

**Toward a Eucharistic Vision of Church,
Marriage, Family and Sex**

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Dedicated to Kate and Annie

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Foreword

By its very essence Orthodox Christian life is “eucharistic.” We consume the Body of Christ in the sacrament in order to become the Body of Christ, the Church. “Holy Communion” – understood in the broader sense of celebration as well as consummation – is the most fundamental and significant action we can perform. On it are based, without exception, all other aspects of Christian life and activity.

In the Eucharist, the faithful offer to God both the Holy Gifts and themselves. This is in response to His prior gift, His prior initiative. We first receive from His hand wheat and grapes as “fruit of the earth.” Then we transform them into bread and wine, which we offer back to God with thanksgiving (the meaning of the Greek term *eucharistia*). God receives these gifts and transforms them in return into a unique and sacred source of nourishment and communion with Himself. The simple Eucharistic elements thus become, in Fr. Sergei Bulgakov’s words, “metaphysical food.”

This mutual gift of offering is most eloquently expressed by the pivotal declaration of the Divine Liturgy or Eucharistic Service: “Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all.” This implies not only that we return to God what He has already bestowed upon us. It signifies as well that our Eucharistic offering is made on behalf of all mankind. As we declare in the “Proskomedia” or Preparatory Service that begins the Divine Liturgy, we offer these gifts not only for ourselves but also “for the life of the world.”

Because of this universal dimension, “on behalf of all and for all,” the Eucharist not only serves as the primary focus of our liturgical celebration and as the indispensable nourishment for our spiritual growth. It also grounds every aspect of our Christian moral life. The Eucharist provides both the rationale and the means for assuming the ascetic struggle that leads to personal sanctification. It offers a vision of God as the unique Source of goodness, justice and righteousness (“God alone is good,” Jesus insists). And it makes possible a depth of communion with God that can transform every human relationship from one based on hostility or self-interest, to one that reflects God’s own compassion, mercy, and sacrificial love.

Philip LeMasters describes this book as an “apologetic” essay that aims to ground sex and marriage in the Church’s understanding of the Eucharist. In the present American social environment, marriage and sexuality seem nearly as irrelevant to one another as do marriage and the Church’s sacraments, including Holy Matrimony. Once sexuality was divorced from procreation with the widespread use of contraceptives, marriage was no longer treated in the secular world as a means for “legitimizing sex.” Today, lead articles in our nation’s news magazines bemoan the fact that couples are increasingly depriving themselves of the “joy of sex,” a consequence of stress, anxiety and chronic boredom both at home and on the job. Pre- and extra-marital sexual relations are on the rise, while conjugal sexuality is in decline. Meanwhile, the divorce rate – with resultant single-parenting and “blended” families – continues apace, spurred on by a mentality that insists on pre-marital contracts and no-fault terminations to too hastily formed “relationships.” What possible relevance has the Eucharist in such an environment?

We owe Prof. LeMasters a great debt of gratitude for showing precisely the relevance, indeed, the necessity of the Eucharist for grounding and guiding every genuinely Christian conjugal relationship. By so doing, he makes clear as well the tragic gulf that separates a Christian understanding of marriage and sexuality from the view held by the great majority of our contemporaries, including many people in the Church. This essay succeeds admirably in restoring a proper vision of marriage as essentially “sacramental,” a primary means by which God bestows His saving grace. At the same time, it provides a moral framework within which the committed Christian couple can explore answers to their own most personal questions regarding matters such as sexual expression, contraception and procreation.

A striking feature of this study is the convincing way it parallels the meaning of marriage with that of the Eucharist. The aim of both is ultimately salvation, obtained as a free gift of divine grace by those who accept the arduous pathway to holiness, one that involves ongoing repentance and constant struggle against what the patristic tradition terms the “passions.” The end of that pathway, for marriage as for Eucharistic celebration, is eternal communion with the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. This may be described as a participation in divine Life itself, denoted by the Greek term *theosis* or “deification.”

In both marriage and the Eucharist we are offered a foretaste of life in the kingdom of God. Each sacrament, accordingly, serves as an icon or

image of the Church in its nuptial relationship to Christ. The Eucharist recalls and reactualizes the saving value of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, accepted as the ultimate expression of His love for those who commit themselves to Him. Christian marriage is predicated on a similar act of sacrifice, symbolized by the wedding crowns. In the Orthodox service of Holy Matrimony, those crowns are symbols of victory and joy, realized nevertheless by continual expressions of self-giving, self-sacrificing love. They are signs of the particular cross that each spouse is called to bear, out of devotion to the other.

If the Eucharist achieves communion through the consuming – the ingesting and digesting – of the gifts of Christ's Body and Blood, marriage achieves communion with the beloved through sexual consummation, the uniting of man and woman in a new creation of "one flesh." "Even as the Eucharist restores bread and wine to their intended place of communion with God," Prof. LeMasters points out, "Christian marriage restores human sexuality to its natural place as a means for growth in holiness."

With this vision of the purpose of marriage, the author proceeds to a paradoxical yet essential truth, that conjugal relations properly embody virtues in the Christian life normally associated with monasticism: poverty, chastity, obedience and, we should add in our present social climate, stability.

The final chapters of the work draw specific conclusions regarding a variety of issues raised by contemporary pressures in American social life, particularly the issues of "same-sex unions" and contraception.

With recent developments in the Episcopal Church, where the House of Bishops approved the election of an actively homosexual priest to serve as bishop of New Hampshire, LeMasters' discussion of the gay lifestyle and the pressures leading towards acceptance of same-sex unions is especially timely and important. His balanced approach accepts a crucial distinction between a homosexual "orientation" and homosexual activity. Insisting that we reject all forms of "gay-bashing," he accepts and faithfully interprets the biblical and patristic condemnations of homosexual practice as profoundly harmful to the integrity and purpose of human life as God intends it.

As for the matter of contraception, his discussion is equally balanced. While he acknowledges that no Orthodox consensus exists regarding the appropriateness of contraceptive measures, he nevertheless draws a number of essential points. Our "synergy" or "cooperation" with God in the work of salvation plays a vital role in Orthodox thought. Avoiding the

“works-righteousness” identified as “Pelagianism,” Orthodoxy insists the God’s initiative must be met by our faithful response. Proper use of our reason and freedom, then, prevents us from passively submitting to “natural law,” as Roman Catholicism is often accused of doing. “There is no moral obligation for the faithful to have as many children as biologically possible,” he declares. Accordingly, he aligns himself with Orthodox theologians such as Frs. John Meyendorff and Stanley Harakas, in accepting certain limited use of contraceptives – provided they are not abortifacient.

Here, as throughout, the author demonstrates an important sensitivity to the flexibility of Orthodox moral theology: its refusal to lapse into a purely deontological or rules-oriented approach in judging human behavior, and its unwavering emphasis on personal freedom and responsibility.

The thrust of this book, and its value for Orthodox Christians, especially in the West today, is well expressed by a statement toward its close. “Orthodox moral theology remains Eucharistic and pastoral, focused on bringing fallen human beings into fuller communion with the Holy Trinity.” The emphasis, reinforced by hundreds of lengthy quotations from patristic and modern theologians contained chiefly in the notes, makes of this a work to be read and studied in Parish groups as well as by married couples. It speaks directly and forcefully to a major crisis within the Church as well as within society, and provides a perspective for which we can only express our own eucharistia.

-- Fr. John Breck

Preface

This book is the product my spiritual journey to Orthodox Christianity. While a member of the Episcopal Church, I first came to a partial realization of the centrality of the Eucharist to the whole of the Christian life. As my theological training had focused on Christian ethics, I was challenged by the contemporary debates on sex and marriage in many churches to study the theological and moral issues at stake in those controversies. My studies led me to the conclusion that the Orthodox Church teaches the fullness of Christian truth on the Eucharist, marriage, and human sexuality; indeed, I became persuaded that an Orthodox understanding of the Church is essential for addressing the intersection of these topics with the spiritual depth which they demand.

Were this book a spiritual autobiography, I would have to say far more about my own journey and conversion. Since it is a monograph in Orthodox moral theology, it will suffice to note that, as a scholar trained in American universities in mainline Protestant contexts, I engage the biblical and theological scholarship of contemporary Protestant and Catholic authors more often in this volume than do most Orthodox writers whom I have read. My aim in doing so is to show that we find in Orthodox theology the fulfillment and completion of the truths taught by scholars of other Christian communions. It is my hope that this conversation with Protestant and Catholic authors will serve the apologetic function of helping readers from other churches embrace the Orthodox faith, as well as strengthening Orthodox readers as they respond to the variety of theological and moral views present in contemporary western culture. I offer this volume to any interested reader in the spirit conveyed by the words of Metropolitan John Zizioulas.

But when it comes to the point of doing justice to the basic components of the Orthodox tradition itself or— and this is more important—to the point of facing our actual ecumenical problems with positive propositions, it becomes clear that Orthodox theology needs to work closely together with Western theology if it is to be really helpful to itself and to others.¹

Introduction

In Judaism, God's deliverance of Israel from death and destruction in Egypt is commemorated to this day in the Passover seder. Jesus Christ used the Passover meal as the basis for what Christians have always called the Eucharist: the thankful celebration of our Lord's sacrificial atonement and eschatological victory over death. The Eucharist has been the ordinary service of Christian worship since the beginning of the Church.² The centrality of the Eucharist in the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church is beyond question. Eucharistic communion with our Lord's body and blood is essential to an Orthodox understanding of the Church and the Christian life.

When we look beyond the visible boundaries of Orthodoxy, we find that virtually all Christian churches have some form of eucharistic celebration, although under various names and with different understandings of the service's meaning, different liturgical forms, and varying degrees of frequency. While disagreements over the meaning and significance of the Eucharist seem interminable across confessional lines, it is clear that for Orthodox Christians this sacrament embodies the most profound themes of Christian theology: incarnation, atonement, salvation, and eschatology. It is truly a communion with the Holy Trinity; indeed, it is heavenly communion experienced now on earth in the life of the Church. Given the Eucharist's profundity, it is not surprising that, since the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Protestants and Roman Catholics have spilled much ink, and tragically at times not a little blood, due their disagreements about the meal instituted on the night when Jesus Christ was betrayed.

What has sometimes been neglected in discussions of the Eucharist, even in the Orthodox Church, is its moral import for the daily lives of believers. Theologians have been long on the sacrament's doctrine and liturgy, but often a bit short on its practical implications for faithfulness in the Christian life. For if we are to grow in our participation in the mystery of the Eucharist, we must ask questions such as: What does the celebration of Eucharist say about and require of those who take it? How should the life of the community of faith, and of its individual members, be shaped and informed by the sacrament of our Lord's body and blood? How, if at

all, should the Eucharist change one's view of the moral life and of the world in which that life is lived? Though a comprehensive treatment of such topics is beyond the limited scope of this study, we can nonetheless draw on the historic resources of Orthodoxy in a way that will shed a measure of light on what it means to live a eucharistic life. Throughout this study, we will ask what it means to offer one's life to the Father in union with the sacrifice of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus to make one's whole existence a participation in the one Eucharist of Christ.

In particular, we will focus on the eucharistic nature of the Church, marriage, and sex. For many in contemporary western culture, this would seem a strange combination of themes. They are inclined to view the Eucharist as holy and sex as wholly profane. As we will see, a genuine Orthodox understanding of Holy Communion demands a view of marital union which, like the Eucharist, draws us into communion with the Holy Trinity. Themes such as incarnation, sacrifice, and covenant connect these topics at a deep level. Indeed, to speak of sex for Orthodoxy is to speak of marriage as a sacrament, as a gracious participation in God's salvation by man and woman together. Both Eucharist and marriage are ecclesial realities which have their full existence in the life of the Body of Christ. If we are to live eucharistically by offering our whole selves—including our sexuality—to the Father, in union with the sacrifice of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will have to do that in and with the Church.

The volume is divided into seven chapters. The first engages a number of contemporary interpretations of the import of the Eucharist for moral theology. The second examines the practical moral relevance of a eucharistic identity for the Church as a society inextricably linked with the world. The third describes an Orthodox understanding of the relationship between Eucharist and Church. The fourth examines selected passages in 1 Corinthians that shed light on the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church's penitential discipline. The fifth develops a eucharistic understanding of marriage and sex. The sixth analyzes contemporary debates in some Christian churches about the blessing of same-sex unions, and explains Orthodoxy's opposition to such blessings. The seventh develops a eucharistic approach to the use of contraception within Christian marriage. The wide range of themes addressed here is an indication of the profundity and breadth of the spiritual and moral issues at stake for the Church in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Chapter 1: The Eucharist in Contemporary Moral Theology

It would probably strike most churchgoers as strange to say that the Eucharist is central to the Christian life and especially to how one understands Christian sexual morality. Regardless of how often or in what way a particular Christian community celebrates this sacrament, congregants are likely to view it simply as a ritual or at most an individual act of piety which is not intended to transform the nuts and bolts of how one lives. Given the strong strand of individualism in American Christianity, and in current approaches to sex and marriage, that should not be surprising.³ How, then, should we go about making the case that Holy Communion is at the very heart of these matters? Perhaps a brief autobiographical word will suffice.

I first encountered an argument for the centrality of the Eucharist to Christian ethics⁴ when I was a teaching assistant at Duke University Divinity School for Father Harmon L. Smith, a priest of the Episcopal Church. I was a Southern Baptist at the time with an almost completely non-sacramental understanding of the faith. Hence, it took me several years and a long ecclesiastical pilgrimage to recognize the deep truth expressed in the historic Christian teachings of my Anglican thesis advisor. His stance takes an unambiguous position on the moral relevance of the Eucharist, and in the process anticipates a number of Orthodox themes and conclusions; hence, it is fitting to begin this study with a consideration of the position that sparked my interest in the eucharistic life.

In *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Liturgy and the Moral Life*, Smith makes the strong claim that “eucharist is the most significant moral act of the church.”⁵ Smith, like many traditional Anglicans, seeks to ground theology in liturgy: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. As he puts it,

The Gospel...knows nothing of sundering liturgy and the moral life; or, conversely, when the Gospel knows of liturgy and the moral life sundered, it calls this “hypocrisy.” So prayer, proclamation, baptism, eucharist, offering, intercession—all of these and more are *moral* acts because they display the kind of people we are.⁶

Rather than being mere rituals, these liturgical acts embody and manifest our true identity before God, and call us to greater faithfulness.

Smith takes his case further by arguing that the liturgical worship of the Church is fundamentally “a purposeless act” because its ultimate end is simply the glory of God. That glorification is its purpose; consequently, worship is off the scale of our usual utilitarian calculus of figuring out how to get what we want in this world. When worship becomes a means of furthering a political agenda, psychological well-being, or even individual religious experience, something is askew.⁷

Of crucial importance to the liturgy’s transformation of worshipers into the people of God is the celebration of Eucharist. In keeping with an Anglo-Catholic understanding of Christ’s real presence in the sacrament, Smith interprets the language of “Do this in remembrance of me” as indicating that “To remember Jesus is not something we do, but something that is done to and for us by the one who is remembered...The grand mystery is that God has reclaimed us.” Eucharist embodies

how we become one with God, and with one another; this is how we are re-membered to God, and to one another; this is how the church becomes the body of Christ. And this is why eucharist is the most significant moral act of the church. In the eucharist we have our unity with—and with one another in—God. We have eaten an eschatological meal; a new age, a new history, has really dawned with Jesus’ presence among us; and we long for unity and peace and fellowship between and among all God’s creation....We celebrate the Holy Communion to be formed into a people to whom Jesus can come again...⁸

Smith reiterates the centrality of the Eucharist to the Christian faith by noting that this sacrament was celebrated before the canonical Gospels were recognized as such. In this light, he suggests a liturgical hermeneutics that reads Scripture in light of what we celebrate and experience in Holy Communion.⁹ The praxis of liturgy forms and trains a collection of human beings into the people of God as they read Scripture, face the moral and spiritual challenges of daily life, and seek to live and die as disciples of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

The Eucharist, then, is for Smith the central liturgical act through which God calls and enables the Church to be the Body of Christ. In the midst of a culture that celebrates atomistic individualism and worships at the altars of selfishness and convenience, the Eucharist calls and empowers

the Church to be a body of selfless love and obedience that foreshadows the fullness of God's reign. As such, the Eucharist calls the Church to a counter-cultural stance which is also of a piece with the character of God and the destiny of all creation for eschatological fulfillment. It is a sign of the tension "between the times" of the inauguration and consummation of God's reign that the Body of Christ would be counter-cultural. At the same time, even a cursory reading of the New Testament indicates that precisely such tension was characteristic of the ministry of Jesus Christ and the witness of the early Church. In sum, the cross of Christ was, and remains, a stumbling block to the wisdom of the world. Hence, Holy Communion with Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is an abiding challenge to the people of God to resist cooption by the ways of a world that rejected its Lord.

The calling of the Christian life, however, is not merely moral in the sense of obeying a code of conduct taught by Jesus, embodying certain virtues modeled by Jesus, or achieving laudable results identified by Jesus. Instead, it is to find the salvation and healing made possible by growth in communion with the Holy Trinity, by truly sharing in the life of Christ. The Christian seeks eternal life, the fulfillment and transformation of every dimension of one's nature and personality in the Kingdom of Heaven. We may progress toward this goal by living eucharistically, by offering the entirety of ourselves to the Father in union with the sacrifice of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

The Christian life is not one of individual morality and does not take its reference point from this world alone. Instead, it is a way of participating in the eternal communion of Heaven through the eucharistic communion of the Church. We share in the life of Christ through communion with His Body, which refers both to the Church and the Eucharist.¹² At a deep level, the Church is the Eucharist; the community of faith is a participation in Communion with the Holy Trinity. Indeed, in the Eucharist "Christ Himself becomes revealed as truth not *in* a community, but *as* a community."¹³

Such a eucharistic vision places great theological emphasis upon the incarnation: the mystery of the Son of God becoming a human being in the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ This incarnational focus is clearly of a piece with the claim that Eucharist is constitutive of the identity of the Church and the Christian life. Eucharist makes present the Son of God's becoming flesh and blood in Jesus Christ; it brings us into communion with His body and blood. The Church is the Body of Christ. When the Church celebrates

the Eucharist, it encounters the risen Lord and is nourished with the spiritual food that it needs to flourish as a foretaste of the eschatological reign of God in the midst of a fallen, rebellious world. That reign is often portrayed in Scripture, Tradition, and Liturgy as a messianic banquet, and the Messiah placed the meal in precisely such an eschatological context when He said that He would not partake of the Supper again until the banquet of the Kingdom of Heaven. The eucharistic worship of the Divine Liturgy is a participation in heaven while on earth, for here “the age to come breaks in upon this present age and into our everyday lives. And having broken into our lives in the here and now, it lifts us to a point altogether outside of time.”¹⁵ The very “life and truth...faith and ethos” of the Church “are a *liturgy*, an organic function of a unified body which receives man in order to save him...”¹⁶

The Eucharist is both incarnational (having to do with the *Logos* becoming flesh and blood) and eschatological (having to do with the ultimate fulfillment of all reality). But what moral implications arise from such doctrinal claims? How do we bridge the gap between abstract mystical expressions and the concrete challenges faced by Christians today? How do we make our daily lives eucharistic?

Orthodox theologian Father Alexander Schmemmann helps us make the connection to ethics in *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, where he writes that “the liturgy of the Eucharist...is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the Kingdom.”¹⁷ In the sacrament, “it is not ‘grace’ that comes down; it is the Church that enters into ‘grace,’ and grace means the new being, the Kingdom, the world to come.”¹⁸ This eschatological dimension of the Eucharist reflects the fact that the liturgy

has led us into the all-embracing Eucharist of Christ, and has revealed to us that the only Eucharist, the only offering of the world is Christ. We come again and again with our lives to offer; we bring and “sacrifice”—that is, give to God—what He has given us; and each time we come to the *End* of all sacrifices, of all offerings, of all eucharist, because each time it is revealed to us that Christ has *offered* all that exists, and that He and all that exists has been offered in His offering of Himself. We are included in the Eucharist of Christ and Christ is our Eucharist.¹⁹

In Jesus Christ’s offering of all reality to the Father, as well as in His incarnation’s hypostatic joining of humanity and divinity, lies for Schmemmann a reminder that modern distinctions between the sacred and

the profane, the religious and the secular, the spiritual and the physical, are in severe tension with Christian belief. Jesus Christ, as fully human and fully divine, explodes such divisions, and calls into question many of the most cherished assumptions of modern western culture.²⁰ When the Son of God takes on flesh and blood and makes those physical realities His own, He demonstrates a truth deeper than all such apparent dualisms. Namely, all reality is God's; and the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ are signs that the eschatological fulfillment of all things has already begun, indeed, has already been accomplished in principle. Not every knee has yet bowed, nor has every tongue yet confessed; but that all things will be finally subjected to God is now guaranteed (1 Cor. 15:20ff). Christ has offered all reality to the Father. Our task in life is to join ourselves and our world to that one eucharistic offering. When we offer bread and wine, and receive it again as the transfigured body and blood of Christ, we participate in the restoration and fulfillment of all creation in the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, we enact this eschatological truth in our own lives.²¹

Consequently, a moral vision informed by the Eucharist will reject an ultimate division of realms or spheres in the Christian life. God creates and redeems us holistically— body, soul, and spirit— as particular people who are in communion with one another. Any separation of any part of our lives from God is, to put it simply, sin. This vision is certainly in tension with the assumptions of modern western culture, which tend to separate rigidly between public and private spheres of life, facts and values, and physical and spiritual truth. A genuine Christian perspective, however, refuses to endorse the independence of any dimension of reality from the Kingdom of God. We are to offer every bit of ourselves and our world to God, to make all reality a eucharistic offering. Instead of living in the fallen world on our own terms according to our unbridled passions, we are to find our life and desire in God. Instead of offering the world to ourselves, we are to offer it to the Lord.²²

The Eucharist shows that the mystery of God's salvation is not purely a matter of spirit. As the Church has always taught, the Son of God became flesh and blood, and offered his entire person through physical suffering and death for the redemption of all reality, not simply of disembodied spirits. One who takes into his body the consecrated elements of the Eucharist is, thereby, participating in the redemption and sanctification of all dimensions of God's creation. In our sacramental communion, we are taken up into the sacrifice of Christ, we become participants in the Eucharist of Christ. In this light, it is clear that God intends for our *entire*

life to become eucharistic: we are to offer our whole selves to the Father in communion with Christ's self-offering on the cross by the power of the Holy Spirit.²³ The incarnation reminds us that things physical, human, and worldly are not strangers to God.²⁴ The Almighty created them, and took them upon Himself in order to restore them fully in the final consummation of all reality. We participate proleptically in that final consummation when we share the bread and wine of the messianic banquet in the Eucharist. Even as bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, our flesh and blood are deified by communion with the Lord in the Divine Liturgy.

Given the crucial role of the Eucharist for our salvation, it is telling that Schmemmann begins *For the Life of the World* with a discussion of food. Far from a mundane reality, "In the Bible the food that man eats, the world of which he must partake in order to live, is given to him by God, and it is given as *communion with God*."²⁵ The role of the human being in such a world is that of a priest who is to offer himself and all reality to the Lord, thus transforming all aspects of self and world into communion with the Trinity.²⁶ The physical stuff of our bodies and the natural world, then, are not autonomous from spiritual concerns. Instead, they find their fulfillment when placed in an eternal perspective.

Every dimension of life in this world is intended for communion with God. The true nature of human beings is to offer themselves and the world to God, to be in full communion with the Holy Trinity. Such communion is not purely spiritual, however, and is manifested in acts as seemingly mundane as eating and drinking. These actions remind us "that in Christ, life—life in its totality—was returned to man, given again as sacrament and communion, made Eucharist."²⁷ Hence, the Christian is called to a eucharistic life characterized by "a movement of love and adoration toward God, the movement in which alone the meaning and value of all that exists can be revealed and fulfilled." Our offering of bread and wine to God "is our offering to Him of ourselves, of our life and of the whole world."²⁸

Participation in the Eucharist enables communicants to live eucharistically, to become eucharistic beings in the entirety of their nature and person, both physically and spiritually. Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov makes a similar point in *The Sacrament of Love*:

A saint is not a superman, but one who discovers and lives his truth as a liturgical being. The best definition of man comes from the Liturgy: The human being is the one of the *Trisagion* and of the *Sanctus*...It is

not enough to *say* prayers; one must become, *be* prayer, prayer incarnate...One should offer not what one has, but what one is.²⁹

The great liturgical act of self-offering is, of course, the Eucharist, where the totality of the communicant is brought into union with the sacrificial offering of Christ. Our whole selves become participants in our Lord's offering; thus, we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to offer our lives to the Father in union with the self-offering of Christ.

