for instance) learns some details about a certain man, begins to feel emotionally drawn to him, and wills to become involved in his life. In this process, several dangers present themselves. Some individuals focus on sensual attraction and ignore the person and the spiritual nature of

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 60-61. Here, again, he notes that he is calling on Augustine’s distinction between *uti* and *frui*.

<sup>60</sup> That is, “first of all the means of continuing existence, secondly a conjugal life for man and woman, and thirdly a legitimate orientation for desire.” Ibid., 66-67. Sexual pleasure, mentioned specifically in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as established by the Creator as a part of the generative function, receives almost no attention in *Love and Responsibility*. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 567.

the attraction. Others too readily give themselves to the emotional aspect of attraction without due concern for the truthfulness of the objective basis they claim for the attraction. Truth about the person is essential for attraction to be valid. Furthermore, “the attraction on which this love is based must originate not just in a reaction to visible and physical beauty, but also in a full and deep appreciation of the beauty of the person.”<sup>61</sup>

Love is also a desire. Because humans are limited, they have need of others. For Wojtyla, the complementarity of the sexes involves men and women in a search for wholeness in relationship. Love as attraction occurs when one is attracted to a good that is seen in another; love as desire sees a good which it lacks and wants. Desire, of course, can be separated from love. Jesus refers to this in Matthew 5:28 when he says, “Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”<sup>62</sup> Love transforms desire because love respects the person. Simple desire seeks satisfaction, love as desire seeks a person.<sup>63</sup> As Wojtyla sees it, the risk of utilitarianism is high when dealing with attraction and desire because of the ease with which they may be experienced apart from love. Nonetheless, both attraction and desire form part of the essence of love between men and women.

Love is goodwill. The selflessness and benevolence of goodwill enrich both love as attraction and love as desire. Goodwill, argues Wojtyla, has the power to perfect both its subject and its object. “It is this that makes married life so extraordinarily rich.”<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 80.

<sup>62</sup> Most often, in mentioning the Bible as quoted by Wojtyla, I have preferred to retain the wording used by Wojtyla so as to reflect as much of his tone as possible.

<sup>63</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 81-82.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

Reciprocity is very important in this regard. Goodwill, attraction, and desire find completion only when they exist between two persons. Unrequited love can be very painful, and it is doomed to stagnation and death. What love desires most of all is the return of love from the beloved. When reciprocity characterizes the couple's love, there is peace and joy rather than jealousy.

Betrothed love is the capstone of love between men and women, and it has a character quite distinct from those aspects of love discussed above. At the heart of betrothed love is a paradox: the giving of oneself as a possession even though one person cannot possess another. A thing can be possessed, a person cannot. Yet what is naturally and physically impossible is morally possible. "The fullest, the most uncompromising form of love consists precisely in selfgiving [sic], in making one's inalienable and non-transferable 'I' someone else's property."<sup>65</sup> It is in the context of betrothed love alone that sexual giving of oneself relates properly to the personalist norm: "the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love."

*The psychological analysis of love.* Wojtyla argues that emotions which reflect values accompany sense impressions. That is, emotion reveals a value found in a sensed object. Memories, thoughts, and the imagination can also reveal values through the emotions attached to them. Since it is the nature of men and women to have a sexual urge, and since that urge seeks complementary completion in the opposite sex, encounters with individuals of the opposite sex can carry an intense emotional charge called sensuality. For Wojtyla, "this orientation of sensuality is a matter of spontaneous

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 97.

reflexes. In this form it is not primarily an evil thing but a natural thing.”<sup>66</sup> The problem arises when sensuality causes one person to view another simply as a means to a valued end—sexual gratification.

The first step toward a valid solution to this problem is also, like sensuality, natural to humans; it is called sentiment.<sup>67</sup> When the entire person is in view rather than just the person’s body, a powerful affection often arises between a man and a woman. According to Wojtyla, while sensuality focuses on desire for the body, sentiment focuses on affection for the person. The affection of sentiment expresses itself in a desire for proximity, intimacy, and exclusive access. Sensuality, however, is still likely to make itself felt in a couple’s sentimental relationship. Females, says Wojtyla, tend to cling more tenaciously to sentiment at the same time that their male friends are recognizing that sentiment is often a cover for sensuality. “Sensuality is more readily awakened in the man, more readily crystallizes in his consciousness and in this attitude.”<sup>68</sup> A problem with sentiment is its tendency to exaggerate the value of the other. As truth is sacrificed sentiment becomes focused on its own idealized creation rather than on the real subject. Often when the reality overtakes the ideal, disillusionment and even hatred replace sentiment. Sentiment, then, is adequate only as a first step in the relationship between a man and a woman.

Love is the fullest answer to this difficulty, but love must integrate truth and freedom. The sweeping forces of sensuality and sentiment occur in persons, and yet persons are also characterized by thought (truth) and volition (freedom). These latter

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>67</sup> For Wojtyla, sentiment seems to mean something like “being in love.”

<sup>68</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 111.

characteristics enable men and women to integrate love, sensuality, and sentiment. “The process of integrating love relies on the primary elements of the human spirit—freedom and truth.”<sup>69</sup> Truth in relationships is both experiential (sensual and sentimental) and objective. Thus the subject, by introspection, can discover the truth of love no less than emotional commitment. Only such objective evaluation, by self-examination, will discover the truth of the nature of the beloved.

*The ethical analysis of love.* In addition to his metaphysical and psychological analyses of love, Wojtyla examines love’s ethics. He begins by lamenting that contemporary ethics is inclined towards “situationism” in which each individual experience has priority over both virtue and the obligation to seek the true good. Situationism forgets that “love in the psychological sense must be subordinated in man to love in the ethical sense.”<sup>70</sup> However, if Christian morality is the starting point, then love as a virtue (and thus as ethical) is primary.

Love as a virtue distinguishes between the “value of the person as such” and the “particular values present in a person.”<sup>71</sup> Sexual values found in a person must always rate below the value of the person. Sensual and sentimental values springing from the sexual urge must be subject to the value of the person qua person. Love unites the value of the person with his or her sexual values in the person while recognizing the priority of the personalist norm. According to Wojtyla, with the will to love one can control the urges of sensuality and emotionalism as well as exert the power of choice regarding a life’s companion.

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 122.

As Wojtyła mentioned previously, in betrothed love a person wills to become the property of another, and thus to repudiate autonomy. “Love proceeds by way of renunciation.”<sup>72</sup> True betrothed love is strikingly different from the idea that marriage simply involves a woman submitting sexually to a man.<sup>73</sup> Rather, says Wojtyła, each belongs to the other, and sexual intercourse is an expression of the belonging. Sexuality is the context of betrothal, not its content. In betrothal, the focus is on the person—the person as both giving and receiving.

A person is by nature free to choose, and in betrothal, choice plays a central role. Choice is a responsibility; love and responsibility go together. Wojtyła argues that when a man or woman considers becoming the possession of another, he or she must be ready to live in “mutual interpenetration, which enables each to live in and by the other.”<sup>74</sup> The magnitude and complexity of the choice is apparent. A difficulty arises in the tension between the sensual and emotional on the one hand, and the need to be a person choosing a person on the other. In this situation, the person must be the priority. If the priority is placed on sexuality, then disillusionment will occur when the sexual urge fades in the midst of the life’s tests. Love’s self-limiting act is that for which human freedom exists. “If freedom is not used, is not taken advantage of by love it becomes a negative thing and gives human beings a feeling of emptiness and unfulfilment. Love commits freedom and imbues it with that to which the will is naturally attracted—goodness. The will aspires to the good, and freedom belongs to the will, hence freedom exists for the sake of love, because it is by way of love that human beings share most fully in the good. This is what

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>73</sup> Note Madame de Staël’s famous aphorism: “Man’s desire is for the woman; woman’s desire is for the desire of the man.”

<sup>74</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 131.

gives freedom its real entitlement to one of the highest places in the moral order.”<sup>75</sup>

Sexual values tend to impose themselves, but the will enables freedom to choose love, that is, to choose the person.

### *Chapter Three: The Person and Chastity*

*The rehabilitation of chastity.* The virtue of chastity, says Wojtyla, needs rehabilitation in the modern world. Chastity suffers at the hands of acedia,<sup>76</sup> which, as he notes, St. Thomas defined as “a sadness arising from the fact that the good is difficult.”<sup>77</sup> Because chastity is often difficult, there is a tendency to either minimize it or consider it evil. As a result, the concept of chastity prompts either resentment or rationalization. True chastity, however, rather than being a hindrance to love (a common accusation), is a protector of the person. Erotic sensations tend to deprive love of its call to affirm the worth of the person. Chastity can resist this erotic tendency.<sup>78</sup> When a man, for example, is sexually attracted to a woman, an interest is aroused which is often accompanied by a tendency toward utilitarian use of the woman as a sexual object. This process can result in a carnal desire that attempts to move the will to act. According to Wojtyla, the virtue of chastity serves as a reminder that a person must be treated as a person, and that sexual enjoyment of another person is only permissible in the context of self-giving love. Chastity reminds one of the importance of the integration of love with bodily attraction.

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>76</sup> Acedia is often translated “sloth” and is one of the seven capital sins. Rather than being a specific vice, acedia is the context of the other vices. It can also be distress or disgust at all one must do to nourish friendship with God, and as such is opposed to charity. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913, s.v. “sloth.”

<sup>77</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 143.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 146.

“Physical intimacy (sexual intercourse) which grows out of concupiscence and nothing more is a negation of the love of persons.”<sup>79</sup> Not only so, but the raw material of sensuality is squandered when it is separated from love. Chastity preserves the raw material of sexual attraction and desire for their proper use in the context for love.

For Wojtyla, subjectivism—the granting of absolute authority to one’s emotions—often challenges chastity. The process men and women go through to rationalize sexual incontinence (whether mental or physical) often involves their appeal to the strong emotions involved. When there is carnal desire, there is need for objective, personal, truth; subjectivism diverts the mind from that truth. Subjectivism, then, has two dangerous tendencies: it ignores the requirement of self-giving love in sexuality, and it suggests that an action is good because it is accompanied by “authentic” or “true” emotions.<sup>80</sup> Subjectivism, notes Wojtyla, hides the objective value of the person, breeding egoism. Love, by contrast, creates a self-giving in which a man and a woman form a “common I”; egoism is incapable of going beyond the singular ego.

At what point does sin enter these processes? Sensuality, sentiment, concupiscence, and carnal desire are not sinful in themselves. Sensuality and sentiment (emotion) are simply the raw materials for love. Concupiscence and carnal desire, as tendencies toward evil (the evil of using another person for an end), are a consequence of original sin, and yet they are not themselves sinful. From Wojtyla’s perspective, “the dividing line is drawn by acts of will, by conscious and voluntary assent of the will.”<sup>81</sup> For example, subjectivism, which involves the tendency to call “good” anything that is

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 162.

pleasant, is likewise not sinful in itself, but it becomes sinful when acted upon in such a way as to violate the nature of the person. “For the will can and must prevent the ‘dis-integration’ of love.”<sup>82</sup>

Men and women need chastity. It is the virtue that moves one to act in light of the true person. St. Thomas, notes Wojtyla, studies chastity under the cardinal virtue of moderation. Thus, chastity is an expression of the moderation or efficient subordination of the sexual appetites to reason. For Wojtyla, however, the virtue of chastity relates more expressly to love because chastity functions to “free love from utilitarian attitudes,” raising sex to the higher level of love.<sup>83</sup> As related to moderation, chastity restrains certain human impulses; as related to love, chastity frees love, even conjugal love, for its full purpose. For Wojtyla, the personalistic norm—“thou shalt love,” and “thou shalt not use”—is definitive for chastity.

*The metaphysics of shame.* “The phenomenon of shame arises when something which of its very nature or in view of its purpose ought to be private passes the bounds of a person’s privacy and somehow becomes public.”<sup>84</sup> Sexual shame, like chastity, performs a positive function in the relationship of love and sexual desire. Wojtyla believes that shame is the manifestation of a reticence to treat another as a sexual object or be treated as a sexual object. For example, a man may feel shame if he thinks he has accidentally been the cause of a woman being tempted to view him as only a sexual object and not as a person; a man may also feel shame at his thoughts if he is tempted to consider a particular woman as only a sexual object. Thus this fundamental human

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 169-170.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 174.

experience of shame carries ethical import; “the moral order is bound up with the existential order.”<sup>85</sup> The goal of shame seems to be to inspire love and to affirm true values. “Sexual modesty is as it were a defensive reflex, which protects that status and so protects the value of the person.”<sup>86</sup>

Love absorbs shame; love does not destroy shame. For Wojtyla, when love enters and the person is treated according to the personalistic norm, shame’s purpose has been served. Love honors shame’s intent. Subjectivism or sentiment can shatter shame and create shamelessness, but only love can absorb shame. Shame expresses itself in “a tendency, uniquely characteristic of the human person, to conceal sexual values sufficiently to prevent them from obscuring the value of person as such.”<sup>87</sup> This concealment must not be so complete as to remove the raw material for love; concealment must protect the true nature and purpose of the sexual. Cultural patterns of modesty of dress, for example, are important. “What is truly immodest in dress is that which frankly contributes to the deliberate displacement of the true value of the person by sexual values.”<sup>88</sup> This does not mean, however, that nakedness in itself is shameful. “The human body is not in itself shameful, nor for the same reasons are sensual reactions and human sensuality in general.” Always, however, the norm is the person, which is never to be used and ever to receive self-giving love.

*The problems of continence.* Attempts at self-control isolated from right thinking are an inadequate basis for chastity. The simple imperative to exercise self-control is of

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 190.

little avail. Rather than a blind self-restraint, clear-sighted objectivity is needed which “‘sees’ the real truth about the values and puts the value of the person, and love above the values of sex and above the enjoyment associated with them.”<sup>89</sup> The value of the person must overcome mere sexual values. This objectifying process, being gradual, is tied to a parallel process of sublimation. The human energy in sensuality and sentiment can be sublimated, or channeled, to give a warm richness to the value of the person. “Indeed, every man must effectively deploy the energies latent in his sensuality and his sentiments, so that they become allies in his striving for authentic love.”<sup>90</sup>

Wojtyla states that sentiment can also express itself non-sexually in tenderness that empathizes with the condition and feelings of others. This deep understanding of others finds physical expression. Clearly, there is a risk that sensuality—the desire for enjoyment—rather than true tenderness, will be expressed. “For tenderness demands vigilance against the danger that its manifestations may acquire a different significance and become merely forms of sensual and sexual gratification.”<sup>91</sup> Tenderness may only be practiced in a context of continence. Nonetheless, the weak, the sick, children, and others may have a right to tenderness, and thus there may be a responsibility to express it.

#### *Chapter Four: Justice Towards the Creator*

*Marriage.* For Wojtyla, the force of this discussion leads to a declaration of the monogamous and indissoluble nature of marriage. A sexual relationship that takes into account the personalistic norm can only find its proper context in marriage. The New

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 200. He notes here that this concept has roots in the thought of Aristotle and Aquinas who taught that appropriate tactics must be used in the practice of virtue.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 203.

Testament, says Wojtyla, affirms the monogamous and indissoluble nature of marriage. Christ opposed the dissolution of marriage. His basis was Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 and the fact that concerning divorce, “in the beginning it was not so.”<sup>92</sup> Christ, who reestablished monogamy and the permanence of marriage, overturned the Old Testament practice of polygamy and Moses’ permission for the letter of repudiation. Betrothed love finds a home in marriage.

Society’s legal recognition of marriage is tied to the fact that “the family is the primary institution at the base of our existence as human beings.”<sup>93</sup> The rights and duties of marriage must be recognized by the legal framework of the institution of marriage in society. This framework must give recognition to the twofold reason for the existence of marriage: “the creation of a lasting personal union between a man and a woman based on love,” and the preservation of “the existence of the species.”<sup>94</sup> Love demands societal recognition of its right to a sexual relationship. As Wojtyla states it, “without the institution of *matrimonium* the person is necessarily degraded in the sexual relationship to the status of an object of pleasure for another person.”<sup>95</sup> This degradation is an injustice both in society and in the eyes of God, since they both seek justice. God has a special interest in both justice toward persons and justice between persons because he is the Creator of every person. In marriage, two persons give themselves to each other because they have the capacity and privilege to do so as persons. God, however, must also give these persons to each other because they are also his possessions. In this manner, sexual relations between them are justified.

---

<sup>92</sup> Mat 19:8.

<sup>93</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 217.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

Justice towards the Creator further requires that justice be done in every marital sexual act. For Wojtyla, justice only occurs when the two realms involved in the sexual act, the order of nature and the personal order are rightly combined. In the personal order, the sexual urge is raw material for self-giving love. “The order of nature is above all that of existence and procreation . . . . Taken in its fullest sense . . . the order of nature aims at ‘procreation’ by means of the sexual act.” Thus, says Wojtyla, “we cannot separate the two orders, for each depends upon the other. In particular, the correct attitude to procreation is a condition of the realization of love.”<sup>96</sup> Marital relations have their full value where there is an acceptance of the possibility of becoming a father or mother. ‘If the possibility of parenthood is deliberately excluded from marital relations, the character of the relationship between the partners automatically changes. The change is away from unification in love and in the direction of mutual, or rather, bilateral, ‘enjoyment’.’<sup>97</sup> Because love between a man and a woman originates in the sexual/procreative purpose of nature passed through the “gates of consciousness and the will,”<sup>98</sup> it is clear that a fertile couple’s marital act without the possibility of procreation is essentially incomplete. Nothing remains except “utilization for pleasure.”<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, to accept the possibility of parenthood is to be pro-person; this is the heart of the personalistic principle.

Conscious acceptance of the possibility of parenthood is not the same as the intent to procreate. In fact, limiting sexual intercourse to attempts at procreation would move towards a utilitarian understanding of the marital act. According to Wojtyla, there

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 228.

is a need for planned maternity based on an understanding of the cycles of fertility that corresponds to the order of nature. “But deliberate prevention of procreation by human beings acting contrary to the order and the laws of nature is quite a different matter.”<sup>100</sup>

Married couples can use periodic continence in such a way as to allow family planning while observing both the order of nature and the personal order. If a husband and wife wish for a time to avoid having a child and at the same time are willing to say of the marital act, “I may become a father; I may become a mother,” then periodic continence observing the cycles of fertility is appropriate.<sup>101</sup> According to Wojtyla, periodic continence differs from artificial methods of contraception in a crucial way. Human persons exist as reproductive beings; yet beings that are not always fertile. Periodic continence honors that fundamental truth about men and women. The personalist norm demands that the full truth of the reproductive other be honored. Artificial methods are designed to cut off, reject, and destroy part of what is true about the nature of the human person. “In the first case, infertility results from the natural operation of the laws of fertility, in the second it is imposed in defiance of nature.”<sup>102</sup> Second, periodic continence is an expression of continence as mature virtue. Nonetheless, periodic continence achieves justice toward the Creator only when used as a method of regulating conception, not when used to avoid having a family altogether.

*Vocation.* For Wojtyla, the fullest justification and ultimate origin of the personalistic norm is the “relationship between God and man.”<sup>103</sup> Non-rational creatures

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 246.

follow the laws of nature automatically and without fail. Human persons, on the other hand, must understand and rationally accept the demands of God's nature. Men and women respond to God as persons; in fact, they are “participants in the thought of God.”<sup>104</sup> This participation has two key elements: “obedience to the order of nature and emphasis on the value of the person.”<sup>105</sup> Men and women can fulfill this fundamental relationship to God and justice with God either through the self-giving of marriage or through a consecrated self-giving to God through virginity. It is a matter of vocation.

The fundamental nature of the human relationship to God is surrender as an act of self-giving love. Physical virginity can provide a context for the “total and exclusive gift of self to God”<sup>106</sup> which becomes mystical virginity. When the natural condition of physical virginity combines with an act of the person’s free will in love for God, there is a fulfillment of the true nature of God as a person and man as a person. In this act, it becomes clear that “the need to give oneself to another person has profounder origins than the sexual instinct.”<sup>107</sup> Wojtyla concludes that while the St. Paul (I Corinthians 7) makes it clear that virginity is superior to marriage, “both virginity and marriage understood in an uncompromisingly personalistic way, are vocations.”<sup>108</sup>

#### *Chapter Five: Sexology and Ethics*

Sexology provides insight into sexual health, says Wojtyla, although sexology’s role is subordinate to the role of sexual ethics. In recent decades, sexologists have

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 257.

discovered a great deal about the changes of puberty, the nature of sexual arousal, and the realization of sexual fulfillment. Sexual health, as limited by sexual ethics, is a good and thus is to be sought. Sexology and sexual ethics are not disjunctive. Violation of the ethical norms of the person and the order of nature can cause problems of sexual health. For example, factors such as insecurity in the relationship, a guilty conscience, egoism, and self-centeredness can hinder the achievement of sexual orgasm by both partners. Each of these factors is addressed in the context of betrothed love based on the personalistic norm. Marriage, in fact, creates a “culture of marital relations” where love, continence, and sexual fulfillment are joined. Then again, at times even a couple’s healthy understanding that they have “responsibility for every conception”<sup>109</sup> can create the fear of pregnancy that can hinder sexual satisfaction. This fear can be alleviated by the cultivation of two key elements of marriage: first, “readiness during intercourse to accept parenthood,” and second, “readiness to practice continence which derives from virtue.”<sup>110</sup> Whether in virginity or in the marriage, continence can be a source of energy and health.

### *Evaluation*

What has Wojtyla accomplished in *Love and Responsibility*? First, he has drawn together themes from his education and experience into a coherent expression of the nature of human sexuality and its expression in marriage. He brings into a single channel streams such as Aquinas’s metaphysics of the person, Scheler’s analysis of shame, biblical prohibitions of divorce, the Kantian categorical imperative, the human experience

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 281.

of love and sensuality, as well as other insights. Second, he makes available a detailed defense of traditional Roman Catholic marriage values. His book is not simply an expansion of the section on marriage found in a work such as Heribert Jone's *Moral Theology*.<sup>111</sup> Rather, it was a reasoned defense for the thoughtful Catholic Christian considering marriage. Third, the work rests within the arms of the intense philosophical analysis that Wojtyla was then making of the nature of the human person and that he would clarify in *The Acting Person*. Finally, in the handful of pages on celibacy in *Love and Responsibility* one finds various seeds that will grow into the more thorough treatment of the subject in *The Theology of the Body*.

### *The Acting Person*

Karol Wojtyla's *The Acting Person* is his most important philosophical work. In it, he describes in detail both his understanding of human experience and his personalism. Though the book is difficult and dense,<sup>112</sup> it is important to consider because it exposes the philosophical agenda of John Paul II.

*Osoba i Czyn*, published in Krakow in 1969, became available to the English-speaking public in 1974 as *The Acting Person*. The monograph enabled Wojtyla to participate in the larger philosophical discussion of Max Scheler's phenomenological personalism. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, Roman Ingarden, and the philosophy

---

<sup>111</sup> According to the flyleaf of the version here cited, this work was available in German, French, English, Italian, Polish, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish; the English was a translation of the 18<sup>th</sup> German edition. The 600 page book is a guide for priests that delineates in detail the proper evaluation of specific sinful behaviors. Heribert Jone, *Moral Theology*, trans. Urban Adelman, 15th ed. (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963).

<sup>112</sup> Williams notes that it is "very difficult to read in any language." Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 186.

department at the Catholic University of Lublin promoted *The Acting Person* and demonstrated its importance for the personalist project.<sup>113</sup>

In *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla utilizes two distinct tools: “The author of the present study owes everything to the systems of metaphysics, of anthropology, and of Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics on the one hand, and to phenomenology, above all in Scheler’s interpretation, and through Scheler’s critique also to Kant, on the other hand.”<sup>114</sup> The central concern of *The Acting Person* is freedom and responsibility as manifested in the acting person. Furthermore, he concludes that by means of action the human person manifests, realizes, and becomes who he or she is. This concern and conclusion come directly from Wojtyla’s methodical phenomenological analysis of human psychical and somatic functions as they are placed within the backdrop of Thomist personalist ontology.