At a practical level, these observations are obviously relevant to Christian views of moral issues such as the challenges raised by the pollution of the environment, advances in technology, and other topics in social ethics.³⁰ It goes without saying that many pressing moral questions have to do with our stewardship of natural resources. At the same time, we live in an age of unparalleled technological innovation. From issues of cloning and genetic engineering to the moral ambiguities of communication in cyberspace, we are confronted with the ramifications for human beings, of this and future generations, of our newly discovered gadgets and powers. It is always tempting to believe that technology will somehow bring with it new moral wisdom or that, with enough engineering skill and good luck, we will be able to avoid environmental disasters. Likewise, the complexities of economic and political power at home and abroad are always with us, combining seemingly abstract principles of justice with mundane realities of self-interest. No scheme of society, economy, or military power seems capable of overcoming the points of tension which arise inevitably in these areas. Such strife seems to be characteristic of the fallen, spiritually sick human nature which we encounter in this life. A fundamental problem for moral theology is that we often define such "natural" and "material" problems on their own terms, as though the natural and material dimensions of reality are self-defining and autonomous from God.³¹

A moral theology informed by the Eucharist must avoid such temptations, for the entirety of our existence is open to communion with God and needs to be healed for that communion to occur. Even as Jesus Christ's incarnation and atonement have to do with both the spiritual and the physical dimensions of his person, the eschatological fulfillment made present in the Eucharist has to do with the consummation of the entire created order, including the natural world and every gadget ever devised by humankind. Even the most technical and practical question of environmental ethics or of technological regulation is also a theological question. Likewise, the Kingdom of God is a heavenly city, an eschatological social

order in which human existence is put in right relation to God in all respects. If creation truly is God's, and if Jesus Christ has truly redeemed it all, then Christian ethics may not treat any dimension of reality as though it were autonomous from the Alpha and Omega, as though its present corrupt state defined its nature.³² We may not even begin to speak of "the natural" apart from an awareness that all creation has fallen away from its true nature and needs to be set right by cooperation with the uncreated grace of the Holy Trinity. All things are raised to their proper relationship with God in the eucharistic offering and salvation of Jesus Christ.³³

The present fallenness of the natural world does not rule out, however, Christian study and stewardship of creation. Instead, we must approach the world eucharistically, offering our knowledge of and participation in the natural world to God.³⁴ Even as particular human beings are empowered to overcome selfish individualism through the Eucharist, we must all undergo the ascetic discipline of learning to view the natural world as something to be offered back to God, not to the selfishness of the human will. The eucharistic attitude is to offer everything, including ourselves, in its fullness to the Trinity.

When we make such an offering, we learn that all creation is potentially sacramental in the sense of it being that through which humans come into communion with the mystery of God's salvation. In other words, God's grace may become present to us through any dimension of reality; we are to grow in communion with God in and through all dimensions of our life in this world.³⁵ In Jesus Christ's incarnate life, death, and resurrection, creation is restored to perfect communion with God.³⁶ Nature is not separated from grace, but finds its true identity, purpose, and fulfillment by realignment with God's salvific purposes. Hence, fallen creation as we experience it is not a moral standard or even the penultimate word about reality. We do not know the fullness of moral truth or reality apart from looking at the world and ourselves in light of Christ's salvation. The Eucharist is precisely communion with the Lord who takes the corruption of the entire creation on Himself, who bears the full weight of creation's alienation from God, and yet gloriously conquers that corruption, restoring creation itself to right relationship with the Holy Trinity.

In principle, creation is redeemed and restored to full communion with its Maker. Since humans are part of creation, we are able to know and serve God only through what God has brought into being. God redeems us through His interaction with creation in the person of Jesus Christ. In the Eucharist, we come into communion with Christ's redemption through

physical consumption of the consecrated creaturely elements of bread and wine. In this light, we see that all creation is called to participate in the eucharistic sacrifice of Christ, to be offered sacrificially and thankfully to God for transformation and fulfillment. No part of creation is ruled out as a conduit of grace, as a point of union with the Son who became, and offered, His flesh and blood. Hence, all creation is potentially sacramental, having been taken up in the salvific work of Jesus Christ.

Such a conclusion is implicit in the liturgical practice of the Church. The consumption of consecrated bread and wine, washing with water, anointing with oil, the laying on of hands, and the pronouncement of certain words are various dimensions of creation through which God's salvific grace becomes present to us. The sacraments remind us that communion with God involves every dimension of creation and of our lives: what we eat, drink, touch, say, think, feel, and intend. All of life is lived before God, and every bit of our existence may be connected in one way or another to the mystery of God's salvation. Even acts as seemingly insignificant as feeding a hungry person, visiting a prisoner, or caring for a sick person were identified by Jesus Christ as signs of the presence of God's reign. And because such humble and physical actions are ways of ministering directly to the Lord Jesus Himself, as St. Matthew's portrait of the Last Judgment reports, then surely it is a mistake to think that we can sever any dimension of our existence, any aspect of our pilgrimage in this world, from communion with God.³⁷

Consideration of the social implications of the Eucharist is in keeping with the holistic nature of our salvation. For the Divine Liturgy has its origins in the political context of the Passover, and recalls the death of one executed as a traitor to an empire.³⁸ The Eucharist also sustains Jesus Christ's followers as His Body, the continuation of His inevitably counter-cultural presence in the world. Those whose Savior is made present to them through eating and drinking may hardly ignore the hunger and thirst of those the Lord died to redeem. It is, or at least should be, impossible for those who dine at the Messiah's table to overlook the social implications of God's reign. Recall the parables in which our Lord likens the Kingdom of God to a banquet to which the poor and outcast were invited (e.g., St. Luke 14:15ff.). The celebration of the Eucharist has direct connections to the importance of the human body in the theology and moral teaching of the Christian faith. Fundamental political, economic, and social problems concern the suffering of the human body from hunger, torture, relentless poverty, and premature death. To ignore the relevance of God's Kingdom

for such realities is to deny the all-embracing nature of salvation, to separate a dimension of reality from its fulfillment through communion with the Trinity. Celebration of the Eucharist demands that we offer every dimension of our lives and world to the Father in union with the sacrifice of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, including our politics and economics. To receive the Eucharist is to participate in the reign of God. The Church is empowered and called by the Eucharist to manifest a social existence and witness which embodies the unity, love, and holiness of the Trinity.

At the heart of an Orthodox Christian vision is the realization that to partake of the Eucharist is to place all of life within the context of the salvation of the Kingdom of God made present in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To celebrate the Eucharist is to offer the entirety of one's being and world to the Father in union with the offering of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, thereby dying to self as we come to participate in the new life of God's reign. This incarnational and eschatological context challenges all moral dualisms and claims to autonomy that would deny God's sovereignty over any dimension of creation. All reality is destined for proper subordination to God's rule in the *eschaton*, for ultimate fulfillment through communion with the Trinity. The Christian life is to be a proleptic participation in the Kingdom, an icon of the salvation which is the intended purpose of all reality. Through the Eucharist, we are challenged and enabled to manifest a foretaste of God's reign as the Body of Christ in this world.

Why, then, do the members of the Church so often fall short of the moral implications of the Eucharist? Why do those who commune fail to see the connections between the Divine Liturgy and the rest of their lives? A good place to begin answering these questions is with a consideration of the dynamics of the relationship between the Church and the world.

Chapter 2: Eucharist and the Relationship Between Church and World

Regardless of the time period in the history of Christianity, there has always been tension between the Church and the world. Nonetheless, Orthodoxy has traditionally sought a *symphonia* between the Church and the rest of society. Such a vision of harmony is hard for many to grasp in our modern, western context which seems to require radical separation between public life and all things religious. The key to understanding the Christian's calling in the world is found in a eucharistic vision of communion with the Trinity that includes the whole of life.

As even a cursory glance at Protestant theologian H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* indicates, the relationship between Church and world is one of the most fundamental questions for both the theological and social dimensions of Christian ethics.³⁹ Some Christians, in "Christ of Culture" fashion, have uncritically identified a section of the world, such as the Byzantine Empire or nineteenth-century western culture, with the fullness of God's reign. Others, in the style of "Christ Against Culture," have affirmed a radical, complete separation between those who follow Jesus Christ and those who do not. Other Christians have taken more nuanced approaches to the Church-world relationship. For example, St. Augustine of Hippo saw the two cities inevitably and inextricably intertwined in this life such that it would be a mistake either to identify or radically divide these two realms in the flux of human history.

Perhaps the best place to begin an analysis of these matters is with a definition of terms. The Church is the mystical Body of Christ, including both the members of that Body on earth and the communion of saints. As we will see in the following chapter, the Orthodox Church understands itself to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church for a number of profound theological and spiritual reasons. The world, in this context, refers to persons and other dimensions of the fallen creation which are not in communion with Christ. The incarnation demonstrates, however, God's abiding love for and presence in all creation, including persons who do not currently strive to grow in union with the Lord. Since the Holy Trinity has created all reality and desires its salvation, there is no ultimate, complete separation between Church and world in this life. As Deacon John Chryssavgis notes, "The Church ...is the world as the latter was intended to be. And the world is the Church, as the former is called to become."⁴⁰ Such a definition demands both hope and an immediate note of realism: there is much of the world in the members of the Orthodox Church and in other Christian communions. All who claim membership in the community of faith are in need of further growth in holiness, and some who profess the

faith will be told by Jesus Christ “I never knew you,” while others will be surprised to be granted admission to the Kingdom of God (St. Matt. 7: 21-23; 25:31ff.). I hardly need a footnote to make the case that the history of the churches witnesses to the myriad failings of those who claim the name of Christian.

Many reasons could be given for the corruption of the members of the Church. At the risk of oversimplifying the always complex causes of human behavior, it is certain that a neglect of the import of the Eucharist, and of a eucharistic vision of life, is a contributing factor to the failures of the people of God.⁴¹ Many in the Church attend the Liturgy, but far fewer develop a deep spiritual understanding of their lives as eucharistic. Holy Communion is a proleptic participation in the Kingdom of God. It is the messianic banquet in which Christians are united with their Lord and with one another as we join in the heavenly worship of God Almighty. Communicants experience a foretaste of heavenly peace when they become what they receive: the Body of Christ. In the Eucharist, there are powerful resources for challenging the worldly corruption of the Church. The Eucharist identifies those who take it as the Body of Christ, as those who already participate in God’s eschatological reign. Those who commune are in communion with the Holy Trinity. It is a tragic mistake to overlook these profound resources for shaping the Christian life. Indeed, the Eucharist *is* the Christian life in the sense that to receive the sacrament is to participate in the life of Christ and the eternal communion that is the Heavenly Kingdom.

At its most basic level, the Eucharist is not about any branch of theological or moral study, not even liturgics. It is far more profound than any topic of study; it is participation in the reign of God and, therefore, an important part of the subject matter of all spiritual, theological, and moral teaching. For what branch of Christian thought or practice could be autonomous from matters as weighty as the incarnation, the Kingdom of God, and the atonement? Eschatology, ecclesiology, and Christology, to name only a few topics, clearly have an important eucharistic dimension. But we do not find in the Eucharist precise moral maxims or a hierarchical listing of virtues or morally admirable goals. As a sacrament or *mysterion*, the Eucharist is the experience of personal communion with God and is intrinsically linked with every dimension of Christian thought and life. The Eucharist raises our life, world, and reality to eternity, restoring every dimension of creation to communion with the Lord. Those whose lives are joined to the eucharistic offering become persons in communion with the

Holy Trinity and all other members of the Body of Christ. Of particular importance here are the eschatological implications of the Eucharist for our understanding of the relationship between Church and world, for the coming Kingdom is already present in every celebration of the Divine Liturgy.⁴²

If such observations told us everything we needed to know about the temporal context of those who celebrate the Eucharist, Christian moral and spiritual discernment would be a superfluous enterprise. There would be no need for asceticism, discernment, and disciplined thought in the Christian life if the Eucharist meant that God's Kingdom would automatically be actualized fully in the lives of those who take it. Were the Kingdom wholly realized in the life of the Christian community, we would experience a perfect *symphonia* of the human and the divine in all of life. But that is far from being the case. The practical problem is that none who take the Eucharist live in perfect communion with the Kingdom of God, and some in the Church barely recognize the grace made present in the Eucharist and its attendant implications for the living of life. No one manifests fully the life of the resurrected Lord, and a quick glance around the neighborhood demonstrates that this world has not yet reached the *eschaton*.

Rather than making the eucharist the very core of our lives, we often regrettably separate what happens in Church from life in the world in a way that divides the practical challenges people face from the experience of personal communion with the Lord in the Liturgy.⁴³ Life is thus lived non-sacramentally, as though the truly important matters of life in the real world are distinct from the task of growing in communion with the Trinity by offering one's entire self to the Father. In other words, Christians do not see the connection between liturgy and the rest of life. The re-membering (*anamnesis*) of communicants both with God and one another is thwarted by the assumption that the holy happens only in a certain ritual and has little to do with the allegedly profane stuff of daily life and personal identity. Schmemmann makes the telling comment that "Having been turned into something 'sacred in itself,' worship has as it were 'profaned' everything else in the Church," and, I will add, in the world also.⁴⁴ In other words, if the liturgy is understood to enact sacred time and place in a way that precludes the rest of life from the possibility of becoming sacred, it is easy to see how worship and workaday spiritual and moral judgment will be separated. It is also easy to see how the eschatological dimensions of the Eucharist will be overlooked.

Orthodox theologian Father John Meyendorff, in *Byzantine*

Theology, observes that such a separation of the sacred and the profane has hardly been the historic intention of Orthodoxy, which has sought harmony between the faith and all spheres of life.⁴⁵

Meyendorff argues that this symphony of the religious and the temporal reflects the Christological doctrines of Chalcedon. It also points, in traditionally Orthodox fashion, to the deification or *theosis* of the whole person “as a living experience, *even now*, and not merely in a future kingdom.” In contrast to western Christianity, the East consequently placed less emphasis on its own powerful institutions and more on its sacramental impact in and through the Empire.⁴⁶ There were limitations, however, on the Church’s leavening effect, for the highest virtues of the faith “proved unapplicable in legal and institutional terms.” It fell to monasteries in Byzantium to embody an often counter-cultural witness that “an unstable and dynamic polarity,” not a complete identification, existed between the Kingdom of God and the Empire.⁴⁷ Monasticism has often maintained the “transcendent, indeed eschatological, element” of tension between Orthodoxy and any given culture or political order.⁴⁸ History has demonstrated that there is a vital place for monasticism in calling the Church to the life of the Kingdom, as opposed to undue accommodation to the ways of the fallen world.

St. Augustine of Hippo saw the temptations facing the Church as the western Roman Empire was collapsing around him in the fifth century. He notes that not even the institutional Church is in perfect harmony with God’s eschatological reign; whether in Church or empire, the citizens of the two cities are inevitably intermingled.⁴⁹ And though St. Augustine clearly appreciates much about Christian Rome, he does not describe it as a straightforward manifestation of God’s reign. Indeed, a fundamental point of *City of God* is that Christianity’s pagan critics are wrong to judge a religion on the basis of the outcome of political events. No earthly institution embodies completely the fullness of the reign of God.⁵⁰

St. Augustine’s monumental volume was misread and abused by Charlemagne and others who sought to identify the City of God with their own empires. One does not have to be hypercritical of political or ecclesiastical institutions to see that they simply do not manifest such eschatological perfection. It is hard to argue with Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr’s charge in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* that those who claim such perfection espouse a “religious idealism... saturated with sentimentality.”⁵¹ Selfishness and the abuse of power are inevitably characteristic of human institutions in our fallen world, whether they are religious or politi-

cal in nature.

Regardless of one's ecclesiology or political theory, it is clear that the members of every community of faith and the citizens of every state are sinners in need of salvation, of growth in holiness and spiritual healing. Such failings mean that we will have to approach the moral import of the Eucharist with sobriety. Namely, history and daily life show us that the celebration of the Eucharist does not automatically bring the world into the full symphonic harmony of the Kingdom. Neither does it guarantee the complete faithfulness of the members of the Church. Likewise, Orthodox empires and nations that claim grounding in the Eucharist, such as Byzantium or the Czar's Russia, are not thereby guaranteed either complete holiness or social justice; similar challenges have faced western Christians under the rule of Charlemagne, Franco, and Pinochet. In other words, the dialectic of Church and world is not resolved simply by the celebration of Eucharist. There is much of the world in the Church, and the Church is often all too worldly in its own right.

This is not, however, a new problem. It is as old as the Eucharist itself. Recall that one of those who ate and drank at the Last Supper, the institution of the Eucharist, was Judas Iscariot, who left the Lord's table to betray Him. Another present at the first Lord's Supper was St. Peter, who denied Jesus three times in short order. The gospels tell us that virtually all the disciples had abandoned Jesus by the time of the crucifixion. St. Luke records that the disciples had given up all hope for their Master by the time the risen Lord appeared to them on the road to Emmaus (St. Luke 24:13ff.). Ironically, they recognized the identity of the risen Jesus as He broke bread with them. Their participation in the first Eucharist did not guarantee their faithfulness. But together with the risen Jesus' teaching, it apparently did enable all but Judas to recognize the Lord after their time of doubt and abandonment. The point is simply that the Divine Liturgy, from its origins, has been celebrated within the context of the imperfections and failings of the Christian community. As early as the Last Supper, it has revealed those faults even as it has provided a basis for challenging them. It has not ensured complete faithfulness on the part of those who receive it.

St. Paul also bears witness to the ambiguity of the Church's relationship to the Eucharist. He chastises the Corinthians for divisions among themselves that pervert the observance of the Eucharist, even charging that "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat" (I Cor. 11:20). St. Paul charges that some take the Supper in a way that profanes the body and blood of the Lord. Those who partake "without discerning

the body” bring judgment on themselves, even to the point of illness and death (I Cor. 11:27ff). St. Paul’s complaints are further evidence that the Eucharist is not a guarantee of Christian faithfulness. Due to the abuses of the Corinthians, it seems to have done them more harm than good. An interpretation of the spiritual and moral import of the Eucharist needs to be characterized by a strong dose of realism. The *symphonia* of the Kingdom of God and the world is not yet fully realized in the lives of the members of the Church.

Further realism is required by the resistance of some who receive the Eucharist to growth in communion with the Holy Trinity, and especially by our tendency to pervert the worship of God. Remember Amos’ prophetic denunciation of the worship of the northern kingdom of Israel:

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them....But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:21-22, 24).

The point is not that God abhors worship, but that Yahweh is not pleased with worship by people who do not embody the justice and righteousness required in the Torah.

Likewise, though no one is ever worthy to eat and drink from the Lord’s table, it is possible to take the sacrament in a way that perverts, profanes, and resists the very grace that comes to us through the body and blood of our Lord. It is important that we remember that the Greek root of the word sacrament is *mysterion*. By definition, we cannot control the mysterious. Since no one may control the mysterious grace of God, there is no guarantee that one will receive God’s grace simply by going through the motions of the eucharistic ritual without repentance and faith. This is an important distinction between a sacrament and an act of magic. The magician has figured out the special words or rituals that will produce the desired results, and thereby controls the relevant powers of nature. In contrast, the communicant accepts in humility the gifts of God on His own terms.⁵² Apart from compliance with those terms, we eat and drink our own judgment.

As St. John Chrysostom preached, much is at stake in how one receives communion. To partake unworthily is to insult and mock the Lord, and to become like “those butchers” who crucified Christ.⁵³ Likewise, St. Nicholas Cabasilas combines a call to frequent communion with a warning of the seriousness of receiving the Eucharist unprepared. He

makes a distinction between those who should not commune because of attachment to “a sin unto death” and those simply in need of the “strengthening medicine” of the sacrament. Though no one is ever worthy of the Eucharist, those who are “rightly disposed” should not refuse to commune with the One who alone is able to heal their infirmities.⁵⁴

The importance of preparation for receiving Communion is a theme in the teaching of various Christian churches, and reflects their dependence on the common faith and practice of the Church before the Great Schism. The Catechism of the current *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church, for example, includes the following question and answer:

Q. What is required of us when we come to the Eucharist?

A. It is required that we should examine our lives, repent of our sins, and be in love and charity with all people.⁵⁵

While Roman Catholic theology teaches that the worthiness of the minister is irrelevant for the validity of the sacrament, the Church insists that sacraments are efficacious only for those rightly disposed to receive God’s grace.⁵⁶

Though Orthodox theology does not view the sacraments in terms of the scholastic distinction between the valid and the efficacious, there are clear points of commonality between the warnings of St. John Chrysostom and St. Nicholas Cabasilas and the official Anglican and Roman Catholic teaching on the gravity of receiving Communion unprepared. The Anglican and Roman Catholic communions draw upon the historic consensus of Orthodox Christianity on this matter.⁵⁷ Indeed, it is hard to see how a Christian church which considers its eucharistic celebration a true communion with Christ may avoid the imperatives of preparation and warning for those contemplating the reception of the very body and blood of the Lord.

But there is more to the complexities of the spiritual and moral profundity of the Eucharist than the acknowledgment that non-believers or the unrepentant do not profit spiritually from the sacrament. At the risk of waxing homiletical, what Christian ought not say with the father of the epileptic boy, “I believe; help my unbelief” (St. Mark 9:24)? And what Christian repents fully for every sin that he commits? St. Paul is the typical Christian in confessing that “I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me” (I Cor. 4:4).

Martin Luther reacted against the Roman Catholic “works righ-

teousness” of his day by arguing that every Christian is always “*simil justus et peccator*” and in constant need of God’s gracious forgiveness. A corrupt spiritual ethos in the West which stressed earning one’s salvation through good works, apart from faith and repentance, led him to teach that Christians should

Take great care that no one goes to mass trusting in confession, or prayer, or self-preparation; but lacking confidence in all these things, let him rather go in high confidence in the Christ who gives the promise.⁵⁸

Luther’s formulation falls short of an Orthodox understanding of divine-human synergy. True acts of repentance are signs of cooperation with grace, of participation in the energies of the Holy Trinity, and are consequently an intrinsic part of the saving faith in Christ which Luther stressed. Despite Luther’s overstatement, he made a lasting contribution in the West to the fight against facile views of human sinfulness which simplistically equate outward obedience to religious laws with true holiness. Both God’s grace and human sin are far more profound than that, for they concern the dynamic personal communion of human beings with their Creator. One’s relationship with the Holy Trinity may not be understood merely in terms of following rules or performing certain actions. Instead, it is a relationship which strikes at the very heart of the mystery of the human being as one created in the image and according to the likeness of God.

In this relationship, repentance from sin is essential for growth in holiness. However, repentance is best understood in positive terms as finding one’s true healing and fulfillment through ever greater communion with God. It is not the dreary, legalistic business of paying a debt or being punished. The true Christian life is one of constant, joyous repentance before a gracious God who desires nothing more than our acceptance of His invitation to share in His life. As Bishop Kallistos Ware observes, the point of repentance is “to see, not what I have failed to be, but what by the grace of Christ I can yet become.”⁵⁹

Even as Ware notes the possibility that a repentant sinner’s penance may involve exclusion from Communion for a time, he places the sacrament of confession in a context of spiritual healing enabled by God’s grace and love. When a penitent is assigned a penance, it is for healing and not for punishment. Even as a physical therapist prescribes certain exercises for the restored functioning of a damaged joint, a priest may assign a certain penance to aid in the healing of a soul from the effects of a particular

sin. The penitent in no way merits or earns forgiveness through the penance; instead, he cooperates with the healing power of grace. He grows in personal communion with the Trinity by opening the dimensions of himself that have been distorted by sin to the healing energies of God.⁶⁰ The Christian life is one of repentance, which is necessary as preparation for communion with the Lord in the Eucharist.

Given the centrality of both repentance and Eucharist to the calling of every Christian, pastors and catechists must find ways to help the laity see their lives as eucharistic offerings, as ongoing manifestations of heavenly worship. The goal is for the Eucharist to become the center of communicants' self-consciousness and identity, for them to develop a heightened sense of the spiritual and moral profundity of the Liturgy as the grounding point for their response to the daily challenges of life in the world. Our communion with the Trinity will grow in depth and richness through deliberate cooperation with the grace made present through the Eucharist, as well as through a life of repentance. The dialectic of Church and world will remain until the *eschaton*. So let us focus on the question: How may moral theology be informed by the Eucharist so as to call the members of the Church to healing from sin and greater holiness?

The first point to consider is that the holiness to which the Church is called is not a matter of escape from the mundane course of human events, from time, or from everything that is not explicitly Christian. The Eucharist is an incarnational meal in which the risen Lord becomes present in the rude stuff of this life, even as he became present in human history through the womb of the *Theotokos*. The line between the mundane and the holy is here erased because it is precisely as the ordinary, whether a baby or bread and wine, that the Son of God comes to us. The connection to moral theology should be obvious. God claims the physical and mundane things of life as His own in the incarnation. The mystery of the Incarnate Word as fully God and fully human shows that every bit of human nature has been claimed by God in Jesus Christ.⁶¹ A continued participation in that process of claiming occurs when Christ becomes present to us in the Eucharist, when we sacramentally take His body and blood into our body and blood.

The life lived by the Christian is no longer his or her own. Just as no dimension of our lives is autonomous from the physical reality of the body or its nutritional needs, no aspect of the life of a Christian is autonomous from the Word made flesh. Our entire life is to be offered to the Father eucharistically in union with the sacrifice of Christ by the power of

the Holy Spirit.⁶² Likewise, Ware emphasizes the centrality of the Eucharist to the Christian's lifelong journey to union with God from infancy to death, noting that "It is above all through Communion that the Christian is made one with and in Christ, 'christified,' 'ingoded' or 'deified'; it is above all through Communion that he receives the first fruits of eternity."⁶³ An Orthodox understanding of the Eucharist describes Christians as the members of Christ's body, organically part of the Lord just as limbs and organs are part of any human body. The body and blood of Christ nourish us for life as the Body of Christ. Indeed, it is hard to imagine stronger fuel for spiritual and moral discernment than to understand oneself, together with other Christians, as organically part of Jesus Christ, like a body part or a branch that grows from a vine.

In the Eucharist, we receive the body of Christ and become what we receive. St. Augustine noted this union with the instruction, "As this, when you eat It and drink It, is changed into you; so let you be changed into the Body of Christ; while you live devoutly and obediently."⁶⁴ St. Symeon the New Theologian's prayer also proclaims this change of identity for the communicant:

Thy whole Body, pure and divine, blazes with the fire of Thy divinity, ineffably united to it. Thou has granted, Lord, that this corruptible temple—my human flesh—be united to Thy holy flesh, that my blood mingle with Thine; from henceforth I am a transparent and translucent member of Thy body.⁶⁵

How this union happens is a mystery, and it is possible to receive the outward, visible sign while resisting the inward, invisible grace.⁶⁶ But when through preaching, Christian education, and the pastoral guidance of one's spiritual father, the point is made that God is calling and enabling us to share in the new life of the risen Lord through the Eucharist, communicants will be formed to cooperate with God's grace by repenting and manifesting in their own lives the deep connections between Communion and every dimension of their being. Granted, no one is ever perfectly prepared to take the Eucharist; no one is ever worthy of Christ's body and blood. But when believers are formed through catechesis, asceticism, and other spiritual disciplines to see God's claim on the whole of their lives, they will be already on the path to becoming the sort of Christians who live every day as those growing in communion with the Holy Trinity. They will also be less likely to compartmentalize their faith from their family life, work, use of time and money, political action, and other daily endeavors.

St. Nicholas Cabasilas stresses the importance of one's own effort to live the new life which has come into being through the gifts of sacramental grace. It is possible for every Christian to strive for faithfulness to the Lord. "Nothing prevents anyone; all have the ability not to oppose the will of Christ, but instead to keep in every way the laws which derive from that will and to govern their lives in accordance with that which pleases Him. We may not claim that these are things beyond human ability, for then there would be no punishment for those who transgress."⁶⁷ Those who have taken Christ into themselves in the Eucharist have every reason and ability to struggle mightily for faithfulness to Him whom they have received.⁶⁸ Our communion with Christ in the Eucharist should change our very understanding of ourselves, our own sense of identity. The Christian life is one of intentional struggle to grow in holiness, to grow into our new identity as a member of Christ's Body through asceticism and repentance in response to God's grace.

Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright places our need to struggle for growth in the eucharistic life in an illuminating context in his *Eucharist and Eschatology*. He notes that those "who celebrate the eucharist are imperfect in their obedience: in the final kingdom their submission to the rule of God will be total. Eucharistic joy is marred by our persistence in sin: the joy of the final kingdom will be full."⁶⁹ Wainwright sees that there is a larger eschatological context which makes clear our failure to embody fully the holiness incumbent upon those who dine at the Lord's table. Namely, we are not yet in the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven, but still struggle with sin in a fallen world. Nonetheless, this awareness functions for Wainwright more as a note of realism than as an excuse for spiritual or moral laxity.⁷⁰

The high calling conveyed in the Eucharist, together with a realistic appraisal of human failings, demands a view of Communion as a moment of both judgment and renewal before God. Wainwright notes that the Lord will "cast out what remains of unrighteousness in His people, and...threaten the world with an end to its old existence..."⁷¹ It is intriguing for Wainwright to connect the Eucharist to eschatological judgment.⁷² Recall that St. Paul wrote of those who, by abusing the Supper, eat and drink their own condemnation. Centuries earlier, Amos chided those who desired the day of the Lord, for "it is darkness, and not light" for those who do not keep Yahweh's covenant (Amos 5:18). Wainwright's insight is in keeping with the spirit of St. Basil the Great's confession that "I know I am guilty, and that I eat and drink condemnation to myself, not discerning the Body

and Blood of Christ my God.”⁷³ The Eucharist makes a prophetic judgment on those who take it, even as it works their spiritual healing. Part of the grace of the Eucharist is that it leads us to acknowledge our sins and turn from them.⁷⁴

It is the historical experience of both the Church and Israel that there are always those who claim membership in the household of faith without embodying or even striving for faithfulness. While no one is beyond moral and spiritual failings, some fall so far short of the mark that their claim to discipleship strains credulity. There is no guarantee, of course, that any sacrament, sermon, catechesis, or other spiritual medicine will penetrate the hardened heart. Still, it is worthwhile to examine further how the Eucharist may both judge and renew those who take it.

We are in need of judgment and renewal through the Eucharist in many ways. In particular the Eucharist challenges the atomistic individualism of modern western culture which threatens to eviscerate the moral seriousness and spiritual integrity of the Christian faith.⁷⁵ In contrast to the common assumption that Christianity has to do with the purely subjective beliefs or experiences of an individual who stands alone before God, the Eucharist is intrinsically social and political even as it brings us into communion with the Holy Trinity. When particular people commune with the body and blood of Christ in the Divine Liturgy, they are mysteriously remembered to God and to one another. They are the Body of Christ, which has many members and measures its health by their coordinated well-functioning as a foretaste of God’s reign—not by the piety, abilities, or emotions of any one individual.

In terms of spirituality, theology, and moral discernment, the focus shifts from the isolated individual to the community of faith, which is comprised of persons whose communion is a participation in the life of the Holy Trinity. Those who would claim personal independence from God’s reign in their political, economic, professional, or familial affairs have violated the logic of the Gospel itself. For if we eat and drink at the Messiah’s Banquet, we are by that act claiming and accepting citizenship in the Messiah’s Kingdom of righteousness and reconciliation with God and neighbor. We are also rejecting the idolatrous lies of individuality which teach us to define ourselves purely in terms of pride, passion, and self-assertion. If we take our Lord’s body and blood, it is incumbent upon us to live as part of his Body, the Church, the people of God. That organic connection to God and other believers evokes a word of repentance from those who have become so accommodated to modern western culture that

they invoke their individual rights to excuse them from the demands of God's reign. Smith describes the spiritual errors of individualism with great clarity, for "the fundamental character of sin consists in the claims of the self to be a sovereign end in itself." True personhood, however, requires communion with God and neighbor; hence, individualism amounts to a refusal to be the persons our Lord created and redeemed us to be.⁷⁶ The fulfillment of our personhood is found in communion with the Body of Christ and the Holy Trinity.

Christians who refuse to be who they are as members of Christ's Body are in need of the spiritual medicine of repentance. To refuse to live as citizens of God's reign for the sake of our alleged individual autonomy is to be in a untenable position; it is to violate the truth of what it means to be a Christian, and to participate in the new life of Christ, which is communal in nature and from which no sphere of human activity has independence. By definition, an isolated individual is not in communion with others in any meaningful way, and certainly not as an organic member of Christ's Body.

Christos Yannaras insists that reliance on "individual moral self-sufficiency" is "the most characteristic sign of man's fall." Key to our transfiguration for eternal life is dying as an individual to be reborn in "a mode of existence where life is realized as communion in love and relationship." To define the religious quest in individual terms, even in terms of individual guilt, is a symptom of "vanity and wounded pride."⁷⁷ Indeed,

The morality of the Church is a liturgical morality, a liturgical ethos of unity and communion, a *personal* participation in the body of God the Word...What makes someone a Christian is not his private virtue or ideas or convictions, but the fact that he participates organically in the life-giving body of Christ, being grafted into the liturgical unity of the Church.⁷⁸

This way of construing the Christian life is ultimately grounded in an Orthodox understanding of the Trinity. Metropolitan John Zizioulas stresses the personal, communal nature of the Trinity as foundational for all Christian thought. Rather than viewing the divine substance as somehow prior to the personal nature of the Trinity, he argues that "If God exists, He exists because the Father exists, that is, He who out of love freely begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit."⁷⁹ Zizioulas teaches that God is always to be understood as the Persons of the Trinity in communion, and not a monistic, autonomous, or preexisting substance that is

somehow prior to Trinitarian communion. Instead, God's very "being is identical with an act of communion." The Trinitarian communion exists "not because the divine *nature* is ecstatic but because the Father as a *person* freely wills this communion."⁸⁰

At the very heart of reality is the Triune God, a Trinity of Persons in loving, mutual relationship. To live as people created in God's image is, consequently, to be in communion with others and with the Holy Trinity. We participate in this divine-human communion through the Church.⁸¹ In the Eucharist, Jesus Christ is revealed as the true identity of everyone who communes. The true communion of persons in Christ is made present in the Eucharist. Far from an act of individual piety or a bare ceremony, the Eucharist is "an assembly, a community, a network of relations" ...in which "Christ is 'parted but not divided' and every communicant is the whole Christ and the whole Church."⁸² To participate in the Eucharist is to be a person in communion with the Trinity and with all other members of the Body of Christ. Even as it is nonsensical within Christianity to think of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as isolated individuals, it is a contradiction in terms to conceive of a Christian whose very identity is not personal and relational, who is self-sufficient rather than "in Christ." Our creation in the image of the Triune God demonstrates that humans are intended for communion, not for individual isolation. Participation in the communion of Eucharist clearly challenges the atomistic individualism of modern western culture.⁸³

A task of the Church in our culture is to help communicants grow in their awareness that the taking of Communion brings judgment on our idolatrous claims to independence. Though such criticism is implicit in every celebration of the Eucharist, the clergy should make this point explicit in their pastoral guidance and catechesis. Recall Hebrew prophets like Amos. They did not simply restate the requirements of the Covenant. They named the sins of the people clearly and in detail. They made explicit the connections between the demands of the Torah and the shortcomings of the community. This is the sort of prophetic judgment which the Eucharist demands of us: to make crystal clear the ways in which the assumptions and habits of our culture are thwarting the faithfulness of the members of the Church. The Eucharist brings such failings into focus because it forces the issue of who we are. If we are the Body of Christ, if we are already citizens of God's reign, if we are participating in the new life of the risen Lord, the distance between the identity that we claim and the lived reality of our lives should be plain. It is a sign of how great that

distance is that many who commune are apparently not aware of the tension between the individualism of our culture and the demands of the Gospel. By making the dynamics of that tension obvious, we speak a word of judgment that may be an important step in bringing about a renewed eucharistic consciousness in the Church.⁸⁴

Two brief observations conclude this chapter. First, our focus on the Eucharist's import for the community of faith does not mean that Christians should be isolated from or uninvolved in social spheres other than the Church. The vision of the reign of God is finally inclusive of all reality, and the image of the last judgment in St. Matthew 25 indicates that some who serve Jesus Christ may not know that they are His servants. To make an explicit connection to the Eucharist, it is clear that those who receive the Lord's body and blood should make His love and righteousness incarnate for those to whom He ministered with special interest: the outcasts, the despised, and the victims of injustice. Priority here should be given to ministries that allow for true personal communion between those who provide aid and those who receive it. Our first obligation of care is toward our fellow members of the Church, for they are truly identified with Christ as members of His body. At the same time, the Christian life should involve support of laudable efforts by governments, charitable organizations, and institutions that are not explicitly Orthodox or even Christian. One whose primary moral identity is shaped by Eucharist in the community of faith will still have much to learn from sources of wisdom, whether philosophical or social scientific, which are not visibly linked to the Church. By working in harmony with others when possible, Orthodox Christians will witness to the *symphonia* of all things in the Kingdom.

Second, we need not fear that a truly eucharistic ethic will be so preoccupied with the Liturgy itself that it will obscure the workaday realities of the Christian life.⁸⁵ Communion enables us to see all reality in a eucharistic context by nourishing the whole life of the Christian and connecting that life to the reign of God. Whoever receives the body and blood of Christ has the obligation to make the Lord's sacrificial love as tangible in daily life in the world as the consecrated bread and wine received in the Liturgy. In other words, the Messianic Banquet makes sacramentally present a Kingdom of God that is sovereign over all of life. Hence, a eucharistic ethic demands a whole life which makes Christ and His kingdom present to all.⁸⁶

Much work remains to be done in helping communicants see the connections between Eucharist and the demands of faithfulness in every-

day life. Realistically, the challenges for moral theology raised by the Church-world relationship will be with us always. The celebration of Eucharist will not work our escape from such thorny spiritual problems, but the sacrament does provide the spiritual nourishment necessary to help us repent of our sins and grow in holiness. The challenge to moral theologians is to give greater clarity to the practical implications of the Eucharist toward the end of the members of the Church becoming and living as what they receive in Communion: the Body of Christ. As that happens, the Church will manifest an ever clearer witness to the holistic salvation of God's Kingdom. Christians will consequently grow in holiness as they bring all areas of their lives into communion with the Holy Trinity.

Chapter 3: An Orthodox Understanding of the Relationship between the Church and Eucharist

To speak of the Eucharist and of the Christian life in an Orthodox context is to speak of the Church. Before considering in greater detail the moral implications of the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, we need to give further attention to the Holy Communion itself, to the Church. As we have seen, questions of ecclesiology are central to a sound understanding of both the Eucharist and the life of faithfulness. Theologically and sociologically, the Church provides the context within which the Holy Mysteries and the sacramental life become intelligible. The Christian life is an ecclesial life, a life in the Church.

To complicate matters, there are many different Christian churches today with fundamentally different understandings of the very nature of the

Church. Most Protestant churches teach that, so long as one has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, one's denominational affiliation is spiritually irrelevant. In this context, the Christian life is viewed as an individualistic journey for which the community of faith is of secondary importance. Such an approach results in a severe challenge to even the idea of theological truth, and often makes emotion or a moral code the disembodied essence of the Christian faith.⁸⁷ Likewise, the individualistic ethos of western culture views churches as societies of like-minded people who choose to gather together on the basis of personal, subjective taste. Some join gardening clubs or bowling leagues, and others join churches. In such a context, we must be careful when speaking of the community of faith, lest we simply add to the confusion about what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ.

Orthodox ecclesiology stands in stark contrast to modern cultural assumptions about the Church. This awareness must be clear in the minds and hearts of Orthodox Christians who live in a culture which is often diametrically opposed to the beliefs and discipline of the Body of Christ. Orthodoxy does not view the Church as a voluntary association of individuals, a merely human organization, or as irrelevant to one's salvation. Father Thomas Hopko notes that the Church is "an object of faith...a divine reality...the gift of God to men of His own truth and love, of His very own life, the eternal life of the Most Blessed Trinity."⁸⁸ To participate in the Church is to find oneself in the very Reign of God, to be in communion with the Holy Trinity. Hence, the Church is not fundamentally a sociological artifact; it is a sacrament, a sign of the mysterious presence of God's salvation in the world.⁸⁹

Orthodoxy makes substantive theological claims about the Church. Of great importance to Orthodoxy is the claim that the Church is catholic in sense of being "full, complete, whole, perfect, all-embracing, lacking nothing in the inexhaustible fulness and superabundance of the very nature and life of God."⁹⁰ In stark contrast to much Protestant ecclesiology stands the claim of the Orthodox Church "to be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, the true Church of Christ on earth" which reflects the "absolute identity and continuity of this Church from the time of the apostles to the present day." In the Orthodox Church, our "way to perfect and ever more perfect communion with God for eternity is already completely and fully open," while other Christian communions contain various impedi-

ments and obstacles to embracing the fullness of the historic faith and growing in holiness.⁹¹

Especially in a culture with so many different Christian churches, Orthodox ecclesiology may appear shocking, at least at first glance. Together with skepticism about transcendent truth claims, our culture has a democratic ethos which is suspicious about any group's unique authority or status. Nothing, we are often told, is more fundamental than an individual's right to find meaning and fulfillment in life on his own subjective terms.

These bold claims by the Orthodox Church are not, however, arbitrary matters of presumption or prejudice, but reflect the Church's living faith in and experience of Jesus Christ. Indeed, they are much older than the presuppositions of modern western culture.⁹² The Orthodox Church has always understood herself to be the fullness of communion with Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, Orthodoxy does not deny that God's grace and truth are present outside of its boundaries. As we have seen in the course of this study, it is possible to find profound theological and moral truth in the writings of many Roman Catholic and Protestant authors. Had I not become persuaded that Orthodoxy was the completion of the truth which I already had found in other churches, I doubt that I would have entered the Church. It is certain that "elements of the catholic fulness of God" remain in various Christian communities, and sometimes "the most authentic elements of genuine Christianity are preached and practiced by non-Orthodox Christians with a fervor and power exceeding that of the members of the Orthodox Church themselves."⁹³ There is a diversity of Orthodox opinion about the relationship between other Christians and the Church, with some allowing for "invisible bonds" between other Christians and the Church, while others insist that only Orthodox should be considered members of the Church in any sense.⁹⁴

Even as we recognize this diversity of opinion about the relationship between non-Orthodox Christians and the Church, it is important to stress that Orthodoxy does not make final judgments on the eternal destiny of those who are outside of the visible fellowship of the Church. Some who believe that they have rejected the Lord or who have never heard the Gospel may serve God "in their deep heart and in the implicit direction of their whole life." Though one may never say that he does not need the Church for salvation, the Lord "is able to save those who in this life never belonged to his Church."⁹⁵ Orthodoxy combines both a substantive ecclesiology, which makes the Church central to the Christian life, with a

refusal to limit in any way the means by which the Holy Spirit works. The Orthodox should invite all Christians and others to join them in the fullness of the Body of Christ, but would not condemn any particular person to damnation.

This awareness of our inability to limit the operations of the Holy Spirit does not, however, lead to complacency about the reality of schism and heresy among the non-Orthodox. Orthodox theology is clear on the question of what ecumenical union among the different churches would entail: a full agreement in the complete, or catholic, faith. Full communion requires a shared life of worship, belief, and discipline which goes beyond any “‘minimal’ reunion scheme...There can be only one basis for union—the *fullness* of the faith.” Likewise, “open communion” with all other Christians is unthinkable for Orthodoxy; sacramental communion is not a means for reunion among Christians who do not share the same faith, but “the consequence and crown of a unity already attained” in the lived communion of the Church.⁹⁶ The Orthodox position reflects profound commitments about the nature of the Church and of the Eucharist; at a deep level, they are both the Body of Christ. We may not partake of the Eucharist unless we are in the communion of the Church; to do otherwise would be to separate the Church from the Eucharist and the Eucharist from the Church. Christ would then be divided from Himself (I Cor. 1:13).

Hopko notes that intercommunion between churches which do not share an identical faith reflects the acceptance of a distinction between the *reality* of the Church and the *actions* of the Church. In other words, one would speak of the Eucharist as something which the Church does, while failing to see that the Eucharist constitutes the Church and that those who share the Eucharist are by definition members of the same Church. To accept intercommunion across ecclesial lines is to accept “that the mystery of the holy eucharist has no direct and immediate ontological relationship to the being and essence of the Church, and that it is irrelevant to the Church’s nature and insignificant to the Church’s confessed reality of being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.”⁹⁷

It is crucial at this point to remember what the Church and the Eucharist have in common. They are both communion with the Holy Trinity and with all the members of the Body of Christ. *Indeed, they are both the Body of Christ.* Participation in the Eucharist is participation in Christ’s Body, which is the Church, and Communion is the basis for the unity of Church. The Church and the Eucharist are both manifestations of God’s reign in this world. Ecclesiology and the theology of the Eucharist

are connected intrinsically. Those who commune are truly one in Christ, and the only true unity in Christ is that made possible by sharing in the fullness of the faith. The full communion one finds in the Eucharist may not be separated from the full communion of the Church.⁹⁸

Orthodox theologian Father Nicholas Afanassieff stresses that an Orthodox understanding of the Church is grounded in the celebration of Eucharist. Indeed, “Every ‘local’ church is the Church of God in Christ, for Christ dwells in His Body in the congregation at the Eucharist, and the faithful become members of His Body by virtue of communicating in the Body of Christ.”⁹⁹ Still, the Church remains *one*, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The various local churches are particular manifestations of the one Church. Afanassieff argues against a “universal ecclesiology” which views particular local churches as parts or components which together make up the whole Church. Since the fullness of Christ’s Body is present in each local parish which celebrates the Eucharist, each local parish embodies the fullness of the Church. “Where the Eucharist is, there is the fullness of the Church; *vice versa*, where the fullness of the Church is not, there no Eucharist can be celebrated.”¹⁰⁰

In an effort to guard against any appearance of congregationalism in this formulation, Zizioulas teaches that the “local and universal” Church are simultaneous, for the one Eucharist of the Church is precisely that which is celebrated by all the parishes around the world. The “multiplicity” of the Church is “constitutive of the oneness” of the Church. Even as the Triune God is a communion of Persons who share a common divine nature, each parish’s Eucharist is a full participation in the one Eucharist of Christ. The full sacramental grace of the Church is present in each particular celebration, but no true Eucharist may be celebrated by a parish which is not in communion with an Orthodox bishop, who is by definition in communion with all other Orthodox bishops. The Church does not become complete when all of its parts are added together; instead, it is always identical with itself.¹⁰¹

The eucharistic unity of the Church requires that Communion be received only by Orthodox Christians. Christ is fully present in each celebration of the Eucharist, which is a *particular* celebration and foretaste of the *universal* Kingdom of God. Each local congregation manifests the fullness of the Church through its eucharistic celebration *in communion with* all other Orthodox eucharistic assemblies. The Orthodox recognize as full manifestations of the Church only those ecclesial bodies which believe and worship according to the fullness of the Christian Tradition. Those who

maintain the whole faith are members of the same Church, though that one Church is made fully present in myriad parishes around the world and throughout human history. The Church is always *particular* and *universal* at the same time.¹⁰²

To receive the Orthodox Eucharist is an ecclesial act whereby one participates fully in the Body of Christ, both in the Divine Liturgy and in the Church. One encounters the sacramental and ecclesial fullness of the Lord's salvation in each particular celebration of the Eucharist. Only those who are in communion with the Church may receive Communion. To admit others to the Eucharist would be to imply the existence of a level of full communion which does not exist. It is of crucial importance to remember the Orthodox view of the Church as the fullness of Christ's Body in the world. Whoever would receive the Eucharist must first affirm the faith in its completeness, for to receive Communion is to participate fully in this mystery of salvation.

To understand Orthodox teaching on this question, one must remember the profound spiritual ramifications of receiving the Eucharist unprepared, as would be those who communed without the faith and discipline of the Church. St. John of Damascus provides a classic Orthodox statement on what is at stake in receiving the Eucharist.

Wherefore to those who partake worthily with faith, it is for the remission of sins and for life everlasting and for the safeguarding of soul and body; but to those who partake unworthily without faith, it is for chastisement and punishment, just as also the death of the Lord became to those who believe life and incorruption for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, while to those who do not believe and to the murderers of the Lord it is for everlasting chastisement and punishment.¹⁰³

The issue for Orthodoxy here is *how* one participates in Christ. Does one participate through faith and repentance? Or does one through disbelief or a life contrary to the way of Christ shut oneself off from communion with the Lord, and thus abuse the sacrament and the Lord Himself? If the latter is the case, one should surely not commune.

Because the Eucharist is fundamentally an act of the Church, we must consider the implications for the community of faith of inviting those outside of the Orthodox Church to commune. For to share in Communion with others is to affirm that we share with them a common faith and ecclesial life in Christ. St. John of Damascus argues that to do so would be to risk the destruction of the Church through heresy.

With all our strength, therefore, let us beware lest we receive communion from or grant it to heretics...lest we become partakers in their dishonor and condemnation. For if union is in truth with Christ and with one another, we are assuredly voluntarily united also with all those who partake with us. For this union is effected voluntarily and not against our inclination.¹⁰⁴

Many in our culture would be scandalized by the very idea of heresy, perhaps envisioning that to call a theological statement heretical is tantamount to burning someone at the stake. When we return to the root meaning of heresy as picking and choosing what one will believe on the basis of personal opinion, it becomes apparent that the category is quite appropriate for describing dimensions of the theology of various Christian groups who have separated themselves from the Orthodox Church.¹⁰⁵ Many churches today have departed from even the basic Trinitarian and Christological dogmas of Nicea and Chalcedon; some reject the sacraments as means of grace and otherwise radically separate the Bible from the living Tradition of the Church. Were the Church to invite members of those groups to participate in the Eucharist, she would imply that their deviations from the fullness of the Orthodox faith are simply not important for their participation in the Church or their pursuit of holiness. To do so would be to repudiate the very reality of Orthodoxy, as heresy would then be accepted in the Church on equal ground with the historic faith. Much is at stake for the Church in the question of who joins in the Communion of Christ's body and blood.

The Orthodox understanding of the relationship between Eucharist and Church is controversial in the context of modern western culture. Virtually all the mainline Protestant churches now invite all baptized Christians to receive Communion at their altars. The Roman Catholic Church ordinarily allows only its own members to receive the sacrament, though exceptions may be made under extreme circumstances.¹⁰⁶ In this light, Orthodox teaching on the Eucharist and the Church must be made intelligible to the contemporary western mind and articulated as clearly as possible. Hence, we will highlight certain doctrinal and moral implications of the Orthodox view of the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church.