Wojtyla’s book contains seven chapters. In chapter one, he analyses the relationship between consciousness and human action in order to demonstrate that the experience of acting and self-knowledge are dependent on consciousness. Consciousness, says Wojtyla, exhibits two essential functions: it is reflective and it is reflexive. Consciousness reflects (like a mirror) both internal states and actions. Furthermore, consciousness reflects actions in two ways: it provides awareness that action is occurring and it provides awareness that I am the one doing the acting.<sup>115</sup> In these reflective functions, consciousness is passive. The act of cognition, for example, is

---

<sup>113</sup> The article on “Personalism” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* mentions J. Maritain and E. Gilson as personalists and notes that “personalism in virtually all its forms has been integrally connected with theism.” John H. Lavelly, “Personalism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

<sup>114</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, xiv.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

not performed but reported by consciousness.<sup>116</sup> The *reflexive* function of consciousness takes the reflective process one step further by revealing “one’s self as the subject of one’s own acts and experiences.” That is, the person is both subject (reflexive) and object (reflective): “it is one thing to be the subject, another to be cognized (that is objectivized) as the subject, and a still different thing to experience one’s self as the subject of one’s own acts and experiences.”<sup>117</sup> It is the last of these three that concern the reflexive function of consciousness. Consciousness provides the awareness that my actions stem from my own self, and that this self is an autonomous real being; this awareness is necessary to knowing oneself as morally responsible.

By describing consciousness in this way, Wojtyla avoids the transcendental phenomenology of the later Husserl<sup>118</sup> and establishes the parameters for the use of phenomenology as a method, but not as an ontology. Wojtyla and others of the Lublin school believed Husserl had finally concluded that consciousness alone had real being. Wojtyla, however, believes consciousness reflects an ontologically real self that exists objectively no less than subjectively. Thomist metaphysics supplied Wojtyla with an ontology of the person while phenomenology supplied him with a tool for scientific analysis of the conscious lived-experience, or *Erlebnis*, of the person.

The second chapter evaluates human action by distinguishing between active efficacy and passive subjectiveness. A person is the source of efficacious conscious

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>118</sup> Hans Kochler, "The Phenomenology of Karol Wojtyla: On the Problem of the Phenomenological Foundation of Anthropology," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 42, no. 3 (1982).

action in which the will participates.<sup>119</sup> Wojtyla says the person is also the source of all that goes on within her, that is, of what happens in her passively. In this subjective passivity she is raw material who observes the activation of potentialities within her; in her efficacy, she is the actor and creator of action. The union of efficacy and subjectivity occurs in the person. “The two structures, that in which man acts and that in which something happens in man, cut across the phenomenological field of experience, but they join and unite together in the metaphysical field.”<sup>120</sup>

In the third chapter, Wojtyla approaches his most central concern: the transcendence of the person in action and the structure of the will. Foundational to human transcendence is self-possession of the ego. “Only the one who has possession of himself and is simultaneously his own sole and exclusive possession can be a person.”<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, “self-possession finds its manifestation and its confirmation in action.”<sup>122</sup> From this foundation come self-governance and self-determination, and out of them springs the will, that is, free will. “The freedom appropriate to the human being, the person’s freedom resulting from the will, exhibits itself as identical with self-determination, with that experiential, most complete, and fundamental organ of man’s autonomous being.”<sup>123</sup> This structure of human will is the source of human transcendence of the simple instinctual activations of nature. Human freedom and transcendence mean that a human “depends chiefly on himself for the dynamization of

---

<sup>119</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 66.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 106. Thus, one can see the significance of the title of this work: *The Acting Person*.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

his own subject.”<sup>124</sup> True human action is free, self-determined, and intentional; it is not spontaneous, instinctual, or unconscious.<sup>125</sup> Most importantly, human action is responsible in its inevitable choice of good or evil objects in light of an internal knowledge of the “truth about good.” “In the opposition between the good and the bad which direct moral conduct there is presupposed that in human acting the willing of any object occurs according to the principle of truth about the good represented by the objects.”<sup>126</sup>

The fourth chapter identifies the sort of human actions that bring personal fulfillment. Every human action leaves its own internal moral trace, but “fulfillment is reached only through the good, while moral evil leads or amounts to, so to speak, nonfulfillment.”<sup>127</sup> The person experiences fulfillment when the truth about good and the resulting duty unite in conscious action. Self-fulfillment relies on both the conscience and truthfulness, and from self-fulfillment comes felicity.<sup>128</sup> In summary, through self-knowledge reflected in consciousness, a person knows his efficacy and self-determination. Through knowledge of the truth of good and his capacity to act, a person knows his responsibility. Through consciously acting a person fulfills his entire personhood and thus achieves felicity. All this is accomplished in the integrated unity that constitutes a human person.

Chapters five and six detail the nature of the human integration of psyche and soma. Wojtyla is committed to soul/body duality integrated such that a “person-action

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

unity has precedence over the psychosomatic complexity.”<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless he also states that “the body is not a member of the subjective ego in the way of being identical with the ego; man is not the body, he only has it.”<sup>130</sup> This results in an ontologically complex human as evinced by the instinctual reactions of the body on the one hand and self-determination on the other hand. An important medium for both psyche and soma is emotion. Wojtyla notes that “sensuous-emotive excitability appears to be particularly well rooted in the soil of human instincts,”<sup>131</sup> while at the same time “all that determines and constitutes the spiritual transcendence of the person—his attitude toward truth, good, and beauty with the accompanying faculty of self-determination—stimulates a very deep emotive resonance in the human being.”<sup>132</sup> All feelings are first directed to values and are then integrated in the consciousness with truthfulness; this is the context of authentic choices and actions. The conflict—closely related to emotion—between the spontaneity of nature and self-determination is authentically resolved in the person by the proficiencies called virtues.<sup>133</sup>

The seventh and final chapter of *The Acting Person* analyzes intersubjectivity. Human cooperation depends on and has its value in persons acting. A man or woman carries the moral value of his or her actions into community. Thus, the values that accompany the joint actions of men and women together are determined by the values that accompany the actions of each man and woman. It is the acts of persons qua persons

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 252.

that are of value; this is the “personalistic” value.<sup>134</sup> Acting with others is the primary means by which one realizes “the authentically personalistic value—the performance of the action and the fulfillment of [oneself] in the action.”<sup>135</sup> Authentic participation with others requires the action of persons in the fullest sense of the word. Furthermore, acting in a personalistic manner is an ethical obligation not only for persons but also for communities which enable such personal action. Two systems that stifle the authentic action of persons are individualism and “totalism.”<sup>136</sup> Each system lacks a proper view of both the person and the community. In true community “man chooses what others choose and indeed often because others choose it, but even then he chooses it as his own good and as the end of his own striving.”<sup>137</sup> Valid communities foster authentic attitudes such as solidarity and love while resisting “nonauthentic” attitudes such as conformism and noninvolvement.

### *Synthesis*

John Paul II’s theology of human sexuality can be summarized by way of four claims. First, it is a theology that arises from his experience and education. By means of his close relationship with his *Srodowisko*, his commitment to the confessional, and his own celibacy, he ponders the issues surrounding sexuality with a constant eye on certain realities of the sexual life. His training in phenomenology provided Wojtyla the scientific analysis for describing the nature of faith, love, lust, shame, and other features of human sexuality. Second, it is a theology elaborated within a philosophical and

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>136</sup> This is the word used in the English text. It seems to mean totalitarianism.

<sup>137</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 280.

theological framework. He speaks of human dignity, human responsibility, the gift of self, and the nature of love from a complex integration of philosophical and theological sources. They enable him to demonstrate that the human person—his recurring theme—is inviolable, that is, never to be an object simply utilized by a subject; capable, that is, able both to recognize and to perform good or evil acts; sexual, that is, existing in the complementary forms of male and female, thus only finding fullness in self-giving and community; and sensual, that is, replete with sexual urges existing innocently yet sadly inclined in both men and women toward the utilitarian use of others. Third, his is an apologetic theology. John Paul II writes as though defending a posture that is under attack. He seldom names his opponents, yet he appears to defend a proper understanding of sexuality that is threatened. Fourth, his theology of sexuality exalts the role of love. Love fulfills the nature of personal interaction; love seeks truth in conjugal relations; love enables chastity. These features of John Paul II's thought—as we shall see in the following chapter—are evident in *The Theology of the Body* and, specifically, in his theology of celibacy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### John Paul II's Theology of Celibacy

John Paul II offers his most extended treatment of celibacy in *The Theology of the Body*.<sup>1</sup> There, in the midst of his treatment of the nature of human sexual embodiment and marriage, he identifies the new way, opened by Jesus, to celibacy. Another source of John Paul II's ideas regarding celibacy is the variety of his exhortations, letters, and other writings addressed primarily to religious and priests. In this chapter, both sources will be examined.

#### *The Theology of the Body*

From 1979-1984, Pope John Paul II gave a series of 129 addresses on human sexuality. He presented these addresses in Italian as weekly, general audiences and the *Osservatore Romano*<sup>2</sup> published them. Even though St. Paul Editions also published them in four small books from 1981-1986,<sup>3</sup> they received little attention. In 1997, however, the addresses appeared in the single volume, *The Theology of the Body*, and thus became more widely available. Even so, exploration of *The Theology of the Body*

---

<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*.

<sup>2</sup> From 1979 to 1984, the weekly *Osservatore Romano* published them in the Italian edition, and then translated and published them in the English edition.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981). John Paul II, *Blessed Are the Pure of Heart: Catechesis on the Sermon on the Mount and Writings of St. Paul* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1983). John Paul II, *The Theology of Marriage & Celibacy: Catechesis on Marriage and Celibacy in the Light of the Resurrection of the Body* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1986). John Paul II, *Reflecitons on Humanae Vitae: Conjugal Morality and Spirituality* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1984).

needs and continues to grow.<sup>4</sup> Serious engagement with its entire thought is lacking. George Weigel makes strong claims for it: “The Church and the world will be well into the twenty-first century, and perhaps far beyond, before Catholic theology has fully assimilated the contents of these 130 general audience addresses. If taken with the seriousness it deserves, John Paul’s *Theology of the Body* may prove to be the decisive moment in exorcising the Manichaeian demon and its deprecation of human sexuality from Catholic moral theology.”<sup>5</sup> Then Weigel adds, “When that happens, perhaps in the twenty-first century, the *Theology of the Body* may well be seen as a critical moment not only in Catholic theology, but in the history of modern thought.”<sup>6</sup> In *The Theology of the Body*, John Paul II combines important elements of his previous writings and uses biblical exegesis as a framework to describe his understanding of sexuality as it relates to marriage, sexual temptation, celibacy, and the use of contraception. Of particular interest is the fact that he places Christian celibacy within the framework of biblical teaching on human sexuality and marriage.

The titles for the individual addresses vary greatly between the English, the French and the Italian editions. Nonetheless the division of the addresses into seven

---

<sup>4</sup> The following directly indicates a variety of works that address the *Theology of the Body*. Benedict M. Ashley, "John Paul II: Theologian of the Body of the Acting Person," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1-2 (2000); Luke Timothy Johnson, "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body': John Paul II on Love, Sex & Pleasure," *Commonweal* 128, no. 2 (2001); Ronald Modras, "Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," in *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1998); Michael Novak, "The Embodied Self," *First Things* 130 (2003); Sister M. Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); Benjamin Marc Balthason Ramarosan, "Mariage Et Célibat Consacré a Partir Des Catéchèses Du Mercredi De Jean Paul II" (Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana, 1991); Mary Shivanandan, "John Paul II's Theology of the Body," *Catholic Dossier* 5, no. 1 (1999); Vincent M. Walsh, *Pope John Paul II the Theology of the Body (Human Love in the Divine Plan): A Simplified Version* (Merion, PA: Key of David Publications, 2002); Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's "Gospel of the Body"* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2003). For a list of Italian introductions, see Ramarosan, "Mariage Et Célibat", 9.

<sup>5</sup>Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 342. Also see, Novak, "The Embodied Self," 18-21.

<sup>6</sup>Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 343.

groupings is relatively uniform.<sup>7</sup> The Pauline Books and Media printing of John Paul II's addresses, *The Theology of the Body*, is divided into two untitled parts. Part one contains two major headings, each with a subtitle: "Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis;" and "Blessed Are the Pure of Heart: Catechesis on the Sermon on the Mount." Part two contains a single major heading: "Life according to the Spirit." This heading is subdivided into five subheadings: 1) "St. Paul's Teaching on the Human Body," 2) "The Resurrection of the Body," 3) "Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom," 4) "The Sacramentality of Marriage," and 5) "Reflections on *Humanae Vitae*." The number of addresses included in each of the seven sections is as follows: first, addresses 1 through 23 on the nature of human sexuality as understood from Genesis one and two; second, addresses 24-50 on the nature of sexual temptation; third, addresses 51-63 on Paul's teaching on the human body; fourth, addresses 64-72 on the resurrection of the body; fifth, addresses 73-86 on the theology of celibacy; sixth, addresses 87-113 on the sacramentality of marriage; and seventh, addresses 114-129 on "*Humanae Vitae*" with a focus on the nature of the conjugal act. Walter Schu rightly indicates that the first four sections establish the foundation of the theology of the body, and the last three sections make applications: first to virginity, second to marriage, and third to family planning.<sup>8</sup>

The collection of addresses is difficult to read. A French edition tactfully notes that the style is "*souvent fort dense*."<sup>9</sup> The initial addresses should be read with special

---

<sup>7</sup>The Italian edition by Città Nuova Editrice divides the addresses into six cycles. John Paul II, *Uomo E Donna Lo Creò* (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Walter Schu, *The Splendor of Love: John Paul II's Vision for Marriage and Family* (Hartford, CT: New Hope Publications, 2003), 117.

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, *Résurrection, Mariage Et Célibat: L'évangile De La Rédemption De Corps* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985), 7.

care in order to understand the specialized vocabulary found throughout.<sup>10</sup> In addition, it is often crucial for the reader to understand the pope's philosophical and theological presuppositions.

The following overview of *The Theology of the Body*, attempts to reflect John Paul II's order and development of ideas. One must keep in mind, however, that what Perry Miller said of Jonathan Edwards, is true of John Paul II: he "is a writer who, like Dante or Milton, cannot be simplified."<sup>11</sup>

*Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*

In this first of the seven major sections of *The Theology of the Body*, John Paul II identifies certain fundamental features of human sexual existence. To begin, he ties Jesus' teaching in Mat 19:1-12 to Gen 1, 2, and 4 by means of Jesus' words: "in the beginning it was not so" (Mat 19:8). Jesus, says John Paul II, bases his arguments in Mat 19 regarding marriage on the creation passages of Genesis rather than "getting caught up in the juridico-casuistical controversies"<sup>12</sup> of his time. Thus, in the remaining audiences of this section, John Paul II describes the theology of human sexuality found in the early chapters of Genesis. Genesis 1 is treated in one audience, Gen 2 is discussed in seventeen audiences, Gen 4 in one audience, and the final audience of this section is a summary.

---

<sup>10</sup> Reading English and French translations of addresses given in Italian by a Polish pope may easily create difficulty. The English and French translations were made for the *Osservatore Romano* and reflect the high quality of that important periodical; nonetheless, comparison of the two sometimes clarifies ideas. I made only limited use of the Italian, because I do not read Italian. One suspects that reading the Italian would occasionally help one better understand John Paul II's thought.

<sup>11</sup> Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959), ii.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 26.

While stating that Gen 1 is an Elohist passage and thus of later origin than the Yahwist second chapter, he deals with it first because it establishes an objective anthropology. In this anthropology of Gen 1, men and women created in God's image are viewed from three perspectives: cosmologically, as part of the created order; theologically, as not simply reducible to the created order; and metaphysically, as possessing a certain good—existence. The instruction to be fruitful and multiply highlights this good. Procreation, then, is an existential good integrally related to the objective anthropology of Gen 1. Jesus, therefore, by mentioning the “beginning” sought, in part, to challenge his interlocutors with this objective anthropology.

Genesis 2, says John Paul II, shifts to a subjective anthropology, that is, an embodied anthropology that has human experience, especially original human experience, as a primary source. The two aspects of human experience John Paul II finds emphasized in Gen 2 are these: original human solitude and original human innocence as they relate to the original unity of man and woman. John Paul II intends to persuade his listeners that male-bodied and female-bodied persons come to a theology of the body via both their embodied experience and the Scriptures.

*Original human solitude.* Original human solitude is feature of human existence that stems from a problem. It is the problem exemplified in the statement in Gen 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Original solitude has a twofold character, says John Paul II. First, Adam, the human, not as male but simply as human,<sup>13</sup> comes to understand

---

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II notes that Adam is not called “male” that is *ish* until Gen 2:23. From this John Paul II concludes that the original solitude of ‘man’ is not the male incompleteness without the female, but the human solitude as a creature in the world as well as the solitude of either sex without the other. *Ibid.*, 35. “The fact that man is a ‘body’ belongs to the structure of the personal subject more deeply than that fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female.” John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 43. On the following page, he says, “We conclude that the man (*adam*) falls into that ‘sleep’ in order to wake up

and define himself in finding that he has no counterpart in the animal world. He is alone. He stands above the animals as the worker of the garden, the namer of the animals, and the one who has dominion. Although his genus is animality, his difference lies in his reasoning and ruling as a subjectivity, that is, as a self-conscious person.<sup>14</sup> This personhood is further confirmed by God's command. Adam is a being endowed with choice and self-determination, that is, with free will.<sup>15</sup> He finds himself bodily alone as a self-conscious and self-determined person under God's covenant (commandment) as well as also being dependent on God, that is, made in God's image. Thus Adam "discovers the meaning of his own corporality."<sup>16</sup>

The second feature of human solitude relates to the relationship between the first two humans. Human solitude is answered by the creation of the woman. The man and the woman share a "somatic homogeneity" that is essential to their relationship; man and woman are bone of bone and flesh of flesh. Thus, Adam, knowing his bodily solitude, has great reason to rejoice when "a helper fit for him" appears.<sup>17</sup> This helper is a second 'self'. Original solitude that cries, "There is no other being like me!" is answered by the unity of the first two human beings. They share an "identity of nature."<sup>18</sup> Thus, notes John Paul II, men and women both experience this unity and come to expect that it will create community in which one person exists alongside another and for another. The

---

'male' and 'female.' In Genesis 2:23, we come across the distinction 'is – 'issah for the first time." It is because the language of Gen 1 and 2 is mythological that it can yield these meanings.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

solitude, self-determination, and self-awareness of embodiment experienced by a human being encounters reciprocity in the other.

John Paul II explains the nature of the image of God in humanity by referring to this solitude and reciprocity. A man or a woman “is not only an image in which the solitude of a person who rules the world is reflected, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons,” that is, an image of the Trinity.<sup>19</sup> “Man,” as John Paul II states it, “is endowed with a deep unity between what is, humanly and through the body, male in him and what is, equally humanly and through the body, female in him.”<sup>20</sup> Embodied males and females reveal humanity. Adam’s knowledge of male and female bodily difference combines with his knowledge that, unlike the animals, this other is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” and together these two known things combine to identify what humanity is. Human bodily difference from the animals as well as human rule over them identifies the solitary human as a person. The bodily male/female duality,<sup>21</sup> in addition to its implied community and fecundity, identifies humanity as made in the image of the Trinity. Thus, is this somatic structure “presented right from the beginning with a deep consciousness of human corporality and sexuality, and that establishes an inalienable norm for the understanding of man on the theological plane.”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 47. He does not here intend to say that both genders contain elements of their opposites, but that humans, whether male or female, are deeply united in their humanity.

<sup>21</sup> For John Paul II, the single metaphysical solitude has two “incarnations”, one male and one female. They are “two ways of ‘being a body’ and at the same time a man, which complete each other.” Ibid., 48.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The words of Gen 2:24 that speak of a man and a woman becoming one flesh indicate that the conjugal act functions as a reminder of the essential nature of humanity. The unity of humanity is seen in Adam's declaration, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." In conjugal relations, a man and a woman return to that unity and "discover their own humanity, both in its original unity, and in the duality of a mysterious mutual attraction."<sup>23</sup> The conjugal act is not simply an instinctual fulfillment of corporality. This act is also the result of the choice made by a self-determining man or woman to leave father and mother and cleave to a wife or husband in marriage. It is, therefore, the act of two self-determined subjectivities, and it reenacts the created origin of humanity in creation. Woman came from man's rib, flesh from his flesh, and by the return to union as one flesh, the blessing of procreation brings about the creation again of life that is flesh of their flesh. Again, a person's bodily femininity or masculinity designed for sexual intercourse leads to the conclusion that women and men are designed for community and unity.

John Paul II emphasizes that the experience of human embodiment is a rich source of theological anthropology. Genesis 2 is a description of original human experience, not so much as chronological human prehistory but as the original, primal, and basic human experience of men and women of all times.<sup>24</sup> These *original* experiences—original solitude, original unity, and original innocence—are the backdrop of the *historical* human experience of sin described in Gen 3. Christ, makes the connection between original human innocence and historical human sinfulness explicit when he contrasts "the beginning" with the current practice of divorce (Mat 19:3-6).

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 51.

Furthermore, for John Paul II, the change from innocence in Gen 2-3 is a change in the meaning of the human body, especially the meaning of the male-female relationship.

*Original human innocence.* The pre-fall innocence of men and women found in particular in the nudity without shame of Gen 2:25, forms a contrast with the fallen, shamed condition of historical humanity in Gen 3. These contrasting human experiences—knowledge of an original innocence and at the same time experience of historical culpability, have led to a human longing for redemption of the body. Thus, Rom 8:23 evinces the internal groaning characteristic of historical humanity and the human desire for the redemption of the body. This revealed, original, bodily innocence—exemplified in nudity without shame—is a catalyst within the historical human experience of bodily sinfulness and produces the longing for bodily redemption.

Original human innocence in nakedness without shame was not, says John Paul II, a reflection of incompleteness or immaturity; it was not lack of experience, but rather a fullness of understanding. The innocence of the original pair reflects their maturity, not their inexperience. In the nakedness of man in the presence of a woman, the man, Adam, came to know his own humanity as a duality. What he physically saw led him to the “fullness of consciousness of the meaning of the body.”<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, beyond the level of physical sight, their nakedness without shame reflected their communion as “person-subjects.” “The body expresses the personal human ‘self’ which derives its exterior perception from within.”<sup>26</sup> The body manifests human persons and enables their communication. It is thus in real persons as manifested in their nakedness that there was

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

no shame. The *communio personarum* willed by God expressed itself in a female person in the presence of a male person. The phrase, “they were not ashamed,” means that they deeply affirmed the inherent maleness and femaleness of the other, while recognizing that the body they beheld was the manifestation of a person.<sup>27</sup>

When the man and woman were naked together, they also saw each other’s goodness. The physical sight of the other led to spiritual conclusions. “I and the other are good, we are complementary, and we are a mutual gift, the one for the other.” In this understanding, there was no shame. For John Paul II, man and woman being a gift for each other is crucial; he calls it the “nuptial” gift.<sup>28</sup>

This gift stems from the human likeness to God. In the act of creating, God grants the radical gift of existence to the world, and it is good. Humankind is the recipient of this gift. “In the whole work of creation, it can be said only of him that a gift was conferred on him; the visible world was created ‘for him.’”<sup>29</sup> Not only so, but humans are a gift to the world. God’s image is manifested in men and women as they, like the Creator, bestow gifts. The primary gift they grant to each other is the gift of the entire bodied self to the other—the nuptial gift.

Only free persons can give this gift. There exists neither an internal compulsion nor an external demand that the gift be given. Self-mastery provides control over instinctual constraints arising within the body; recognition of personhood provides respect both for self and other as subjects existing for their own sake. In this context of

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 58. The nuptial character of the body means, “it is capable of expressing the love with which the man-person becomes a gift, thus fulfilling the deep meaning of his being and his existence.” Ibid., 125.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 59.

freedom, a man or woman stands ready to give the gift of his or her embodied self to the other. John Paul II's theology of the body insists on both the complementarity of male and female bodies as well as respect for the person. Being naked without shame requires the affirmation of the sexual body in addition to the affirmation of the personhood of self and other. This original freedom in original innocence led to the original happiness of Adam's proclamation, "This is now bone of my bone." (Gen. 2:23)<sup>30</sup>

Love is the motivation of creation; love gives and good comes to be. The man and the woman emerge from God's love and, in turn, they radiate self-giving, creative love in their bodily experience. The truth about the nature of their embodiment becomes apparent in their capacity for self-donation and immunity to shame. God communicates grace to them, granting them original innocence, original happiness, and original immunity to shame. Love joined thus with grace in the man and the woman to make them participants "in the interior life of God himself, in his holiness."<sup>31</sup> As a result, both the man and the women "exist from the beginning in the mutual relationship of the disinterested gift of oneself."<sup>32</sup> God gave the world to men and women, who then give the nuptial gift to each other without shame. The meaning of the body, therefore, results from the knowledge of bodily innocence and from the possibility of self-giving. The revelation and discovery made by the man and the woman is also beatifying,<sup>33</sup> thus instilling God's holiness in them. Furthermore, historical men and women know this

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 65. John Paul II reminds his readers that both of these theological features appear in the *Gaudium et spes* where it is affirmed that God willed human beings for themselves, and that a man or woman "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." (GS 24)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 69.

meaning in part by the contrast of their bodily shame with the revelation of the original innocence.

The inner condition, then, of the original man and the woman was one of innocence. Their will and their intention was both innocent and righteous. Each viewed the other as a person, not an object for consumption; to have done otherwise would have introduced shame. By viewing each other as persons, however, their mutual giving becomes a mutual enriching. The woman in giving herself to the man “rediscovers herself” within the acceptance she found in the man. Her “humanity and femininity” are affirmed as her true embodied self and her sexuality are both received as a gift. She is enriched by the full possession of herself. Likewise, the man not only receives her, but he also reveals his true masculinity in giving of his full self, his full humanity to her. When the woman accepts the man and his self-giving then both mutual giving and mutual receiving occur. Hence the pope’s conviction that, “following the trail of the historical *a posteriori*—and above all, following the trail of human hearts—we can reproduce and, as it were, reconstruct that mutual exchange of the gift of the person.”<sup>34</sup>

*Loss of original unity.* Sadly, the original innocence, justice, and holiness was lost. The inner disposition of men and women changed; their internal forces and this body-soul relationship altered. In human “theological prehistory,” man and woman experienced the innocent disposition of the body and the potential of self-giving in marriage and procreation. Yet another dreadful possibility was also present: “if the man and woman cease to be a disinterested gift for each other, as they were in the mystery of creation, then they recognize that ‘they are naked’ (cf. Gn 3). Then the shame of that

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 72.

nakedness, which they had not felt in the state of original innocence, will spring up in their hearts.”<sup>35</sup> It follows that the theology of the body from Gen 2 must now teach women and men who they are, who they should be, and how they should act. The nuptial meaning of their bodies remains as a “distant echo” in spite of the loss of the “the grace of original innocence.”

The loss, as well as the need to remember what has been lost, remains great. Men and women are to remember the “first feast of humanity” described in Gen 2:23-25. The original man and woman were a “primordial sacrament.” The holiness of God became visible in their masculinity and femininity; they became a sign of God’s communication of life. The world is a sacrament indicating divine creativeness; woman and man existing in sexuality yet without shame in the world were a sacramental sign of God’s holiness. “Together with man, holiness entered the visible world.”<sup>36</sup>

One means of this remembering is procreation. In Gen 4:1 the experience of becoming one flesh is called “knowing.” That is, Adam knew Eve and she conceived a child.<sup>37</sup> This knowledge had numerous facets. In conjugal intercourse, says John Paul II, the primordial woman and man experienced the meaning of their own bodies and of each other’s bodies. Via the mutual self-revelation and self-giving of becoming one flesh, they came to know experientially the nature of the body. Nonetheless, this was more than knowledge of abstract humanity. For Adam it was knowledge of a particular woman and for Eve it was knowledge of a particular man. For each it was knowledge of a

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>37</sup> John Paul 2 notes that the knowledge is reciprocal. Mary, mother of Jesus replies to the angel, “How shall this be, since I know not man?” (Luke 1:34). Ibid., 78.

“unique and unrepeatable subject,” a person, found in the other.<sup>38</sup> Thus, does the conjugal union become another step in the process of rediscovering the true nature of the body. What the man learned of himself in naming the animals and in accepting the gift of the woman, and what the woman and the man know of themselves as sexual persons standing naked together without shame, comes to an even fuller self-knowledge in the conjugal union.<sup>39</sup>

In the midst of this knowledge, the man and the woman become father and mother (Gen 4:1). “Knowledge conditions begetting.”<sup>40</sup> Self-determinant, free persons actively engage in knowing themselves, the other, and humanity. Eve said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.” (Gen 4:1) The theology of the body informs Eve’s declaration. All that she is by God’s act of creating her comes to fruition in the creation of another person in the image of God. For Eve and Adam, knowledge and generation entwine—the body has a generative meaning, notes John Paul II. “Masculinity conceals within it the meaning of fatherhood, and femininity that of motherhood.”<sup>41</sup> A human life results from Adam knowing Eve, and thus sexual union becomes an affirmation of life in the face of death. When the man and woman broke the covenant with God, death came to them, yet they still affirmed life—Adam named Eve “the mother of all the living” and he knew her and she gave birth to life acknowledging the Lord’s help. Historical man continues to combine knowledge and conception. “In spite of the inevitable prospect of death, man always continues to put knowledge at the beginning of generation. In this way, he seems to participate in that first ‘vision’ of God himself: God the Creator

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 85.

‘saw . . . and behold, it was very good.’ He confirms the truth of these words ever anew.”<sup>42</sup>

When certain Pharisees tested Jesus by asking him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, Jesus replied, by pointing them to the beginning, to Gen 2. Jesus wanted them to find there an integrated, full vision of humanity and sexuality. He pointed his interlocutors to a full theology of the body, a theological anthropology, which gave them both a calling and a reliable basis for conducting their lives. “How indispensable is a thorough knowledge of the meaning of the body, in its masculinity and femininity, along the way of this vocation! A precise awareness of the nuptial meaning of the body, of its generating meaning, is necessary.”<sup>43</sup> It is especially necessary in order to understand the redemption of the body.

*Blessed Are the Pure of Heart: Catechesis on the Sermon on the Mount*

Jesus pointed back to the original man and women but he also spoke of the historical man and woman with their loss of innocence. In Mat 5:27-28 Jesus declares, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” John Paul II looks to this passage as a second major source of the theology of the body. Here Jesus goes beyond the commandments—“you shall not commit adultery” and “You shall not covet your neighbors wife”—to a “superabounding of justice.” This fecund justice comes from joining the biblical commands to the life-experience morality that

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 89.

encompasses all that a man or woman is.<sup>44</sup> Jesus' instruction, therefore, is for historical men and women who are called to find and fulfill their entire humanity through understanding the meaning and truth of the body.

*The role of shame and lust.* Jesus' injunction is against committing adultery in the heart. Adultery, says John Paul II, is "a breach of the unity by means of which man and woman, only as husband and wife, can unite so closely as to be 'one flesh' (Gn 2:24)." This action involves "a desire directed, in this case, by the man toward a woman who is not his wife, in order to unite with her as if she were his wife."<sup>45</sup> What gives Jesus' statement of Mat 5:27-28 universal importance is that it manifests a fundamental human characteristic of historical human persons. 1 John 2:16-17, speaking from within a Johannine theology, indicates the origin of human lust: it is not of the Father but of the world. Lust is fruit of the world: not the world given to humanity by the creative act of the Father, but the world left over after the man and woman expelled God from their hearts. The covenant with God was broken, notes John Paul II, because they questioned "love as the specific motive of the creation and of the original covenant."<sup>46</sup> Immediately, the antithesis of "naked without shame" appeared—"they knew they were naked." Shame is not of the Father, but comes from a Fatherless world.

Shame merged with fear. "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." The nakedness is not solely literal, as though Adam would have been perfectly at ease if he had worn trousers. When previously they had stood without shame, the man and the woman had accepted their sexual bodies and all that was true

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 111.

about those bodies; they knew they were persons transcending the realm of animals; they were free to give and receive in mutual donation; they understood that they were to have dominion over the world and subdue it. Now they are afraid and hiding. A radical change had occurred in relation to their bodies. Now much is altered: they lack certainty about “the image of God, expressed in the body”; they no longer clearly see their relationship to God’s vision of the world; their bodies have lost their power as a “sign of the person in the visible world;” they are defenseless; and their bodies are now endangered by a hostile uncooperative world. “Cosmic shame” overtook them.<sup>47</sup>

John Paul II notes that due to these calamitous events, there exists “a fundamental disquiet in all human existence” which expresses itself in shame.<sup>48</sup> In the experience of shame, men and women find their bodies are in discord with their minds. As Paul said, “In my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind.” Self-control is now difficult; mastery of the body is no longer easy and natural. Because of this new role of the body, the lusty man and woman no longer feel “above the world of living beings or *animalia*.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, comes the “shame of my own sexuality” and my own misguided sexual desire in the presence of another. Jesus speaks of the adulterous desire a man may have for a woman when he looks at her. Shame and lust keep pace with each other in the human heart. A man or woman “is ashamed of his body because of lust. In fact, he is ashamed not so much of his body as precisely of lust.”<sup>50</sup> Prior to the fall, communion of persons existed because of sexual complementarity; after the fall, this communion of

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

persons must exist in spite of sexual duality. Sexual difference becomes confrontation and shame must intervene to protect the self and the other. “Encroaching upon the man-woman relationship in its totality, that shame was manifested with the imbalance of the original meaning of corporeal unity, that is, of the body as the peculiar ‘substratum’ of the communion of persons.” Simple sexual sensation replaces masculinity and femininity. Identification with one’s own body becomes difficult.<sup>51</sup>

Genesis 3 describes dire results of this new situation. Gen 3:16 expresses the woman’s situation: “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” Darkness now accompanies the conjugal relationship and its fruit. Unity and mutual respect give way to the husband’s rule over the wife. “This opposition does not destroy or exclude conjugal union, willed by the Creator (cf. Gn 2:24), or its procreative effects. But it confers on the realization of this union another direction, which will be that of the man of lust.”<sup>52</sup> Rejection of the Father leaves the man and the woman with bitter fruit from the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The problem, however, is not the body or its nuptial meaning. Shame reflects not a body gone awry but a heart filled with lust. Lust is “a limitation, infraction or even distortion of the nuptial meaning of the body.”<sup>53</sup> Shame measures the desires of the heart against the echo of Gen 2:25 and finds the heart to be lacking. Shame attempts to maintain the unity of persons in the diversity of their sexuality and to preserve such unity from lust. Nonetheless, domination, the insatiable desire of lust, and the “relationship of

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 124.

possession of the other as the object of one's own desire," now form a fallen cycle of marital relationships. In its essence, this is the loss of freedom. Love, the focus of the freely given nuptial gift, must now struggle with lust. Because of concupiscence, "the relationship of the gift is changed into the relationship of appropriation."<sup>54</sup>

*Loss of mutual donation.* What was the concern, then, that Jesus addresses in Mat 5:27-28? First, Jesus' teaching mirrors Gen 3:16; the central issue in both is the desire to possess and to use another person. The reciprocal donation of the self spoken of in Gen 2:25 is corrupted into the lust to own and utilize for enjoyment.<sup>55</sup> Second, Jesus addresses an unhealthy interpretation of the sixth commandment: You shall not commit adultery. Although Jesus ultimately addresses his instruction regarding adultery to every man and women, his immediate audience was the Jews of his day. Their understanding of adultery was filtered through centuries of development, beginning with the patriarchs; yet Jesus rejects aspects of this development, not with the intent to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Mat 5:17). With the "abandonment of monogamy"<sup>56</sup> and the rise of polygamy, says John Paul II, Israelites had come to understand adultery "above all (and perhaps exclusively) as the violation of man's right of possession regarding each woman who may be his own legal wife."<sup>57</sup> This understanding was reinforced by Mosaic legislation "regarding the body and sex [that] is not so much 'negative' or severe, but rather marked by an objectivism, motivated by a desire to put this area of life in order."<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless,

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 137.

the concept of the nuptial gift is almost entirely absent. Nonetheless, the prophets in their condemnation of the Israel's spiritual adultery revive, in large part, the understanding of marriage as a personal covenant. For the Old Testament prophet, adultery is "a sin because it constitutes the breakdown of the personal covenant between the man and the woman."<sup>59</sup> Therefore, throughout the law and the prophets, adultery is understood as a sin of the body. Jesus, however, changed that; for him, adultery was a sin of the heart.

Sirach had said something similar (Sir 9:8-9; 23:17-22), as had the author of Pro 6:25. Yet, their admonitions to avoid looking lustfully on a woman were designed to help men stay away from adultery as a sin of the body.<sup>60</sup> John Paul II, however, notes that for Jesus the look that is adultery consists of a legitimate experience of the value of a human body accompanied by an illegitimate separation of that value from the person. That is, adultery of the heart is "an interior separation from the nuptial meaning of the body."<sup>61</sup> "Lust is a deception of the human heart in the perennial call of man and woman."<sup>62</sup> The man's experience of finding the woman attractive or the woman's experience of finding the man attractive should bring with it a set of rich, humanizing values. Lust, however, reduces this set to the simple desire to consume by, among other things, erasing the "matrimonial significance" of the body as well as erasing the body's function as a sign, that is, a sacrament. Thus, "when lust has gained possession of the will" and "is dominant over the subjectivity of the person," an internal act is performed that is adultery.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 144-145.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 151.

For John Paul II it is obvious that a significant change has occurred in the meaning of the word “adultery.” Jesus indirectly affirms the evil of the act of adultery, but more significantly he expands the concept of adultery to include a look and an act of the heart. With this expansion comes a new definition of adultery: “It reduces the riches of the perennial call to the communion of person, the riches of the deep attractiveness of masculinity and femininity, to mere satisfaction of the sexual need of the body.”<sup>64</sup> By this definition Jesus not only extended adultery to the heart but also to marriage as well. The call to evaluate the nature of lust is given “both for those who are not united in marriage, and—perhaps even more—for those who are husband and wife.”<sup>65</sup>

These reflections on Mat 5:27-28, says John Paul II, make it clear that the dualism of Manichaeism is contrary to the teaching of Jesus.<sup>66</sup> Neither the body nor sex is deprecated in his teaching. “The words of Christ according to Matthew 5:27-28 must lead to . . . an affirmation of the femininity and masculinity of the human being, as the personal dimension of ‘being a body.’” The body is a sacramental sign. The Manichean view of the body as “anti-value” and a source of evil is a profound impoverishment of the body as described in the biblical theology of the body. Part of the call of the gospel of Christ—including Mat 5:27-28—is to “reactivate that deeper heritage and give it real power in human life.”<sup>67</sup> Far from being a rejection of sexuality, Christ’s call is to a profound self-understanding that weighs the inner longings and values of the heart such that a spontaneous valuing of full masculinity and femininity characterizes every

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>66</sup> John Paul II describes the relationship of the person to the body as follows: “Man . . . expresses himself through that body and in this sense is, I would say, that body.” Ibid., 203.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 168.

encounter with another.<sup>68</sup> Women and men are to practice the “fullness of justice” of the “new man” as they ally themselves with the ethos of the redemption of the body.<sup>69</sup>

*St. Paul’s Teaching on the Human Body*

*Body and Spirit.* St. Paul’s teachings on the human body play a key part in the thought of John Paul II, who notes, in light of verses such as Gal 5:17,<sup>70</sup> that for Paul, the body is the means of expression or actualization of the internal life, either negatively or positively.<sup>71</sup> Negatively, “a sin of the flesh . . . is one of the symptoms . . . of the life of the flesh.”<sup>72</sup> This “life of the flesh,” notes John Paul II, corresponds to the three lusts described in 1 John 2:15;<sup>73</sup> the issues of the heart that Jesus mentioned in Mat 5:21-48;<sup>74</sup> and Jesus’ instructions regarding impurities from the heart in Mat 15:2-20.<sup>75</sup> Positively, in both Gal 5 and Rom 8:5-10, Paul places this conflict between the desires of the Spirit and the desire of the flesh “in the context of the Pauline doctrine on justification by means of faith, that is by the power of Christ himself operating within man by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, “justification by faith is not just a dimension of the divine plan for our salvation and sanctification, but according to St. Paul is a real power that operates in man

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 175-176.

<sup>70</sup> “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

<sup>71</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 191.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 192.

and is revealed and asserts itself in his actions.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, on the one hand, after listing the works of the flesh, Paul declares, “Those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” On the other hand, the children of God are set free by Christ to realize the works of the Spirit through their bodies, and the primary work of the free man is love. In Gal 5:13-14, Paul declares that God calls Christians to freedom, and that they should use that freedom to love and serve each other, not to give a false opportunity to the flesh. Christians should subordinate freedom to love.<sup>78</sup> When this occurs, then the concupiscible flesh is put to death and the body is set free.

Abstention and control are important potentialities arising from the presence of Christ in the life of all believers. Thus, Paul says in 1 Thess 4:3-5, “This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathens who do not know God.” John Paul II comments that “the task of purity which the author of the letter seems to stress above all, is not only (and not so much) abstention from unchastity and from what leads to it, and thus to abstention from the passion of lust. But at the same time, it is the control of one’s own body in holiness and honor, and indirectly also that of others.”<sup>79</sup> This capability works in tandem with the life of the Spirit. In the words of Gal 5, the fruit of the Spirit is, among other things, purity and self-control; the work of the sinful nature is, among other things, license and impurity. When the God-designed, spontaneous attraction occurs between a man and a woman, the life of the Spirit causes each to honor the body and person of the other, and keeps each from

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 200.

merely utilizing the other in the passion of lust. Paul is succinct. “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3).

*Honoring sexuality.* Honoring the body means honoring the sexuality of the body. In 1 Cor 12:18-25, Paul draws an analogy of the human body and the body of Christ in order to describe the nature of the church. He also reveals several important features of a proper theology of the body. John Paul II notes that the backdrop for Paul’s comments is the creation and redemption of the body. This backdrop, with its depiction of the reality and truth about the sexual body, is then combined with the reality of historical, sinful men and women.<sup>80</sup> Paul says, “The parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:22-25). The fact that some parts of the body are weak and unpresentable reflects the shame that followed original sin. As John Paul II notes, that shame dimly reflects original innocence, and “from shame springs respect for one’s own body.” In order to produce harmony in the body, special honor must be given to its sexual parts. “The man of original innocence, male and female, did not even feel that discord in the body.” Shame and the propensity for lustful passion make special care necessary, so that the body will

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 202.

be harmonious and controlled “in holiness and honor” (1 Thess 4:4). Paul encourages a transformation and a “gradual victory over that discord in the body.”<sup>81</sup>

These Pauline passages, says John Paul II, can be summarized under a single heading: the “doctrine of purity.” For Paul, purity has both a “moral” and a “charismatic” dimension.<sup>82</sup> Morally, purity is a virtue closely related to temperance and is a capacity to respect persons as persons in their sexuality and to respect the dignity of the body more generally. It is also the capacity to turn away from lust. Charismatically, purity is fruit of the presence of the Holy Spirit. After describing sexual sins as being against one’s own body, Paul pointedly asks in 1 Cor 6:19, “Do you not know that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” The body of the Christian deserves respect, notes John Paul II, because it is the body of a person, because it is the dwelling place of the Spirit, and because it is joined to Christ himself (1 Cor 6:15).<sup>83</sup> Paul says frankly, “the body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor 6:13). The Spirit’s indwelling is fruit of the redemptive work of Christ, and the Spirit sanctifies believers, enabling them to experience the fullness of their bodily humanity and the embodied sexuality of others. Again, the fruit of this process is purity, especially purity working itself out as a moral commitment to control the body and a commitment to those acts that will themselves further purity.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, “from purity springs that extraordinary beauty which

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 206-207.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 207.

permeates every sphere of men's common life and makes it possible to express in it simplicity and depth, cordiality and the unrepeatable authenticity of personal trust."<sup>85</sup>

*The Resurrection of the Body*

John Paul II observes that Christ gave a "trptych of words" crucial for developing a theology of the body: Mat 19:3-9; Mat 5:27-32; and Mat 22:23-33 (cf. Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40).<sup>86</sup> In the last of these, he responded to a quandary raised by the Sadducees. They asked Jesus what would happen if a woman married a man who had seven brothers, and then when he died she married one of the brothers, who also died, and in this way she successively married each of the seven brothers, and finally she died. These Sadducees wanted to know, whose wife she would be in the resurrection. They take this story to show that there is no resurrection from the dead. Jesus response to them includes the following: "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:24-25).

John Paul II sees a number of implications in this passage. First, marriage is for this age only. In fact, Luke 20:34 is specific: "The children of this age marry and are given in marriage." Not so in the age to come. The resurrection will bring "not only the recovery of corporeity and the re-establishment of human life in its integrity by means of the union of the body with the soul, but also a completely new state of human life itself."<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, those who are resurrected will be "psychosomatic" beings retaining their humanity, including their masculinity and femininity. Jesus says they will

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 238.

be “like the angels,” yet the very fact that he affirms a *resurrection* indicates that they will not be purely spiritual. Rather, what will occur is a “spiritualization of the somatic nature” by means of a distinct “system of forces” within the resurrected whereby there is a “new submission of the body to the spirit.”<sup>88</sup>

In this resurrection, “the body will return to perfect unity and harmony with the spirit.”<sup>89</sup> All the opposition that arose from the fall, by which “I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind” (Rom 7:23), is erased. In the perfect spiritualization of the person at the resurrection, the spirit will “fully permeate” the body. Although mature Christians can in part achieve this state in this present age, in the resurrection there will be a perfect integration, resulting in deep harmony that manifests itself in perfect spontaneity.<sup>90</sup>

This involves both human divinization and spiritualization. “As we read in Luke 20:36, the ‘sons of the resurrection’ are not only equal to angels, but are also sons of God.” Again, this divinization is “incomparably superior” to that which can be attained in this life. God will communicate his very divinity to his children. As a result, the resurrected will experience the beatific vision, yet they will retain their “authentic subjectivity” and God will perfect them.

Furthermore, because of the beatific vision that is the “inexhaustible source of perpetual virginity,”<sup>91</sup> the resurrected will give themselves in their entirety to God and their nuptial gift will find its fullest expression in virginity. Full self-discovery will result in fully giving oneself to God. “In this way, this reality signifies the real and definitive

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 254.

fulfillment of human subjectivity, and on this basis, the definitive fulfillment of the nuptial meaning of the body.”<sup>92</sup> The body is revealed both in its original potentiality and in its redeemed transformation.

What began in the creation of humanity and continues in the procreative union of one flesh will come to full expression in a resurrection in which they “neither marry nor are given in marriage.” The true meaning of the body, argues John Paul II, does not change. “The original and fundamental significance of being a body as well as being, by reason of the body, male and female—that is precisely that nuptial significance—is united with the fact that man is created as a person and called to a life in *communione personarum*. Marriage and procreation in itself do not determine definitively the original and fundamental meaning of being a body or of being, as a body, male and female. Marriage and procreation merely give a concrete reality to that meaning in the dimensions of history.”<sup>93</sup> The nuptial meaning of the body is forever personal and communitarian. Thus, the unmarried state of the resurrected is both old and new.

#### *Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom*

In *The Theology of the Body*, John Paul II begins by showing the importance of the phrase “in the beginning” (Mat 19:8). Later, as seen directly above, he indicates the importance of the resurrection—a state in which men and women do not marry.<sup>94</sup> These two perspectives, the creational and the eschatological, inform the current historical situation of fallen men and women. It is not surprising, therefore, that John Paul II uses this threefold framework of creation, historical humanity, and resurrection to describe the

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 233.

nature of virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Having presented the basic features of a theology of the body—the original, historical, and future nature of human sexual embodiment--John Paul II explores in detail the character of celibacy and those men and women who choose celibacy for the kingdom of heaven on the basis of their “particular sensitivity of the human spirit” that results in their “exclusive donation of self to God in virginity.”

The foundational biblical passage for his study is Mat 19:3-12. In it some Pharisees asked Jesus whether divorce is lawful, and his reply pointed them to “the beginning” and Gen 2:24. The Pharisees then questioned Jesus regarding why Moses had allowed divorce. Jesus stated that Moses made this allowance because of their hard hearts, and then Jesus declared, “whoever divorces his wife, except in the case of concubinage,<sup>95</sup> and marries another, commits adultery” (Mat 19:9). Jesus’ disciples react strongly to this restriction of divorce and suggest that it is expedient not to marry. Jesus then says to them, “Not all men can receive the precept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it” (Mat 19:11-12).