First, Orthodoxy stresses the sacramental nature of both the Eucharist and the Church. They are both tangible realities of this world through which the salvific grace of God becomes present. They are both

manifestations of the Kingdom of God which may not be reduced to their aesthetic or sociological dimensions, for they foreshadow the mysterious fulfillment of all things in Christ. As such, they challenge the casualness with which many—if not most—Americans have come to view the Church and her ministries. Unfortunately, many in our culture have replaced a sacramental view of the Christian life with secular assumptions that make notions of privacy and personal preference superior to a substantive theological vision of our life before God.¹⁰⁷

A renewed emphasis on the sacramental nature of Eucharist and Church provides a strong challenge to those who have come to define Christian worship and community exclusively in worldly terms. The Eucharist and the Church are realities which we encounter within creation as we know it, but they are transformed by grace to incarnate the eternal holiness of the Kingdom of God in our world. Whoever participates in them participates, either for salvation or condemnation, in the life of the Trinity. The theological and moral seriousness of both Eucharist and Church are strongly underlined by Orthodoxy.¹⁰⁸ We participate in the past, present, and eschatological future of God's Kingdom in the Eucharist.¹⁰⁹ Our communion with Christ transcends all worldly categories about the place of religion in human society. We are invited, then, to a truly theological understanding of the Church which supplants contemporary western assumptions with those of the economy of God's salvation.¹¹⁰

Second, the Orthodox position calls us to the fullness of the Christian life. Orthodoxy refuses to accept minimalist or reductionist ecumenical projects which seek intercommunion on the basis of a partial agreement about the Christian faith. The Orthodox are in communion only with others who teach an identical faith, for there is one Church whose unity is in the complete, whole truth of Christ. To commune is to receive sacramentally the whole Christ, to be fully integrated into Christ's Body, to participate fully in His Kingdom. The Christian community may not rest content with doctrinal or moral teachings that are so accommodated to the limitations of culture that they obscure dimensions of the demands of the Gospel. Whoever communes with or joins the Church is, by those very acts, called to attain the full stature of Christ. Consequently, it is imperative to restrict participation in Communion to those who are prepared to grow in holiness. No human being is ever fully prepared to encounter the Lord or to live as a member of His Body. However, given the damaging effects of secularism and individualism on the churches, as well as the great fragmentation of doctrinal and moral teaching found in the various

denominations today, it is foolish to assume that every self-described Christian has the intention of, or is even open to, participating in the fullness of the life of Christ which is made present through the Eucharist.

The Orthodox position also stresses the importance of membership in a particular, visible Christian community. In our day, Christianity may be taken to mean virtually anything from being a “nice person” to a western cultural imperialist. Many who never regularly attend worship services would identify themselves as Christians. In stark contrast, Orthodoxy denies a wholly invisible church, instead identifying the fullness of Christ’s Body on earth with the visible communion of those who embrace the Orthodox faith.¹¹¹

Membership in the particular, identifiable community of the Church is necessary for someone to share in the Orthodox Eucharist. Only in such a substantive communal context does it become possible to speak meaningfully of penitential discipline, of progress in the Christian life in relation to commonly accepted standards, and of growth in holiness before God. If we do not commune as members of the visible Church, we are not truly in communion with those with whom we receive the sacrament. The Church is obviously not able to help those outside its membership prepare for the Eucharist or undertake the ascetic struggle of the spiritual life. To separate participation in the Eucharist from membership in the visible Church is to underwrite a dangerous individualism in the Christian life which fundamentally separates the spiritual journey of the particular believer from the Body of Christ.

It is important to refute clearly the objection that “closed communion” is an anti-ecumenical practice which implies that the only Christians, or perhaps the only ones who will find salvation, are the members of one’s own faith community. Orthodoxy rejects such an interpretation of its understanding of the Eucharist. A way of explaining this rejection is by reference to my own experience as a catechumen, when I regularly attended eucharistic liturgies without being able to commune. Those were painful experiences which caused me to long for full communion with the Church. Likewise, an Orthodox Christian who attends a Roman Catholic or Protestant eucharistic service will surely bemoan the regrettable separation between Christians which makes it impossible for all believers in Christ today to share the same bread and wine. The pain of fractured communion is, however, appropriate when there are true divisions among Christians. For example, I was not in full communion with the Orthodox Church as a catechumen, and my exclusion from the Eucharist was a reflection of that

fact. To have pretended that I was in full communion when I was not would have been a farce with spiritually destructive consequences. The Orthodox do not participate in Roman Catholic and Protestant eucharistic celebrations because we are not in full communion with those churches. As long as there is not a shared life of faith in the Body of Christ, there can be no true communion in the Eucharist.

Some will argue that all Christians should practice intercommunion as an eschatological sign of the unity of all who are in Christ. Perhaps, they would say, the Eucharist should be shared by all those communions who understand themselves to be on a journey to the Kingdom of God, who manifest the Church in some way. Lutheran theologian Gordon W. Lathrop, in *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology*, argues that certain practices, such as liturgical worship, the reading of Scripture, and prayer, are signs of the presence of the Church in a given time and place.¹¹² Lathrop does not call for complete agreement in liturgy and doctrine among the churches. Instead, he stresses the commonality in practice among ecclesial bodies which gather for worship according to historically recognizable patterns. He rejects the exclusive claim of any communion to possess the fullness of the Church due to the “shaky...unreliable...[and] defective” nature of all Christian communities.¹¹³

Lathrop is surely right that every Christian group shares in the fallenness of our world and is in need of humility. He is also correct that many ecclesial bodies have a great deal in common in their patterns of worship and belief. Genuine Christian charity should lead Orthodox believers to rejoice in what they share with other followers of the Lord, and not simply to condemn other Christians as those who have deliberately and maliciously fallen into heresy. Those who through no fault of their own have never encountered the catholic witness of Orthodoxy may hardly be blamed for maintaining membership in their respective Christian communities.

These considerations do not, however, answer Orthodoxy’s claim to embody the fullness of the Church. All genuinely Christian teaching and practices have their origins in the first thousand years of the undivided Church, as any fair reading of the history of Christianity indicates. When we find that other communions have something in common with Orthodox worship and belief, it is because they are embodying certain dimensions of the historic faith which Orthodoxy alone has preserved in its fullness since the Great Schism. While there is certainly some connection to the Orthodox faith on the part of those who maintain any central Christian practice and

belief, we still face the question of what it means for believers to be in full communion with one another as the Body of Christ. For true communion with Christ is not a matter of sharing a few ideas and actions in common. It is, rather, the endeavor of sharing fully in the life of Christ with those whose doctrine, worship, and discipline are in uncompromised harmony with the visible, covenanted Body born on Pentecost. This communion is made possible by God's grace, and is historically identified by the unbroken communion among the Orthodox churches for two thousand years. Hence, Lathrop's proposal falls short of the fullness of the Church, and settles for a level of ecclesial unity that is less than full communion in the Body of Christ.

A similar position is held by evangelical theologian Miroslav Volf, in *After Our Likeness: The Church and the Image of the Trinity*, who notes that there is "a widespread ecumenical consensus today that the church is catholic because the *fullness of salvation* is realized within it." Disputes arise, however on the question of "how the presence of this fullness of salvation in churches (or in the church) is to be conceived."¹¹⁴ Volf claims that the true catholicity or fullness of the church is an eschatological reality, and that the church before the *eschaton* lives always in anticipation and hope. "If the Spirit of God is present in the church only as the first fruits of the still outstanding new creation, then each church can be only *partially* catholic... Within history, each church is catholic insofar as it always reflects its full eschatological catholicity historically only in a broken fashion. This is why no church can claim full catholicity for itself."¹¹⁵ In order to claim a measure of catholicity, a church must be open to other churches and loyal to the apostolic tradition.¹¹⁶ Volf notes that "Where two or three are gathered in Christ's name, not only is Christ present among them, but a Christian church is there as well, perhaps a bad church, a church that may well transgress against love and truth, but a church nonetheless..."¹¹⁷

Volf's identification of the Church falls short of the fullness of Orthodox ecclesiology. Rather than seeing the Church as a visible body with a history of unity that manifests agreement on fundamental matters of worship, doctrine, spirituality, morals, and polity, Volf sees the Church as present whenever believers gather in the name of the Lord and perform certain minimal practices of discipleship. Though there is a variety of Orthodox opinion about other Christian ecclesial bodies, there is a consensus that the Orthodox Church alone embodies the fullness of the Body of Christ. Other communions have added to or taken away from the consensus of faith shared by East and West before the Great Schism.

Orthodox ecclesiology is consonant with the view of salvation as *theosis*, the process of growing in union with the Trinity. Even as the goal of the spiritual life is full union with God by grace, the Church is the fullness of Christ's presence on earth where the means of salvation are readily available to all. Granted, the members of the Orthodox Church are sinners who are still en route to the eschatological blessedness of the Kingdom. The Church does not perfectly live out its faith or manifest its identity in this world. But despite the sins of the Orthodox, it is in the Orthodox Church, which has maintained the fullness of Christian teaching and worship, that we find the Body of Christ.

It may seem to some as though the Orthodox have an arrogant ecclesiology and wrongly label other communions as deficient. With Volf, many would claim that it is possible to recognize the Church in any group of professing Christians. Questions arise immediately, though, on what it means to be the fullness of the Body of Christ. Even in an age of increasing ecumenical dialogue between the various Christian communions, there remain disagreements about the Christian faith which are sufficient to keep the various churches from being fully united. Likewise, there are clergy, congregations, and denominations which have fallen away from the basic Trinitarian and Christological dogmas of historic Christianity and who formally endorse what the Church has always identified as sexual immorality. To make the blanket statement that all such bodies are fully or equally the Church is to ignore doctrinal, spiritual, and moral matters which strike at the very heart of the faith. To do so is to underwrite a minimalist view of the Church in which it becomes impossible to set substantive standards for belief and life which lead to union with the Holy Trinity through participation in the fullness of Christ's Body on earth. There is great danger for the faith, then, in Volf's proposal.

Today there are deep divisions among Christian communities over virtually every doctrinal and moral issue imaginable. Given this mournful reality, it is not the place of fallen humans to create a facade of full communion where such does not exist. To pretend that these divisions do not exist now, or are simply not important, is to downplay the importance of doctrine, liturgy, morals and virtually all other dimensions of the Christian life. It is also to prepare the way for a "lowest common denominator" ecumenism in which substantive expressions of the faith are ruled out. The fractured communion of Christians today is regrettably, but appropriately, reflected in the reservation of the Eucharist only for those with whom we share a common faith and life in the Orthodox Church. If we want to be

in full communion with all who follow Jesus Christ, as we should, let us work toward true unity in the faith. It is hard to see how we may achieve a substantive unity apart from membership in a specific Christian community with commonly shared beliefs, practices, and standards of discipleship.¹¹⁸

The Orthodox position is that, if we want the fullness of the Christian life, we will need the fullness of the Christian Church. In the Eucharist we participate in the fullness of the Church and of Christ. Union in that sacramental fullness is properly reserved for those who are fully united in a common faith and life.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, it may be entirely appropriate for Orthodox, with the blessing of a spiritual father, to join with other Christians in prayer, theological and spiritual study, and a variety of cooperative ministries, so long as they do not require an Orthodox Christian to participate in or endorse anything heretical. It may well be that the Holy Spirit will work through such ecumenical endeavors to draw “separated brethren” in Christ to a place of full communion with the Church.¹²⁰ When we equate this full communion with participation in the Eucharist, we emphasize the sacramental profundity of the Eucharist and the Church’s mission of complete unity in Christ. “Closed communion,” then, may be seen as an invitation to the people of God to work toward a full communion that includes unity in all dimensions of the Christian life through the Orthodox faith.¹²¹

Chapter 4: Toward a Eucharistic Ethic of Penitential Discipline

Given the centrality of the Eucharist for the very life of the Church, Orthodox moral theology must give further attention to its shaping influence on the life of the members of the Body of Christ as they grow in communion with the Holy Trinity. Toward that end, we will examine a concrete moral issue which is at the heart of the identity of the Church as a eucharistic community: St. Paul's treatment of excommunication due to sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 5-6. Since St. Paul also speaks to the Lord's Supper in this epistle, we will be able to find illuminating connections in these passages between the Eucharist, penitential discipline, and an Orthodox understanding of sex and marriage. The selection of these topics is not arbitrary, as Christ's incarnational, holistic salvation directly concerns both the social and bodily life of Christians, and places them in a sacramental context. The Eucharist is at the heart of both the communion of the Church and of man and woman in marriage. Many churches today are embroiled in controversies about sexuality. In this cultural context, it is important to show that Orthodox teaching on this question expresses clearly the message of the New Testament. In contrast, some contemporary ecclesial bodies, like the Corinthians to whom St. Paul wrote, apparently have lost the ability even to recognize a moral scandal, much less to discern its spiritual significance.

We begin with a statement from St. Paul that he makes as part of his pronouncement of excommunication on the Corinthian man who is living with his father's wife. Immediately after instructing the Christian community to "deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," St. Paul says:

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (5: 6-8)

Immediately after this passage, St. Paul continues exhorting the Corinthian Christians to exclude from the fellowship, and not even to eat with, those who persist in grave sin. (5:9-13)

The Orthodox Church follows the teachings of St. Paul by imposing exclusion from participation in the Eucharist as a means of penitential discipline. Such a penance may be imposed for a time for the spiritual healing of sinner, not simply as a punishment.¹²² John H. Erickson comments that the purpose of such a rigorous penance is “the reconciliation of the individual sinner with his God, but—congruent with this—his reconciliation with the Church...The context of penance is the Church; its goal, the eucharist.”¹²³ The connection between the Eucharist and the Church is essential for understanding the relationship between penitential discipline and participation in the sacrament.¹²⁴ Those who have committed grave sin have ruptured their communion with God and with the other members of the Church. Hence, it is appropriate for them to be excluded from the Eucharist until such time as their fractured communion has been restored and healed, according to pastoral application of the Canons. For the Church to welcome to the Eucharist those who are openly unrepentant of notorious sin would be to weaken the entire Body of Christ by implicitly endorsing spiritual disease in the parish and inviting it to spread to other members. Penitential discipline is necessary both for the spiritual well-being of sinners and the health of the Church.

Such an understanding of penance is not controversial among Orthodox theologians; however, it differs radically from the assumptions of much, if not most, contemporary Christianity in the West. All too often in our culture, people of whatever ecclesial affiliation assume that religion is a private, subjective affair. Churches, it is often thought, should cater to every desire of parishioners and turn a blind eye to sin in the name of tolerance and inclusivity. Hence, penitential discipline is often not a realistic possibility in many American denominations.

It is also the case that much western Christianity approaches repentance in a “juridical, legal framework” that is focused on appeasing the vengeful view of God portrayed in Anselm’s theory of substitutionary atonement. Here an exaggerated emphasis upon God’s wrath often overshadows His redemptive love, and evokes an excessive fear in the hearts of those who envision a harsh, legalistic Father who demands a pound of flesh from even His own Son. This mind-set makes repentance an effort to earn immunity from the Lord’s terror, rather than a way of growing in love and union with the Trinity. In contrast, Orthodox teaching on repentance

stresses God's unfathomable love for humankind and desire that we find healing and salvation through cooperation with grace, which is possible only when we turn in humility away from sin and to God. We seek to grow in communion with the Holy Trinity by sharing more fully in the life of Christ, not by paying a legal debt.¹²⁵ It is no wonder that many western churches have reacted against this wrathful, legal view of God by abandoning any substantive view of repentance in the name of an inclusive, non-demanding love which does not make a challenging call to growth in holiness. Orthodoxy avoids such legalism even as it places repentance in the healing context of God's mercy.

As a professor in a Methodist-related university, I had taught St. Paul's admonitions on excommunication in Corinth many times in my undergraduate survey course, noting it as an example of Church discipline. During my journey to Orthodoxy, however, the passage began to take on a new significance. While an Episcopalian, I became aware that the fraction anthem in one of the Anglican rites for Holy Communion is "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast." Immediately after the celebrant breaks the consecrated bread, these words are said or sung.¹²⁶ The liturgical use of the passage caused me to wonder about its importance for understanding the relationship between the celebration of the Eucharist and the life of the Church. Given that the passage in question arises from St. Paul's discussion of a case of sexual immorality, I began to ask how these themes intersected with St. Paul's understandings of both penitential discipline and sexual ethics.

The Corinthian correspondence includes a warning against the abuse of the Lord's Supper: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord." (11:27) St. Paul moves immediately from that discussion to a discourse on spiritual gifts in which he identifies the Church as Christ's Body: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." (12:12) In 1 Corinthians, it is imperative to see a connection between St. Paul's comments on Communion with those on the nature of the Christian community. Indeed, St. Paul first raises the issue of the Lord's Supper because of factions in the Church that are apparently symptomatic of a failure to recognize the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ. This unity is made present in the sharing of Christ's body and blood. (11:17-22)

St. Paul's concerns about the man living with his father's wife are

similar. The Corinthians are proud that they are tolerant of an incestuous relationship so offensive that it was banned by both Roman and Jewish law. Their acceptance of the relationship tells us a great deal about their moral and spiritual confusion. The apostle's solution is straightforward: excommunicate this man, and have nothing to do with fellow Christians who persist in grave sin and threaten the faithfulness of the Church. The image used in 5:6-8 is one of the Passover. In preparation for the Passover, a Jewish household is cleansed of leaven as its members prepare to celebrate the Hebrews' deliverance from death as a people in Egypt. Likewise, St. Paul wants the Church to remove bad influences from the community of faith, even as the Hebrews were to remove leaven from their homes in preparation for the Passover.

In the salvation history of the Old Testament, it was the slaughter of the Passover lamb that made possible the Hebrews' life as a people. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the Passover Lamb whose sacrifice conquers death and brings us eternal life and reconciliation with the Holy Trinity. Of course, the Lord's death and resurrection are crucial formative events in the life of the Church. Apart from the risen Messiah's victory over death, there would be no Christian community at all. These events are absolutely essential for the life of the Church as the Body of Christ. St. Paul believes that, for the Christian community to live faithfully as the Body of Christ, it must be protected from the negative influence of members who unrepentantly behave in ways that are destructive of the integrity and health of Christ's Body. "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" In other words, even one instance of grave sin that is accepted by the community may be destructive of its faithfulness.¹²⁷

Since Christ's sacrifice has already been made, it is well past time for cleansing out the leaven.¹²⁸ St. Paul notes that our Passover lamb has already been sacrificed: Jesus Christ has been crucified.¹²⁹ "Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (5:8) Despite the current Anglican use of this passage as a fraction anthem, we must remember that St. Paul is not explicitly addressing the Supper at this point in 1 Corinthians. Instead, he is speaking to the demands of faithfulness that are incumbent upon the Church in daily life.¹³⁰ The whole of the Christian life is to be lived in communion with God, as a paschal festival in which we participate in the new life of God's reign.¹³¹ Christ's sacrifice is the basis for the holiness and faithfulness of the people of God. "*The real pres-*

ence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is the foundation of Christ's real presence in the community of believers."¹³² The whole of the Christian life is grounded in that presence, both in the Eucharist and in every dimension of the Church's witness, and should always manifest this identity.

The Anglican use of "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast" as a fraction anthem reflects the deep connections between Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the identity of the Church as the Body of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ is made present to us in the Eucharist.¹³³ His sacrifice is absolutely essential for the genesis and sustenance of the Church as Christ's Body. The sacrificial love of Christ as Paschal Lamb is foundational, both historically and theologically, for the very existence of the Church. The Eucharist, then, is a sort of Christian Passover that recalls and makes present a great act of God's salvation to His people.¹³⁴ Celebration of the Passover recalls the events leading to liberation from Egypt, identifies those who celebrate as "the recipients of a salvific action here and now," and generates hope for eschatological salvation. "Thus, even before Christianity, the Paschal feast had already become a comprehensive compendium of salvation history. This explains how the Jewish people were able to look upon participation in the Paschal rite as a personal entrance into the course of salvation history."¹³⁵

What does it mean for Christians to "celebrate the festival" or "keep the feast"? On St. Paul's terms, it would mean that the Christian community is to act in ways that are consonant with its identity as the Body of Christ. Their very being is that of communion in and as Christ's Body, and they are to live out that identity in all that they do. Rather than allowing the old leaven of sin to corrupt our common life, Christians are to embody the faithfulness of new unleavened bread. As many have noted, St. Paul often insisted that Christians be who they are by living in accordance with their identity as members of Christ's Body. Even as observant Jews remove leaven from their homes in order to celebrate the Passover, the Christian community is to remove from its life those influences that hamper its holiness.

It is not hard to connect this exhortation to the Church with an emphasis on the Eucharist. Jesus Christ is our Passover lamb, and the Eucharist is a Christianized Passover meal. More than anything else the Church does, the celebration of the Eucharist manifests our identity as Christ's Body and calls us to be who we are. Holy Communion shows that the very life of the Church is communion with Christ, and places that life within the con-

text of the salvation history of cross, resurrection, and eschatological hope. Whenever the Church celebrates the festival of the Eucharist, it becomes what it receives: the Body of Christ. To celebrate the Eucharist is to be the Church.¹³⁶

Such a view of the Eucharist is a call of faithfulness to the Church. Those who celebrate Eucharist are taken up into the sacrifice of Christ. By virtue of their communion with Him, they become participants in the Lord's self-offering and members of His Body. They are to live a eucharistic life, to become eucharistic beings who offer the entirety of their existence to the Father in union with the sacrifice of the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁷

As we have noted, St. Paul's stance on "keeping the feast" is radically counter-cultural in our day. It is diametrically opposed to the assumption that religion is a wholly private affair for which the subjective experience of the individual has unquestioned priority over the claims of any community. Likewise, it will offend by holding even consenting adults accountable to transcendent moral standards. Rather than someone to be admired for boldly embracing an alternative pattern of sexuality, the incontinent man is seen by St. Paul as an example of the leaven that is to be removed from the community. St. Paul views excommunication as necessary in this case to protect the faithfulness of the Church, as well as a drastic means whereby the sinner might be called to repentance and salvation. In 1 Cor. 5: 9-13, St. Paul makes his point clearly.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Drive out the wicked person from among you."

Even as corrupting leaven must be removed during the Passover, corrupting influences must be removed from the Church if it is to be faithful to its identity as the Body of Christ. Brian S. Rosner argues that St. Paul draws on several important Old Testament themes to support his plea for excommunication, including what he calls the motifs of holiness, cov-

enant, and corporate responsibility.¹³⁸ Surely, no Christian takes joy in St. Paul's admonition to excommunicate and shun unrepentant sinners who claim membership in the Body. Nonetheless, we must remember the context in which he writes. The Church in Corinth is in a shambles, divided by factionalism, influenced by sexual libertines (6:12ff.), and so confused morally as to be proud of an incestuous relationship that would be condemned even by pagans. Just as a bishop would discipline a pastor who is guilty and unrepentant of sexual misconduct for fear of the spiritual health of the Church, St. Paul calls for the expulsion of unrepentant evildoers. The Corinthian church is in such a low estate that there is no consensus on acceptable Christian behavior or standards of discipline. Hence, the process outlined by Jesus Christ in Matthew 18: 15-17, whereby one who refuses to repent after being called to do so by the Church should be treated "as a Gentile and a tax collector," might not be a realistic possibility in Corinth. The only hope for reform in Corinth, apparently, is to discipline severely those who threaten to destroy the faithfulness of the community until such time as they repent.¹³⁹

In the Orthodox faith, exclusion from the chalice occurs because one's spiritual illness is such that one is not prepared to receive and cooperate with the grace made present in the Eucharist. Further repentance is needed for greater healing before one is able to participate in sacramental communion with the Lord. Such spiritual sickness, regardless of whether it is visible to other members of the Church, also means that one's full participation in the community has been broken, though not beyond repair through repentance. Precisely because of the centrality of the Eucharist to the Christian life, St. Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 11: 28-30:

Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

Coming in the context of a discussion about divisiveness in the Church, this passage calls for communicants to show proper reverence for the consecrated gifts and the unity of the Church as Christ's Body. Their Communion is to manifest their true unity in the sacrifice of Christ.¹⁴⁰ True communion in Christ, then, does not refer simply to the Liturgy. It also calls for a life in communion with the other members of Christ's Body. Those who refuse to live such a life cut themselves off from the Eucharist. Given St. Paul's view of the spiritual dangers of receiving Communion

unprepared, it would follow that the participation of the unrepentant in the Supper would only do him and the community further harm. Indeed, such exclusion may simply be a recognition of the breaking of communion already caused by the unrepentant sinner.¹⁴¹

When one recognizes the connections between the Eucharist and the Church as the Body of Christ as outlined by St. Paul, it becomes apparent that a call to holiness of life for those who commune is implicit in Holy Communion. This is a call both to the community as a whole and to its particular members.¹⁴² The one cup and loaf are foundational for the unity of the Church as Christ's Body; indeed, they *are* the unity of the Church. The health of the Body is at risk when those who refuse to repent of conduct antithetical to the faith participate fully in the life of the Body of Christ. Their influence is as disastrous as the presence of leaven when one intends to prepare unleavened bread. For such persons to partake of the Supper would be to profane it, with destructive consequences for both the communicant and the community. For to eat and drink at the Lord's table is to be part of the household of faith; those who commune are organically united as members of Christ. Hence, it is not surprising to hear St. Justin Martyr's instructions on the Eucharist from the second century.

This food we call Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us.¹⁴³

The teaching of St. Paul, as it has been interpreted and lived out in the Orthodox Church, calls for parish priests to be vigilant in requiring the appropriate penance for parishioners toward the end of their spiritual healing. For that to happen, members of the parish must be properly catechized and otherwise formed in the centrality of confession and repentance to the Christian life. Pastors and lay educators must preach and teach that to receive Communion is to participate in and to commune with Christ's Body. Rather than a mere act of individual piety, to receive Communion is truly to commune with the Lord and all other members of the Church, on earth and in heaven. In good Pauline fashion, the Church must proclaim that members of the Body should be who they are by virtue of Communion with the Lord. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast" by constantly striving to grow in holiness. The intersections between the Eucharist and central Christian themes are deep and

profound; there is no shortage of resources here for helping the laity gain a deeper understanding of their lives before God.

We must also acknowledge that the Church on earth will always have within its membership those who refuse to be who they are as members of Christ's Body. There are those today who do not discern the body of the Lord in the Eucharist, who do not live as Christ handed down to us, and who would have fit right in with the Corinthian's factionalism and sexual immorality. Exclusion from the Eucharist will, no doubt, continue to be a necessary penance for the spiritual healing of some parishioners as they undertake the journey of repentance and restoration.

It may be tempting to think that sweeping the leaven out of the Church would be an easy matter of imposing legalistic regulations and penalties. However, Erickson warns against a "wooden legalism" in penance, whereby "penance is viewed as 'doing your time,' as 'paying your debt to society...'"¹⁴⁴ One may go through the motions of penance without truly repenting, even as one may make a less than honest confession. After repenting of a particular sin, one may fall prey to another temptation. In this light, it is vital to avoid a naive idealism about the effects of penitential discipline in the Church. Its presence does not guarantee the healing of souls. The following quotation from St. Augustine of Hippo provides a realistic caution against an undue optimism for the perfection of the members of the Church in this world.

In this wicked world, in these evil days, when the Church measures her future loftiness by her present humility, and is exercised by goading fears, tormenting sorrows, disquieting labors, and dangerous temptations, when she soberly rejoices, rejoicing only in hope, there are many reprobate mingled with the good, and both are gathered together by the gospel as in a drag net; and in this world, as in a sea, both swim enclosed without distinction in the net, until it is brought ashore, when the wicked must be separated from the good, that in the good, as in His temple, God may be all in all.¹⁴⁵

The complete purification of the membership of the Church is reserved for God's eschatological judgment. Sin is too persistent in our fallen world to allow for a facile optimism which leads inevitably to disappointment and despair about the Church.

Nonetheless, it is important not to let realism about the imperfection of Christians lead to spiritual or moral laxity. As St. John Chrysostom preached, deep spiritual matters are at stake for all concerned when one

who persists in grave sin receives the Eucharist.

If therefore there is one among you of those who gather together with you in the Church who is a fornicator, and you observe him approach the sacred mysteries, say to the dispenser of them: This man is unworthy of our sanctities. For if such a man is not worthy *to declare the justices of God* (Ps. xlix.16), consider how he adds to his punishment should he touch the sacred table; and not alone he, but you also who countenance him.¹⁴⁶

Chrysostom warns against the selfishness of thinking “What is it to me? I mind my own affairs.” Given our common membership in Christ, there are no strictly private affairs. The Christian’s first concern should be his neighbor’s need for correction and restoration. If the nonrepentant sinner “sees that all turn away from him,” he may learn the gravity of his offense. The risk of approval by silence is greater and may lead to the corruption of his conscience. These matters are especially serious for members of the clergy. Chrysostom warns the clergy that “should you while knowing that a man is unworthy permit him to partake of the Sacred Table, his blood will be required at your hands...Take care not to provoke the Lord, by not purifying His Body.”¹⁴⁷

Chrysostom’s insights highlight the ecclesiological meaning of the Eucharist, as those who commune are organically united as members of Christ’s one Body. Hence, no spiritual matters are entirely private matters. Likewise, no one communes alone but always in community. There is a mutual responsibility among the members of the Church to help one another grow in faithfulness as spiritually healthy and well-functioning members of the Body. As well, the pastor is called to guide the members of the parish as they grow into the full stature of Christ. Rather than succumbing to the temptation to tell parishioners what they want to hear, members of the clergy must at times impose discipline and turn away from the Communion of the faithful those who have fallen from true communion with Christ and the Church. In an age of watered-down Christianity that often prizes individual happiness over faithfulness, Chrysostom’s strong call to eucharistic discipline is a much needed corrective.

Even as we recall the need for discipline, it is important to remember that the Eucharist is an eschatological meal, with the members of the Church finding the fullness of their salvation in the coming Kingdom. To celebrate Holy Communion is to experience a foretaste of the Messiah’s heavenly banquet, but it does not guarantee one’s perfect submission now

to God's consummated reign. Likewise, the very life of the Church is to be a foretaste of heaven, but in this world the witness of the Church is compromised by the sinfulness of her members; indeed, the Church is filled to a person with those who sin. Consequently, parishioners need the spiritual healing made possible by faithful participation in sacraments, ascetic struggle, and penitential discipline in order to grow in communion with God as they journey toward the Kingdom. By repenting and otherwise cooperating with grace, sinners will prepare for full eschatological communion with the Holy Trinity.

Nonetheless, some Christians will persistently and even publically do what is destructive of their own souls and the Church's mission, and refuse to repent. As a severe method of spiritual therapy, excommunication may then be necessary to protect the Church and lead the wayward person to restored communion. Even as any ecclesial body would discipline a cleric who persists unrepentantly in sexual misconduct, a member who threatens the very life of the Church by a pattern of grave sin is surely not in full communion with the Body of Christ.

To "keep the feast" in light of Christ's sacrifice means to live faithfully as the Body of Christ, even as we are nourished by Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist. Through preaching, teaching, sacramental confession, and the pastoral guidance of one's spiritual father, the Orthodox Church helps its members grow in holiness and become prepared to find spiritual healing through their participation in the Eucharist. Orthodoxy teaches that, at the deepest level, Holy Communion and a holy community are the same thing: the Body of Christ. The risen Lord is to be present not only in the transformation of the elements of bread and wine, but also in the very life of the community gathered before the altar. If we restrict the reality of communion with the Trinity to the service of Communion, we will lack the spiritual and moral resources necessary for a faithful Christian life. In the Eucharist, we offer ourselves to the Father in union with the Son's sacrifice by the power of the Holy Spirit. To participate in the Eucharist is nothing less than to be empowered to grow in union with the Holy Trinity in all dimensions of one's life.

It is helpful to recall here the Orthodox view of the Church as the fullness of the Body of Christ. We are not faithful to what we celebrate in the Eucharist if we do not live eucharistically, if we are not open to the full meaning and implication of the Eucharist for our lives. As we have seen, the Body of Christ does not concern only the Divine Liturgy. It includes the entirety of our existence, the fullness of our life. It is a call to the full-

ness of the Christian life, to a total communion with God which finds its eschatological fulfillment in the Kingdom. To view the Eucharist as anything short of participation in the life of Trinity is to shut ourselves off from the fullness of God's grace and of growth in holiness. Hence, the Orthodox Church calls all communicants to bring every aspect of their lives into communion with God, and follows St. Paul's example of penitential discipline for the sake of both the spiritual health of the parish and the salvation of sinners.¹⁴⁸

Chapter 5: Toward a Eucharistic Understanding of Marriage and Sex

Ours is an age in which many churches are debating the place of sex and marriage in the Christian life. Virtually all the mainline Protestant denominations in America seem to be consumed by intractable arguments between various factions about the proper Christian stance on homosexuality. Among Roman Catholics, there are theologians and organizations which call openly for the endorsement of homosexual relations, sometimes by arguing for the blessing of same-sex unions. In many ecclesial bodies, traditional Christian teaching is rarely heard on matters such as premarital sex and the deep spiritual significance of both marriage and intercourse. The individualism and subjectivism of modern western culture have had disastrous effects on many churches' understandings of the place of sexuality in the Christian life.

In contrast, the Orthodox Church remains united in its fidelity to the fullness of Christian teaching on the relationship between man and woman in marriage. The eucharistic spirituality we have described calls for an Orthodox understanding of the place of sexuality and marriage in our salvation.

In contrast with those who would assume that sexuality is a purely private matter and none of the Church's business, we must remember that St. Paul's discourse on excommunication is in response to a case of gross sexual immorality in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 5:1). St. Paul returns quickly to questions of sexual morality in 6:9, stating that those who practice sexually immorality and adultery will not inherit the Kingdom of God.¹⁴⁹ He continues in 6:12-20 to address sexual libertinism in Corinth in a theologically rich fashion. The libertines "jumped from the notion of Christian freedom with respect to food to freedom with respect to sexual relations."¹⁵⁰ St. Paul quotes in vv. 12-13 the slogans of the libertines: "all things are lawful for me" and "food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food." The libertines apparently believed that they were set free from all moral and spiritual norms of sexual activity. Nothing more is at stake for them in the physical actions of sexual intercourse than in eating and digesting food. The Corinthians' complacency about the man living

with his stepmother may have stemmed from precisely such an amoral view of sex as a bodily activity without spiritual import.¹⁵¹

Against this downplaying of the moral and spiritual significance of sexual activity, St. Paul reminds the Corinthians in vv. 13-14 that the purpose of the body is faithfulness to God, who will one day resurrect our bodies. He is here appealing to fundamental biblical convictions about the goodness of creation and its eschatological fulfillment, and denies the radical separation of body and soul that was assumed by the libertines of Corinth. “In rejecting such a dualism[,] Paul is simply subscribing to the anthropology of the Bible.”¹⁵²

This high view of the body is apparent in St. Paul’s argument against Christians having sex with prostitutes in vv. 15ff.¹⁵³ He teaches that sexual intercourse makes two people one flesh; hence, it is by definition abhorrent for a Christian, as a member of the Body of Christ, to become one with a prostitute.¹⁵⁴ Rosner, placing St. Paul’s reasoning in its Old Testament context, notes that he views sex with a prostitute “as a sin against God,” not a private matter or an offense against a wronged spouse.¹⁵⁵ Citing the LXX Genesis 2:24 [“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.”], Rosner notes that it uses a form of the same root verb, translated here as “cleaves,” that St. Paul uses, in 6:16-17, to describe both the union brought about through sexual intercourse and the spiritual union of a Christian with the Lord. These are “mutually exclusive alternatives of cleaving to the Lord or to a prostitute...”¹⁵⁶ Rosner’s point is very important. Sexual intercourse, for St. Paul, is a type of union so deep and profound in importance that it may be compared to one’s spiritual union with God.¹⁵⁷ Just as various Old Testament passages refer to Yahweh as the husband of Israel, and condemn Israel for infidelity to her covenant with the Lord, St. Paul concludes that illicit sexual activity on the part of Christians is an act of infidelity to God.¹⁵⁸

The fidelity owed to the Lord by Christians is further magnified by St. Paul’s statement in 6:19-20: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”¹⁵⁹

The image here is of slavery.¹⁶⁰ The Christian has been bought by God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; hence, the believer is obliged to be faithful to the Lord in every bodily action, including especially sexual behavior.¹⁶¹

Though St. Paul does not make an explicit connection in 1 Corinthians between the Lord's Supper, penitential discipline, and sex, the same themes run throughout his discussion of these topics. The Supper is the source of the unity of Christians as the body of Christ. As St. Paul asks in 10:16-17,

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

It is through the Eucharist, together with the rest of the sacramental life of the Church, that human beings participate in the Body of Christ.¹⁶² That participation in the Lord's Body demands faithfulness that is consonant with both the nature of one's personal unity with Christ and the holiness of the corporate Body. Many are one in Christ, united as members of one Body, through the communion manifested in the Eucharist. Sexual intercourse also entails deep unity and communion, a bodily participation so intimate that its very nature is to make two people one. Hence, the Christian's sexual activity may not be separated from participation in the Body of Christ, both in terms of the Eucharist and the full sacramental and ascetical life of the Church.

As St. Nicholas Cabasilas observed, in the Eucharist, along with the other sacraments, we are united with Christ's "wounds and bruises and... death" and "become one flesh with Him—with Him who was put to death and rose again."¹⁶³ Notice the use of "one flesh," which is clearly reminiscent of the Genesis passage, to describe our union with the Lord through the sacraments. Cabasilas also makes this point specifically with reference to the Eucharist as the means of participating in a one flesh union with Christ.¹⁶⁴

By virtue of participating in the Eucharist, the Christian is called to live as one in full, holistic communion with Holy Trinity. No part of our life or existence should be separate from communion with the Lord with whom we become one flesh. St. John Chrysostom recognized the common thread of communion in these matters:

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh" (v. 31). There is another aspect of marital obligation: Paul shows that a man leaves his parents, who gave him life, and is joined to his wife, and that one

flesh—father, mother, and child—results from the commingling of the two. The child is born from the union of their seed, so the three are one flesh. Our relationship to Christ is the same; we become one flesh with Him through communion, more truly one with Him than our children are one with us, because this has been His plan from the beginning.¹⁶⁵

Persons shaped by the assumptions of contemporary western culture will rarely think of sexual intercourse in relation to Holy Communion. Indeed, most will assume that both are matters of the private, subjective emotions of individuals. Such assumptions could not be farther from the teachings of the Orthodox Church. Hence, it is important to make the connections between the Eucharist and sex explicit.

As we have seen, the first point of commonality is that both are acts of covenantal communion, of a unity so deep and profound that they change the identity of the persons who participate in them. In sexual union, two become one. Given the traditionally Jewish understandings of the human person that are reflected in both the Genesis and Pauline passages we have examined, it is clear that this unity is not a temporary physical joining, but the full participation of two people in one another such that they are joined permanently at a deep level. The unitive dimensions of intercourse are fulfilled in the sacramental covenant of marriage, whereby man and woman acknowledge that they are no longer independent agents, but joined holistically in Christ. This interpersonal union of the spouses is a fundamental purpose of our sexuality.

Orthodox theologian Father John Breck makes this point clearly.

The parallel often drawn between sexual intercourse and eucharistic celebration is neither overly romantic nor frivolous. Both actions presuppose sacramental *consecration* and culminate in *consummation*, which achieves *communion* with the beloved. In addition, both actions are predicated on *sacrifice* which seals the covenant relationship: the sacrifice of the couple, symbolized by the nuptial crowns, as they offer themselves in loving service to each other and to God.¹⁶⁶

Likewise, the Eucharist unites those who commune with Christ and with one another in so powerful a way that they become members of Christ's Body. The imagery here is similarly organic and integral. The New Testament's accounts of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper point toward a covenantal communion between the Lord and His people.¹⁶⁷ The Old Testament themes of covenant and sacrifice are fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion.¹⁶⁸

The sacrifice of the New Covenant is made present to us through the Eucharist. The covenant is reaffirmed and ritually enacted whenever this Holy Mystery is celebrated. Those who commune become part of the covenant, being united with the Lord's crucifixion and victory over death. They do so through their participation in the Body of Christ, not as isolated individuals. As St. Paul notes in 1 Cor. 12:12, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." Just as we cannot make sense of the function of a hand or foot apart from its participation in a human body, we cannot make sense of a particular believer apart from his participation in the Body of Christ. Likewise, sexual union is not a solitary undertaking, but the realization of a community of two persons; it is intended for the unity of man and woman in Christ through the sacramental life of the Church.

The commonality between sexual union and communion with Christ is made clear by St. Paul's conclusion in Ephesians 5:31-32 on the relationship between husband and wife: "'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." The covenantal sexual union of man and woman in marriage is here used as an image for the spiritual unity of Christ and the Church. Vigen Guroian articulates well Orthodox Christianity's understanding of what it means to become one flesh with another in marriage.

The Orthodox Church describes sexual intercourse as *synousia*, a term which means consubstantiality. Husband and wife are joined together as *one* in holy matrimony. They are an ecclesial entity, one flesh, one body incorporate of two persons who in freedom and sexual love and through their relationship to Christ image the triune life of the Godhead and express the mystery of salvation in Christ's relationship to the Church.¹⁶⁹

Likewise in 2 Corinthians 11:2, St. Paul states that he "betrothed you [the Corinthians] to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband."¹⁷⁰ Implicitly, the sexual union of husband and wife is a bond so profound that it is a symbol for believers' participation in the Body of Christ and the reign of God. Marriage should be "a picture of the fellowship of the eschatological redeemed humanity with the Creator" where the "dialectic of sameness and difference" between man and woman becomes a means of salvation.¹⁷¹ It should mirror the loving communion of Persons

that is the Trinity.¹⁷² It should become a participation in the life of the Trinity, a means by which the agapic love of God becomes present in the world through the relationship of man and woman. The same is true of the Church in the celebration of the Eucharist. Those who commune are made living members of Christ and of one another through a bond to which the covenantal union of marriage is parallel in spiritual significance. The Church embodies eschatological communion with God, being in its very life a manifestation of union with the Almighty. Even as the Persons of the Trinity are eternally united in love and share a common nature, marriage and Church are about two (or more than two, in the case of the Church) becoming one organically in the sharing of a common identity and destiny as they journey to the salvation of the Kingdom of God.¹⁷³

Here lies another point of commonality between Holy Communion and sex: both are physical actions with a profundity that transcends the merely physical. In intercourse, bodily actions have a direct impact on what are perhaps the most profound dimensions of one's life. Love, friendship, happiness, sorrow, procreation, and the most intimate bonding possible between persons are at stake. A merely physical description of the bodily gestures fails to convey the deep significance of sexual union.

The same is true of all the Holy Mysteries, as Paul Evdokimov explains,

The classical [Orthodox] definition states that "the sacrament is a holy action through which the invisible grace of God is given to the believer under the visible sign." They are not only signs that confirm the promises of God, neither are they means to invigorate faith and trust; they do not merely give, but *contain*, grace and are *channels*; they are at the same time the instruments of salvation and salvation itself, as is the Church.¹⁷⁴

Orthodox teaching is that in the Eucharist bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The consecrated bread and wine are tangible, physical signs through which Christ becomes present in our fallen world. Those who receive His body and blood are so intimately connected to the Lord that they are members of Christ's Body, being organically united to him. The spiritual significance of Communion is far more than meets the eye. As with sexual union, physical descriptions alone fail to display the full meaning of the sacrament.

The privatized religion of modern western culture has little room for either a genuine sacramental theology or a true spiritual understanding

of sexuality. Schmemmann argues that western theology has separated symbol from reality in a way that severely weakens the understanding of sacraments as means of participation in the life of God.¹⁷⁵ Rather than neatly separating “the symbolic” from “the real” in a sacrament, Schmemmann calls for a return to the sacramental theology of the Fathers, who taught that symbols manifest, realize, and reveal what they symbolize. Through them we are invited to a “living encounter” with the Holy Trinity.¹⁷⁶

Schmemmann’s account of Patristic sacramental theology provides a strong basis for an Orthodox understanding of sexual union. Even as the consecrated bread and wine manifest, communicate, and become Christ’s body and blood, sexual intercourse is to become participation in and with the life of another in such a profound way that the two become “one flesh.” Intercourse is to be an expression of the covenanted, selfless love of man and woman through which they participate in the life of God. It would be a mistake to separate the act of sexual intercourse from the reality of marriage between a man and a woman, for the former is to be an epiphany of the latter. In any marriage, it would be impossible to separate with complete clarity the place of sexual union from the other dimensions of marriage. They are inextricably intertwined and encountered together as symbol and reality. In a parallel way, the Eucharist is by definition a mysterious participation in the grace of God, and we may not distinguish with precision between the symbol and the reality, for one manifests the other; we encounter the one through the other. In both the Eucharist and marital sexual union, physical realities become epiphanies of grace.

An incarnational theology is clearly presupposed by Orthodox teaching on both the Eucharist and sex. The Son of God became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. As the Council of Chalcedon proclaimed, Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. His full humanity is joined so closely with his full divinity that the Incarnate Word was proclaimed by the Council as one person with two natures. The implications for moral theology of the incarnation are profound, for the Son of God has become physically present in our human life; indeed, humanity is joined with divinity in the person of Jesus Christ. The Christian life is lived in a world created by the Son who takes the limitations of bodily life upon Himself and through them redeems His creation. Not only is Jesus Christ fully human, but he employed any number of physical signs to make present God’s reign: feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and raising the dead.

As St. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 15:20, the risen Lord is the “first fruits” of the destiny of creation for eschatological fulfillment. Even as

Jesus was raised from death as a complete, embodied person, Christians hope for the transformation of the “perishable” into the “imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:42). Salvation is the fulfillment and restoration of the fallen creation in communion with God, and believers are invited to interpret all dimensions of their lives, including the bodily dimensions of sex, in light of their hope for the final transformation of reality in God’s reign.¹⁷⁷ Contrary to the popular assumptions of our culture, sexuality is not simply a private realm of individual subjectivity. It is, instead, a dimension of our embodied personhood which is intended for the fulfillment and transformation of God’s Kingdom.¹⁷⁸

Marriage is the unique context for sexual relations; here the bodily union of man and woman becomes a means of salvation through which sexual passions are purified and the spouses grow in communion with the Trinity. St. John Chrysostom teaches that the sexual desire of the spouses for one another is not evil, but an integral part of our human nature which remains “still basically good after the Fall.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, Chrysostom criticizes men who do not come to church for fear of uncleanness after having relations with their wives, reminding them of the Pauline saying that “Marriage is honorable, and the bed undefiled.” He speaks for “the mainstream of Eastern Christianity” in stressing that men and women are “ontologically ideal counterpart[s].” Man and woman are created for one another, and find their God-intended union in one flesh in the great blessing of marriage, where “husband and wife are one body in the same way as Christ and the Father are one.”¹⁸⁰ Chrysostom differs from his eastern and western contemporaries in denying that there is any uncleanness for women associated with childbirth.¹⁸¹ Not only a “safe haven” for the licit fulfillment of sexual desire and the deepest love between two people, marriage is “to be a living image, or *icon*, of the marriage of Christ the Bridegroom with His Bride, the Church.”¹⁸² The bodily realities of sex and marriage are thereby taken up in our salvation.

Since the risen Lord is both fully human and fully divine, no dimension of our bodily existence is without spiritual import because every bit of us is destined for eschatological salvation and communion with the Holy Trinity.¹⁸³ The human and the divine are joined so closely in the person of Jesus Christ that all dimensions of our human life may now be conduits of grace and signs of God’s Kingdom. The risen body of Christ is an icon of God’s purposes for all creation. The same is true of the Eucharist. Because the Son of God became fully human, the material stuff of this world may be transfused with and transformed by grace and made

a vehicle of God's presence in the world. Hence, Christians share the bread and wine which has become the body and blood of Christ. These are outward, visible signs of inward, spiritual grace. They are physical signs that make present what they signify. They are epiphanies of the Kingdom of God.¹⁸⁴ As we have seen, all of life is potentially sacramental. Every bit of creation is intended for communion with God, and we are to manifest that communion in every dimension of our existence. A eucharistic view of life goes beyond the liturgy itself to the quest for full communion with the Trinity. As Orthodox theologian Father Patrick Henry Reardon comments, "The goal of the Holy Eucharist is not the consecration of bread and wine, but the consecration of human beings."¹⁸⁵

Likewise, the physical gestures of sexual intercourse have deep spiritual, psychological, social, and moral meaning. They are fully human gestures, and as physical in nature as anything humans do. It is precisely in and through their physical nature that they take on a significance that transcends the physical.¹⁸⁶ For an incarnational faith, it should not be at all surprising that there is spiritual profundity in any physical action, especially one connected so closely with the creation of man and woman in God's image (Gen. 1:27-28).¹⁸⁷

As we have seen, the Christian faith teaches that the physical act of sex is a marrying activity in which two are joined as one. The unitive dimensions of sex and marriage are so profound that the biblical authors frequently use them as an image for the relationship between God and the household of faith.¹⁸⁸ When we remember that God's unfathomable love is at the very heart of the new covenant in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:16), we encounter another level of commonality between Holy Communion and sexual intercourse. Namely, at the heart of each activity is self-sacrificial love. It is obvious that this is the case with the Eucharist as a meal in which believers are nourished by the shed blood and broken body of Jesus Christ. The celebration of Eucharist makes the Lord's sacrifice present to those who commune, and places them in communion with that sacrifice. It also demands that they embody His selfless love in their hearts and lives.

Slightly more subtle are the self-sacrificial dimensions of intercourse. Recall that sex is a unitive act through which man and woman become one in marriage. St. Paul's goal for those joined as husband and wife is a mutually submissive love modeled on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the Church.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject

to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. (Eph. 5:21-28)¹⁸⁹

The union of Christians in marriage is consequently to be self-sacrificial and Christlike.¹⁹⁰ The nature of this type of marital love requires that each spouse has authority over the other's body, and consequently sacrifices sexual autonomy to the spouse.

But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Cor. 7:2-4)¹⁹¹

St. John Chrysostom comments on this passage that

the wife has no power over her own body, but she is her husband's slave—and also his ruler. If you refuse to serve your husband properly, you offend God. So, wife, if you want to abstain, even for a little while, get your husband's permission first. This is why St. Paul speaks of conjugal rights as a *debt*; to show that neither husband nor wife is his or her own master, but rather are each other's servants.¹⁹²

Through the lifelong fidelity of marriage, husband and wife are to develop a self-sacrificial, exclusive bond of love through which they may come to participate more fully in Christ's sacrificial love.¹⁹³ Such divine love is at the very heart of the Eucharist, and elicits in response our self-sacrificial love toward God.¹⁹⁴ Christian marriage is a eucharistic offering of one's closest human relationship to the Father in union with the sacrifice of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁵ Those who receive Communion are to become what they receive, making present in the world the sacrificial love of Christ by all that they do and are. Likewise, those who become one flesh are joined at the deepest level possible, physically, emotionally, socially, and economically. In the usual order of things, they

have and rear children together. When done well, these activities require dying to self for the sake of others. They require a eucharistic life in which we offer ourselves fully to God and those with whom we are in covenant. St. John Chrysostom makes this point in relation to St. Paul's admonition to husbands to "love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. 5:25):

Do you want your wife to be obedient to you, as the Church is to Christ? Then be responsible for the same providential care of her, as Christ is for the Church. And even if it becomes necessary for you to give your life for her, yes, and even to endure and undergo suffering of any kind, do not refuse. Even though you undergo all this, you will never have done anything equal to what Christ has done. You are sacrificing yourself for someone to whom you are already joined, but He offered Himself up for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way, then, as He honored her by putting at His feet one who turned her back on Him, who hated, rejected, and disdained Him, as He accomplished this not with threats, or violence, or terror, or anything else like that, but through His untiring love; so also you should behave toward your wife.¹⁹⁶

Such a marriage is "a form of martyrdom" that requires death to our selfish "pretensions to autonomy" in a way that draws us closer to God.¹⁹⁷ Christian marriage is an ascetical struggle of dying to self for the sake of another.¹⁹⁸ The Eucharist may be seen as the source of the self-sacrificial love shown daily by spouses which nourishes, sustains, and guides them in their love for one another, their family, and God.¹⁹⁹ Christian spouses also will be prepared well by the covenant of marriage to appreciate the gravity of Communion, even as the Eucharist enables them to keep the sacrificial love of Christ at the heart of their one-flesh union.²⁰⁰

As anyone who has ever received Holy Communion or engaged in sexual intercourse knows, these are not magical events which guarantee by their mere performance right participation in the Body of Christ or a faithful marriage imbued with Christlike love. One may willfully abuse these practices in a way that frustrates the accomplishment of the purposes intended for them by God. For example, St. Paul warns in 1 Cor. 11:27-32 of severe consequences for taking the Supper in an unworthy manner, and the Church has followed him in requiring preparation for participation in the sacrament. One who is wrongly disposed toward the Eucharist, whether through a mocking attitude, a denial of the faith, or a refusal to repent, abuses God's grace and invites spiritual ruin.