*The vocation.* Some men and women today receive a vocation to voluntary celibacy. But Christ indicated that not everyone could accept this vocation, only those to whom it was given. Those that receive this gift are enabled to make a choice oriented

---

<sup>95</sup> Again, in attempting to reflect John Paul II’s thought, I have used his translation, “concubinage” of the word πορνεία that is more often translated “fornication.” Ibid., 262.

toward the virginal eschatological human state. They have a “charismatic orientation” toward this state; that is, they have a gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>96</sup> The kind of instruction given by Jesus—he did not give a command to all, but a counsel to some—is further evidence that celibacy is not for all. “Those able “to receive it’ are those ‘to whom it has been given.’”<sup>97</sup> In the eschatological state, celibacy will be universal. However, for historical humanity today, celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is an exception to the rule of the current state stage of humanity: marriage. Because it is a counsel, it is a “charismatic choice” made as a response to a gift and call given by the Holy Spirit.<sup>98</sup>

*Jesus and Old Testament ideas about virginity.* John Paul II points out that the cultural and religious context of the Old Testament had no place for honoring celibacy. Jeremiah’s celibacy was a sign of the coming judgment by God during which a spouse or children would be solely a cause of sorrow (Jer 16:1-2). The virginity of Jephthah’s daughter was a cause of lamentation (Judg 11:37). Marriage, with its concomitant procreation, was a status of religious privilege because covenant with Abraham promised that he would “father a multitude of nations” (Gen 17:4) and because the Messiah would be a son of David. Celibacy was associated with physical incapability. John Paul II points out that Jesus broke with this Old Testament tradition in four ways: 1) historically, by disregarding the traditional and current practice of his day; 2) psychologically, by denying that personal wholeness requires marriage and children; 3) ethically, by declaring that it is morally acceptable to not marry; and 4) religiously, by establishing a

---

<sup>96</sup> Compare Ibid., 206.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 264.

spiritual basis for celibacy outside of God's manifest procreative purposes for the children of Abraham.<sup>99</sup> Jesus inaugurated a radical change in the understanding of celibacy. From being a sign of physical defect, it became a sign of voluntary commitment to the kingdom of heaven. This change took root in the life of the church and early on it bore fruit in the life of Paul (1 Cor 7:25-40), the theology of the book of Revelation (Rev 14:4), and in the understanding of many in the early church.<sup>100</sup>

*Virginity as a sign.* In the new order, virgins for the sake of the kingdom are a charismatic and eschatological sign. They point to the resurrection, the virginal destiny of humanity, the nature of the glorified man and woman, the full nuptial significance of the body, the dynamics of the redeemed body, and the import of eternal face-to-face communion with God. "The human being, male and female, who, in the earthly situation where people usually marry (Luke 20:34), freely chooses continence for the kingdom of heaven, indicates that in that kingdom, which is the other world of the resurrection, people will no longer marry (Mark 12:25). This is because God will be 'everything to everyone' (1 Cor 15:28)."<sup>101</sup>

Virginity is a charismatic sign for a second reason as well: because the Spirit works supernatural fruitfulness into it. This unusual fruit, says John Paul II, is exemplified most clearly in Mary, the mother of Jesus. It was not by physical fecundity that she bore Jesus, but by the fertility of the Spirit working in her virgin body. "Mary's divine maternity is also, in a certain sense, a superabundant revelation of that fruitfulness in the Holy Spirit to which man submits his spirit, when he freely chooses continence in

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

the body, namely, continence for the kingdom of heaven.” The marriage of Joseph and Mary displayed the perfect communion and fruitfulness of a continent “conjugal pact” for the kingdom.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, Jesus’ own fruitful and virginal life teaches the same lesson. Celibacy offers the potential of superabundant spiritual fruitfulness.

Nonetheless, even though continence is “especially efficacious and important for the kingdom of heaven,”<sup>103</sup> it is not to be chosen simply from expediency. One should not choose celibacy from the utilitarian measurement of its potential fruitfulness. As John Paul II points out, Jesus does not confirm the disciples’ evaluation that because marriage is indissoluble it is better to avoid it. Rather, Jesus pointed them to the proper motive: the kingdom of heaven. The efficacy of celibacy is a byproduct, in part, of its “supernatural finality.” Continence for the kingdom of heaven requires a deep, final commitment to that kingdom; just as the object of this commitment, the kingdom of heaven, is all encompassing, so the commitment itself embraces all of life.<sup>104</sup>

*Comparison of marriage and virginity.* Such a life is not for all. The call to marriage is “universal and ordinary,” but the call to virginity is “particular and exceptional.” God grants “the gift, that is, the grace” and, as a result, one understands the significance of the kingdom of heaven and experiences the motivation to choose celibacy.<sup>105</sup> This requires a renunciation of marriage and an acceptance of an “even fuller form of intersubjective communion with others” for the kingdom of heaven—the expression of the Trinitarian communion. The initial sacrifice, renouncing marriage,

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 268-269.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 272.

precedes the continual sacrifices of living the celibate life. The goods renounced in marriage—giving oneself as a gift to another, sexual union, procreation, and participation in marriage and family—are renounced for another good, the kingdom of heaven.<sup>106</sup>

Women and men remain essentially the same whether married or celibate. They participate in the original solitude and the communion of masculine and feminine bodies, while they also deal with the “threefold concupiscence” (1 John 2:25) resulting from the fall. Thus, a celibate person is not by reason of celibacy superior to a married person.

Yet Paul will say that the married do well and the celibate do better (1 Cor 7:38). John Paul II states that celibacy is superior to marriage in that the former is exceptional while the latter is universal, and in that the former is “especially important and necessary to the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>107</sup> This in no way disparages marriage. All authentic church tradition, he says, has agreed.

In addition, marriage and celibacy are complementary. Nothing in the physical sexual relationship of husband and wife makes marriage inferior. Neither does poverty, chastity, and obedience make one who lives in a religious institute superior in perfection. The measure of perfection is charity, and charity can be achieved both in the religious institute and in the world. Jesus recommended that the rich young man sell all and give to the poor “if [he] would be perfect” (Mat 19:21). Nonetheless, the married in the world may observe the “spirit of those counsels.” The continent and the married thus speak to each other; the continent exemplify the letter of that which the married may display the spirit. Similarly, in the married “perfect conjugal love must be marked by that fidelity and that donation to the only Spouse . . . on which religious profession and priestly

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 275.

celibacy are founded.” Furthermore, the married physically reproduce children and spiritually reproduce Christians, through education and nurture, while the celibate spiritually reproduce through the special fruitfulness of the Spirit.<sup>108</sup>

Love, notes John Paul II, is central to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. It is out of love for the present and future kingdom that the celibate renounces marriage, and family; takes up his cross; and follows Christ.<sup>109</sup> The celibate is driven by the single value of the kingdom. In addition, love for this value is inseparable from love for the “divine Spouse” of the church, Christ, who both rules and animates the kingdom. Contenance, then, “has acquired the significance of an act of nuptial love, that is, a nuptial giving of oneself for the purpose of reciprocating in a particular way the nuptial love of the Redeemer.”<sup>110</sup> The sexual bodily design of men and women is not best understood in the modern terminology of sexual instinct. Rather, human masculinity and femininity are best understood in the context of human personhood that includes the freedom of self-giving in love—the nuptial gift. Designed for total self-giving, every man and woman is free to bestow that gift or not to bestow it. Marriage is giving the nuptial gift in love to another. Celibacy is giving the nuptial gift in love for the kingdom of heaven,<sup>111</sup> it is a particular response of love for the “Spouse of souls.”<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore, celibacy, far from subtly denouncing marriage, affirms the value of marriage. The greatness of the sacrifice made by celibates, says John Paul II, is measured by the value of that which is sacrificed. The renunciation of marital

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 277-278.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 283-284.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 282.

commitment and relations affirms the value of both. That is, as a renunciation, celibacy turns from genuine goods such as family, spousal love, and sexual intimacy. Jesus' mention of the three categories of eunuchs implies that a sacrifice of a good has occurred in each of the three cases. Something good, marriage, is sacrificed for something else good, the kingdom of heaven.<sup>113</sup> In fact, the value of marriage becomes clearer when celibacy highlights the underlying nuptial gift. The virgin takes the nuptial gift and gives it to Christ, thus identifying the existence of the gift, the freedom to give it, and the self-realization that comes in giving the gift. In this way, celibacy clarifies the meaning of what it is to marry: to give the gift of the total self in freedom. It is not surprise therefore, that the love of a celibate, Christ, for the church, is the model of spousal love (Eph 5:22-23).<sup>114</sup>

*Paul's advice: choose celibacy.* Paul clearly tells his readers that although he would advise them to choose celibacy (1 Cor 7:7, 8, 27-28), they do not sin if they marry (1 Cor 7:7, 9, 28, 36). Thus, in the teaching of Paul, as in the teaching of Jesus, celibacy is a counsel, not a command. According to John Paul II, the probable central question answered by Paul in this chapter is whether it is sin to marry; this question would stem from "dualist pro-gnostic currents, which later became encratism and Manichaeism."<sup>115</sup>

Nonetheless, Paul encourages celibacy. He emphasizes that "the time is already short" and "the form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:29, 31). "This observation about the perishability of human existence and the transience of the temporal world, in a

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 289.

certain sense about the accidental nature of all that is created,”<sup>116</sup> leads to the conclusion—“Do not seek a wife” (1 Cor 7:27). John Paul II observes that Paul also counsels celibacy because of two important features of marriage. First, the married have “troubles in the flesh” (1 Cor 7:28); that is, marriage is often fraught with difficulties simply because it is so difficult to express “true conjugal love.”<sup>117</sup> Second, the married are occupied “with the things of the world,” while the unmarried are occupied “with the affairs of the Lord,” that is, with how to “please the Lord” (1 Cor 7:32-34). This occupation of the unmarried with “the affairs of the Lord” directly corresponds to Jesus’ phrase, “celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 19:12).

Furthermore, the married person is divided: loving both a spouse and the Lord. By contrast the celibate is “characterized by an interior integration” that allows for complete dedication to the kingdom. Nonetheless, Paul recognizes three valid reasons for marriage: 1) as a remedy for concupiscence, 2) as a response to the gift of grace for marriage, and 3) as a sacramental state.<sup>118</sup>

John Paul II concludes his comments on celibacy with two observations. First, because marriage is “tied in with the form of this world which is passing away,” it is better to choose virginity even though marriage is good. God gives the gift of grace to both the married and the celibate; that is, God enables both types to experience the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Both celibacy and marriage are “full answer[s]” to the question of the theology of the body. Nonetheless, those who choose identification with

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 295.

the celibate nature of the future kingdom do better.<sup>119</sup> Second, the theology of the body is best understood under three rubrics: the beginning, the nature of concupiscence, and the resurrection; that is, original, historical, and future humanity. The last of the three is the focus of Paul's comments in Rom 8:18-25. There the "redemption of the body" appears in the center of the cosmological liberation of creation from its bondage. What appeared in original humanity and fell in historical humanity undergoes transformation and fulfillment in future humanity and the redemption of the body. In this full redemption, men and women, as subjective persons, find fullness in the nuptial meaning of the body given in its entirety to God.<sup>120</sup>

*The Sacramentality of Marriage and Reflections on 'Humanae Vitae'*

The final two sections of the *Theology of the Body* are two further applications of the theology of the body. In themselves, they do not address celibacy; therefore, they are not discussed here. In these two sections, John Paul II applies the theology of the body developed earlier in the addresses first to marriage as a sacrament, and second, to the true nature of the conjugal act.

*John Paul II's Comments on Celibacy outside of the Theology of the Body*

*Various Manifestations of Celibacy*

When John Paul II spoke of celibacy elsewhere than in the *Theology of the Body*, he most often included it as part of the trilogy of evangelical counsels—chastity, poverty, and obedience. Only in the *Theology of the Body* does he develop in any detail the

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 298-299.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 301.

theology of celibacy apart from direct consideration of either the evangelical counsels or priestly celibacy.<sup>121</sup> These three—the evangelical counsels, priestly celibacy, and the theology of celibacy—are, nonetheless, closely related.<sup>122</sup> A significant tie between them lies in the concept of “the choice of total self giving in Christ.”<sup>123</sup> Just as John Paul II spoke of the nuptial gift of self in relation to celibacy, so the consecrated life requires a total giving of oneself to God. Among the three counsels, he says, the “first and essential” is celibacy;<sup>124</sup> thus, whenever he speaks about the consecrated life he speaks, at least in part, about celibacy. Therefore, unless mentioned otherwise, in the observations that follow, John Paul II’s comments on priestly celibacy,<sup>125</sup> the consecrated life, and

---

<sup>121</sup> The three evangelical counsels are chastity, poverty, and obedience. Those who vow to practice these are said to be living the consecrated life. This consecration is lived by men (ordained or not) and women who take these vows upon entering a particular community—i.e. either a Religious Institute or a Secular Institute—or who live these vows alone as hermits or anchorites. A woman may take simply the vow of chastity and remain in the world as a consecrated Virgin. In the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, unmarried men entering the diaconate take a promise to remain celibate. The “promise of celibacy” is not the “vow of chastity” (although it entails the same behavior) and therefore does not make the clergy part of consecrated life (unless they happen also to have taken vows as a member of an Institute of Consecrated Life). In all rites of the Roman Catholic Church, even those allowing a married man to seek ordination to the diaconate or priesthood, once a man is ordained he may not enter into marriage.

<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, John Paul II mentions that among the new forms of “consecration” today are associations where married couples commit to the “chastity proper to the married state and, without neglecting their duties toward their children, profess poverty and obedience.” He does not consider these married ones to be “consecrated” even though he favors their commitment. John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” in *The Church and the Consecrated Life*, ed. David L. Fleming and Elizabeth McDonough (St. Louis, MO: Review for Religious, 1996), 62. The numbers appearing in the citations of this document refer to the standard sections of the document.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>125</sup> Typically, the motives and meanings he assigns to the various forms of celibacy are identical. For priestly celibacy, for example, he emphasizes celibacy as a gift of the spirit, as freeing the heart for service, and as leading to spiritual fatherhood. John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests: Holy Thursday (1979-2001)* (Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 2001), 18. These are the same aspects that he emphasizes regarding religious celibacy. Nonetheless, he occasionally distinguishes motives for celibacy specific to one group or another. Religious celibacy has, primarily, an eschatological meaning; priestly celibacy has a social meaning; female celibacy includes the meaning of the “gift of self as sister.” John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests*, 219, 18. Also, John Paul II, *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People: Christifideles Laici* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1988), 55. The numbers appearing in the citations of this document refer to the standard sections of the document.

secular institutes will be combined somewhat indiscriminately to discover his overall approach to the theology of celibacy.

The fertile soils for celibacy mentioned by John Paul II are the gospel, tradition, and the Church's magisterium. Growing in this soil, the seeds of consecration manifest specific features. John Paul II summarizes as follows: "This is the essence of religious consecration: to profess within and for the benefit of the Church, poverty, chastity, and obedience in response to God's special invitation, in order to praise and serve God in greater freedom of heart (cf. 1 Cor. 7:34-35) and to have one's life more closely conformed to Christ in the manner of life chosen by Him and His Blessed Mother."<sup>126</sup>

### *Reasons to Choose Celibacy*

*Following Christ.* Christ was celibate, and those who choose celibacy for Christ's sake, says John Paul II, follow his example in a way that others do not.<sup>127</sup> Christ offers this relationship of closely following him to some and not to all. Some of his disciples, for example, received this special vocation with its accompanying gift from the Spirit.<sup>128</sup> The consecrated follow Christ in his complete submission to the Father; he gave himself totally to his Father, and this self-giving is remembered in the Eucharist.<sup>129</sup> "His way of living in chastity, poverty and obedience appears as the most radical way of living the Gospel on this earth, a way which may be called divine, for it was embraced by him, God

---

<sup>126</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel: Messages of John Paul II on Consecrated Life* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1983), 210.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 200, 201. John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 1. Jean Beyer, *Juan Pablo II a Las Religiosas Y Religiosos* (Barcelona: Herder, 2000), 44.

<sup>128</sup> John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 14.

<sup>129</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 112.

and man . . . .”<sup>130</sup> Jesus—virgin, poor, and celibate—is the example followed in the consecrated life.<sup>131</sup> “Your religious consecration,” says John Paul II to a group of religious, “has not only deepened your baptismal gift of union with the Trinity, but it has also called you to greater service of the People of God. You are united more closely to the Person of Christ, and you share more fully in His mission for the salvation of the world.”<sup>132</sup>

*Example of Mary.* John Paul II exalts Mary, the Ever-Virgin mother of Jesus, as the “perfect example of the consecrated life.”<sup>133</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” she declared, “may it be to me as you have said.” These words are at the heart of consecration; they are the “prototype of every religious profession.”<sup>134</sup> Those committed to virginity can turn to Mary in order to discover how to live their life in faithfulness to the Spouse of the Church.<sup>135</sup> Mary cares for the consecrated in an especially tender way. Jesus’ words to John, “Here is your mother,” entrusted John, all men and women, and in particular the consecrated, into the loving tenderness of Mary’s care. In addition, like John, the consecrated welcome Mary, in a special way, into their home as they follow her example of radical consecration.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 18.

<sup>131</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 46.

<sup>132</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 201.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-209. John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests*, 147. John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 28. John Paul II, *The Gift of Redemption: Apostolic Exhortation Redemptionis Donum* (Washington, D. C.: Office of Publishing Services United States Catholic Conference, 1984), 17. The numbers appearing in the citations of this document refer to the standard sections of the document.

<sup>134</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 160.

<sup>135</sup> John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests*, 147.

<sup>136</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 114.

*Love for God.* Love for God expresses itself, at times, in the consecrated life.<sup>137</sup>

Similarly, says John Paul II, the consecrated life testifies to the world that the love of God can fill the human heart to the brim.<sup>138</sup> More pointedly, only the spousal love<sup>139</sup> of God can fill the heart because only it embraces the whole person.<sup>140</sup> Love for God and its corollaries—love of Christ, love of the Church, love of the kingdom of heaven—are the central driving force in the life of consecration and celibacy. Christ is alone worthy of all the love a man or woman can offer.<sup>141</sup> “Yes, in Christ it is possible to love God with all one’s heart, putting him above every other love.”<sup>142</sup> Thus, chastity for the kingdom of heaven can thrive in the midst of a hedonistic world. “Those who have been given the priceless gift of following the Lord Jesus more closely consider it obvious that he can and must be loved with an undivided heart, that one can devote to him one’s whole life and not merely certain actions or occasional moments or activities.” The consecrated are “captivated in the depths of their heart by the beauty and goodness of the Lord” and have been “admitted in a unique way to the knowledge of the Son and to a sharing of his divine mission in the world.”<sup>143</sup> Consecration is loving God above all else. Celibacy is

---

<sup>137</sup> Again, John Paul II uses the word “consecrated” for a specific category of persons who are following the threefold evangelical counsels.

<sup>138</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 46.

<sup>139</sup> Experiencing Christ’s spousal love is not exclusive to the consecrated. All the baptized have been placed in “spousal covenant with Christ.” John Paul II, *On the Family: Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* (Washington, D. C.: Office of Publishing Services United States Catholic Conference, 1981), 13. The numbers appearing in the citations of this document refer to the standard sections of the document.

<sup>140</sup> John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 16. John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 3, 11, 14.

<sup>141</sup> John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 34.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

not simply the renunciation of marriage; it is also the affirmation of spousal love for Christ.<sup>144</sup> The soul of celibacy is love.<sup>145</sup>

*A vocation from God.* Every Christian, notes John Paul II, has a charism and a vocation.<sup>146</sup> The Spirit of God gives the gifts and ignites the calls through the Church.<sup>147</sup> The vocation, be it to celibacy or to marriage, comes as one understands both what one has inside himself or herself, and what God expects. “‘What is my vocation’ means ‘in what direction should my personality develop, considering what I have in me, what I have to offer, and what others—other people and God—expect of me?’”<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, baptism is the first consecration experienced by every Christian, yet for some a second consecration deepens the first.<sup>149</sup> Those called by God to obey the evangelical counsels, were elected in Christ Jesus “before the foundation of the world” to receive a “precious pearl”—the “grace of the vocation.” They “[follow] Christ along the ‘narrow and . . . hard’ way” (Mat 7:14).<sup>150</sup> The consecrated respond to the call that comes from the heart of the gospel and receive the religious vocation as a new “burial in the death of Christ” (Rom 6:3-11).<sup>151</sup> The initiative for this further consecration does not lie with the celibate.

---

<sup>144</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 7, 11.

<sup>145</sup> John Paul II, *Avec Vous, Je Suis Prêtre: Homélie Et Exhortations (1978-1986)*, ed. Pierre Raffin (Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 1986), 286. John Paul II, *I Will Give You Shepherds: Pastores Dabo Vobis* (Washington, D. C.: Office for Publishing and Promotion Services United States Catholic Conference, 1992), 36. The numbers appearing in the citations of this document refer to the standard sections of the document.

<sup>146</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 56. John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 31.

<sup>147</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 134. John Paul II says specifically, “Celibacy is precisely a ‘gift of the Spirit.’ A similar gift is contained in the vocation to true and faithful married love.” John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests*, 18.

<sup>148</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 257.

<sup>149</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 109. John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 201.

<sup>150</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 1.

<sup>151</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 106, 109. John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 7.

The Father initiates, asking only some of the baptized to exhibit this total commitment and thus to “respond with complete and exclusive devotion.”<sup>152</sup> Nonetheless, the privilege of response pertains to the person. As persons, men and women can either give or withhold the gift of self. Choosing celibacy is giving one’s total gift to the Lord.<sup>153</sup> The priest, for example “decides upon a life of celibacy only after he has reached a firm conviction that Christ is giving him this ‘gift’ for the good of the Church and the service of others.”<sup>154</sup>

*As an eschatological sign.* Celibacy has an eschatological meaning. John Paul II sees celibacy as a sign to the world and the Church of the nature of the future life.<sup>155</sup> Virgins, he says, “bring into the midst of this passing world *the announcement of the future resurrection* and of eternal life; life in union with God himself through the beatific vision and the love which contains in itself and completely pervades all the other loves of the human heart.”<sup>156</sup> The consecrated invite the faithful to look forward to the fullness of salvation through Christ the bridegroom in the last day. Although poverty too has an eschatological aspect in that selling of all and giving to the poor provides treasure in heaven,<sup>157</sup> it is celibacy that most clearly “foretells the resurrected state.”<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, in addition to being the sign of the future, celibacy is actually the beginning of the new

---

<sup>152</sup> John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 17. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 35.

<sup>153</sup> John Paul II, *Avec Vous, Je Suis Prêtre*, 285-286.

<sup>154</sup> John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests*, 19.

<sup>155</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 157. Mat 22:30.

<sup>156</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 11. John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 7.

<sup>157</sup> Mat 19:21.

<sup>158</sup> John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 26. John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 5. Mat 19:21.

creation. The evangelical counsels open up a “wide space for the ‘new creation’ that emerges in [the] human ‘I’ precisely from the economy of the Redemption.”<sup>159</sup>

*Spiritual and ministerial fulfillment.* Being celibate appropriately focuses life, says John Paul II. The perfection that most closely corresponds to the image of God is the perfection of the evangelical counsels.<sup>160</sup> The distortion of the person that manifests itself as the “three lusts” is best corrected by the corresponding three counsels.<sup>161</sup> Perfect charity, “the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being,”<sup>162</sup> flourishes where there is undivided love for God and nonexclusive love for others.<sup>163</sup> John Paul II cites 1 Cor 7:34 to show that celibacy enables one to live in undivided loyalty to Christ.<sup>164</sup> Following the evangelical counsels provides unprecedented opportunity for contemplation of the beauty of God and results in a special understanding of God.<sup>165</sup> John Paul II asserts that “the faithful practice of the evangelical counsels accentuates . . . human dignity, liberates the human heart and causes [the] spirit to burn with undivided love for Christ and for His brothers and sisters in the world.”<sup>166</sup> Finally, undivided focus on Christ results in the unprecedented capacity for ministry.<sup>167</sup> To a group of sisters he says: “Embracing with faith, hope and charity your divine Spouse, you embrace Him in the many people you serve: in the sick, the old, the cripples, the handicapped people

---

<sup>159</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 8, 10.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>162</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11.

<sup>163</sup> John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 12.

<sup>164</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 202, 210. John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 1, 21.

<sup>165</sup> John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 15, 20, 104.

<sup>166</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 202. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 16.

<sup>167</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 140.

whom nobody is capable of taking care of but you because this demands a truly heroic sacrifice.”<sup>168</sup>

*Results of Choosing Celibacy*

*Benefits for the Church.* Consecrated persons function as witnesses to the Church. The consecration and holiness of the few calls the many to further consecration and holiness. By contemplating the gift of the consecrated life, the Church remembers that it belongs to Christ alone and that it longs to be without blemish. The consecrated testify to the Church that God can fill the human heart. The Church allows the lives of the consecrated to question her.<sup>169</sup> In addition, the life of Christ—poor, celibate, and obedient—is made present to the Church.<sup>170</sup> Thus, the example of the celibate speaks more persuasively of the adequacy of Christ than does mere teaching on celibacy;<sup>171</sup> the integration of life and message deepens the celibate’s influence.<sup>172</sup> Hermits, for example, witness to several things: the passing nature of the present age; that man does not live by bread alone; and that the supreme vocation is to always be with the Lord.<sup>173</sup> The radical nature of the commitment of the consecrated is a prophetic voice witnessing to the presence of God in the world.<sup>174</sup> In addition to functioning as a witness to the Church,

---

<sup>168</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 160.

<sup>169</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 44-47, 112. John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 159. All the baptized, by virtue of the consecration of their baptism are to practice the chastity appropriate to their state, the “reasonable detachment from material possessions,” and obedience to God and the Church. John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 30.

<sup>170</sup> John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 29.

<sup>171</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 113.

<sup>172</sup> John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 85.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 73, 85.

the consecrated provide direct service to the church by their many gifts and ministries within the Church. Finally, the consecrated serve as chosen representatives of the entire Church. “The whole messianic People, the entire church, is *chosen in every person* whom the Lord selects from the midst of this people; in every person who is consecrated *for everyone* to God as his exclusive possession.”<sup>175</sup> That is, “in the love that Christ receives from consecrated persons, the love of the entire Body is directed in a special and exceptional way towards the Spouse, who at the same time is the head of this Body.”<sup>176</sup>

*Benefits for the world.* Similarly, the world receives benefits from the lives of the celibate. The world needs and waits to see the generosity of hearts consecrated fully to God.<sup>177</sup> Thus, those following the evangelical counsels play a special role in the evangelization of and ministry to the world. The radical gift of self to Christ is a gift to every member of the human race as contained in Christ.<sup>178</sup> Radical, nonexclusive love comes from this gift. As John Paul II exclaims: “Yes, in Christ it is possible to love God with all one’s heart, putting him above every other love, and thus to love every creature with the freedom of God!”<sup>179</sup>

### *The Superiority of Celibacy*

Is celibacy superior to marriage? John Paul II believes it is, yet he carefully describes what he means. He makes two categories of statements. Some statements

---

<sup>175</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 8.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>177</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 159.

<sup>178</sup> John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 3.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 88. In this section, John Paul II includes the chastity appropriate to the married state as a way of loving god above every other love.

indicate that he believes celibacy is better than or superior to marriage. Other statements laud celibacy indicating its character and benefits without necessarily implying its superiority to marriage—which he also lauds in other contexts. In the first category, he notes: “As a way of showing forth the church’s holiness, it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ’s own way of life, has objective superiority. Precisely for this reason, it is an especially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the church’s purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity.”<sup>180</sup> Celibacy is superior because the consecrated follow Christ more closely, follow him wholly with all of their lives, and are “totally free for the service of the Gospel.”<sup>181</sup> The consecrated have opportunity to give undivided loyalty to Christ.<sup>182</sup> In the second category, he notes that the evangelical counsels provide “particularly favourable conditions” for perfection.<sup>183</sup> Speaking to his fellow priests, John Paul II says, “We freely renounce marriage and establishing our own family in order to be better able to serve God and neighbor.”<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, because every person is designed for self-giving that springs from our spiritual nature, and because every person’s ultimate fulfillment lies in final union with God, those who have chosen that life which most closely resembles the final union (that is, the celibate’s life) have a unique role as signs to all persons about the essential nature of human fulfillment. Thus can be seen the “exceptionally important part which virginity plays in realizing the kingdom of God on

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 32. In the same passage, he extols the merits of the vocation to marriage, and he calls them “complementary paths.”

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>182</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 202, 210. John Paul II, “Vita Consecrata,” 1, 21.

<sup>183</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 256.

<sup>184</sup> John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests*, 147.

earth,” because the kingdom of God is realized precisely as “particular people gradually prepare and perfect themselves for eternal union with God.”<sup>185</sup>

One must not forget, however, that John Paul II also speaks highly of the place of marriage in the Church. A married person outside the ‘state of perfection’ of the evangelical counsels may be more perfect than the celibate because the standard of perfection is love. Thus, “whether the person is married, celibate, or even virgin . . . is here of secondary importance.”<sup>186</sup> Marriage is a vocation from God and a gift of the Spirit, for the married are also living out God’s plan for them.<sup>187</sup> Conjugal love “represents the mystery of Christ’s incarnation and the mystery of his covenant.”<sup>188</sup> The married are required to give themselves in love entirely, including physically, the one to the other, and by their love they participate in the love of Christ manifested in the cross. “Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the church of what happened on the cross”; they are a sacramental sign.<sup>189</sup>

### *Summation*

It is evident that John Paul II ponders celibacy from several perspectives: as a philosopher, a theologian, a priest, a confessor, a celibate, a mystic, and as the pope. Such varied perspectives provide a unique mixture, a unique vision of celibacy. Thus, in spite of the fact that his discussion of celibacy in *The Theology of the Body* is relatively

---

<sup>185</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 255.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>187</sup> John Paul II, *Letters to My Brother Priests*, 18. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 3-4.

<sup>188</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

brief, and his comments outside of it are somewhat miscellaneous, his understanding of celibacy is quite well developed.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Toward a Protestant Theology of Celibacy

Protestants may benefit from several aspects of John Paul II's theology of celibacy: his contact with Church Tradition, his personal experience of celibacy and extensive contact with celibates, his integration of celibacy into a theology of marriage, and the incorporation of his theology of celibacy within a philosophical understanding of the human person and human sexuality. If Protestants are to benefit from the work of John Paul II on celibacy, they must grasp its basic features, observe the internal Roman Catholic criticisms of his thought on human sexuality, and finally, move towards a Protestant theology of celibacy by comparing his thought with theirs and by recognizing the tasks that lie before them. This chapter seeks to facilitate that process.

#### *Summary of John Paul II's Theology of Celibacy*

What, then, is John Paul II's theology of celibacy? From the complex of books, addresses, audiences, and encyclicals we have examined, it is possible to summarize the major features of John Paul II's theology of celibacy under two headings: philosophical/theological aspects and the biblical/theological aspects. Both play a major role in his understanding of celibacy. The first draws together his understanding of the person and embodiment. The second draws together his thoughts on love for the kingdom of heaven, the relationship of marriage and celibacy, and celibacy as an eschatological sign.

*Philosophical/Theological Aspects*

*The nature and responsibility of the person.* The choice of celibacy, says John Paul II, springs from the very nature of the human being. For example, celibacy corresponds to the self-giving nature that is central to human personhood.<sup>1</sup> We are designed in the image of the self-giving God who gave existence to his creation and redemption to his children. This design expresses itself in a need to give oneself; at the same time, the giving is not compulsory. As a person, a man or a woman chooses to give or chooses not to give, being compelled neither by internal nor external factors.<sup>2</sup> Celibacy, then, is “exclusive donation of self to God in virginity.”<sup>3</sup> Celibacy also corresponds to the natural intersubjectivity of persons.<sup>4</sup> A human person reflects the image of the members of the Trinity,<sup>5</sup> each of whom eternally communes with the others. Celibacy is not an interaction between two human persons. It is an interaction between a man or woman and the divine Person.<sup>6</sup> This communion with God is the primary communion for which all men and women are designed, and it is this communion that the celibate chooses as his or her exclusive commitment.

At the heart of self-giving is love. God designed the human person both to give and receive love. A person can properly relate to another only in a relationship

---

<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 65; Karol Wojtyła, *Persona Y Acción*, trans. Jesús Fernández Zulaica, *Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1982), 32. This is the Spanish translation of Wojtyła’s *The Acting Person*. John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 283.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 262.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>6</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 251.

characterized by love.<sup>7</sup> In responding to the vocation of celibacy, one freely and exclusively chooses to love God<sup>8</sup> with the highest of human loves, spousal love. To follow either this vocation or the vocation to marriage requires a sustained act of love of which only persons are capable.<sup>9</sup>

One feature of love is the human capacity to recognize value. John Paul II notes that because God created and sustains the world, and because he made men and women in his image, they are able to perceive objects as either good or evil. Because of his or her vocational call and charism, the celibate is especially sensitive to the value of intimate communion with God. The celibate person offers complete self-giving love to the highest of all objects of value, God himself. In return, the celibate receives what comes from pursuing this highest good—personal fulfillment.

This perception of and response to value, even when it is stimulated by Christ's invitation, is not compulsory. A central feature of human persons is their ability and responsibility to choose by an act of the will.<sup>10</sup> They choose undivided dedication to God even while they are aware of internal impulses toward marriage, sexual expression, and the other goods involved in the decision. Men and women are conscious both of being moved internally by instinctual and somatic impulses, and yet of being agents responsible for determining their choices. John Paul II believes that there should be no simply utilitarian calculus of the benefits of celibacy,<sup>11</sup> nor should there be any denial of values or of truth in choosing and living celibacy. On the contrary, the truth about goods, as

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>10</sup> Wojtyła, *Persona Y Acción*, 82-83.

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 280.

well as the acceptance of some goods and the renunciation of others, must clearly come within the purview of the person considering celibacy.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the choice of celibacy draws on essential features of the human person.

*The nature of embodiment.* Bodies manifest persons and a central feature of human bodies is that they are either male or female.<sup>13</sup> From this fact John Paul II draws three implications related to celibacy. First, God did not design human persons for isolation. He designed them for communion through the nuptial gift, the gift of the self.<sup>14</sup> Second, the sexual urge is a fundamental raw material for men and women. In part, it is from this raw material that human love forms. Nonetheless, the lust which historical, fallen, men and women find in themselves misleads them. Third, a central purpose of the sexual urge is the continuance of the human species. Celibate men and women fulfill each one of these three aims of human sexual embodiment. Concerning the first purpose, they seek undivided communion with God as well as non-exclusive communion with others. Regarding the second aim, they love both God and their neighbor, including their neighbor of the opposite sex. They love Christ as their divine spouse with their nuptial gift.<sup>15</sup> They love those of the opposite sex, and shame protects them from the effects of lust, just as it protects the married.<sup>16</sup> Shame is an indicator of the tendency of historical fallen men and women to use another person simply for sexual satisfaction and to deny the truth of the personhood of the other. The celibate, then, like the married person,

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>13</sup> As stated earlier, this does not deny the existence of hermaphrodites, rather it states the obvious about the vast majority of persons. See Wojtyla's comment at Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 273, 284.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 117; Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 178.

benefits from shame by seeking to live in a proper personal relationship with all others in the practice of chastity.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Christ's redeeming work sets the celibate free, enabling him or her to subordinate freedom to love.<sup>18</sup> Concerning the third aim, although celibate men and women do not contribute to the propagation of the species, they are spiritually fruitful. Furthermore, they are signs of the ultimate destiny of the human species. Thus, the three aims of human embodiment each receives an alternate expression in the lives of celibate men and women.

### *Biblical/Theological Aspects*

In addition to the significant philosophical/theological aspects of John Paul II's theology of celibacy, there are important biblical/theological aspects.

*The vocational call.* John Paul II states that every baptized person receives a vocation and charism.<sup>19</sup> For some of the baptized, Christ's invitation to a religious consecration,<sup>20</sup> celibacy, "finds an echo" within their soul.<sup>21</sup> After a time of introspection and prayer they may respond by confirming their vocation to celibacy. Thus, "continence for the kingdom of heaven is a charismatic orientation toward that eschatological state in which men 'neither marry nor are given in marriage.'"<sup>22</sup> In Mat 19:12, Christ indicates that not everyone could receive this calling. John Paul II believes that some, by the

---

<sup>17</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 167.

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 198, 275, 302.

<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Beyer, *A Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*, 109.

<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 262, 301.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

election of God, have a “charismatic orientation” toward the state of celibacy.<sup>23</sup> Thus, with this vocation comes the charism, the presence, and gift of the Spirit that provides the grace necessary to choose and live out celibacy.<sup>24</sup> Receiving this vocation, says John Paul II, is a one-time, lifelong, irrevocable, commitment. Nonetheless, both in Mat 19 and in 1 Cor 7 celibacy is a counsel, not a command.<sup>25</sup>

*Love for God and his kingdom.* Under the old covenant celibacy was rare and marriage was the privileged state of the blessing of God. With Christ came a change. Now celibacy became a sign of a particular sort of love for the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom that is both present and future.<sup>26</sup> Celibates live for the kingdom and point to the kingdom in which the resurrected will no longer marry. In fact, the time is short, as Paul observes, and transient things will pass away.<sup>27</sup>

Love for the kingdom expresses itself in several related motives that stimulate the celibate in his or her commitment. First, is love for God. Betrothed or spousal love<sup>28</sup> is the giving of the nuptial gift in its fullness to another. For the celibate woman or man, this love that embraces the whole person is a manifestation of two goals: to be known by God and to know God. Celibates, in the fullness and responsibility of personhood, give their whole love to God. In this way, their virginity then becomes “conjugal love pledged to God Himself,”<sup>29</sup> and they are “captivated . . . by the beauty and goodness of the

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 263, cf. 206.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>28</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 131, 253.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 251.

Lord.”<sup>30</sup> Paul makes it clear that celibates, unlike the married, can live in undivided devotion to God.<sup>31</sup> The celibate man or woman is entirely focused on God and thus also committed to his kingdom and his world; that is, the celibate focuses on “how to please the Lord.”<sup>32</sup> Captured by the beauty and goodness of God, the celibate chooses God to love with a love that excels every other love. For John Paul II, this is the essence not only of celibacy but of each of the evangelical counsels.

A second love-motivation that stimulates the celibate is imitation of Christ. Celibacy is chosen, in part, because Christ was celibate.<sup>33</sup> Christ—celibate, poor, and obedient—showed his disciples the radical way of life for the kingdom of God.<sup>34</sup> Celibates follow Jesus more closely than others follow him by imitating him in the specific profound act of celibacy. They also follow Christ in his self-giving. Christ is the gift of God for the redemption of men and women, and in the Eucharist, Christians remember his total sacrifice of himself.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the celibate imitates Christ by sacrificing himself or herself through renouncing goods such as marriage. In this way, the celibate shares in the redeeming work of Christ.<sup>36</sup>

A third love-motivation for celibacy is the imitation of Mary. The perpetual virginity of Mary was the spiritually fecund ground from which the incarnation grew.<sup>37</sup> Mary’s fruitfulness, by the Spirit, was abundant. Thus, in her complete dedication to God

---

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 104.

<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 293.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 291, 292. See, 1 Cor 7:32.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 270; John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 18.

<sup>35</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 282.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

she became the perfect example for all those who choose spiritually-fruitful<sup>38</sup> celibacy. She is their example<sup>39</sup> and helper in fulfilling the demands of the consecrated life, and in particular, the life of virginity.

*Celibacy as a complement to marriage.* Celibacy, says John Paul II, does not denigrate marriage.<sup>40</sup> Marriage is the common vocation granted by God; celibacy is the exception. Both require the self-sacrificial giving of the nuptial gift and both result in the fruitfulness of co-creation with God. “Both furnish a full answer to one of man’s fundamental questions, the question about the significance of ‘being a body,’ that is, about the significance of masculinity and femininity, of being ‘in the body’ a man or a woman.”<sup>41</sup> Both are life long commitments.<sup>42</sup> Celibacy is an act of love, and as such it involves renunciation.<sup>43</sup> The married renounce all others except their spouse, but the celibate renounce marriage itself for their Spouse. Furthermore, the higher the value of that which is renounced, the greater is the worth of the renunciation. One should not choose celibacy because of a perceived negative value in marriage—for example, its indissolubility.<sup>44</sup> Instead, celibates, by recognizing what they are renouncing to be a good and that such a renunciation is an enormous sacrifice, declare the great value of that which they renounce. Similarly, John Paul II does not believe there is anything evil in

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>39</sup> John Paul II, *Visible Signs of the Gospel*, 208-209.

<sup>40</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 273.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>42</sup> Celibacy is life long just as marriage, being a physical eunuch, the resurrection state, the nuptial gift, the kingdom of God, the imitation of Christ, and the eventual redemption of the body are life long. Ibid., 270.

<sup>43</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 125.

<sup>44</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 263.

conjugal relations that should motivate the celibate to reject marriage.<sup>45</sup> Rather, celibates choose a single good, the kingdom of heaven, over the various goods of marriage. Finally, marriage and celibacy clarify the meaning the one of the other. Marriage clarifies the meaning of the spousal love that the celibate is to have for the divine Spouse.<sup>46</sup> Celibacy clarifies the meaning of the nuptial gift of self that is necessary in marriage.

Nonetheless, John Paul II makes it clear that celibacy is superior to marriage. He does not, however, mean to imply that a celibate person is superior to, or more perfect than, a married person. Every person's perfection is measured by charity, and the individual married person may readily surpass the individual celibate in charity, especially if the married person practices a form of the evangelical counsels appropriate to his or her state.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, celibacy is superior for several reasons: 1) marriage is common, celibacy is exceptional; 2) celibates are able to live in undivided service to the Lord and his Church, whereas the married must also be concerned about pleasing their spouse;<sup>48</sup> 3) the celibate more exactly imitates the physical and interpersonal life of Jesus; 4) celibacy is "especially important and necessary to the kingdom of heaven;"<sup>49</sup> 5) the celibate discovers the fuller form of intersubjective communion and self-fulfillment;<sup>50</sup> 6) celibacy is governed by a superior motive—it is for the kingdom of heaven;<sup>51</sup> 7)

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 277. For example, a married person might practice a modest standard of living as opposed to full poverty, a life of voluntary submission to spiritual counsel as opposed to a vow of obedience, and periodic continence as opposed to celibacy.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 275, 279.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 273-274.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 275.

marriage, as a human state, is passing away, whereas celibacy reflects the resurrected state and thus also reflects the full redemption of the body.<sup>52</sup> In addition, John Paul II notes that Paul is quite specific about certain disadvantages of marriage. With marriage come “troubles in the flesh,” thus those considering marriage should be sober-minded regarding expectations of continual marital bliss. “True conjugal love . . . is also a difficult love.”<sup>53</sup>

*Celibacy as an eschatological sign.* Jesus taught that those who are resurrected from the dead will not marry; therefore, all human persons will someday be celibate. In the resurrection, Christ will bring to completion the redemption of the body including a return to original innocence<sup>54</sup> and “a new submission of the body to the spirit.”<sup>55</sup> This new state will correspond to the essential nature of men and women.<sup>56</sup> The practice of celibacy in this life, therefore, is a sign to the Church and the world of the future of humanity. God will provide fullness to all those in the kingdom of heaven, enabling them to be filled with him as their all sufficient love.<sup>57</sup> This role of God in the lives of men and women corresponds in every detail to their makeup physically and spiritually. Today, then, the Church and the world see the celibate and are reminded of the truth about human nature and ultimate human fulfillment. Celibacy “clears a path” for the great hope of full redemption of the body in the kingdom of God.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 290, 296.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 264, 267.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 301.

*Roman Catholic*<sup>59</sup> *Evaluations of John Paul II's Theology of Sexuality*

*General Evaluations*

John Paul II's writings on human sexuality elicit strong responses. Those who praise John Paul II's theology of human sexuality often do so in the highest terms. Echoing George Weigel's comments mentioned earlier, Michael Novak calls the *Theology of Body*, "a time bomb in the Church that is not likely to go off until about twenty years from now."<sup>60</sup> Milder praise of John Paul II's understanding of sexuality is common.<sup>61</sup> A significant form of tribute to the *Theology of the Body* comes from authors who attempt to summarize and popularize it extensively.<sup>62</sup> Yet, while some authors seem loath to criticize the pope; other writers seem loath to praise him. The *Theology of the Body* is berated as a work in which John Paul II "only asserts and never demonstrates," and in which "no real sense of human love as actually experienced" is present.<sup>63</sup> Ronald Modras speaks of John Paul II's near "obsession" with sexuality, describing the *Theology*

---

<sup>59</sup> It is essential to note that several of the critics of John Paul II cited in this section are in fundamental disagreement with Roman Catholic moral teaching on issues such as abortion and contraception, and as a result they are not Roman Catholic theologians, but rather theologians that consider themselves Roman Catholic.

<sup>60</sup> Novak, "The Embodied Self," 18.

<sup>61</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, "John Paul II: Theologian on the Body of the Acting Person," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1-2 (2000): 43; Crosby, "Vision of Sexuality," 69; Daryl J. Glick, "Recovering Morality: Personalism and Theology of the Body of John Paul II," *Faith and Reason* 12, no. 1 (1986): 7; Joseph W. Koterski, "An Introduction to the Thought of Pope John Paul II," in *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His Contribution to Catholic Thought*, ed. Geoffrey Gneuhs (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 36; Alain Mattheeuws, *Union Et Procréation: Développement De La Doctrine Des Fins De Mariage* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 229; Novak, "The Embodied Self," 18, 21; Michel Séguin, "The Biblical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II on Human Sexuality," *Communio* 20 (1993): 288-289; William B. Smith, "John Paul II's Seminal Contributions to Moral Theology: Foundational Issues," in *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His Contribution to Catholic Thought*, ed. Geoffrey Gneuhs (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 49.

<sup>62</sup> Schu, *Splendor of Love*; Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999); Walsh, *A Simplified Version*; West, *Theology of the Body Explained*.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson, "Disembodied," 12.

of the Body as “neo-Thomistic natural law ethic” in new clothes complete with the view that the sexual urges are dirty.<sup>64</sup>

Some authors mix criticism with moderate appreciation of John Paul II.<sup>65</sup> Modras, in his comments in 1980, mentions both positive and negative aspects of the pope’s moral philosophy. John Paul II’s philosophy is a work of “intricate subtlety” in which he interacts with Aquinas, Kant, and Scheler creatively and critically, resulting in a “theory of morality that is marked by traits of intellectual vigor and originality.” Modras is thus grateful for the pope’s “pioneering efforts in metaphysics.”<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, he believes John Paul II’s method is problematic because it attempts to draw values from authoritatively pronounced norms; that is, the pope’s method is “heteronomous, based not on reason but the willful prescriptions of authority.”<sup>67</sup> Later, in 1998, Modras becomes more thoroughly negative towards the pope’s ethical system, apparently finding little to appreciate in it. Charles Curran, although willing on occasion to express appreciation of John Paul II, states that the pope’s moral theology is too black and white and that it demonizes the opposition.<sup>68</sup> In addition, other authors both agree and disagree with John Paul II on this matter.<sup>69</sup> Richard Grecco regrets several aspects of John Paul II’s

---

<sup>64</sup> Modras, "Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," 148, 150, 152.

<sup>65</sup> Various authors comment on the difficulty of his material in general and the *Theology of the Body* in particular. Johnson, "Disembodied," 11; Modras, "Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," 155; Séguin, "Biblical Foundations," 267; Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 343.

<sup>66</sup> Modras, "The Moral Philosophy of Pope John Paul II," 693, 696.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*: 695.

<sup>68</sup> Charles E. Curran, "Evangelium Vitae and Its Broader Context," in *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, *Readings in Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 123.

<sup>69</sup> Ashley, "John Paul II," 39; Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 176-178; Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 152, 156. Some, like Laurent Boisvert, seem to ignore John Paul II. In writing 130 pages on celibacy, he cites John Paul II once and never mentions the *Theology of the Body*. L. Boisvert, *Le Célibat Religieux* (Paris: Cerf, 1990).

writings: his inattention to the social sciences; his elitism due to the fact that few people are capable of the level of moral reasoning he seems to demand; and his overly structured view of human consciousness. On the other hand, Grecco admires some aspects John Paul II's thought: his penchant for offering theological understanding and not just rules; his promotion of a personalist ethic; his use of an experiential ethics, and not just an ethic based on natural law; and his tendency toward a more relational, rather than simply rational, epistemology.<sup>70</sup> Michael D. Place accuses John Paul II of inconsistency in the application of the newer understandings of ethical theory common among Christian ethicists. Place says John Paul II's method appears modern but his conclusions are classicist, though Place does not venture to explain why "such apparently common presuppositions can render such different conclusions."<sup>71</sup>

Various authors also disagree about John Paul II's principal themes and purposes in the *Theology of the Body*. Johnson, for example, believes the pope's central theme in the *Theology of the Body* is "the transmission of life," that is, the justification of Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*.<sup>72</sup> More commonly, critics mention other themes as more central to John Paul II's understanding of human sexuality (including his *Theology of the Body*): 1) truth regarding the human person, 2) Christ as redeemer in light of the creation and fall, 3) the dignity of the human person, 4) human freedom, 5) human subjectivity, 6) human self-determination, 7) the communion of persons implied in being made in God's image,

---

<sup>70</sup> Richard Grecco, "Recent Ecclesiastical Teaching," in *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, *Readings in Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 145-147.

<sup>71</sup> Michael D. Place, "*Familiaris Consortio*: A Review of Its Theology," in *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, *Readings in Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 186, 203-204.

<sup>72</sup> Johnson, "Disembodied," 14, 16-17.