There is a parallel truth regarding sex. It is possible to have intercourse in a context that denies or does not acknowledge its unitive dimensions or place in the economy of our salvation. Prostitution, rape, and incest by definition deny the one-flesh union of selfless love that is a fundamental purpose of sex. Those who intend their sexual liaisons to be transitory and without lifelong commitment refuse to recognize or live out the implications of their intimate unions. Others, even in marriage, may use sex as a selfish means of dominance or manipulation. Even as it is possible to frustrate God's purposes for Holy Communion, it is possible to block ourselves from God's purposes for sexual intercourse by our own sins.

Anglican moral theologian Philip Turner argues, however, that not all the goods of sexual intercourse are entirely eliminated when sex is had outside of a faithful, loving marriage. In response to those who would question the Church's traditional insistence on limiting sexual relations to marriage, he insists that marriage makes clear "the full description of sexual good" sought by human beings. Hence, even the revisionists of sexual morality will find the goods they seek embodied more clearly in marriage than anywhere else.²⁰¹

It would be a grave error to condone sexual immorality under any circumstances; nonetheless, Turner's apologetic point is well taken. There is value in being able to explain the truth of Christian teaching in ways that may for the first time get the attention of those who have become dissatisfied with sinful lifestyles. Even as there is a fullness to the sort of selfless life demanded by participation in the Eucharist, key characteristics of a Christian view of marriage are lifelong mutual self-less love, fidelity, and support. The one-flesh union of sex finds its fulfillment in such a life, which prepares those called to marriage to love and serve both God and neighbor more faithfully as a couple than could have done apart. It is hard to imagine a serious account of the values at stake in sex that is not dependent upon such a vision, if only implicitly and imperfectly. Orthodox teaching reserves intercourse for a context in which these values may be developed in ways that enable couples, families, societies, and the Church to flourish before God. Sexual relations apart from marriage are deficient and corrupt because they occur in a context which makes it impossible for them to fulfill God's purposes for the union of man and woman.²⁰² Far from a minimalistic ethic, the way of life required by the Eucharist and Christian marriage calls for a full self-offering to God and the others with whom one is in communion, whether in the Church or the family. To settle

for a lesser ethic is to refuse to pursue the full communion with God to which we are called; it is to fall short of our nature as persons created in God's image and destined for communion with the Holy Trinity.²⁰³

When Orthodox Christians marry, they are joined to one another by the Trinity. They are made one flesh, and called to embody Christlike love and fidelity in marriage throughout their lives. They marry in the Church, for their union is a participation in the Body of Christ. Far from a private act of feeling or pleasure, marriage is a public act of deliberate, explicit communion with one another, God, and the Church.²⁰⁴ Intercourse belongs within such a public, intentional covenant because of God's purposes for our sexuality and the grave matters at stake when this intimate relationship between persons is abused.

Marriage tells the truth, as Christianity sees it, about sexual union: two people are becoming one in a shared life before God which is to be modeled on the communion of the Holy Trinity. Their sexual union makes them uniquely vulnerable before one another. They are likely to have children. Their Christian discipleship will be shaped in important ways by their marriage and family life. Their household requires the blessing and ministries of Church if it is to flourish. Likewise, they are to live as husband and wife in ways that build up the Body of Christ.²⁰⁵ Marriage is a holy mystery through which the mutual love of man and woman is empowered and transformed by grace and taken up into the self-sacrificial love of Christ. Extraordinarily important matters, including our very salvation, are at stake in sex and marriage.²⁰⁶ This larger theological context is necessary to explain the Church's teaching that it is sinful to engage in sexual relations before or outside of marriage.²⁰⁷ Not to be dismissed as a matter of outmoded legalism, the Church's teaching directs us to *theosis*, to growth in holiness and union with the Lord. The point is not simply to regulate sexual behavior according to a moral standard. Instead, the union of man and woman is to be raised by the grace of God to Christlike communion, to participation in the Kingdom of Heaven. Apart from the sacrament of marriage, such a transformation of the man-woman relationship is impossible.²⁰⁸

Apart from the sacrament of marriage, the union of man and woman is not a eucharistic communion with the Holy Trinity. God's purposes for our sexuality—that we become “one flesh” as we grow in holiness through grace—are not fulfilled apart from covenant, *agapic* love, and union in the full sacramental and ascetic life of the Church. Christian marriage unites husband and wife in Christ and prepares them for the journey

to the Kingdom. Sexual relations apart from marriage cater simply to carnal passions and human schemes of convenience. Indeed, they ignore the gravity of sexual intercourse for persons created in the image of God, and therefore do not become “the dynamic response of personal freedom to the existential truth and authenticity of man.”²⁰⁹

In order to understand the fullness of Orthodox teaching on marriage, it is necessary to examine with greater care the Church’s understanding of the place of marriage in the journey of salvation. Orthodoxy, unlike much western Christianity, does not place the categories of nature and grace in opposition to one another.²¹⁰

Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky, in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, observes that Orthodoxy views salvation as the process of *theosis*, of becoming “partakers of the divine nature.” This process occurs through a union with the Trinity through the “uncreated energies” or grace of God: “In deification we are by grace...all that God is by nature, save only identity of nature...We remain creatures while becoming God by grace, as Christ remained God in becoming man by the Incarnation.”²¹¹ The nature which is redeemed by grace is not for the Orthodox “‘pure nature’ to which grace is added as a supernatural gift.”²¹²

For Orthodoxy, it is the nature of the human being to find fulfillment only through *theosis* or deification, one’s holistic participation in the life of the God. Rather than pursuing the imitation of Christ, the Orthodox envision “a life in Christ” which is “participation in the very life of the Holy Trinity, in that supreme perfection which is love.”²¹³ We are to seek a knowledge of God that is “a union in uncreated light” made possible by grace, not knowledge of an external reality.²¹⁴ Christians should view human life, in all its aspects, as finding fulfillment only through union with the Trinity. Progress in *theosis* requires the intentional cooperation of humans with divine grace.²¹⁵

Given the close connections between marriage, the Trinity, and the Eucharist, Christians are called to practice the ascetic discipline of governing their sexuality in ways that will lead them to the fullness of this union. Even as the Eucharist restores bread and wine to their intended place of communion with God, Christian marriage restores human sexuality to its natural place as a means for growth in holiness.²¹⁶ A eucharistic view of sex and marriage calls us to die to self out of love for God and the spouse, and thus to find the life of union with God for which we were created.²¹⁷

The union of *theosis*, the call to repentance and virtue, and the discipline and effort of faithfulness do not, however, concern only the human spirit. As an incarnational faith, Christianity must have a place for the body in salvation. St. John of Damascus made this point in connection with honoring the saints, for “God dwelt even in their bodies in spiritual wise...Surely, then, we must ascribe honor to the living temples of God, the living tabernacles of God.”²¹⁸ Yannaras notes that bodily asceticism changes “our nature’s individual mode of existence into personal communion and relationship” in the Church. Fasting and other forms of bodily discipline are ways of subordinating one’s passions to the way of life manifest in the Body of Christ. Such discipline is directed against “the rebellion of material individuality, the rebellious drive for self-subsistence,” but not against matter itself. To the contrary, it is part of our struggle to grow in communion with the Trinity by offering the entirety of ourselves to God in love; this “struggle becomes an act of communion.”²¹⁹ Even as we are not purely spiritual or intellectual creatures, we will not grow in holiness by disembodied means. When we transform the stuff of our mere biological survival in the fallen world into a free, personal offering to the Trinity, we embody the eucharistic ethos of the Church in our whole selves: body, soul, and spirit.²²⁰

St. Gregory Palamas articulates a classic Orthodox view of *theosis* in which the whole person, including the body, may find union with God.²²¹ Against those who denied a place to the body in our union with God, Palamas took it as “a self-evident fact since the moment the Son of God Himself took flesh in the womb of Mary and established a visible Church upon earth, whose sacramental grace can and must sanctify the whole man, as a pledge of bodily resurrection on the last day.”²²² Especially in connection to Christian teaching on sexuality, it is vital to remember that we are called to bring our physical bodies into holiness by ascetic cooperation with God’s grace. For Palamas, the key link here is Christ’s deification of the body.²²³

Though Palamas thinks first of monastics as pursuing such bodily holiness through rigorous asceticism, he also notes that *theosis* is open to all Christians. “As to those who live in the world, they must force themselves to use the things of this world in conformity with the commandments of God.”²²⁴ It is telling that Palamas emphasizes the need to die to self as a living sacrifice to find union with God. This is a call to eucharistic living, which is especially challenging for those who live amidst the world’s temptations to think primarily of individual happiness and fulfill-

ment in sex and marriage. Given Palamas' presuppositions, however, the body is intended for far more than pleasure and freedom.²²⁵

Father Stanley Harakas is representative of Orthodoxy in teaching that a major task of growth in *theosis* is overcoming the distortions of our passions. Christians are to undertake "spiritual warfare...to free the God-given, natural needs from their distortions and to allow them to be transfigured as full participants in the process of growth toward God-likeness."²²⁶ This challenge is especially necessary in the area of sexual desire.²²⁷ To view sex and marriage as means for growth in holiness is possible because of Orthodoxy's affirmation of the goodness of the body and repudiation of Gnosticism.²²⁸ Since family life will be the setting within which "most Orthodox Christians...grow toward *theosis*," such a positive view of the body and sexuality is quite important.²²⁹ The challenge of loving one other in marriage in a fashion that reflects the love of the Trinity is great.²³⁰ Such a marriage is possible only "when another partner is a constant factor in their marriage. That 'third partner' is God."²³¹ In other words, the fulfillment of marriage itself, in a fallen world, is beyond the ability of humankind left to its own devices. Participation in and cooperation with grace are necessary for the marital relationship to grow as a means of communion with the Trinity. "Reverent people, energized by divine grace and motivated by God-like love, can contribute to making the home—for parents and children alike—a workshop for growth toward *theosis*."²³²

A vision of marriage and family life as means of living eucharistically may appear strange to those who have not been formed by the Church's teaching. However, those who have found only frustration as a result of living according to our culture's mores are in a good position to appreciate for the first time the wisdom of the Christian message. Orthodox theologian Deacon John Chryssavgis observes that contemporary western culture guarantees the failure of many marriages precisely because it encourages people to expect "total personal and interpersonal fulfillment, seeking in marriage a magic solution to the problems of human relationships." Such a selfish and secular viewpoint misses the point of marriage entirely, for "husband and wife do not love because they are perfect or because they complement one another. Rather, their unconditional, forgiving love enables them both to grow towards perfection."²³³ Christian marriage occurs within a rich theological and eucharistic context that frees the couple from slavery to unrealistic notions about marriage as a constant state of romantic bliss and interpersonal fulfillment.²³⁴ The sexual dimensions of marriage are not seen simply as opportunities for physical plea-

sure, but instead are to be characterized by chastity, which brings husband and wife to greater union with the Lord.²³⁵ Given the close connections between the purposes of marriage and our salvation, those who do not offer their sexuality to God either through the sacrament of marriage or the asceticism of virginity are guilty of distorting their human nature. For God has created our sexuality as a means of growth in holiness, as a path of participation in salvation. To refuse to employ our bodies, and our most intimate relationships, for that eschatological goal is to sin against our very selves, and will lead only to despair.

That *eros* is transformed and fulfilled by grace is manifested in the liturgical service of marriage. For the Orthodox, the service includes “the same four fundamental elements encountered in the sacraments of both Baptism and the Eucharist.” There is the *offering* of the couple “to one another and, together, to the Church.” *Anamnesis* occurs with the remembrance of “saintly couples from Abraham and Sarah to Joachim and Anna, who prepared the way for the advent of the Virgin Mary and the Incarnation of Christ.” The crowning of the bride and groom are an *epiclesis*, “an invocation (or a series of invocations) of the Holy Spirit upon the couple.” Then the bride and groom drink from the wedding cup, which is reminiscent of the ancient practice of Communion from the Presanctified Gifts during the marriage service.²³⁶ Through the marriage service, “The Church assumes the whole of life and transforms it into an offering. Thus every aspect and detail of humanity—including sexuality—is redeemed and baptized. This offering and redemption is the final purpose of marriage, namely the preparation for and realization of the Kingdom of God.”²³⁷ Husband and wife are to die to self through their agapic union, and thus participate in the new life of Christ.²³⁸ The nature of human sexuality is restored and fulfilled by the eucharistic context of Christian marriage. The relationship of man and woman in its entirety is made an offering to the Holy Trinity.

Hopko cautions that the celebration of the marriage service is not, however, an act of magic, and not “all those who are ‘married in the church’ have an ideal marriage.” Still, “when a couple is married in the Church of Christ, the possibility for the perfection of their marriage is most fully given by God.” Their marriage is to be a step in *theosis*, a gateway to greater participation in the life of the Holy Trinity.²³⁹ By its very nature, sexual union points beyond the merely physical to the flourishing of the whole person in God’s reign. Christian marriage is an eschatological act whereby our sexuality is fulfilled and transformed by grace.

Yannaras notes that Orthodox teaching does not denigrate the physical, biological dimensions of marital union. It directs those dimensions, however, to eternity as a means of “a unity of persons in freedom and love, through their relationship with Christ in the eucharist.” The embodied love of man and woman is made a eucharistic offering of two together as communicants in the Kingdom. Biological necessity and self-sufficiency are transformed into “a dynamic imitation of Christ’s cross and conformity to His voluntary assumption of our nature’s death—a conformity whose fruit is resurrection and incorruption.”²⁴⁰ By the asceticism of marriage, within the context of the sacramental life of the Church, *eros* is oriented toward God as the ultimate end of human longing. Man and woman thereby “pass dynamically from the natural to the eucharistic relationship, to the ascetic realization of true *eros*.”²⁴¹

Orthodox theologian Father Joseph Woodill makes this point in connection with the Orthodox marriage service. The “ritual dance” of circling the center of the church three times is accompanied by verses announcing the incarnation, praising the martyrs, and glorifying Christ.²⁴² Prayers evoking the examples of Joseph, Daniel, Tamar, together with other examples from the Old Testament, create a liturgical space in which “sexuality [is] not condemned but contextualized. Married sexuality is understood here as a way to participate in the journey toward freedom from all that obstructs the intended return to God.” This eschatological context demands that marriage “be no less ‘eucharistic,’ than the eucharistic breaking of bread.”²⁴³ Even as the Eucharist transforms bread and wine into sacramental participation in the life of the Trinity, the wedding service portrays Christian marriage as the fulfillment of all dimensions of the man-woman relationship in God.²⁴⁴

The purpose of marriage is identical to that of monastic life. “The difference is practical—how to attain the likeness to God that is the calling of all humanity—not teleological.” As with any effort to pursue sanctification, the proper context for Christian marriage is the eucharistic communion of the Church. Like the rest of life, marriage, family, and sexuality are here taken up into the offering of Christ, and are intended to become means for union with the Holy Trinity.²⁴⁵ Given the assumptions about sex and marriage that reign in contemporary western culture, Orthodox Christians require a counter-cultural formation in order to view these dimensions of life in a eucharistic context. In particular, the Orthodox must reject the notion that sexual intercourse is the highest good in a relationship between a man and a woman.²⁴⁶

Rather than an endeavor focused on sexual gratification, marriage is described by the wedding service as a struggle which earns a crown. “The crown of God’s creation is nothing other than woman and man, together, loving with God’s own love. The practice of finding God’s love in marriage will involve chastity, obedience, and humility.” Chastity within marriage does not mean sexual abstinence, but “the mindful pursuit of the end of *theosis* for the woman and for the man.” Chastity restores marriage to its intended purpose of union with God through covenantal fidelity and self-sacrifice.²⁴⁷ As in monasticism, “sex is saved in marriage...by being reoriented from being its own meaning to being again a gift of God’s presence in the flesh.”²⁴⁸

The eucharistic context of Christian marriage is apparent once again in the Orthodox focus on the restoration of human nature through union with God. In marriage, our fallen sexuality is reoriented to its ultimate purpose of *theosis*. Even as bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, and the means of our participation in salvation, human sexuality is in marriage offered to the Father, united with the offering of Christ, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a manifestation of the covenantal love which is characteristic of the Trinity.²⁴⁹ Through such a eucharistic marriage, man and woman participate in the life of the Trinity by grace. They do so through the union of their entire selves in marriage, including their bodies. By the power of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, man and woman are deified as their common life becomes a participation in the Eucharist of Christ.

It is fitting, then, that Schmemmann begins his analysis of the vocation of Christian marriage with a discussion of the *Theotokos*, the one who is “full of grace.” He distinguishes between a focus on Mary in the West as virgin in a way that makes her “a being almost totally different from us” in purity, while “in the East she is always referred to and glorified as *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, and virtually all icons depict her with the Child in her arms.” The Orthodox see Mary as “a light, a joy, proper to the whole life of the Church” who fulfilled her humanity by complete openness to the Lord.²⁵⁰

In being entirely open to God, Mary fulfilled “the *womanhood* of creation.” Schmemmann acknowledges that such a phrase may sound strange in a culture which prizes the equality of the sexes. To deny the “specific vocation... [of] woman,” however, is to belittle her unique role in the economy of salvation.²⁵¹ At the same time, Mary is a model for both male and female in relation to the Almighty, for she points toward the ful-

fillment of both man and woman in her acceptance and response before God.²⁵²

Man is called to be the priest of creation, submitting himself and the world in obedience and love to God. Likewise, woman is to accept “the life of the Other as *her own life*, giving herself totally to the Other.” Mary is “the *new Eve*.” Mary’s complete “obedience *and* love” for God together manifest “the true response of Creation to its Creator.” We are “fully human,” fulfilling our true nature as the children of God, only when we love and obey God in this way.²⁵³ Mary’s virginity is not a lack or deficit, but “the fullness and the wholeness of love itself.” In her virginity, Mary finds “wholeness, totality, [and] fulfillment” by giving herself entirely to God.²⁵⁴

Christian marriage should be characterized by the same complete love, obedience, and acceptance before God that was shown by Mary. The total devotion to and dependence upon the Holy Trinity that her virginity embodies is to be characteristic of man and woman as they marry, share a common life, and rear children. Together with their sexuality, the entirety of their lives and relationship is to be taken up into the eschatological reign of God, oriented towards its ultimate purpose of *theosis*, of a life full of grace. Even as Mary’s complete obedience and love were necessary dimensions of the incarnation, such qualities must be present in marriage for it to become a vehicle for salvation.²⁵⁵ Mary’s life is a model of the eucharistic life: of dying to self through a complete self-offering to the Father.²⁵⁶

Having raised the issue of Mary’s virginity as a model for marriage, it is important to note that both marriage and virginity, which might seem to be at odds with one another, are means of loving and serving God.²⁵⁷ For Orthodoxy the crucial factor is not the form which devotion to God takes, but that obedient love toward God be at the heart of one’s life, regardless of whether one is married or celibate.²⁵⁸ The Christian faith has never made celibacy a mandatory part of discipleship; it is for “those to whom it is given...Let anyone accept this who can” (St. Matt. 19:10-12). Chrysostom suggests that we follow the path to salvation that we find easiest, whether Abraham’s way of marriage or Elijah’s way of celibacy. “Follow whichever way you wish, for both lead to heaven.”²⁵⁹ St. Paul (1 Cor. 7) and many of the Fathers understood the celibate life to be more in keeping with full devotion to the Lord than the married life, even as they acknowledged that not all are capable of a life of complete sexual continence.²⁶⁰ Both monasticism and marriage have their place in the Church.²⁶¹

Evdokimov argues that “the monastic vows of obedience, chastity,

and poverty are rediscovered in the life of every Christian,” and must be incarnated in ways appropriate to the married state. He defines these vows as follows:

Total *obedience* to God supplants all self-sufficiency, every ascendancy coming from the world. The one who truly obeys God has dominion over the world, is royally free, and fully enjoys the dignity of a king.

Chastity is found in the structure of the spirit and in the priestly sacrifice of one’s having and one’s being; it is the dispossession and the full consecration of one’s life.

Poverty is a poor person’s completely open sensitivity to the designs of God and their prophetic penetration—who only wants to know and to follow the Word in the world, who hopes for one possession only, that of the indwelling of the Spirit.²⁶²

Though in a context markedly different from monasticism, married persons are to offer their lives to the Holy Trinity in ways characterized by self-sacrificial obedience, chastity, and poverty. This is a calling to a eucharistic life in which we grow in communion with the sacrifice of Christ, making His sacrificial love present in and characteristic of every aspect of our being. Every Christian is called to a priestly life in which he “offers the totality of his life and being as a sacrifice, [and] makes of his life a liturgy. Every layperson is the priest of his existence.”²⁶³ Each Christian marriage creates a domestic Church in which the couple participates in the salvation of Christ. As at the wedding at Cana, “the water of the natural passions is changed into ‘the fruit of the vine,’ the noble wine that signifies the transmutation into ‘the new love,’ a charismatic love springing forth to the Kingdom.”²⁶⁴ And “the more the spouses are united in Christ the more their common cup, the measure of their life, is filled with the wine of Cana and becomes miraculous.”²⁶⁵

Growing in this miraculous life together in God is, for Evdokimov, the purpose of marriage.²⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the “plenitude” and “superabundance” of the nuptial union is manifest in the life of children, who are epiphanies of the communion of love called marriage.²⁶⁷ The assumption that human sexuality is intrinsically sinful has no place in Orthodoxy. Orthodox marriage rites do not provide a remedy for sin, but “the miracle of the transfiguration of Eros.” Sexual sin is not so much “of the flesh” as “against the flesh, the profanization of the sacred and of the sanctity of the Incarnation.”²⁶⁸ In Christian marriage human sexuality becomes a means of participation in the self-sacrificial, unitive love of Christ, and is

thus restored to its original purpose of joining two persons as one flesh in communion with God.²⁶⁹

Given the place of marriage in the economy of our salvation, the dangers are spiritually profound for all concerned of failing to acknowledge the gravity of sexual intercourse as a marrying activity which is intended for growth in holiness. Apart from placing their physical union in the context of the covenant of self-sacrificial love, man and woman will not be able to fulfill God's purposes for their sexuality and shared life. They will not be participants in the reign of God in their union, but in matters of this fallen world defined on its own terms. Children would then be conceived in contexts entirely unsuitable for their upbringing as members of Christ's Body. Without a Christian marriage, the couple is not in a position to find appropriate guidance and counsel in the Church. Though we have seen that a eucharistic marriage is part of the restoration of our nature as man and woman, it is hardly the case that such a marriage occurs naturally in our fallen world. Without locating their marriage explicitly within a eucharistic context, the couple will not find the fullness of union in Christ. The prospects for Christlike mutual submission, lifelong fidelity, and serious discernment of the pair's vocation within the Body of Christ are destroyed by a failure to own the claim that in sexual intercourse two are to become one in Christ. Such an acknowledgment means Christian marriage.²⁷⁰

The language of "one flesh" is reminiscent of the Eucharist. Those who commune are one body, joined organically in the selfless love of God. Through their communion in Christ's body and blood, they participate in the eternal life of God's reign. The same is true of those whose one-flesh union is a tangible image of God's salvation in this world. In an important sense, sex and marriage are eucharistic, eschatological, and ecclesial realities: they find their basis and fulfillment in the foretaste of the Kingdom that is made present when the Church celebrates the Wedding Feast of the Lamb.²⁷¹

Marriage is a relationship between persons by which the partners grow in the holiness of the Kingdom of God; consequently, Orthodoxy "grounds its understanding of sexuality in its *particular theological vision*, not in Puritan moralism."²⁷² Breck explains clearly the Orthodox teaching that "the only place 'genital sexuality' can be exercised to a good and fitting end is in the context of *a monogamous, heterosexual, blessed, conjugal union*." God's unique covenantal role with His people is reflected in "the exclusive and total commitment of two persons to each other as an

iconic reflection of the uniqueness and faithfulness of Christ's commitment to the Church." Marriage is between a man and a woman because the Lord created humankind male and female "with the express purpose of providing for procreation: continuing his work of creation by joining two lives in a loving embrace that will normally, in the words of the marriage ceremony, produce 'the fruit of their bodies, fair children.'" Likewise, a married couple is called to accept the blessing of procreation, to "be fruitful and multiply." Sexual union between man and woman is to be conjugal as a sign of "a 'new creation,' making of the two 'one flesh' by which to bring forth children, fulfill one another in love, and work out their mutual salvation."²⁷³

Breck teaches that, through marriage, a couple's love is "to be transformed from water into wine," as they find the fulfillment of their human nature through the transforming grace of God. The erotic love of man and woman finds its fulfillment in true *eros* for God.²⁷⁴ The love of husband and wife for one another "is merely their human response to God's prior, boundless love, that seeks to embrace in an eternal communion with himself all those who bear his divine image." As marriage is a participation in the gracious life of God, it "acquires a sacramental quality, and attains to the perfection for which it was created, by pointing beyond sexual gratification to God, who is the object of the soul's deepest longing. Pleasure and sexual desire are not to be eliminated. They are to be 'transferred' or redirected from the self to the other."²⁷⁵

Breck rightly notes that such an understanding of marital union "as a genuine vocation" is in deep contradiction with the assumptions of contemporary western culture. Rather than a way of unbridled hedonism or self-fulfillment, the married are called to "an ongoing, *ascetic struggle*, not to eliminate sexual desire or repress it, but to purify and perfect it by directing it toward the other" as part of a shared life characterized by "crucified and saving love, whose ultimate end is mutual participation in the life of God's Kingdom." Rather than finding its primary purpose in "procreation or personal fulfillment," marriage serves the "*working out of the spouses' mutual salvation*."²⁷⁶ Through the ascetic struggle of man and woman, our "fallen sexuality" is transfigured "into an act of *worship*—an offering of praise, thanksgiving and intercession—by which the union of husband and wife prefigures and prepares their eternal communion with God."²⁷⁷

The physical differences of gender are not spiritually irrelevant matters of how flesh is arranged on a skeleton.²⁷⁸ In a universe created by God in which the Logos became a male human being born of a virgin

mother, the particulars of biology are not unconnected from God's purposes for human beings. Were they unconnected, traditional Christian teaching on sex and marriage would be unintelligible. As we will see in the next chapter, it is in this context unthinkable for Orthodoxy to endorse homosexual relationships in any way. The fullness of union between man and woman is found in the gracious restoration and fulfillment of our nature, including our biologically related sexuality, made possible by the sacrament of marriage.