8) eschatology and the human person, 9) the human body as the expression of the human person, and 10) the gift of the person via the male and female body.<sup>73</sup>

Other respondents have noted that John Paul II, as might be expected, draws his norms from Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church, with his primary starting point being Scripture, and a special place being given to Vatican II and some of the writings of Paul VI.<sup>74</sup> His use of Scripture in the *Theology of the Body*, however, has drawn some criticism. Modras criticizes what he understands to be John Paul II's view of Adam as a literal first human,<sup>75</sup> while Johnson criticizes John Paul II for drawing an ontology from "selected ancient narrative texts."<sup>76</sup> Curran is concerned that John Paul II relies too heavily on Scripture and that he does not recognize that his interpretations are value-laden.<sup>77</sup> Others, however, appreciate his use of Scripture in light of his catechetical and pastoral purpose to delineate an anthropology adequate for today's men and women.<sup>78</sup> Ashley suggestively proposes that John Paul II's hermeneutic is a form of narrative theology.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 9, 12; Glick, "Recovering Morality," 13; Richard M. Hogan, "A Theology of the Body," *International Review of Natural Family Planning* 6, no. 3 (1982): 232; Mattheeuws, *Union Et Procréation*, 229; Ramarosan, "Mariage Et Célibat", 325-326; Janet E. Smith, "Natural Law and Personalism in *Veritatis Splendor*," in *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, *Readings in Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 84.

<sup>74</sup> Ramarosan, "Mariage Et Célibat", 324; Smith, "John Paul II's Seminal Contributions to Moral Theology: Foundational Issues," 42; Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 152.

<sup>75</sup> Modras, "Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," 153.

<sup>76</sup> Johnson, "Disembodied," 14.

<sup>77</sup> Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 177-178.

<sup>78</sup> Ashley, "John Paul II," 41; C. Caffarra, "Vérité Et Éthos De L'amour Conjugal: Réflexion Philosophico-Théologique Sur La Première Série Des Catéchèses Hebdomadaires De Jean-Paul II 1979-1983," *Esprit et Vie* 17 (1984): 241-242; Koterski, "Thought of Pope John Paul II," 31; Mattheeuws, *Union Et Procréation*, 229; Ramarosan, "Mariage Et Célibat", 320-321.

<sup>79</sup> Ashley, "John Paul II," 42.

*Evaluations of John Paul II's Moral Reasoning*

The most significant criticism of John Paul II concerns his preference for a deontological ethic over a consequentialist ethic. Because a consequentialist ethic depends on weighing the goods in specific actions, it tends to view humanity as the primary source of ethical wisdom. The ideas and experiences of men and women provide the means for weighing competing values. John Paul II's primary sources of values are the Scriptures, the Tradition, and the Magisterium. Nonetheless, experience plays a role in his ethical system. The experiences of men and women are examined phenomenologically in order to discover how the values found in these primary sources show up in human life. The consequentialist ethicists tend to develop their ethical system by listening to the opinions of the world and certain blocks within the church's laity.

Ronald Modras put his finger on the debate when he noted that in John Paul's method of moral reasoning "human dignity and freedom is capable of being impinged upon by some outside, arbitrary authority. Such a view of norms, of human or divine law, including natural law, lays itself open to the charge of being heteronomous, based not on reason but the willful prescriptions of authority."<sup>80</sup> Or, as Modras says later, John Paul II is out of touch with lived human experience, particularly the experience of sexual pleasure.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Johnson suggests that the pope needs to have a "theology that takes the self-disclosure of God in human experience with the same seriousness as it does God's revelation in Scripture."<sup>82</sup> Curran repeats this concern, believing that John Paul II's approach lacks awareness of the Church's need to learn from the laity and the

---

<sup>80</sup> Modras, "The Moral Philosophy of Pope John Paul II," 695.

<sup>81</sup> Modras, "Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," 155. Also see the provocative comments in Johnson, "Disembodied," 12-16.

<sup>82</sup> Johnson, "Disembodied," 17.

world.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, Place notes that John Paul II primarily follows an “older” (Place constantly uses this term) perspective on the nature of moral evaluation. That is, John Paul II views some acts as intrinsically evil. The new perspective, however, holds to the following: 1) because humans are finite and sinful they are forced to choose among goods, 2) the goods inevitably conflict, and 3) men and women must weigh goods and thus can do in “good faith” what is not “in complete conformity with certain Christian ideals.” Place says John Paul II acknowledges the new perspective and yet explicitly rejects it. The real debate, notes Place, “is in the area of moral norms and absolutes.”<sup>84</sup> Sister M. Timothy Proakes notes that the battle taking place is one in which John Paul II specifically rejects consequentialist moral theories, and she supports him in doing so and in affirming that some acts are intrinsically evil.<sup>85</sup>

There is no doubt that John Paul II takes sides in the debate between the consequentialist and the deontological theories. In *Veritatis Splendor* he states: “The moral prescriptions which God imparted in the Old Covenant, and which attained their perfection in the New and Eternal Covenant in the very person of the Son of God made man, must *be faithfully kept and continually put into practice* in the various different cultures throughout the course of history.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, in part four of *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul II specifically addresses and rejects certain aspects of some current expressions of teleology.<sup>87</sup> In the same way, in *Love and Responsibility*<sup>88</sup> and *The Theology of the*

---

<sup>83</sup> Curran, “Evangelium Vitae,” 123; Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 248.

<sup>84</sup> Place, “*Familiaris Consortio*: A Review of Its Theology,” 188-190.

<sup>85</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 93.

<sup>86</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1993), 25. (The number at the end of the citations of this work refer to the standard section numbering.)

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-81.

<sup>88</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 34-39.

*Body*,<sup>89</sup> he rejects any use of another person that denies the fundamental dignity of the person. That is, he rejects utilitarianism and some of the implications of teleology. That much is obvious. What is less obvious is whether John Paul II should simply be categorized as a natural-law deontologist. Modras combines three criticisms of the pope: he “still maintains the old Platonic dualism”; his view of shame is “very much that of Augustine”; and he approaches sexual issues from the outside, calling lust what the world calls love.<sup>90</sup> These criticisms center on John Paul II’s refusal to draw his ethical norms directly from human experience, that is, his belief in revealed, transcultural norms found in the Scriptures, the Tradition, and the Magisterium. Modras, by contrast, views the pope’s contributions as little more than simply “neo-Thomistic natural law ethic” in new clothes.<sup>91</sup>

The primary counterargument to the charge that John Paul II’s ethic is but rehashed natural law comes from the recognition of the role that personalism plays in his system. Mary Shivanandan believes that John Paul II makes a new contribution to Catholic ethical discussion in his emphasis on self-possession and self-donation, and in his expansion (beyond Augustine) of the understanding of shame.<sup>92</sup> Others also consider his embodied personalism, as both masculine and feminine, to be a significant new contribution.<sup>93</sup> Weigel summarizes his contribution:

---

<sup>89</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 54-57, passim.

<sup>90</sup> Modras, "Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," 150, 153.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>92</sup> Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology*, 148-150.

<sup>93</sup> Crosby, "Vision of Sexuality," 52, 57; Glick, "Recovering Morality," 8; Mattheeuws, *Union Et Procréation*, 229; Novak, "The Embodied Self," 20-21; Smith, "John Paul II's Seminal Contributions to Moral Theology: Foundational Issues," 51.

Few moral theologians have taken our embodiedness as male and female as seriously as John Paul II. Few have dared push the Catholic sacramental intuition—the invisible manifest through the visible, the extraordinary that lies on the far side of the ordinary—quite as far as John Paul does in teaching that the self-giving love of sexual communion is an icon of the interior life of God. Few have dared say so forthrightly to the world, ‘Human sexuality is far greater than you imagine.’ Few have shown more persuasively how recovering the dramatic structure of the moral life revitalizes the ethics of virtue and takes us far beyond the rule-obsessed morality of ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives.’<sup>94</sup>

Early in the pope’s tenure, even Modras expressed admiration for John Paul II’s “pioneering efforts in metaethics.”<sup>95</sup> Curran,<sup>96</sup> too, in spite of his many reservations, says concerning the concept of the nuptial gift, “the pope has definitely made a positive contribution that has never been found before in papal teaching.”<sup>97</sup> Before listing several criticisms of John Paul II, Grecco expresses appreciation for his ethical reasoning: it offers theological understanding, not just rules; it promotes a personalist ethical theory; it is experiential, not simply based on “natural law”; and it uses a less rationalistic and more relational epistemology.<sup>98</sup>

### *Evaluations of John Paul II’s Theology of Celibacy*

Specific assessments of John Paul II’s theology of celibacy are rare. Most works commenting more generally on the *Theology of the Body* give only a few lines to celibacy.<sup>99</sup> Controversy and agendas regarding homosexuality, divorce, abortion, and

---

<sup>94</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 342.

<sup>95</sup> Modras, “The Moral Philosophy of Pope John Paul II,” 696.

<sup>96</sup> Curran’s *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* is one of the two more thorough evaluations of the pope’s theology of human sexuality. The other is Shivanandan’s *Crossing the Threshold of Love*. They are a valuable pair of works in part because Curran is generally critical of John Paul II, and Shivanandan is supportive. Both authors capably handle the large quantity of his writings, and both bring a theological acumen capable of interaction with the large themes that pervade the writings of John Paul II.

<sup>97</sup> Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 168.

<sup>98</sup> Grecco, “Recent Ecclesiastical Teaching,” 146.

<sup>99</sup> For example, Glick, “Recovering Morality,” 20; Grecco, “Recent Ecclesiastical Teaching,” 145; Richard M. Hogan and John M. LeVoir, “The Family and Sexuality,” in *John Paul II and Moral Theology*,

contraception drive much of the Catholic comment on John Paul II's moral reasoning. His theology of celibacy, of course, does not directly address any of these controversial topics and thus lies outside the driving interests of many Roman Catholic commentators. More specifically, his conclusions regarding celibacy are not controversial in Catholic circles. Perhaps, the case is simply, as Curran observes, that "the pope's teaching on virginity closely follows the recent Catholic approach."<sup>100</sup> Nonetheless, some observations have been made. Ramaroson and George Williams note the passion John Paul II displays for priestly celibacy as a heroic gift to the Church.<sup>101</sup> Yet, it is also noted that he says little about the place in the church for singles who are not necessarily consecrated to celibacy.<sup>102</sup> Curran, unlike Place,<sup>103</sup> positively comments on what he considers to be John Paul II's understanding of celibacy's superiority to marriage. Curran believes the pope has made some careful distinctions regarding celibacy as superior due to its place in the evangelical counsels, and regarding the possibility of non-celibates exceeding celibates in charity, the true measure of spirituality.<sup>104</sup>

---

ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, *Readings in Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 181; Mattheeuws, *Union Et Procréation*, 214.

<sup>100</sup> Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 186.

<sup>101</sup> Ramaroson, "Mariage Et Célibat", 323; Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 290.

<sup>102</sup> Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 168; Place, "*Familiaris Consortio*: A Review of Its Theology," 195; Williams, *Mind of John Paul II*, 294.

<sup>103</sup> Place, "*Familiaris Consortio*: A Review of Its Theology," 195.

<sup>104</sup> Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 186.

*Toward a Protestant Theology of Celibacy*

*Comparing John Paul II's and Contemporary Protestant Theologies of Celibacy*

Considering the literature reviewed, how does the contemporary<sup>105</sup> Protestant understanding of celibacy compare to that of John Paul II? As might be expected, they are quite similar. Protestant theology on the subject, tends, however, to be spotty: several good ideas show up in one author but not in another. What John Paul II, and perhaps what Roman Catholic thought generally offers, is a theology of celibacy replete with all its primary features in a single author. Furthermore, as will be seen in the brief comparison below, John Paul II provides a complex philosophical foundation absent from Protestant theologies of celibacy.

*Features in Common.* Protestants and John Paul II share major concerns within a theology of celibacy. Three features merit special note for the central way in which they bind the two systems together. First, both systems affirm that the triune God designed those creatures made in his image for communion, as a reflection of the eternal communion of the persons of the Trinity.<sup>106</sup> Male persons and female persons seek communion similar to the way the distinct persons of the Trinity enjoy communion. Therefore, in part, one understands the nature of humanity and God's nature by understanding the import of the complementarity of male and female persons. Likewise, in both the Protestant writings and those of John Paul II, male/female complementarity reflects Yahweh as Israel's husband and Christ as the bridegroom of the church.

---

<sup>105</sup> Unless mentioned otherwise, the discussion that follows addresses only *contemporary* Protestant theology.

<sup>106</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 117; John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 47.

Celibacy then, is an expression of this communal relationship in that Christ is the celibate's spouse. In addition, celibate women and men are still involved with each other in complementary fashion as mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, coworkers, and so forth.<sup>107</sup>

A second common theme is the temporal nature of marriage. In the beginning, God blessed the marital union, but with the coming of Christ a new way, the way of celibacy, received God's blessing. In the resurrection, this way will become the way of all men and women. Because marriage is temporal, one can choose celibacy in anticipation of the resurrection state and as a sign of that coming state.<sup>108</sup> Another related theme present in both the Protestants and John Paul II is the ability of undivided, bridal, celibate love for God to fulfill the entire person. Celibacy is both a reminder of and the practice of a fundamental feature of the human person—God designed men and women for himself, so that they might find their fullness in him.

A third common theme is the permanent nature of the commitment to celibacy. Although Roman Catholic priests are required to promise lifelong celibacy, not as those seeking consecration through a vow of chastity, but in connection to the office of priest that has celibacy as a requirement; nonetheless, John Paul II always speaks of celibacy as permanent. Barth, Grenz, and Thurian also speak of the general permanence of celibacy, although Barth and Grenz leave room for temporary celibacy.<sup>109</sup> Those Protestants who

---

<sup>107</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 165; John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 273-274.

<sup>108</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 296; Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 51.

<sup>109</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 144; Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 197; Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 57.

reject the concept of celibacy as a vocation also see celibacy as a choice that may readily be temporary.<sup>110</sup>

*Uniquely Protestant contributions.* Some Protestant writers also speak of celibacy in ways not specifically found in the writings of John Paul II; yet as will be seen, echoes of these Protestant ideas do show up. Two examples will suffice. Barth, for instance, understands men and women to be God's covenant partners. He believes that this implies that men and women are to exist in "fellow-humanity" with each other. Celibates, therefore, must not isolate themselves from those of the opposite sex.<sup>111</sup> Barth's specific emphasis on a covenantal agreement between God and human persons does not appear in John Paul II; yet a counterpart does appear. John Paul II speaks of such things as a fundamental divine-human relationship, collaborating with God in procreation, and the non-exclusive love of which the celibate is capable.<sup>112</sup>

Another example of a unique Protestant contribution that nonetheless appears in a similar form in John Paul II, is the emphasis on the local Christian community as the celibate's new family. Grenz and Barth speak of a move away from the focus on biological family and towards the church as community.<sup>113</sup> In the writings of John Paul II, the same intuition fulfills itself in his focus on the consecrated life, monasticism, and religious institutes. Protestants often understand that celibates will remain in the local Christian communities and live among the married. Roman Catholics most often

---

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* 110; Hsu, *Singles at the Crossroads*, 58; Poirier, "Celibacy and Charism in 1 Cor. 7:5-7," 7.

<sup>111</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 165-168.

<sup>112</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 36, 82; John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata," 88. The numbers appearing in the citations of this document refer to the standard sections of the document.

<sup>113</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 144; Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 195.

understand that celibates will join a community of fellow celibates. Yet both base their understanding, in part, on the communitarian nature of the human person.

*Contributions unique to John Paul II.* The thought of John Paul II contributes two major features not found in Protestant theologies of celibacy. First, he places at center stage a philosophical understanding of the human person. Existential personalism informs his understanding of the inviolability of the person and the person's freedom to give or not give the nuptial gift. For example, John Paul II understands that the role of shame in the struggle with lust logically precedes the concept of marriage as a remedy for concupiscence. That is, Scheler's extensive treatment of shame as adapted by John Paul II is a significant logical basis of his understanding of original innocence and historical lust. Similarly, in the thought of John Paul II, the celibate is able to give himself non-exclusively, in purity, to other men and women because of the nature of the human person. John Paul II consciously weaves philosophical considerations into the deepest levels of his system of thought. Aquinas and Scheler, with Aristotle and Kant in the background, provide crucial pieces of John Paul II's theology of celibacy. No Protestant author does this. Barth, as is well known, consciously refuses to integrate philosophical principles into his theological prolegomena. The critic might be inclined to note that such a posture is in itself philosophical. Nonetheless, Barth places the revelation of Christ as his foundation. The bottom layer of Barth's system of thought is more exclusively theological and biblical than that of John Paul II.

The second major aspect of John Paul II's theology of celibacy absent from Protestant thought is his emphasis on the Virgin Mary. He spoke of her as the highest example of celibate life and of the spiritual fruitfulness that can accompany virginity in

the person of a disciple. In the section entitled “Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom” in *The Theology of the Body*, John Paul II writes of her in only one address.<sup>114</sup> Yet when he directly addressed celibates, he often spoke of her example.<sup>115</sup> The Protestant authors are unlikely to speak of Mary in relation to celibacy, due to the common Protestant belief that Mary enjoyed normal married life after the birth of Jesus.<sup>116</sup>

### *Areas Needing Further Study*

The elements of a theology of celibacy are readily available. Among Protestants, however, there is a need to consolidate the gains. The writings of Barth on marriage and celibacy contain a great deal of subtle import and are of particular merit. His work could readily serve as an integration point for Protestant thought on celibacy. Grenz exhausts his thoughts on singleness as well as celibacy in some 20 pages of his *Sexual Ethics*. They are valuable, but are nowhere near as fecund as the work of Barth. Hsu’s work adds many small pieces to the mix of ideas. Thurian partially bridges the gap between Roman Catholics and Protestants. He frequently quotes Barth, yet he uses categories more familiar to Roman Catholics. Beyond their own writings, there is good reason for Protestants to seek to integrate the carefully—often, meticulously—phrased theology of John Paul II. As with the writings of Barth, the reader must mine and process his words in order to extract the richness present in them. Both Barth and John Paul II wrote treatises that often require meditation rather than mere reading. In addition, John Paul II’s writings reflect, in particular, four deep pools: the church fathers, a carefully

---

<sup>114</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 268.

<sup>115</sup> See the section in chapter four entitled, “Example of Mary.”

<sup>116</sup> Protestants mention a number of evidences that may indicate that Mary, though a virgin at the time of Jesus birth, assumed normal married life: use of words such as “before” (Mat 1:18), “until” (Mat 1:25) and “firstborn” (Luke 2:7); and the mention of Jesus’ brothers (Mat 12:46; John 7:3; etc.).

developed philosophical system, a quintessential distillation of traditional Roman Catholic thought on celibacy, and his own theological insight. If Protestants attempt to integrate the work of John Paul II into a Protestant or ecumenical theology of celibacy, however, several key areas will need study and clarification.

*Adequate scriptural basis.* The theology of celibacy rests on relatively little Scriptural support. Random references to celibacy appear throughout the Bible. Jephthah's daughter, at the very least, did not marry (Jud 11:38). Because of God's command, Jeremiah did not marry (Jer 16:2). Isaiah encourages the eunuchs with the hope of something better than posterity (Isa 56:3-5). Anna, a prophetess, likely lived as a widow for sixty years (Luke 2:36-37). Four virgin women, daughters of Philip, prophesied in the early church (Acts 21:9). 1 Tim 5 indicates that some widows made pledges to remain unmarried. The enigmatic 144,000 who "did not defile themselves with women" briefly appear in the Apocalypse (Rev 7:4-8; 14:1-5). Jesus and Paul were almost certainly celibate, and others, such as John the Baptist likely were; although the New Testament does not specifically affirm the celibacy of any but Paul. Such biblical references to single persons can only serve as secondary support for a theology of celibacy.

Three passages do nearly all the work: Mat 19:3-12; Mat 22:23-30; and 1 Cor 7, especially verses 1-2, 7-9, 25-38.<sup>117</sup> John Paul II interprets each of these three passages

---

<sup>117</sup> Matura limits the principle texts to Mat 19:10-12 and 1 Cor 7:25-35. Thaddée Matura, "Le Célibat Dans Le Nouveau Testament D'après L'exégèse Récente," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 97, no. 6 (1975): 482.

in a more or less traditional way.<sup>118</sup> He believes the following: in Mat 19 Jesus recommends celibacy for the kingdom to whoever is enabled to accept it; in Mat 22 Jesus teaches that in the resurrection no one will be married, that is, all will be celibate; and in 1 Cor 7, Paul considers celibacy the preferable state (again for whoever is enabled to accept it) because it has certain advantages. Current exegesis of each of these passages tends to verify the basic legitimacy of these traditional interpretations; nonetheless, as can be expected, there are significant alternative understandings of each passage.

Mat 19:3-12 is widely interpreted in the traditional manner.<sup>119</sup> Jesus emphasizes the indissolubility of marriage and, as a result, the disciples comment that it is better not to marry. Jesus then highlights something true in what they have said. For those to whom it has been given, celibacy<sup>120</sup> for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is better.<sup>121</sup>

Jacques Dupont put forward a major alternate interpretation that Quentin Quesnell later clarified and deepened.<sup>122</sup> They say that in Mat 19:12 Jesus elaborates on his comment in 19:9 "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital

---

<sup>118</sup> Both Calvin and Luther hold to these traditional interpretations, although Calvin appears not to comment on the "no marriage" feature of Mat 22. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.42-43; 4.13.17; Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," 16, 51, 53; Van Vleck, "The Chaste Heart", 52.

<sup>119</sup> Matura, "Le Célibat Dans Le Nouveau Testament."; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, ed. D. A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 487, 561.

<sup>120</sup> More recently, Gary Bower has attempted to defend the posture that Mat 19:12 refers to voluntary physical castration for the kingdom of heaven. This interpretation appears on occasion throughout the history of the church, yet it suffers the fatal flaws of ignoring both Christ's penchant for hyperbole and his own example. Gary Robert Bower, "Ambivalent Bodies: Making Christian Eunuchs" (Ph.D diss., Duke University, 1996). Carmen Bernabe has suggested that being eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven is a sort of "social or symbolic castration" experienced by those who live their marriages in light of kingdom values rather than traditional values. Carmen Bernabe, "Of Eunuchs and Predators: Matthew 19:1-12 in a Cultural Context," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 33, no. 4 (2003).

<sup>121</sup> Matura notes the divide among major commentators on Matthew between the traditional interpretation and that of Dupont and Quesnell. Matura, "Le Célibat Dans Le Nouveau Testament," 491.

<sup>122</sup> Jacques Dupont, *Mariage Et Divorce Dans L'évangile: Matthieu 19,3-12 Et Parallèles* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959); Quentin Quesnell, "'Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven' (Mt 19,12)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1968).

unfaithfulness (*porneia*), and marries another woman commits adultery.” After the disciples register their shock, Jesus notes that those who separate from a wife because of *porneia* must, for the sake of the kingdom, live thenceforward like eunuchs; that is, they cannot marry. The strength of this interpretation is that it retains the focus on the greatness and sanctity of marriage found in the verses 3-9. The weakness in their argument is twofold. First, Jesus’ analogy of eunuchs implies a permanent inability to marry. Yet, on all accounts, the death of a spouse frees one to remarry. Second, Matura notes that Dupont and Quesnell must make the entire teaching regarding eunuchs refer to the exception clause,<sup>123</sup> which as Matura notes, many understand to be a Matthean insertion.<sup>124</sup> Thus, the traditional interpretation of the passage, though challenged, is still a viable option that may readily and legitimately serve as a significant aspect of John Paul II’s theology of celibacy.

In Mat 22:23-33 and its parallels in Mark 12:18-27 and Luke 20:27-40, John Paul II finds evidence that the future of humanity is celibate. One aspect of this view is not controversial: Jesus taught that the resurrected will not marry.<sup>125</sup> What some debate, however, is in what way this unmarried state parallels the celibate. Several commentaries mention rightly that Jesus’ saying predicts that neither procreation nor marriage will be

---

<sup>123</sup> As Keener notes, Dupont and Quesnell’s view makes the apostles’ comment, “it is better not to marry,” irrelevant. Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 470.

<sup>124</sup> Senior believes the eunuch clause applies to both those who remain unmarried after divorce and those who never marry. Donald Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Gene M. Tucker and Charles B. Cousar, *Interpreting Biblical Texts* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 147.

<sup>125</sup> J. C. Fenton, *The Gospel of Saint Matthew, The Pelican New Testament Commentaries* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 355; Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, ed. F. F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 511; Keener, *Matthew*, 528; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 737-741.

necessary in the resurrection<sup>126</sup> and that his saying implies that interpersonal relationships will be enriched beyond marriage. Thus, the resurrected state is an enrichment beyond marriage, not a deprivation.<sup>127</sup> Celibacy, on the other hand, currently involves both renunciation and sacrifice that seem inappropriate to the resurrected state. Thus, there is a disjoint between sacrificial celibacy in this age and non-marriage in the next. This, however, does nothing to diminish John Paul II's use of the passage. He notes, "There is an essential difference between man's state in the resurrection of the body and voluntary choice of continence for the kingdom of heaven in the earthly life and in the historical state of man fallen and redeemed. The eschatological absence of marriage will be a state, that is, the proper and fundamental mode of existence of human beings, men and women, in their glorified bodies."<sup>128</sup> Regardless of the exact relationship of celibacy to the future life, however, John Paul II's basic understanding of this passage is justified.

1 Cor 7 is a complex passage, yet in regard to celibacy, certain basic interpretations are nearly universally accepted.<sup>129</sup> For example, almost all agree that Paul promoted celibacy for those who have the gift, and that Paul pointed out several advantages that come to the celibate. While the various readings of 1Cor 7 affect its

---

<sup>126</sup> Contrary to many other commentators, Sim asserts, "The evangelist is adamant that in the new age the righteous will become angels." David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 142.

<sup>127</sup> John Paul II also mentions the fullness of "intersubjective communion" that will be experienced in the resurrected, redeemed body and will "unite all who participate in the other world, men and women, in the mystery of the communion of saints." John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 262, 267.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>129</sup> For example see Bromiley, *God and Marriage*, 58.

application<sup>130</sup> in different ways, the traditional reading given by John Paul II is based on typically non-controversial interpretations.

Concerning the overriding theme of the 1 Cor 7, Gordon Fee suggests that ascetical pressure existed within the Corinthian church to dissolve marriages, exclude conjugal rights, and demand celibacy. This pressure related to the problems of sexual morality in Corinth (1 Cor 5:1-13; 6:1-20) and a misunderstanding of the newfound freedom of women<sup>131</sup> expressed in passages like Gal 3:28.<sup>132</sup> The background of 1 Cor 7 as described by Fee, however, does not significantly affect the application of the passage in regard to its basic themes, except perhaps to create a parallel between the Corinthian context and the prominence of sexual issues in the life of the church today.<sup>133</sup> David Garland introduces 1 Cor 7 with a litany of things we cannot know about the chapter: how these issues arose, what exact question had been asked by the Corinthians, motivations in Corinth for or against celibacy or divorce, and so forth. He notes that inferences and judgments are necessary to interpret the passage and that a number of plausible options have appeared.<sup>134</sup> A final portion of the chapter, verses 36-38, is especially controversial. “Historically there have been at least four ways to understand 1 Cor 7:36-38, . . . (1) Paul is writing about a young man and his fiancée; (2) Paul is

---

<sup>130</sup> Craig notes, for instance, that Paul’s eschatological emphasis causes him to take little notice of the children and future generations. Clarence Tucker Craig, “The First Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 76.

<sup>131</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 266-270; Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 109-114.

<sup>132</sup> “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

<sup>133</sup> Ben Witherington is among those that note the importance of Paul’s repeated idea: “remain as you are.” Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 173.

<sup>134</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 246.

writing about a father and his virgin daughter; (3) Paul is discussing a levirate marriage; and (4) Paul is describing ‘spiritual marriage.’”<sup>135</sup> John Paul II also notes alternative interpretations of the passage, and he then rightly concludes that, regardless of the view of verses 36-38, “the expressions, ‘he does well,’ ‘he does better,’ are completely univocal.”<sup>136</sup> Thus, while the interpretation of 1 Cor 7 is complex and various features are disputed, the basic use made of it by John Paul II derives from commonly accepted interpretations of specific features of the passage.

These passages, although few in number, are an adequate starting point for an ecumenical and biblical theology of celibacy. The non-controversial features of the passages affirm several ideas: the unmarried state can be lived with a special dedication to the kingdom of God; this state has some advantages; some men and women receive a calling to live in this state; and this state bears some similarity to the unmarried state of the resurrected.

What separates many Protestants such as Luther and Barth, from Roman Catholics such as John Paul II, however, are two questions. Is celibacy superior to marriage? Should a vow to God accompany celibacy? The Protestants say no to both questions; the Roman Catholics say yes.

*The superiority of celibacy.* Barth opines that “the whole sphere of the male-female relationship, including marriage, is limited and in some sense menaced by the theory of the higher perfection of the celibate life of monks and priests.”<sup>137</sup> John Paul II

---

<sup>135</sup> Greg Peters, "Spiritual Marriage in Early Christianity: 1 Cor 7:25-38 in Modern Exegesis and the Earliest Church," *Trinity Journal* 23, no. 2 (2002): 212.

<sup>136</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 289.

<sup>137</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 124.

does not hesitate to affirm a common Roman Catholic conviction that celibacy is, in some sense, superior to marriage. For example, he often speaks of the celibate's undivided loyalty to Christ. Many Protestants, however, desire to avoid a two-tier ranking of Christians that they find implicit in talk of the superiority of celibacy. This debate is not new to the church. Jerome and Jovinian debated it in the late fourth century.<sup>138</sup> Nonetheless, the resistance to the idea of the superiority of celibacy is a major obstacle to any revival of interest in it.

Based on the pertinent information in the previous sections of this dissertation, John Paul II describes four ways in which celibacy is superior<sup>139</sup> to marriage. First, celibacy is especially effective in the work of the kingdom because God grants unique supernatural fruitfulness to celibates. The premier example of such fruitfulness by the Holy Spirit is the Virgin Mary. Similarly, he says, Christ's own fruitfulness related supernaturally to his celibacy. This effectiveness is one of the things that give celibacy its value and it is part of the reason that Jesus specifies the choice of *celibacy* for the kingdom, rather than, let us say, higher education for the kingdom. The motivation for choosing celibacy is precisely this understanding of its significance for the kingdom of heaven.<sup>140</sup> Second, celibates are capable of a fuller form of "intersubjective communion with others." The celibate becomes "a true gift to others" and thus by means of celibacy more fully fulfills him or her self.<sup>141</sup> Following his discussion of these two closely

---

<sup>138</sup> Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 20; Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal."

<sup>139</sup> John Paul II rejects any tendency to see those in a "state of perfection," that is, those in religious institutes (the consecrated) as inherently superior to other Christians; at the same time, he affirms the value of the evangelical counsels for growth in charity. John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 277. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the premier motivation for celibacy is imitation of Christ. This paragraph, however, deals with those aspects of celibacy that John Paul II specifies as superior to marriage.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 268-271.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

related advantages of celibacy the pope says, “In Christ’s words recorded in Matthew (Mt 19:11-12) we find a solid basis for admitting only this superiority, while we do not find any basis whatever for any disparagement of matrimony which, however, could have been present in the recognition of that superiority.”<sup>142</sup> When John Paul II turns to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he indicates the third and fourth ways in which he believes celibacy is superior. Paul says, “He who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better.”<sup>143</sup> How is celibacy better? Again following Paul, he notes that the celibate is better able to concentrate on “pleasing the Lord,”<sup>144</sup> and second, that marriage is part of the transient current age about which Paul advises: “those who use the things of the world [should live] as if not engrossed in them. For this world is passing away.” Moreover, “those who have wives should live as if they had none.” Thus, John Paul II understands celibacy to be better, in Paul’s terminology, because the celibate is free from “the necessity of being locked into this transiency.”<sup>145</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, John Paul II also lauds features of the spiritual life that are somewhat unique to celibates, but which imply no superiority of celibacy, because a similar list could be made regarding features of the spiritual life that are unique to the married. For example, the celibate has a “particular sensitiveness” or “charismatic orientation” to the non-married destiny of humanity. Celibacy is not now the “fundamental mode of human existence.” In the transformation of the resurrection, it will become the fundamental mode. Celibates exhibit a certain sensitivity to this coming existence and identify themselves “in a special way with the truth and reality of that

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>143</sup> 1 Cor 7:38

<sup>144</sup> 1 Cor 7:32

<sup>145</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 296.

kingdom” by choosing “a special participation in the mystery of the redemption (of the body).<sup>146</sup> For another example, the celibate renounces marriage in order to give exclusively of him or her self to Christ, the divine Spouse. This is a particular, grateful response to the love given by the Redeemer. The theology of the body understands that men and women are designed to give their full masculinity or femininity to another. The celibate chooses to give the entire sexual, embodied self as an exclusive nuptial gift to God. Similarly to the way a wife gives herself *for* her husband, the celibate gives herself *for* the kingdom of Christ; and just as the husband comes to fully understand himself by means of giving himself to his wife, so the celibate comes to fuller understanding of himself in giving his exclusive nuptial gift to God. Celibacy, like marriage, is in harmony with the interior meaning of the body.<sup>147</sup> These statements and many others by John Paul II, cite advantages of celibacy without implying its superiority.

Nevertheless, Barth’s concern, quoted above, remains: exalting the perfection of celibacy implies the imperfection of marriage. Several observations are in order, however. Positively, the pope clearly states that the measure of perfection is charity, and that a Christian can excel in charity regardless of his or her vocation. He also states that marriage and celibacy are complementary vocations; both involve the calling, blessing, and grace of God.

Negatively, two comments are in order. First, John Paul II’s conviction that special spiritual fruitfulness accompanies celibacy appears unjustified. Clearly, the most abundant fruits ever produced by the Holy Spirit in a human subject are the incarnation that took place in the Virgin Mary, and the work of salvation that took place in the

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 262, 263, 271.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 281-284, 286.

celibate Jesus Christ. What cannot be determined, however, is the causal role played by virginity in each case. At least it cannot be deduced that, based on these two cases, celibacy tends to spiritual fruitfulness that is superior to that of marriage. To draw such a conclusion gives the appearance of committing the logical fallacy of “questionable cause” that is, *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. John Paul II appeals to the preposition “for” in Jesus’ phrase “eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven.” He believes Jesus here indicates that something about celibacy—its greater spiritual fecundity—lends itself to the service of the kingdom in a way that marriage does not. In this, he concludes, celibacy is superior. Thus, in the writings examined for this dissertation, John Paul II failed to justify that conclusion. Also unwarranted is his belief that the celibate experiences a fuller form of “intersubjective communion with others”<sup>148</sup> than the married. There is no Scriptural backing for the idea; and although it may often be the case, it is not an essential feature of celibacy making it superior to marriage. Rather, it may indicate an advantage that sometimes accompanies celibacy just as there are advantages to marriage.

A second negative comment merits consideration. John Paul II’s interpretation of the Pauline concepts in 1 Cor 7 seems to overemphasize the “magisterial” as opposed to the “pastoral” nature of the passage.<sup>149</sup> As Paul exams the Corinthian situation and delights in his own calling, he gives pastoral advice and comment. He speaks at times “by way of concession, not of command” and gives his “opinion” (1 Cor 7:7, 25, 40); at other times he specifies that “not I, but the Lord” gives instructions (1 Cor 7:10). The specific passages where Paul comments on the advantages of celibacy are best

---

<sup>148</sup> Note Kathleen Norris’s fascinating personal and historical evidence in this regard. Norris, *Cloister Walk*, 116-123, 297-304.

<sup>149</sup> He says, “The tone of the whole statement is without doubt a magisterial one. However, the tone as well as the language is also pastoral.” John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 288.

understood as sound pastoral advice regarding the persons and circumstances of Corinth. Thus when he notes, “the one who is married is concerned about the things of the world” he identifies what is generally true in Corinth and elsewhere; he is not describing the nature of all marriages. Some marriages allow much time for “pleasing the Lord” while, on the other hand, the situations of some celibates keep them embroiled in the “the things of the world.” Thus, the superiority of celibacy in this case has nothing to do with moral or essential superiority, but everything to do with what is usually the case: most often celibates are freer than the married to concentrate on how they may “please the Lord.” Similarly, John Paul II draws too much from Paul’s teaching that because the time is short, the Corinthians should avoid wholesale integration with a transient world. The teaching Paul specifically gives in this regard is not that men and women should choose celibacy, but that, among other things, “those who have wives should be as though they had none; and those who weep as though they did not weep.” That is, all men and women must live with only one eye on the temporal. Thus, Paul wants the Corinthians to be as free from transient concerns as possible, and he goes on to state that, in his opinion, celibacy provides that opportunity. This is good pastoral advice for the situation at Corinth and other places, but the basis for the preference given to celibacy is pragmatic, not essential. Paul would agree that in deciding for marriage or for celibacy one must both look within to discover the gift and calling of God, and one must also look around to see the most practical way to serve God in one’s context. For some, it is marriage; for others it is celibacy.

Clearly, these observations need further investigation. Nonetheless, what these paragraphs suggest is that the barrier of celibate superiority may be extricable from John

Paul II's theology of celibacy. Although the superiority of celibacy is basic to his position, Protestants need not retain the concept of superiority in order to draw from him. Removing superiority would enable Protestants to enter the rich Roman Catholic teaching and experience and exalt celibacy to its proper place alongside of marriage.

*The vocation and vow of celibacy.* Before the Protestant retrieval of the pope's theology of celibacy can begin in earnest, a second issue, whose resolution lies beyond the scope of this paper, deserves mention: the vocation to celibacy. Several perspectives of the vocation and gift of celibacy appear in Protestant writings. Thurian quotes John Chrysostom, that "God does not refuse it to anyone who asks him for it with fervour . . . . This gift is granted to all those who wish for it and who ask for it."<sup>150</sup> Hsu insists that the gift of celibacy does not exist.<sup>151</sup> Other Protestants believe that Christians receive spiritual gifts from God at the time of their salvation, and as a result, they must examine themselves in order to discover the divinely implanted predisposition toward the gift. John Paul II holds to a fourth view closely related to the first: that self-discovery will lead one to recognize one's calling and that with the acceptance of the calling, grace will be given to fulfill it: "Those able 'to receive it' are those 'to whom it has been given.'"<sup>152</sup> Christ does not extend the call to all, but only to those able to receive it. It is obvious that there is significant incompatibility among these views.

The question of the vow of celibacy relates closely to the issue of vocation. Paul practices celibacy without giving evidence of either a public or a private vow. Yet he

---

<sup>150</sup> Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 58. He cites Chrysostom from L. Pirot and A. Clamer, *La sainte Bible*, Vol. IX (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1946), 252.

<sup>151</sup> Hsu, *Singles at the Crossroads*, 68-72.

<sup>152</sup> John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 263.

does not seem likely to marry. He knows himself and he knows that celibacy is his calling. “I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God.” “To the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.” “I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs.” “In my judgment, [the widow] is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.” Upon reading these words, one expects that Paul will remain single all his life. Here we have no evidence of a vow, yet much evidence of a calling and a recognized gift. In this way, celibacy differs significantly from marriage. Both Mat 19 and 1 Cor 7 affirm the indissolubility of marriage; it is a life-long, binding relationship.<sup>153</sup> Commentators debate whether these passages allow divorce, but it is obvious that marriage is meant to be a life-long joining of a man and a woman. In 1 Cor 7, however, celibacy is specifically non-binding. Paul is at pains to say that if anyone marries, it is, in itself, no sin.

Max Thurian, though at that time he was a Protestant, ably defends the promise of Christian celibacy. First, he appeals to the imagery used by Christ in Mat 19. Being a eunuch is permanent. Marriage, the counterpart to celibacy in Mat 19, is also permanent.<sup>154</sup> Second, he quotes Paul’s words to the unmarried man in 1 Cor 7:37. “The man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing.” For this man, celibacy is a settled matter. Third, 1 Tim 5:12 states that some widows “bring judgment on themselves because they have broken their

---

<sup>153</sup> John Paul II indicates that marriage, talked about in Mat 19:3-9, helps us understand celibacy, addressed in 19:10-12. *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>154</sup> Without finality, John Paul II says it is not true celibacy. *Ibid.*, 266, 271.

first pledge.” Thurian notes that this implies a pledge by some to remain single. Fourth, he points out that “giving up a wife” is among the things some disciples have had to sacrifice (Luke 18:28-30). Once given up, says Thurian, these things cannot be taken back. The decision is permanent. Fifth, he quotes Rom 11:29, “God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.” Finally, Thurian states that choosing celibacy requires that one orient him or her self toward the return of Christ. Until that return, the orientation cannot change.

Luther and Calvin agree that celibacy is a gift and can be a permanent calling. They believe a vow, however, is rash. Celibacy requires the continuance of the grace to remain chaste. One can rarely know, they insist, that this grace is a permanent possession. A vow of celibacy is inadvisable, but should not be prohibited. Thus, notes Calvin, 1 Tim 5 indicates that some widows pledged themselves to “the state of perpetual celibacy.” Nonetheless, the overall advice to the widows in 1 Tim 5:9, 14 appears to be that they marry unless they are over age 60.<sup>155</sup>

Thus, the questions of the nature of vows and vocations intermix. A clear understanding of the vocation to celibacy will require careful answers to numerous questions. How does one recognize a vocation? Can one be certain of a vocation? What is the nature of the spiritual gifts described in the New Testament? Are both celibacy and marriage spiritual gifts? In what sense is celibacy a counsel? Is a positive response to the vocation of celibacy irrevocable? The bodies of literature available to answer these questions are immense. On one side is the primarily late twentieth century Protestant literature on spiritual gifts and on the other is the voluminous Roman Catholic and

---

<sup>155</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.42-43; 4.13.7, 18; Luther, "Judgment on Monastic Vows."

classical literature on the evangelical counsels, the call to the consecrated life, the call to the priesthood, and so forth.

*Additional issues.* The two issues above are perhaps the most important because of their potential to block broad Protestant acceptance of any thorough theology of celibacy. Nonetheless, before Protestants can regain a theology of celibacy, they must also investigate some other, lesser issues.

For example, a question arises regarding a sort of third category of person that is neither married nor committed to celibacy: the single. John Paul II emphasizes that God designed every person to give the nuptial gift of self to another. The two proper objects of this gift are God or a spouse. Those who give the gift to God are celibate and almost universally, in John Paul II's thought, bound by vows; that is, they are clergy, men or women religious, or are members of secular institutes. A large group exists within the Roman Catholic Church, however, that is neither strictly celibate nor married. That is, there is a third group made up of the unmarried of marriageable age, the widowed, and the divorced who either are hoping to marry or are uncertain about a call to celibacy. In *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II says, "Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is, in its own proper form, an actuation of the most profound truth of man, of his being "created in the image of God."<sup>156</sup> Yet this does not fully address Roman Catholic reality. Some men and women, for example, spend decades of their lives hoping to marry; they are neither married nor avowedly celibate. In *Christifideles Laici*, John Paul II cites the Vatican II document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*,

---

<sup>156</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11. The numbers appearing in the citations of this document refer to the standard sections of the document.

4, regarding the possible lay states of life: married, family life, celibacy, and widowhood.<sup>157</sup> Nonetheless, in those writings of John Paul II examined for this study, he says little to address those in this third category—neither married nor permanently celibate.

The same reality, of course, confronts Protestants. Some authors specifically address all three groups. Grenz listed the varieties singleness: youth/early adult singleness; unchosen singleness, that is, waiting to marry; willed celibate singleness; and postmarriage singleness including the widowed and divorced. The only other category is marriage. In his treatment of singleness, he first speaks generally of the unmarried, and then speaks specifically of the celibate.<sup>158</sup> Barth also mentions both the simply single and the dedicated celibate.<sup>159</sup> Both Barth and Grenz seem to recognize that if a specific vocation to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom exists, then there appear to be three major categories of adults: the married, the celibate, and the rest. In response to this tension, Aune takes a different tack. She states that to be single is by definition to be celibate.<sup>160</sup> Yet, Jesus' words in Mat 19:12 require a distinction between the unmarried person seeking a spouse and a person who has made himself or herself a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, not only must one not separate the theology of celibacy from the theology of marriage, but also these theologies must include a sort of theology of the simply unmarried.

---

<sup>157</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 56. While in *Christifideles Laici* the word “celibacy” appears, in Abbot’s edition, the word is “unmarried.” Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II: With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 494.

<sup>158</sup> Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 196-199.

<sup>159</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, 4*, 144-145.

<sup>160</sup> Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* 110.

Protestants also need to explore the answers to a variety of other theological and philosophical questions. In the Tradition, in Roman Catholicism, and to a certain extent in Anglicanism, celibacy is usually contained within the three evangelical counsels. Does this practice reflect an essential need for the existence of certain formal structures in order for celibacy to thrive? How has the modern Protestant exaltation of the principle of *sola fide* affected the demise of the Protestant practice of celibacy? When Luther's views of marriage and celibacy are compared with those of his fifteenth and sixteenth century contemporaries, do the Reformer's views reflect modern Protestant views, or do they reflect a mix of medieval Roman Catholic and Reformational views? Must one accept the personalism that underlies John Paul II's understanding of human sexuality in order to draw legitimately from him for a theology of celibacy? Why do Roman Catholics readily accept hierarchy, including the superiority of celibacy, while Protestants often prefer egalitarianism? What are the roots of this difference? Finally, can the traditional prominence of the imitation of Christ in celibacy supply common ground to Protestants and Roman Catholics that may both resolve the question of superiority and serve as the organizing principle for the entire theology of celibacy.

Several practical and psychological—that is, less specifically theological— aspects of celibacy also require exploration. For example, Protestants, including Baptists, who practice believer's baptism, may ask what impact the cultural/religious ethos of paedobaptism has on celibacy. That is, does the adult decision to follow Christ express itself within Roman Catholicism through practices such as commitment to celibacy, correspond to the decision, made in churches centered on adult conversion, of those seeking baptism and joining the local church? What outwards offices exist to carry

profound adult commitments to follow Christ? Similarly, what relationship does the adult call to full-time ministry featured in some Protestant denominations have to the decision for celibacy common to Roman Catholicism?

One could extend the list of such questions almost indefinitely. Yet, it is clear that much work remains to enable a Protestant theology of celibacy that incorporates the insights of John Paul II to appear and thrive.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Conclusion

The purpose of this research project is to provide a stimulus toward a more thorough Protestant theology of celibacy. The means used to achieve this end has been the review of Protestant, especially contemporary Protestant, thought on celibacy and the analysis of the carefully nuanced theology of virginity found in John Paul II. This dissertation is intended as a tool by which contact with John Paul II may enrich Protestant thinking on celibacy. This research resulted in some discoveries and caused me to make several suggestions.

#### *Discoveries*

In the course of producing this dissertation, I made two discoveries of particular significance for a Protestant theology of virginity. As I had suspected, modern Protestants, almost universally, have not thought deeply about the nature of virginity for the kingdom. Nonetheless, there are several hopeful signs of development. Karl Barth's thorough treatment of marriage and scattered treatment of virginity is seminal, and adds significantly to Protestant theology. Writers like Albert Hsu and Kristin Aune know the experience of celibacy from the inside out and offer many insights that await incorporation into a thorough, systematic theology. In addition, the Protestant monastic movement, strongest among the Anglicans, suggests the full-fledged renewal of celibacy as a Protestant spiritual discipline, albeit solely in a monastic context. Finally, in this

monastic context, Thurian's work provides a bridge between institutional celibacy common in Roman Catholicism and Protestant celibacy.

Furthermore, I made a second discovery—again, as I had suspected: the roots of John Paul II's somewhat commonplace (for Roman Catholics) conclusions on celibacy go very deep. His philosophical and theological sophistication undergirds each point he makes. Among the Protestants, only Barth approaches such systematic thoroughness and integration of thought regarding celibacy. Evaluation of their theology of celibacy requires evaluation of its roots. In order to evaluate the roots one must thoroughly understand a wide range of significant philosophical, theological, and ethical issues.

### *Suggestions*

Beyond the recommendations made in chapter 6, I suggest that there are several steps that Protestants, including myself, must take if we are to grow in understanding virginity from a theological perspective. First, we need to read more widely in Roman Catholic authors. John Paul II is only one of many authors who can be read with benefit regarding such issues as the nature of celibacy as a spiritual discipline, the temptations peculiar to the celibate, the ecclesial value of the celibate to the non-celibate, the psychological adjustments common to celibates, and so forth. The literature is vast and rich.

Second, there are at least two Protestant authors that deserve study in detail: Barth, whom I mentioned above, and Luther. Luther confronted a system of celibacy experiencing the corruptions to which it is prone. For example, it seems certain forms of the doctrine of the superiority of celibacy easily lead to some of the abuses of the sixteenth century. Luther championed marriage. Wise authors learn from him and write

about celibacy within the theological framework of marriage. John Paul II, Barth, Thurian, and Grenz all did so.