The deep theological context in which Orthodoxy places marriage reminds us that Orthodoxy does not view matrimony as a merely human institution designed for the mundane flourishing of families and societies. The true context and purpose of marriage is the eschatological salvation experienced already in the Church's Eucharist. Guroian reminds us of this larger context for marriage: "The issue is not primarily sociological, *it is an ecclesial one.*"²⁷⁹ When Christians forget about the fundamental theological context of marriage, "the Church is weakened; and lessened is its ability to witness to Christ and his Kingdom. This is a great loss to a world in need of redemption."²⁸⁰ Not simply a natural or social state, Christian marriage is also a sacrament, a holy mystery in which we encounter the Lord through the gracious transformation of the human relationship of marriage.²⁸¹

Guorian cites a prayer from the Armenian Rite of Holy Matrimony that identifies "spiritual love and a mutual accord...as the highest goods of marriage." However, these benefits are by no means the private possessions of the couple; they are

the basis for a virtuous life whose context is community with others. Children are a gift and blessing which will deepen and extend this agapic community. The family is a school for that personal and virtuous life which prepares persons of a character willing to do service to others and fit for the Kingdom of God. Through the gift of children God forges husband and wife into persons they never imagined they could be. Children teach their parents humility, tolerance, patience, and how to deal with their own limitations. But a child's presence is also the opportunity which God provides parents for discovering within themselves the capacity to love without measure, to forgive and redeem the lives of others.²⁸²

Guroian acknowledges that such a lofty description of marriage is in tension in certain respects with the increasingly common experience of the failure of marriages in divorce, even among the Orthodox. Still, the

Church's stance on divorce and remarriage is both realistic and soteriological.²⁸³ If marriage is about our salvation, the fulfillment of our nature through communion with God, its commonality with the Eucharist is clear. They are both sacraments through which we are further incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ and strengthened for life in the reign of God. Even as the Eucharist is by definition a shared meal of the community of faith, marriage finds its proper context in the Church.²⁸⁴

This ecclesial portrait of marriage fits well with St. Paul's concerns in 1 Corinthians 5-6.²⁸⁵ Instead of recognizing that sexual union is for marriage and the Kingdom of God, the Corinthians praised incest and championed unbridled sexual liberty. These were clear signs to St. Paul that the Corinthians had lost their theological and moral bearings, and were not living out their identity as Christ's Body. St. Paul called them to "keep the feast" by cleansing their community from influences antithetical to their identity as the Body of Christ. Though not a passage explicitly about the Lord's Supper, this discourse has strong eucharistic overtones. Our Lamb has been sacrificed, and Christians are to keep their paschal feast by leading a holy life both as a community and as particular members of the Church. When we celebrate the Eucharist, that sacrifice is made present in a fashion that calls the Church to faithfulness as the Body of Christ. When believers live in right communion with God and one another, they are living eucharistically by being a foretaste of God's reign of sacrificial love. As St. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians, the celebration of the Eucharist is the basis of the unity of the Church. Both Eucharist and Church are the Body of Christ. Those who commune are to participate fully in Christ, embodying faithfulness to God's Kingdom in all aspects of their lives.

Matters as profound as sexual relations are not, consequently, private issues beyond the bounds of ecclesial concern. Sexual union between man and woman strikes at the heart of our salvation. Christian eschatological hope is for the fulfillment and transformation of all creation in God's reign. Sexual union is parallel in its profundity to the spiritual union of believers with Christ and with one another. When we abuse the unitive dimensions of sex, we complacently accept the fallenness of our human nature and risk turning all concerned away from God's Kingdom, including our sexual partner, children, and fellow Church members. We risk making our sexuality so trivial, transitory, and selfish that it cannot serve its intended purpose of embodying Christ's selfless love through marriage, of being a eucharistic offering to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. The

easy acceptance of sexual immorality for our physical bodies is a grave threat to the health and faithfulness of the Body of Christ.

It is important here to remember that Christianity is an incarnational faith. When we distort God's purposes for our embodied sexuality, we implicitly deny that the Son of God has taken our full humanity—body, soul, and spirit—on Himself and deified them for the life of God's reign. Our sexuality is the place of our greatest difference from one another, and the place where we may be most closely united with another. It is a place where we can love, wound, and bring life or death to the world. It intersects with the core of human identity and community so deeply that in the sexual union of marriage is mirrored the relationship between Christ and the Church.

The Church has an obligation to live out its identity as the Body of Christ and to "keep the feast" by helping those who are guilty of sexual sins grow in holiness, which may include the penitential discipline of exclusion from the Eucharist. Of essential importance to the Church's fulfillment of that obligation is, of course, the sacrament of confession. Together with the vigilant pastoral ministry of the confessor, catechists must also teach the Church's counter-cultural message of the ecclesial and eschatological nature of sex and marriage. Namely, sexual intercourse joins us with another for the purpose of a selfless, faithful love through which we prepare for and participate in God's reign. Out of that one-flesh love normally come children and the myriad challenges of preparing them to serve God and neighbor. If we live out fully the implications of this sexual union, we will die to self for others and God's Kingdom. We will live eucharistically as we marry, rear children, and grow in holiness as man and woman.

When such a view of sex is preached and taught in light of the Eucharist, and lived out in the parish, it will become easier to make a clear, convincing case to the laity for traditional Christian teaching on these matters. It also becomes possible in such a context to identify the particular failings of sexual relationships outside of marriage, both for single and married persons. In keeping with Orthodox teaching, those failings do not amount to a final condemnation of anyone who sins sexually; instead, they portray the goals of Christian marriage in such a way that those who fall short of them will be able to name their sins clearly and repent with a confident hope for a faithful life. Taken together, these considerations point us toward an incarnational and eschatological perspective on sex where saying "Yes" to God's purposes for us in this crucial dimension of our lives

is the basis for saying “No” to sexual relationships that cannot fulfill those purposes.

These conclusions are clearly supported by Orthodox teaching, and all Christians should recognize them as entirely consistent with the Scriptures and a traditional understanding of discipleship. It is imperative that parishioners be taught to see the connections between sexuality, marriage, and the Eucharist, and to embody those connections in their own lives. The more effectively such spiritual formation occurs, the more likely it is that Christians will offer the whole of their lives to God and grow in holiness. Those who know that the journey of *theosis* directly concerns faithfulness to God in their sexuality and marriage will live eucharistically. They will “keep the feast” by offering themselves as man and woman to the Father in union with the sacrifice of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. They will already be participants in God’s reign, the Wedding Feast of the Lamb.

Chapter 6: An Orthodox Response to “Same-Sex Unions”

We have seen that Orthodoxy places sexuality and marriage within a eucharistic context which provides the basis for understanding the spiritual and moral import of these dimensions of human life. Given the current cultural climate in the United States, the Church has a unique opportunity to proclaim the place of sexuality in our salvation in stark contrast to the assumptions behind most of the debates on the endorsement of homosexual unions by many western churches. The question of Christianity’s proper stance on homosexuality is the most controversial and divisive issue facing the churches of North America today. Disagreement over society’s stance on homosexuality extends well beyond the institutional borders of the churches, as legislative bodies, courts, and the electorate consider pro-

posals for same-sex unions, provision of benefits for domestic partners, and anti-discrimination laws. The churches run the gamut of reactions to homosexuality, ranging from politically correct affirmation of all things associated with gay liberation to support for horrific acts of gay-bashing. Too often, statements on Christian views of homosexuality—regardless of their conclusions—are driven by partisan political and moral agendas, and not by a eucharistic vision of our life before God.

There is no question about the teaching of the Orthodox Church on homosexuality; namely, sexual relations between persons of the same sex are “sinful and contrary to God’s will.”²⁸⁶ Orthodoxy maintains the living Tradition of the Church on the question of homosexuality. The Scriptures, writings of the Fathers, lives of the Saints, and the Liturgy provide no basis whatsoever for the endorsement of sexual relations between two people of the same sex under any circumstances. Consequently, there is no debate on this question in the Church.²⁸⁷

Orthodox believers may not, however, simply ignore the debates on homosexuality which are raging in other churches and in the larger American culture. The legitimacy of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle has become a prominent question in politics, business, education, and even organizations such as the Boy Scouts. Members of the Church, including our children, are exposed to the endorsement of homosexuality and other forms of sexual immorality in the media and other public forums. We must be able to respond to popular arguments for the approval of homosexuality in ways that will help parishioners resist distortions of the faith. Such an apologetic may well help some outside the Church to recognize the genuine Christian wisdom of Orthodox teaching about the unique role of the union of man and woman before God. Given the centrality of sexuality to so much in our culture, a strong witness on this question may well lead some to take the first steps in embracing the fullness of Orthodoxy. Consequently, much of our discussion in this chapter is focused on developing a persuasive Orthodox response to contemporary revisionist claims about homosexuality.

A common argument used to evoke Christian endorsement for the practice of homosexuality is that one’s “sexual orientation” is not purely voluntary. Some argue that it is consequently unfair to require persons who have not freely chosen a homosexual orientation to be celibate. Orthodoxy maintains that even involuntary homosexual inclinations result in misdirected sexual desires and acts which are sinful in the eyes of God, for “they disorient [us] from the pursuit of holiness” and require repentance.²⁸⁸ This

is the clear message of Orthodoxy to those who struggle with homosexual passions. Repentance within the context of the therapeutic ministry of the Church is the spiritual medicine which those who struggle with such temptations require if they are to grow in holiness.

The fullness of an Orthodox vision of *theosis*, and of the sacramental and ascetic context in which growth in holiness occurs, is not presupposed by those who argue today for Christian endorsement of homosexual relations. Instead, their arguments are driven by a selective reading of Scripture and Tradition which is uncritically accommodated to the assumptions of contemporary western culture about both sexuality and religion. For example, the Protestant scholar Eugene F. Rogers, in “Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life,”²⁸⁹ argues that marriage between persons of the same sex “can be a means of redemption,” and that the Holy Spirit is bringing homosexual marriage to the churches.²⁹⁰ In response to the objection that homosexual relationships are by their very nature not open to procreation at any point, and thus incapable of fulfilling a foundational purpose of human sexuality, Rogers argues that procreation is not the chief characteristic of Christian marriage; instead, marriage is to be a communion of self-giving love modeled on the Trinity.²⁹¹ This love is not, in Roger’s view, a basis only for marriage between people of opposite sex.

Though he acknowledges that human nature is for persons to be biologically male or female and for procreation to arise only from heterosexual coupling, Rogers argues that God’s salvation operates contrary to nature. The basis of his argument is St. Paul’s statement in Romans 11:24 that the inclusion of Gentiles into Israel’s covenant is contrary to nature.²⁹² In Roger’s view, appeals to nature as a Christian moral standard are deadly to the faith itself, for they would rule out the very salvation of Gentiles as those branches grafted against nature into Israel.²⁹³

Rogers attempts to develop a rich account of the purposes of Christian marriage, especially indicating how marriage is a means of being drawn into deeper participation in God’s love. Rather than beginning with political accounts of individual rights or the quest for self-actualization through romantic happiness, Rogers tells us that he wants to make a genuinely theological argument for the blessing of same-sex unions. At first blush, readers not well grounded in Orthodoxy might find his argument plausible, for St. Paul clearly asserts that God goes against nature in grafting Gentiles into the salvation of Israel (Rom. 11:24). Likewise, St. Paul does proclaim that there is neither male nor female in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

The key issue at stake, however, in evaluating Roger’s argument is

whether a homosexual relationship is capable of bringing human beings to participation in the Trinitarian love of God in ways that are truly parallel to marriage between a man and a woman. Is a homosexual relationship of the sort that may be a foretaste of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb? Given what we have already said about the intersections between Eucharist²⁹⁴ and marriage, we need now consider whether two men or two women may be united sexually in a covenantal, self-sacrificial love of the sort that makes present Christ's sacrifice and kingdom in this world. To put it differently, is a homosexual union capable of being a means of participation in Christ, a step in *theosis*? Rogers' answers to these questions are clearly contradictory to Orthodox teaching and the Church's reading of the biblical passages which he cites.

All Christians should affirm that the biological givenness of our life as man and woman reflects God's gracious intention for our life together as male and female. Our creation as man and woman is both a sign of the relationship between Christ and the Church and a reflection of the communal love of the Trinity. The consummation of God's reign is portrayed in Scripture as the Wedding Feast of the Lamb; this image again uses the fulfillment of our creation as man and woman as the symbol of our eschatological salvation. To paraphrase Thomas Aquinas, Christ's gracious redemption fulfills but does not destroy nature.²⁹⁵ In other words, Christian salvation is not a gnostic escape from the constraints of the body, but the transformation and fulfillment of the whole person—body, soul, and spirit—as Christ's bodily resurrection demonstrates. It is a mistake radically to separate our physical nature as man and woman from God's intentions for both our sexuality and our salvation.

Rogers has a rejoinder for this argument, for surely not all things bodily are of equal importance for God's purposes in the world. He claims that the New Testament rejection of the necessity of circumcision is a model for rejecting an ultimate moral or spiritual distinction between heterosexual and homosexual unions.²⁹⁶ The normative view of the human body for Christians, in Rogers' view, is the glorified body of Christ, not simply our physical bodies as men and women in this life.²⁹⁷ Rogers argues that the order of redemption transcends gender. God's Fatherhood is not that of a biological male. He makes the curious remark that priests, in churches which ordain women to holy orders, may be called "Father" without being biologically male. He notes that the Virgin Mary is a model for all humankind, whether male or female. The Church, together with its male priests, is the bride of Christ. In the eschatological body of Christ,

the limitations of physical gender are overcome.²⁹⁸

In the current climate of controversy over homosexuality in many churches, Rogers' argument requires a thorough response, especially because of the eucharistic and eschatological context in which he attempts to place marriage and human sexuality. Of central importance to evaluating Rogers' proposal is the place of our physical bodies in the economy of salvation. Certainly, Rogers does not intend to be a Gnostic, and looks for the advent of the Kingdom to bring transformation rather than obliteration of the created order. But how do we get our bearings for determining what such transformation means?

In keeping with the method of our study so far, we will begin with the Eucharist. Though the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is a mystery beyond human explanation, none would deny that the consecrated elements retain at least the empirical characteristics of bread and wine. Likewise, the Church, though the Body of Christ and not simply a human institution, retains the host of mundane social, political, and economic characteristics that are typical of human communities. The same Church which is a foretaste of God's reign by the power of the Spirit remains in this world recognizable as a social institution, with all the limitations and particularities that human society entails. Participation in the Body of Christ does not make irrelevant all dimensions of the created order. Instead, it calls for their restoration, fulfillment, and transformation by grace.

With specific reference to sexuality, Breck observes that, "[N]o reasonable exegesis of the biblical passages...can conclude that gender per se will be eliminated in the resurrection."²⁹⁹ Indeed, the risen Lord has the body of a man, including tangible wounds and the ability to eat food (John 20:27; Luke 24:43). It is clear that we should not endorse the view that there are no abiding physical characteristics, such as gender, in God's eschatological reign. The natural distinctions between male and female are not entirely obliterated in the Kingdom of God.³⁰⁰ Hence, Rogers errs in arguing that our salvation makes irrelevant the biological distinctions between man and woman. We have seen that in Orthodox theology salvation is the fulfillment of the relationship between man and woman in the image of the Trinity, not the obliteration of the distinctions between man and woman. The marital union of man and woman remains the only sexual relationship capable of leading one to growth in holiness before God. The Church has always maintained that those who are not called to a genuine marriage with a person of the opposite sex should remain celibate.

These reservations about Rogers' proposal are bolstered by a biblical theology of man and woman. Protestant scholar Donald J. Wold, in *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, examines biblical theology on sexuality within the context of the views of sex held by several ancient cultures of the Near East. He concludes, in light of his analysis of Scripture, that homosexual relationships violate God's intentions for those created and redeemed in the image of God as men and women. A crucial phase of Wold's argument is Christological: since the Logos is the agent of creation, the natural order of human sexuality is an indication of God's intentions for us as man and woman.³⁰¹ Wold argues that a variety of biblical texts condemn all homosexual acts, but he focuses on Romans 1:26-27. On Wold's reading, St. Paul is arguing that

homosexuality is a result of the departure from God's order in creation... Paul, a firm supporter of the law, was no doubt aware that Leviticus 18:22 categorically included under divine punishment all acts between members of the same sex....[A]ccording to Paul, nature is the created order of male and female in the image of God, regulated by conscience and the law.³⁰²

On the basis of this Christological and Pauline basis, Wold rejects appeals to God's action against nature to graft the Gentiles into the covenant of Israel as a basis for the Church's blessing of homosexual unions. As Romans 1 and 11 are addressing such different issues, he concludes that "it is hermeneutically unsound to ignore the context of specific expressions."³⁰³ Methodist scholar Richard B. Hayes, in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, agrees that Romans 1 also asserts the incompatibility of homosexual relationships with God's purposes for human sexuality. Hayes interprets St. Paul to teach that homosexual acts are "an outward and visible sign of...the rejection of the Creator's design. Those who indulge in sexual practices *para physin* are defying the Creator and demonstrating their alienation from him."³⁰⁴

Hayes rejects the claim that the contemporary witness of homosexual Christians warrants a revision of the Church's traditional readings of Romans 1.³⁰⁵ He demonstrates that the overcoming of the division between Jew and Gentile has clear precedent in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 12:3; Isa. 49: 6). The Scriptures teach that God's intention is for all those created in the *imago dei* to be in communion with the Trinity, and Jesus Christ fulfills the eschatological purpose of opening the path to *theosis* for all people. The same may not be said about the treatment of homo-

sexuality anywhere in the Scriptures. Clearly, the Orthodox Church has never read any passage of Scripture as being supportive of sexual relations between persons of the same sex. Hence, Rogers' analogy does not stand.

In addition to this argument from Scripture, it is important to stress the theological issues at stake in the prospect of blessing homosexual unions. Namely, Rogers claims that such unions may become a means of grace, a participation in God's eschatological redemption. Here we do well to remember that grace restores and perfects, but does not destroy, nature. Since God's intention is for us to be man and woman in His image, we should see Christian marriage as a way of fulfilling our fallen nature, of restoring it to participation in God's grace and holiness. Especially when we remember that Christian marriage is a union whereby two become one in Christ and grow in holiness, it becomes clear that the very nature of marriage is gracious as a means of participation in the life of the Holy Trinity. In marriage, our fallen sexuality is restored and set on a therapeutic path for the Kingdom of God. Hence, the very nature of marriage is salvific. In this light, homosexual unions are obviously contrary to the nature of God's intentions for those created as man and woman in the image of the Trinity. They distort our God-created human nature as man and woman, and block the path to growth in holiness. Rather than our transformation and fulfillment, they work our distortion. To argue for a Christian endorsement of such relationships is to espouse a view of humankind and of salvation which differs radically from the faith of the Scriptures and the Church.

As we have seen, numerous biblical authors use marital imagery for the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, the union between Christ and the Church, and the Wedding Feast of the Lamb as a sign of the eschatological destiny of humankind. From Genesis through Revelation, there is continuity in God's purposes for the man-woman relationship as a unique means of our participation in the life of the Trinity. When man and woman die to self in the covenantal love of marriage, they live eucharistically and participate in the very life of God, even as they prepare for the Kingdom. The fulfillment of God's intentions for our nature as man and woman is possible only in Christian marriage.³⁰⁶ Hence, relationships which do not fulfill our nature as man and woman before God may not be instruments of grace or a means of participating in God's reign. For that to happen, grace would have to become the foe of creation; in dualistic fashion, nature and grace would then be enemies, rather than dynamic categories which together shed light on our standing before God as creatures who have strayed

from the Lord’s purposes for us and who need a spiritual healing which is beyond our own ability to effect. Manichaeism once more would rear its ugly head.

Those who argue that the biological distinctions between the sexes amount to no more than spiritually irrelevant plumbing have fallen prey to the Gnostic dangers of radically distinguishing the person from the body. A faith which places so much weight on the Body of Christ—in connection to the incarnation, the resurrection, the Church, and the Eucharist—must never dismiss the importance of the bodily differences of man and woman, as they have been revealed to have tremendous importance in the economy of salvation from the biblical period to the present. It is unthinkable for the Church to bless unions which are so clearly perversions of God’s intentions for man and woman. The use of the term “perversion” may seem ill-mannered in our politically correct time. Nonetheless, it aptly reflects an Orthodox understanding of the corruption of human sexuality which occurs in unions between persons of the same sex.³⁰⁷ Homosexual desire is a “disordered passion” contrary to “the desire of man and woman to recreate their original oneness in Adam.” Homosexual acts are not only “ill-fitted, unusual, and abhorrent.” They are also “at odds with how God created us as human beings, in His image, as male and female.”³⁰⁸ Breck notes similarly that Orthodox Christianity maintains that “*all homosexual acts are morally wrong*: they distort the natural purpose and function of bodily organs, they have no procreative value, and they represent a parody of the ‘one flesh’ union.”³⁰⁹

Some may question whether such theological points speak to the challenges faced by persons who struggle with homosexual desires. Some advocates of the legitimacy of homosexual practices assert that it is natural for those with a homosexual orientation to engage in such behaviors. Much depends here on what we mean by “natural.”³¹⁰ Orthodox ethicist H. Tristram Engelhardt concedes that, in our fallen world, “fornication, adultery, and homosexual acts may in certain circumstances maximize inclusive fitness.” He admits that “there may be no basis whatsoever in secular medical terms to hold homosexuality to be a form of illness, disease, or disability, or to count homosexuality as biologically deviant or perverse.” The question for moral theology, however, is whether homosexual relations are rightly ordered toward the salvation of the persons involved in them, whether they are natural in the sense of fulfilling God’s intentions for our sexuality as those created in His image and according to His likeness. To this question, Engelhardt gives an emphatically negative response.³¹¹

Further support for the Church's teaching on homosexuality is found in a theological interpretation of the intrinsically heterosexual nature of human sexuality as reflected in human genitalia and the unique personal union between man and woman that our genitalia make possible. Male and female is how God created us, and we err in making these creaturely characteristics irrelevant for understanding God's intentions for our sexuality. Another way of making this point is to ask whether a true "one flesh union" is possible apart from sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Father William Basil Zion notes that Orthodoxy gives a negative answer to that question due "to the simple fact that homosexual genital acts, even though highly symbolic in themselves, do not symbolize the unity between Christ and His Church as sacramental marriage does."³¹²

Likewise, Stanley Grenz makes a strong case that the language of "two becoming one flesh" is deprived of its meaning when applied to homosexual unions because of the biological sameness of their bodies.³¹³ Grenz further develops his position by noting that heterosexual intercourse "provides a vivid symbolic declaration of the monogamous nature of the biblical idea of marriage" whereby man and woman are physically united in producing children. Regardless of whatever virtues a same-sex relationship may display, it remains "inherently devoid" of procreative potential, and fails to symbolize monogamy.³¹⁴ Instead of the ritualized exclusive union of two becoming one, Grenz identifies homosexual unions as friendships that do not manifest the one flesh union of man and woman which is made possible by the physical differences between the sexes. Likewise, friendships are not exclusive relationships which are intended to last throughout the course of one's life. "Same-sex intercourse, then, introduces into the friendship bond the language of exclusivity and permanence that properly belongs only to marriage."³¹⁵ Of their very nature, then, same-sex unions are not parallel in their unitive significance to those of man and woman in marriage. These are clearly not the sort of unions which the Church has called marriage.