Third, in addition to the rediscovery of monastic and religious celibacy, Protestants need to discover a form of celibate living that is relatively unheralded in Roman Catholicism: the celibate who lives in simple relation to the local church. Protestants are well suited theologically and culturally to promote a celibacy that consists of a commitment made to God and recognized by the church, but not formalized by vows to a group of celibates. Of course, Protestants would be unwise to disregard the wisdom of both the ancient church and current Roman Catholicism that recognizes the need one celibate has for encouragement from another. Nonetheless, in both past and current practice, many have been celibate for the kingdom who have taken no vow and joined no celibate association. Thus, it seems unwise for the church to reserve recognition of celibacy to those committed to institutes or bound by clerical vows.

Fourth, Protestantism will likely experience little practical change in its approach to celibacy until there is a cultural shift involving alterations in its speech habits and patterns of recognition. Typically, Protestants assume that every normal person wants to marry and Protestant speech reflects that prejudice. This creates an antagonistic environment for celibacy. Words like bachelor and old maid have been largely replaced by the word single, yet the word single covers a broad category of persons most of whom hope to marry. Protestants need to resurrect the word celibate and use the word to mean those who have chosen the unmarried state for the sake of the kingdom. Such a word would enable the Protestant church to recognize that such a state exists and that it is good. Then, as young men and women face the decision whether to marry, and older

men and women face the decision whether to remarry, they would recognize two clear options: marriage and celibacy. However, because no model for celibacy exists in most Protestant churches, one can rarely point to a fellow member of the local church and say, “She is celibate.” If Protestant thinkers become convinced that a theology of celibacy should accompany the theology of marriage, then Protestant churches will need to change their culture in conformity with their theology.

### *The Need*

Protestants have cast aside a gift from God. Jesus presented this gift personally to his church. For fifteen hundred years, Christians held it high and thanked God for it. However, when they inordinately exalted it over marriage, Luther and other Reformers raised their voices in anger. Today, five hundred years later, celibacy has yet to regain its rightful stature among the descendants of the Reformers. Protestants must recover the gift, clean it, and return it to a place of honor beside its sister, marriage.

## WORKS CITED

- Abbott, Elizabeth. *A History of Celibacy: From Athena to Elizabeth I, Leonardo Da Vinci, Florence Nightingale, Ghandi, and Cher*. 1st Scribner ed. New York: Scribner, 2000.
- Abbott, Walter M., ed. *The Documents of Vatican II: With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*. New York: Guild Press, 1966.
- Adams, Margaret. *Single Blessedness: Observations on the Single Status in Married Society*. New York: Basic Books, 1976.
- Allchin, A. M. *The Silent Rebellion: Anglican Religious Communities 1845-1900*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1958.
- Ambrose, St. *Concerning Virgins*.
- . *Some of the Principle Works of St. Ambrose*. Translated by H. De Romestin. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 vols. Vol. 10, Second Series, A *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955.
- Anglican Religious Communities Year Book 2002-2003*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002.
- Ansaldi, J. "Célibat Pour Christ' Et Sexualité." *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 67, no. 3 (1992): 403-415.
- Ashley, Benedict M. "John Paul II: Theologian of the Body of the Acting Person." *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1-2 (2000): 31-45.
- . "John Paul II: Theologian on the Body of the Acting Person." *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1-2 (2000): 31-45.
- Aune, Kristin. *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2002.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Vol. III, Pt. 4. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961.
- . *Church Dogmatics*. Translated by A. T. Mackay and others. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Vol. III, 4. Edingurgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961.

- Benson, Richard Meux. *Instructions on the Religious Life*. Oxford: Society of S. John the Evangelist, 1927.
- Bernabe, Carmen. "Of Eunuchs and Predators: Matthew 19:1-12 in a Cultural Context." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 33, no. 4 (2003).
- Beyer, Jean. *Juan Pablo II a Las Religiosas Y Religiosos*. Barcelona: Herder, 2000.
- Boisvert, L. *Le Célibat Religieux*. Paris: Cerf, 1990.
- Bower, Gary Robert. "Ambivalent Bodies: Making Christian Eunuchs." Ph.D diss., Duke University, 1996.
- Bromiley, Geoffrey. *God and Marriage*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Brower, Gary Robert. "Ambivalent Bodies: Making Christian Eunuchs." PhD, Duke University, 1996.
- Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.
- Buttiglione, Rocco. *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*. Translated by Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1997.
- Caffarra, C. "Vérité Et Éthos De L'amour Conjugal: Réflexion Philosophico-Théologique Sur La Première Série Des Catéchèses Hebdomadaires De Jean-Paul II 1979-1983." *Esprit et Vie* 17 (1984): 241-253.
- Calvin, John. *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*. Translated by John W. Fraser. Edited by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvin's Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960.
- . *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill and Henry P. Van Dusen. 2 vols, *The Library of Christian Classics*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.
- Carlson, Eric Josef. *Marriage and the English Reformation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994.
- Clark, Elizabeth. *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity, Studies in Women and Religion*. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986.

- . *Women in the Early Church, Message of the Fathers of the Church*. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983.
- Clarkson, Margaret. *So You're Single!* Wheaton, IL: Howard Shaw, 1978.
- Cochini, Christian. *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*. Translated by Nelly Marans. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990.
- Coe, Bufford W. *John Wesley and Marriage*. London: Associated University Presses, 1996.
- Conley, John J. "The Philosophical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II: A Response." In *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, edited by John M. McDermott, 23-28. Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993.
- Coppens, J. "Erasmus and Celibacy." In *Priesthood and Celibacy*, edited by A. M. Charue, P. Chauchard, H. Crouzel, G. Cruchon and A. De Bovis, 599-622. Milano: Editrice Ancora, 1972.
- Craig, Clarence Tucker. "The First Epistle to the Corinthians." In *The Interpreter's Bible*, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, 3-264. New York: Abingdon Press, 1953.
- Crosby, John F. "John Paul II's Vision of Sexuality and Marriage: The Mystery of "Fair Love"." In *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His Contribution to Catholic Thought*, edited by Geoffrey Gneuh, 52-70. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000.
- Curran, Charles E. "Evangelium Vitae and Its Broader Context." In *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, 120-133. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- . *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005.
- Deeken, Alfons. *Process and Permanence in Ethics: Max Scheler's Moral Philosophy*. New York: Paulist Press, 1974.
- A Discourse of the Married and Single Life Wherein, by Discovering the Misery of the One, Is Plainly Declared the Felicity of the Other. 1621. In, Early English Books Online, <http://80-wwwlib.umi.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/eebo/image17480>. (accessed May, 2003).
- Duin, Julia. *Purity Makes the Heart Grow Stronger: Sexuality and the Single Christian*. Ann Arbor, MI.: Vine Books, 1988.
- Dupont, Jacques. *Mariage Et Divorce Dans L'évangile: Matthieu 19,3-12 Et Parallèles*. Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959.

- Durnbaugh, Donald F. "Work and Hope: The Spirituality of the Radical Pietist Communitarians." *Church History* 39, no. 1 (1970): 72-90.
- Evening, Margaret. *Who Walk Alone: A Consideration of the Single Life*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974.
- Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapid, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987.
- Fenton, J. C. *The Gospel of Saint Matthew, The Pelican New Testament Commentaries*. New York: Penguin Books, 1963.
- Ferguson, Everett, ed. *Christianity and Society: The Social World of Early Christianity*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999.
- Fix, Janet, and Zola Levitt. *For Singles Only*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1978.
- Foster, Lawrence. *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Foster, Richard. *Freedom of Simplicity*. New York: Harper & Row, 1981.
- . *Money, Sex, and Power*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Frings, Manfred S. *Max Scheler: A Concise Introduction in the World of a Great Thinker*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1965.
- Fudge, Thomas A. "Incest and Lust in Luther's Marriage: Theology and Morality in Reformation Polemics." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 2 (2003): 319-345.
- Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians*. Edited by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
- . "The Christian's Posture toward Marriage and Celibacy: 1 Corinthian 7." *Review and Expositor* 80, no. 3 (1983): 351-362.
- Gasparro, Giulia Sfameni. "Ascetism and Anthropology: Enkrateia and 'Double Creation' in Early Christianity." In *Asceticism*, edited by Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, 127-146. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Geldenhuis, Norval. *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*. Edited by F. F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951.
- Gerstenberger, Erhard S., and Wolfgang Schrage. *Woman and Man*. Translated by Douglas W. Stott, *Biblical Encounter Series*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.

- Glick, Daryl J. "Recovering Morality: Personalism and Theology of the Body of John Paul II." *Faith and Reason* 12, no. 1 (1986): 7-25.
- Gorner, Paul. *Twentieth-Century German Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Grecco, Richard. "Recent Ecclesiastical Teaching." In *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, 137-148. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*. 2nd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- . *The Social God and the Relational Self*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Hadidian, Allen. *A Single Thought: God's Word on Singleness*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1981.
- Hardesty, Nancy. "Being Single in Today's World." In *It's O.K. To Be Single*, edited by Gary R. Collins, 11-21. Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1979.
- Hart, Mark Dorsey. "Reconciliation of Body and Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Deeper Theology of Marriage." *Theological Studies* 51, no. 3 (1990): 450-478.
- Hawks, Edward. *William Mcgarvey and the Open Pulpit: An Intimate History of a Celibate Movement in the Episcopal Church and of Its Collapse 1870-1908*. Philadelphia: The Dolphin Press, 1935.
- Heid, Stefan. *Celibacy in the Early Church: The Beginnings of a Discipline of Obligatory Continence for Clerics in East and West*. Translated by Michael J. Miller. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000.
- Hensley, J. Clark. *Good News for Today's Singles*. Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1985.
- Herbstrith, Waltraud. *Edith Stein: A Biography*. Translated by Bernard Bonowitz. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985.
- Hibbs, Thomas S. *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999.

- Hodges, Thomas. 1673. *A Treatise of Marriage with a Defence of the 32th Article of Religion of the Church of England: Viz. Bishops, Priests and Deacons Are Not Commanded by God's Law Either to Vow the State of Single Life, or to Abstain from Marriage: Therefore It Is Lawful for Them, as for All Other Men, to Marry at Their Own Discretion, as They Shall Judge the Same to Serve Better to Godliness.* In, *Early English Books Online*, <http://80-wwwlib.umi.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/eebo/image/45578>. (accessed May, 2003).
- Hogan, Richard M. "A Theology of the Body." *International Review of Natural Family Planning* 6, no. 3 (1982): 227-252.
- Hogan, Richard M., and John M. LeVoir. "The Family and Sexuality." In *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, 157-183. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Horsley, Richard A. *1 Corinthians*. Nashville: Abdingdon Press, 1998.
- Hsu, Albert Y. *Singles at the Crossroads: A Fresh Perspective on Christian Singleness*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Hunter, David G. *Marriage in the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- . "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian." *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 45-64.
- . "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine." *Church History* 69, no. 2 (2000): 281-303.
- Husserl, Edmund. "Philosophy as Rigorous Science." In *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, edited by Quentin Lauer, 71-147. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965.
- . "Pure Phenomenology, Its Method and Its Field of Investigation." In *Husserl, Shorter Works*, edited by Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston, 10-17. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
- Inwood, M. J. "Max Scheler." In *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, edited by Ted Honderich. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Isley, William L. "A Spirituality for Missionaries." *Missiology* 27, no. 3 (1999): 299-309.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *New Testament Theology: Part One; the Proclamation of Jesus*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971.
- Jerome, St. *Against Jovinianus*.

- . *The Principles Works of St. Jerome*. Translated by W. H. Fremantle. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14, Second Series vols. Vol. 6, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954.
- Jobert, Philippe. "Iniciación a La Filosofía De Juan Pablo II." *Revista de Filosofía* 18, no. 53 (1985): 219-251.
- John Paul II. *Avec Vous, Je Suis Prêtre: Homélie Et Exhortations (1978-1986)*. Edited by Pierre Raffin. Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 1986.
- . *Blessed Are the Pure of Heart: Catechesis on the Sermon on the Mount and Writings of St. Paul*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1983.
- . *The Gift of Redemption: Apostolic Exhortation Redemptionis Donum*. Washington, D. C.: Office of Publishing Services United States Catholic Conference, 1984.
- . *I Will Give You Shepherds: Pastores Dabo Vobis*. Washington, D. C.: Office for Publishing and Promotion Services United States Catholic Conference, 1992.
- . *The Jeweler's Shop: A Meditation on the Sacrament of Matrimony Passing on Occasion into a Drama*. Translated by Boleslaw Taborski. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992.
- . *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People: Christifideles Laici*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1988.
- . *Letters to My Brother Priests: Holy Thursday (1979-2001)*. Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 2001.
- . *On the Family: Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio*. Washington, D. C.: Office of Publishing Services United States Catholic Conference, 1981.
- . *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981.
- . *Reflecitons on Humanae Vitae: Conjugal Morality and Spirituality*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1984.
- . *Résurrection, Mariage Et Célibat: L'évangile De La Rédemption De Corps*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985.
- . *The Theology of Marriage & Celibacy: Catechesis on Marriage and Celibacy in the Light of the Resurrection of the Body*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1986.
- . *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997.

- . *Uomo E Donna Lo Creò*. Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1985.
- . *Visible Signs of the Gospel: Messages of John Paul II on Consecrated Life*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1983.
- . "Vita Consecrata." In *The Church and the Consecrated Life*, edited by David L. Fleming and Elizabeth McDonough, 323-436. St. Louis, MO: Review for Religious, 1996.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body': John Paul II on Love, Sex & Pleasure." *Commonweal* 128, no. 2 (2001): 11-17.
- Jone, Heribert. *Moral Theology*. Translated by Urban Adelman. 15th ed. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963.
- Keener, Craig S. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- Knapp-Fisher, E. G. "Celibacy." *Theology* 60, no. 442 (1957): 144-50.
- Kochler, Hans. "The Phenomenology of Karol Wojtyla: On the Problem of the Phenomenological Foundation of Anthropology." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 42, no. 3 (1982): 326-334.
- Koons, Carollyn A., and Michael J. Anthony. *Single Adult Passages: Uncharted Territories*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991.
- Koterski, Joseph W. "An Introduction to the Thought of Pope John Paul II." In *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His Contribution to Catholic Thought*, edited by Geoffrey Gneuchs, 13-37. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christianity*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. New York: Harper and Row, 1953.
- Lawson, Linda. *Life as a Single Adult: A Church Study Course Book for Use by Single Young Adults*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1976.
- Lazareth, W. H. *Luther on the Christian Home*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960.
- Lee, Mark W. "The Church and the Unmarried." In *It's O.K. To Be Single: A Guidebook for Singles and the Church*, edited by Gary R. Collins. Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1979.
- Leonard, Bill J. "Celibacy as a Christian Lifestyle in the History of the Church." *Review and Expositor* 74, no. 1 (2001): 21-31.
- Lienhard, M. "Luther Et Le Monachisme." *Foi et Vie* 93, no. 2 (1994): 9-28.
- Lum, Ada. *Single & Human*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976.

- Luther, Martin. "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7 [1523]." In *Luther's Works*, edited by Oswald C. Hilton, 3-56. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973.
- . *Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order That They Lay Aside False Chastity and Assume the True Chastity of Wedlock*. Edited by Hemut T. Lehmann. Vol. 45, *Luther's Works*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1523.
- . "Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows [1521]." In *Luther's Works*, edited by James Atkinson, 250-400. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- . "Lectures on Genesis [1535]." In *Luther's Works*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, 3-359. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958.
- . "A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage [1522]." In *Luther's Works*, edited by James Atkinson, 7-14. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- . "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate [1520]." In *Luther's Works*, edited by James Atkinson, 123-219. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978.
- Mattheeuws, Alain. *Union Et Procréation: Développement De La Doctrine Des Fins De Mariage*. Paris: Cerf, 1989.
- Matura, Thaddée. "Le Célibat Dans Le Nouveau Testament D'après L'exégèse Récente." *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 97, no. 6 (1975): 481-500.
- McAllaster, Elva. *Free to Be Single*. Chappaqua, N.Y.: Christian Herald Books, 1979.
- McCool, Gerald A. "The Theology of John Paul II." In *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, edited by John M. McDermott, 29-53. Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993.
- Meredith, Don. *Who Says Get Married? How to Be Happy and Single*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981.
- Miller, Keith, and Andrea Wells Miller. *The Single Experience*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1981.
- Miller, Perry. *Jonathan Edwards*. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959.
- Mitting, Elizabeth, ed. *The Single Woman: Comments from a Christian Perspective*. London: Victory Press, 1966.

- Modras, Ronald. "The Moral Philosophy of Pope John Paul II." *Theological Studies* 41 (1980): 683-697.
- . "Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body." In *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, 149-156. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Edited by D. A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992.
- Nelson, James B. *Between Two Gardens: Reflections on Sexuality and Religious Experience*. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983.
- . *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978.
- Norris, Kathleen. *Cloister Walk*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.
- Nota, John H. "Max Scheler and Karol Wojtyla." In *Existential Personalism*, 135-147. Washington: American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1986.
- Novak, Michael. "The Embodied Self." *First Things* 130 (2003): 18-21.
- Page, Jean-Guy. "La Pensée De Karol Wojtyla Sur La Relation Homme-Femme." In *Karol Wojtyla: Filósofo, Teólogo, Poeta*, edited by Pietro Rossano, 263-288. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1984.
- Parish, Helen L. "'by This Mark You Shall Know Him': Clerical Celibacy and Antichrist in English Reformation Polemic." In *The Church Retrospective: Papers Read at the 1995 Summer Meeting and the 1996 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, edited by R. N. Swanson, 253-266. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 1997.
- . *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent, Policy, and Practice*. Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000.
- Payne, Dorothy. *Singleness*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.
- Peters, Greg. "Spiritual Marriage in Early Christianity: 1 Cor 7:25-38 in Modern Exegesis and the Earliest Church." *Trinity Journal* 23, no. 2 (2002): 211-224.
- Pierard, R. V. "Evangelicalism." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.
- Place, Michael D. "*Familiaris Consortio*: A Review of Its Theology." In *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, 184-210. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.

- Poirier, John C. "Celibacy and Charism in 1 Cor. 7:5-7." *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 1-18.
- Pope John Paul II. *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997.
- . *Veritatis Splendor*. Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1993.
- Prokes, Sister M. Timothy. *Toward a Theology of the Body*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Quesnell, Quentin. "'Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven' (Mt 19,12)." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1968): 335-358.
- Ramaroson, Benjamin Marc Balthason. "Mariage Et Célibat Consacré a Partir Des Catéchèses Du Mercredi De Jean Paul II." *Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae*, 1991.
- Reimers, Adrian J. "The Thomistic Personalism of Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)." In *Atti Del IX Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, 6, 364-369. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991.
- Rousselle, Aline. *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*. Translated by Felicia Pheasant. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.
- Schaff, Philip, and David S. Schaff, eds. *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*. 6th ed. 3 vols. Vol. 3. New York: Harper and Row, 1931.
- Scheler, Max. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values; a New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*. Translated by Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- . *Man's Place in Nature*. Translated by Hans Meyerhoff. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.
- Schild, Maurice E. "Marriage Matters in Erasmus and Luther." *Reformed Theological Journal* 39 (1980): 65-72.
- Schillebeeckx, E. *Celibacy*. Translated by C. A. L. Jarrott. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968.
- . *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*. Translated by N. D. Smith. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965.
- Schlink, Basilea. *My All for Him*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1971.
- Schu, Walter. *The Splendor of Love: John Paul II's Vision for Marriage and Family*. Hartford, CT: New Hope Publications, 2003.

- Seeman, Erik R. "It Is Better to Marry Than to Burn: Anglo-American Attitudes toward Celibacy, 1600-1800." *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 4 (2000): 397-419.
- Séguin, Michel. "The Biblical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II on Human Sexuality." *Communio* 20 (1993): 266-289.
- Senior, Donald. *The Gosple of Matthew*. Edited by Gene M. Tucker and Charles B. Cousar, *Interpreting Biblical Texts*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Sharp, Robin. "Monasticism in Modern Protestantism." *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 188 (1963): 281-287.
- Shivanandan, Mary. *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999.
- . "John Paul II's Theology of the Body." *Catholic Dossier* 5, no. 1 (1999): 1-7.
- Sim, David C. *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Simpson, Peter. *On Karol Wojtyla*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2001.
- Smith, Harold Ivan. *Single and Feeling Good*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987.
- Smith, Janet E. "Natural Law and Personalism in *Veritatis Splendor*." In *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, 67-84. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Smith, William B. "John Paul II's Seminal Contributions to Moral Theology: Foundational Issues." In *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His Contribution to Catholic Thought*, edited by Geoffrey Gneuchs. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000.
- Sockman, Ralph W. "The Revival of the Conventual Life in the Church of England in the Nineteenth Century." Columbia University, 1917.
- Sokolowski, Robert. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Sroka, Barbara. *One Is a Whole Number*. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1978.
- Stafford, Tim. *Sexual Chaos*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Stagg, Frank. "Biblical Perspectives on the Single Person." *Review and Expositor* 74, no. 1 (1977): 33-42.
- Stedman, Rick. *Pure Joy: The Positive Side of Single Sexuality*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1993.

- Swindoll, Luci. *Wide My World: Narrow My Bed*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982.
- Taylor, Jeremy. "Married Life." In *In God's Name: Examples of Preaching in England from the Act of Supremacy to the Act of Uniformity 1534-1662*, edited by John Chandos, 506-514. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971.
- Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her, through Whom the Word of Eternal Life Was Opened in This Day, of Christ's Second Appearing, Collected from Living Witnesses, in Union with the Church*. 2nd ed. Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons & Co., Printers, 1888.
- Thatcher, Adrian. "Postmodernity and Chastity." In *Sex These Days: Essays on Theology, Sexuality and Society*, edited by Jon Davies and Gerard Loughlin, 122-40. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Thielicke, Helmut. *The Ethics of Sex*. Translated by John W. Doberstein. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964.
- Thurian, Max. *Marriage and Celibacy*. Translated by Norma Emerton, *Studies in Ministry and Worship*. London: SCM Press, 1959.
- Towns, James E. *One Is Not a Lonely Number*. Dallas: Crescendo Press, 1977.
- . *Singles Alive!* Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co., 1984.
- . *Solo Flight*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1980.
- Turner, William. *The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox*. Basle, 1543.
- Tyndale, William. *An Answere Vnto Sir Thomas Mores Dialogue*. Edited by Anne M. O'Donnell and Jared Wicks. Vol. 3, *The Independent Works of William Tyndale*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000.
- Van Vleck, Philip C. "The Chaste Heart: Martin Luther and the Discourse on Marriage and Celibate Practice in Christian Theology, 1521-1559." PhD, Duke University, 1994.
- Vantassel, Stephen. "Celibacy: The Forgotten Gift of the Spirit." *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 12, no. 3 (1994): 20-23.
- Vivian, Tim. "Modern Monastic Spirituality." *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 2 (2001): 357-362.
- Walsh, Vincent M. *Pope John Paul II the Theology of the Body (Human Love in the Divine Plan): A Simplified Version*. Merion, PA: Key of David Publications, 2002.

- Walters, Christine. "To the Circuits: The Methodist Diaconal Order." *Epworth Review* 23, no. 1 (1996): 6-9.
- Weckman, George. *My Brothers' Place*. Lawrenceville, Virginia: Brunswick Publishing Corporation, 1992.
- Weigel, George. *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999.
- Weiser, Frederick S. "New Directions in Evangelical Communities." *Una Sancta* 23, no. 3 (1966): 113-121.
- Wesley, John. "Thoughts on a Single Life." In *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.: Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford*, edited by John Emory, 539-544. New York: B. Waugh and T. Manson, 1832.
- West, Christopher. *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's "Gospel of the Body"*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2003.
- Williams, George Huntston. *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1981.
- Witherington III, Ben. *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- Wojtyla, Karol. *The Acting Person*. Translated by Andrzej Potocki. Edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Analecta Husserliana*. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979.
- . *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*. Translated by Jordan Aumann. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981.
- . *Love and Responsibility*. Translated by H. T. Willetts. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., 1981.
- . *Max Scheler Y La Ética Cristiana*. Translated by Gonzalo Haya, *Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos*. Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1982.
- . *Persona Y Acción*. Translated by Jesús Fernández Zulaica, *Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos*. Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1982.
- Wood, Britton. *Single Adults Want to Be the Church Too*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977.
- Woznicki, Andrew N. *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyla's Existential Personalism*. New Britain, Ct.: Mariel Publications, 1980.

Yost, John K. "The Reformation Defense of Clerical Marriage in the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI." *Church History* 50, no. 2 (1981): 152-165.