What, then, is the Christian who desires a homosexual relationship to do? James P. Hanigan argues that those with persistent temptations toward homosexual acts are called to chastity in singleness, whether through monastic or secular life.³¹⁶ God's grace enables us for the eschatological fulfillment and restoration of our nature, for sharing in God's reign through our participation in the life of the Body of Christ. A homosexual relationship is not a fitting vehicle for coming to share more fully in God's holiness. Regardless of arguments about whether homosexual activity is

in any sense natural in our fallen world, Christians know the true nature of our sexuality from what God has revealed about our creation and salvation as man and woman. Since grace restores and fulfills, but does not destroy our sexual nature as man and woman, to participate in homosexual relationships is to place oneself on a trajectory away from God's gracious purposes for our sexuality. Hence, one who is not called to the vocation of heterosexual marriage should remain single and chaste, and take up the unique forms of ministry available to the celibate.

We must consider, however, the objection that human sin and finitude make such a standard unrealistic for some who desire homosexual relationships. For example, Roman Catholic moral theologian Fr. Richard McCormick, S.J., agrees that heterosexual marriage is normative for Christians, meaning that "the covenanted friendship of marriage offers us the best opportunity to humanize our sexuality and our selves." Nonetheless, he urges the Church to make a pastoral concession for those who are "irreversibly homosexual" and "not called to celibacy for the Kingdom."³¹⁷ McCormick argues that "homosexual acts, however incomplete, flawed and disordered, cannot in all situations be said to be morally wrong...[for] moral norms, however valid, are limited formulations. When they are applied, they encounter brokenness, complexity, and restricted options."³¹⁸ In such situations, the Christian should obey conscience and the Church should support his or her decision.³¹⁹

Hayes is suspicious, however, of the implicit assumption behind the assertion that a life of sexual abstinence is unrealistic or impossible for unmarried Christians. "Despite the smooth illusions perpetrated by mass culture in the United States, sexual gratification is not a sacred right, and celibacy is not a fate worse than death."³²⁰ In stark contrast to the contemporary hedonistic mindset, Hayes places the discussion of human sexuality within an eschatological context that interprets current struggles and limitations in light of the dawning horizon of God's reign.³²¹ We do not become fuller participants in that reign by accepting uncritically the assumptions of this age which frustrate our growth in holiness as man and woman. The Christian life is an arduous journey of dying to self out of faithfulness to God's Kingdom, and has always required the sacrifice of at least some of the cherished desires of all believers. Of course, pastors must work sensitively with those who struggle even to begin the long road of repentance for sexual sins. Pastoral guidance should be aimed at growth towards full submission to God's reign, and must not become complacent about lifestyles which distort God's purposes for our sexuality. Christian

counseling on homosexuality should consciously strive for abstinence from homosexual acts, and repentance from homosexual desires and fantasies, in the context of pursuing *theosis*.³²² To cling unrepentantly to sin is to place an immovable obstacle between oneself and growth in holiness, as well as between oneself and Jesus Christ.³²³

Granted, a particular Christian's struggle toward that goal may be slow and imperfect; the Church must be patient with sinners of all kinds as they die to self, and those who struggle with sexual sins are no exception.³²⁴ But to rest content with same-sex relationships that are counter to God's purposes for our sexuality is spiritually helpful neither for the persons involved nor for the community of faith. There is an inevitable tension between human fallenness and the eschatological vision of consummated communion with God. Pastoral guidance should not relax that tension, but help the Christian to grow in faithfulness to the demands of God's reign.³²⁵

Those who condone homosexual relationships as an acceptable part of the Christian life are guilty of an extreme, unwarranted relaxing of the demands of growing in holiness. They rest content with a substantial obstacle to the eucharistic life through which God's eschatological reign may become present in the world. The covenantal union of man and woman in marriage is the unique context in which sexual intercourse fits coherently with the Christian vision of our salvation. It is only in this union that our sexuality may be transformed by grace as a means by which we are taken up into the eschatological love of God.³²⁶ Those with homosexual inclinations are called, as are all Christians, to the ascetic discipline of dying to self for the sake of the Kingdom.³²⁷ This call to holiness must be made in the spirit of selfless love which does not judge others, even as it condemns their and one's own sin toward the end of repentance and healing.³²⁸

Those who obscure the ascetic call of the Gospel are guilty of encouraging others to engage in relationships which are contrary to God's purposes for us as man and woman. In such cases, the faithfulness of both the individual Christian and of the community itself is greatly weakened. To condone the practice of homosexuality—or any other sinful activity—is to fail to live out the implications of the Eucharist. A eucharistic ethic requires the offering of oneself—body, soul, and spirit—to the Father in union with the sacrifice of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The teaching of the Orthodox Christian faith, from its beginning and for the important reasons we have discussed, is that we may die to self and find

the new life of Christ through either celibacy or marriage, which is possible only with a person of the opposite sex. These are the ways of offering or sacrifice that God intends for our sexuality. To refrain from pursuing this high vision is to refuse to offer the whole of one's life to God. It is to fail to place the entirety of one's life in the context of the Eucharist.

In our contemporary culture, it may seem strange to place great theological and moral weight on the Church's stance toward homosexuality. We are accustomed to thinking of human sexuality in terms of rights to privacy and claims for freedom from discrimination. Given the atomistic individualism of our culture, many would ask whether one's sexual behavior is anyone else's business. As we have seen, such assumptions are directly contrary to those of historic Christianity. Christians commune in the Eucharist with Christ and one another, becoming the Body of Christ. They are organically connected, being members of one another who are to function toward the end of the spiritual health of the entire community. As St. Paul's Corinthian correspondence indicates, the health of the Church as the Body of Christ would be severely threatened by its acceptance of sexual immorality within its midst. Those who commune together are one, sharing in one another's strengths, weaknesses, joys, and sorrows. For the Church to bless same-sex unions or otherwise encourage the practice of homosexuality or other forms of sexual immorality is to place a common obstacle in the path of the entire community's journey to the Kingdom. The spiritual health of all the members of the Church is inevitably interconnected, and no ultimate compartmentalization is possible in the Body of Christ on the basis of what is allegedly private. Salvation is holistic in the sense that we are called to complete, full communion with God; no dimension of our lives is separate from the demands of God's reign.

For Christians to be faithful they must live eucharistically, accepting their foundational identity as members of a Body through which they die to self as they grow in the covenantal love of the Holy Trinity. If our sexuality is not made part of that eucharistic life, then the members of the Church have not offered themselves fully to God. In this light, Orthodox teaching on homosexuality is not fundamentally a matter of moralism, convention, or revulsion. Instead, it is a matter of salvation because it leads those tempted to homosexual relationships to grow in communion with the Holy Trinity by repentance, asceticism, and the sacramental ministry of the Church. Saying "No" to distortions of our sexuality is an essential part of saying "Yes" to the salvation of God's reign.

Chapter 7: The Place of Contraception in the Eucharistic Life

Our discussion has focused on the union of man and woman in marriage in the context of the Eucharist and the Church. An obvious dimension of marital union is procreation. Though not all married couples have children, childbirth reflects God's intentions for our sexuality: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). Indeed, this command immediately follows in Genesis the statement of humanity's creation in the image of God as man and woman. To be in God's image is to welcome new life through a communion of love. The Holy Trinity, the ultimate paradigm of loving communion, is the Creator of all reality. Those who are like God are to participate in His creative work by using their sexuality in accordance with God's purposes for us as man and woman.

Nonetheless, Orthodoxy knows that humans are not simply breeders. Some, out of a special vocation for God's Kingdom, are not to marry or procreate at all. Others, especially in recent decades, wish to regulate childbearing in marriage for a variety of reasons, ranging from personal convenience to stewardship of limited financial, emotional, and physical resources. The use of contraceptive devices is now widely accepted in Protestant circles. The Roman Catholic Church is the only major Christian communion which officially condemns as gravely sinful the use of artificial means of contraception. In beginning our analysis of the spiritual and moral significance of contraception, we will engage the arguments put forward by Rome against their use. In contrast to Roman Catholic natural law morality, we will see that an Orthodox understanding of marriage

places the issue of contraception in a eucharistic light which reflects the common vocation of husband and wife to *theosis*.

Pope Paul VI, in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, defines current Roman Catholic teaching on this subject. He argues that conjugal love is "fully human," uniting man and wife as whole persons in all dimensions of their existence.³²⁹ As sexual union and reproduction are intrinsically physical and biological realities that reflect God's purposes for us, a married couple is "not free to proceed [in procreation] completely at will...but they must conform their activity to the creative intention of God." Even though not every act of intercourse leads to conception, "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life." Paul argues that the unitive and procreative dimensions of intercourse must be respected in every act of sexual union.³³⁰

The only sort of birth control allowed by Paul is natural family planning, by which a couple abstains from intercourse during the fertile periods of the woman's menstrual cycle. This method, according to the encyclical, respects "the order established by God" by indicating to the couple when they may have marital relations which will not result in pregnancy.³³¹ The couple does not intervene to alter the rhythms and biological propensities which God has ordained for the body. Instead, they alter their behavior in order to cooperate with the natural rhythms of the body.

Paul fears that the widespread use of contraceptives will lead to increased marital infidelity and to a general lowering of moral standards in society. Likewise, he is concerned that men will be encouraged to use women selfishly for sexual gratification, "considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion." As well, public authorities "who take no heed of moral exigencies" may be tempted to regulate procreation according to their political goals, thus violating "the most personal and most reserved sector of conjugal intimacy." Particular couples, society as a whole, and governments must respect God's intentions for our sexuality.³³²

Roman Catholic teaching on contraception has many strong points. It recognizes the intrinsically physical dimensions of our sexuality, and rightly observes that the intimate union of man and woman is also a procreative act. Certainly, a sign of becoming "one flesh" is the procreation of children who are the genetic heirs of both parents. Married couples often find a new, deeper sense of the union of their lives when they work together to rear children in whom they recognize physical and other traits of one another. From a Christian perspective, humans are not free to invent

a sexual morality that does not respect God's intentions for us as man and woman. Likewise, to ignore or deny the procreative dimensions of our sexuality is to obscure the place of childbearing in the economy of our salvation.

It goes without saying that the Old Testament views children as a blessing. The covenants with both Abraham and Moses are made with an eye toward God's faithfulness to future generations. It is a sign of Jesus Christ's full humanity that he is born a baby. St. Peter's first sermon in Acts includes the statement "For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." (Acts 2:39) The practices of infant baptism, chrismation, and participation in the Eucharist, along with religious instruction for children, indicate the importance of the spiritual formation of the next generation of Christians. From our earlier discussion of marriage and family life as opportunities to die to self through agapic love in preparation for God's reign, it is clear that child rearing has a very important place in the Christian life.

The Roman Catholic position raises the question starkly: Is it ever spiritually and morally legitimate for a married Christian couple to use artificial means of contraception? Within Roman Catholicism, we find a diversity of opinion on this topic. The official Roman teaching has both its defenders and its critics, and there is no need to rehearse their well-known debates here.³³³ Much of the discussion of these matters among Roman Catholics takes place within the context of natural law morality. Other Christian traditions may approach the issue of contraception in a different light. For example, Protestant theologian Karl Barth asks whether the very essence of marriage before God forbids husband and wife to place impediments in the way of conception.³³⁴ As is characteristic of Barth, he is reluctant to equate the command of God with any kind of natural law morality. Indeed, he argues that sexual abstinence, natural family planning, *coitus interruptus*, and contraception are all in some ways "painful, troublesome and we may say unnatural or artificial." Barth observes that no "absolute and exclusive preference can be given [to any of the methods], but there is also none which can be flatly rejected." Married couples must make their decisions about childbearing together and in good faith before God.³³⁵

Barth's treatment of the issues related to contraception highlights questions of the nature of marriage. Namely, is marital union to be defined biologically and procreatively to the extent that any use of contraception is

a violation of the essence of marriage itself? Or is the union of husband and wife a sacramental covenant of persons that is not susceptible to such precise biological regulation? Here we must tread carefully, for we have seen the crucial importance of the physical body for Christian belief, including accounts of sexual morality. We must avoid an implicit Gnosticism in which the Christian life occurs irrespective of the body, being free of its corporal limitations. Hence, a stance on contraception which seeks to sever entirely the connection between marital union and child bearing is unacceptable to those who understand the essential place of the body in our salvation.

Orthodoxy maintains that it is the nature of marriage to welcome children as God's blessing as a means of participating in the life-creating love of the Trinity.³³⁶ Hence, Harakas reports that

Agreement exists among Orthodox ethicists on the following: since one of the purposes of marriage is the birth of children, a couple acts immorally when it consistently uses contraceptive methods to avoid the birth of any children, if there are not ethically legitimate extenuating circumstances....Less agreement exists on the issue of contraception within marriage for the spacing of children or for the limitation of the number of children.³³⁷

Some Orthodox equate any use of contraceptives with abortion, arguing that those who use methods other than abstinence to control conception are driven only by base "bodily gratification." Others recall the Orthodox emphasis on "the sacramental nature of marriage, seeing the sexual relationships of spouses as an aspect of the mutual growth of the couple in love and unity. This approach not only permits, but also encourages the sexual relationships of husband and wife for their own sake as expressions of mutual love." Harakas observes that this second approach would allow the use of contraception for the "spacing and limiting" of the conception of children.³³⁸

As Harakas interprets Orthodox teaching, the couple which uses contraception to regulate the birth of children for good reasons intends to or has already fulfilled the procreative purpose of marriage.³³⁹ They will still be parents, and there is no moral obligation for the faithful to have as many children as biologically possible. Likewise, to forbid the use of contraception entirely is to define sexual union, and hence marriage, in intrinsically procreative terms. If we say that the couple which contracepts is by definition violating the purposes of marriage, it is hard to see why infertile

or postmenopausal couples should marry or have intercourse. Here we do well to remember our earlier discussion of the sacramental nature of marriage as an agapic communion, modeled on the Trinity, through which each spouse dies to self out of love for the other. In this way, the two become one as they progress toward *theosis* and the life of the Kingdom of God.

In the usual course of events, a married couple will have children, the rearing of whom will be a vital part of their spiritual growth. But even a couple which is unable to have children is still a married couple; their sacramental union remains a vehicle for participation in the life of God. To make childbearing essential to marriage is to recognize only one dimension of the spiritual significance of sexual union, which remains a sacramental relationship through which two become one, regardless of conception.³⁴⁰ St. John Chrysostom concludes, at the end of a paragraph extolling childbirth as the sign of the married couple's "one flesh" union, that a childless couple also shares in the unity of marriage, as "their intercourse effects the joining of their bodies, and they are made one, just as when perfume is mixed with ointment."³⁴¹

Given the centrality of Holy Communion to the Christian life, participation in the Eucharist should shape a couple's understanding of the procreative dimensions of their marriage. Here special attention may be given to the act of offering. In the Eucharist, human beings offer bread and wine to God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, these elements become the very body and blood of Jesus Christ through which those who commune are united with the Lord's sacrifice and victory over death. Our offering of bread and wine is taken up into Christ's sacrifice and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into communion with the Holy Trinity. The offering of the elements is a symbol or type of the whole of the Christian life. We are to live eucharistically, offering our "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1).

In Christian marriage, man and woman offer themselves to God, the Church, and one another. Through their agapic union, they die to self in union with Christ. Their covenantal communion is a means of participating in God's reign, of progressing toward *theosis*. Regardless of whether particular conjugal acts lead to conception, the sexual intimacy of the couple unites them as one flesh. Husband and wife are to submit to one another in their marital union, embodying selflessness in the sexual expression of their covenantal love (1 Cor. 7:3-4). Sexual intercourse then becomes an act of offering one's entire self to both the spouse and the Lord in sacrificial, agapic fidelity. The eucharistic dimensions of marital union

are clear: the couple lives sacramentally as they embody in their marriage the sacrificial offering of Christ.

It is crucial, in this light, to place an Orthodox analysis of contraception within the appropriate context. The question is not one of reducing the chances of conception for adulterers or of the spreading of disease among those who are sexually promiscuous. Neither are we considering the merits of contraception as a means of fundamentally severing the ties between intercourse and parenthood. Instead, the question is whether there may be a place for the use of contraception within particular Christian marriages as the husband and wife together grow in holiness. There is clearly a diversity of Orthodox opinion on the legitimacy of contraception. Nonetheless, Orthodoxy does not categorically forbid a married couple from using contraception, so long as the method used does not hinder implantation of a fertilized egg or otherwise cause abortion. More helpful than attempts to apply a precise legal standard to this matter is consideration of the couple's spiritual growth. Namely, would they use contraception in the context of a eucharistic understanding of their marriage and with an orientation toward growth in the Kingdom of God?

In the usual course of things, marital union will lead to parenthood. The responsibilities of child rearing provide new challenges and opportunities for the couple as the scope of their sacrificial, covenantal love is broadened to include one or more children. In this way, the couple may come to participate more fully in the agapic life of the Trinity by the spiritual discipline of rearing their children, who are beyond the parents' choice and control in many ways. Protestant ethicist Stanely Hauerwas has poignantly remarked that

we must learn to love one another, that we become more nearly what we were meant to be through the recognition and love of those we did not "choose" to love. Children, the weak, the ill, the dispossessed provide a particularly intense occasion for such love, as they are beings we cannot control. We must love them for what they are rather than what we want or wish them to be, and as a result we discover that we are capable of love....Christians are thus trained to be the kind of people who are ready to receive and welcome children into the world.³⁴²

As every parent knows, profound lessons about committed, selfless love come to us through our children. We suffer for them precisely because we love them, and grow in our parental love through that suffering. The eucharistic dimensions of marriage may become even more profound

through parenthood, in which we offer our lives and our children to God in countless acts of sacrificial love. In this context, we should ask whether it is possible that the use of contraception could fit coherently within this eucharistic view of marriage and parenthood. The objections to such a proposition are obvious, for contraception is a means of controlling parenthood and of separating particular acts of sexual union from conception. Indeed, a couple could use contraception to avoid having children at all for selfish reasons. Nonetheless, a crucial factor here would be the context in which a married couple used contraception. For example, to space or limit the number of children in a family out of a reasonable concern for the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the children and the parents is not necessarily sinful. God's intentions for family life are not simply that as many children as possible be conceived, but that every child flourish and be prepared for life in the reign of God.

A couple whose Christian vocation includes forms of ministry or work that are not conducive to a large family might, with the guidance of their spiritual father, decide to limit conception at least for a time in order to allow them to pursue both parenthood and the other work to which they are called. In an age in which members of both sexes may pursue professions that meet legitimate human needs and serve God's purposes in the world, a woman may be called to be both a mother and a worker outside of the home. A marriage in which contraception is used may still be one characterized by sacrificial, covenantal love between the spouses and toward their children, neighbors, and God. A married couple may offer their parenthood, along with the rest of their lives and vocation, to God, regardless of how many children they have.

What must be avoided, however, is a selfish use of contraception which seeks to avoid parenthood for reasons of convenience, greed, or sloth. Barring extraordinary medical circumstances, intentionally to separate sexual intercourse from conception throughout the course of a marriage is wrongly to close oneself off from a fundamental purpose of the union of man and woman. It is also to refuse to accept parenthood as one of the most important vocations of human life and one of the most profound opportunities to grow in the agapic love of God. The offering of our marriages to the Father is incomplete without an openness to welcoming children.³⁴³

Nonetheless, those not blessed with children still participate in a true marriage, and are called to live eucharistically in relation to God, the spouse, and the world. The Christian life requires offering the entirety of

one's being to the Father in union with the sacrifice of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Whether a couple is sterile or blessed with few or many children, they are called to make their life an offering to the Holy Trinity. In this eucharistic context, the biological and reproductive dimensions of married sexuality are taken up into the sacrifice of Christ; yet these dimensions do not exhaust the spiritual significance of marital union. Implicit in the union of a married couple is the joining of two into one in the most profound way possible for human beings. Through this union, man and woman participate in the covenantal, self-sacrificial love of God. The embodiment of that agapic love in marriage *may be* compatible with a particular couple's use of contraception as a means of regulating the size of their family.

Orthodoxy does not rely here on the imposition of an inflexible rule. To the contrary, the freedom and spiritual growth of man and woman together in marriage is the key issue. Evdokimov notes that the "nuptial priesthood" of husband and wife demands that they be able to make decisions about contraception without the direct intervention of the Church. Instead, the pastoral guidance of the Orthodox Church will be provided in a ways that are appropriate to the couple's spiritual maturity.³⁴⁴ Rather than focusing only on the procreative dimensions of sexuality, the Christian couple is called to embrace childbearing and rearing freely with a view toward the life of the Kingdom of God.³⁴⁵ As such, the key issues at stake in the use of birth control in marriage are not those of "natural" or "artificial" means, but of spiritual maturity and freedom.³⁴⁶

Growth in agapic love, not a rigid and physically defined view of natural law, is the norm for an Orthodox understanding of contraception. Father Paul O'Callaghan argues that the root of the difference between Roman Catholic and Orthodox teaching on contraception is that

most Orthodox are prepared to accept the premise that human beings may actively intervene in physical processes so as to determine by free choice that certain acts of intercourse will take place under conditions of infertility. Whereas the Roman approach—seeking the same ends—leaves the couple under the determinism of natural processes, an Orthodox approach allows the couple the freedom of actually determining the condition of fertility."³⁴⁷

Stressing the biblical theme of stewardship over nature, including our own bodies, O'Callaghan claims that it violates "the divine order of creation to assert that natural processes...are the arbiter of the good for human beings,

rather than that free human beings should be allowed to control natural processes.”³⁴⁸ In this way, Roman Catholic teaching is wrongly deterministic, subjecting the freedom of human beings to the tyranny of the natural world.³⁴⁹

Nonetheless, Breck notes the intrinsic link in Orthodox teaching between the unitive and procreative dimensions of marital union. The Christian tradition defines a family as “a man and a woman who join as ‘one flesh’ for the deepening of their mutual love by bringing forth ‘the fruit of their bodies.’” The unitive value of marriage, therefore, is inextricably linked to its creative potential.³⁵⁰ Disagreement among Orthodox moral theologians about the status of contraception exists because child-bearing and rearing are “the primary aim of and justification for sexual activity,” while the unitive dimensions of marriage are “a blessed and joyful corollary to procreation.”³⁵¹ One sign of the moral and spiritual error of those who engage in sexual intercourse outside the covenant of marriage is their typical lack of openness to children.³⁵²

Father Chrysostom Zaphiris writes of the use of contraception in marriage that “as long as a married couple is living in fidelity to one another and not allowing an immoral egotism to dominate their sexual relations, the particularities of their sexual life are left to the freedom of the spouses to decide.”³⁵³ In the case of a couple “who already have three or four children and cannot realistically face the possibility of begetting more children and providing adequately for their upbringing and education,” the use of contraception may well be a better option than complete abstinence “from sexual intercourse with the constant threat that Satan may tempt the couple to some form of adultery.” For Zaphiris, whether the contraceptive method is “natural” or “artificial” is irrelevant, as the contraceptive intention is the same.³⁵⁴ Under a given set of circumstances, contraception may “contribute to the possibility of a couple’s having a permanent spiritual and physical union. The practice of contraception can contribute to the harmony between the man and the wife which is the *sine qua non* of their union.”³⁵⁵

Zaphiris cautions that abstinence from intercourse in a marriage should arise from spiritual discernment, not fear of conception. “That is, sexual continence should be practiced only when a couple feels that this is being asked of them by God as a moment within their mutual growth in holiness and spirituality.” Abstinence “for baser motives such as fear is not the kind of continence which is counseled to us by the Gospel.”³⁵⁶ In this light, he criticizes *Humana Vitae* for assuming a view of natural law which

denies the synergistic freedom of humans before God.³⁵⁷

Zaphiris concludes that a “decision to suspend fertility [temporarily], when made by both marital partners with reason and freedom of spirit, is a decision perfectly consistent with God’s will for human beings on earth.”³⁵⁸ Rather than affirming a deterministic view of natural law, he argues “that sexual life must be guided by the meaning of the relationship and personhood.” Orthodoxy allows a variety of opinions on the morality of contraception, but insists on a synergistic view of salvation which requires that human beings freely respond to and cooperate with God’s grace. Hence, this question is better addressed within the context of *theosis*, of the calling of particular people to grow in holiness, than within the inflexible biological categories of natural law as interpreted by *Humana Vitae*.³⁵⁹

After reviewing the variety of contemporary Orthodox thought on contraception, Zion reaches similar conclusions. He begins by rejecting Roman Catholic natural law arguments about the teleology of bodily organs as being scientifically outdated and in tension with a more genuinely Orthodox focus on the moral import of “human motives and intentions.” Next, he argues that “The human ordering of nature is legitimate in accord with the principles of synergism.” Human cooperative response to God’s grace may well entail intervention in the processes of nature. That allowance for human initiative is limited by the intrinsic status of human life, for abortion is always morally illicit for Orthodox Christians. Hence, any contraceptive devices or methods which destroy fertilized eggs are unacceptable morally, as generally are those requiring permanent sterilization.³⁶⁰

It is imperative to remember, however, that the arguments of these authors for the possible legitimate use of contraception in particular marriages do not amount to an omnibus endorsement of its use by any or all Orthodox couples. Instead, they reflect the judgment that certain couples may in good conscience discern that, given their level of spiritual maturity in relation to the limits of the particular circumstances which they face, they should use contraception at this point in their marriage. In other words, temporarily avoiding pregnancy might be helpful to a particular husband and wife as they grow in holiness. Such an allowance is more a therapeutic concession for the sake of salvation than a general moral rule.³⁶¹

Marital asceticism should be normative for Christians, as is shown in the traditional fasts of the Church, and is not without relevance for ques-

tions of conception. As Engelhardt notes, “were a couple abstaining from sexual intercourse on Wednesdays and Fridays, during four fast seasons of the year, and on Saturdays, Sundays, and feast days, as well as prior to communion on other days, there would already be a fair probability that the number of children produced in a marriage would be reduced.”³⁶² “Traditional Christianity provides what is for many paradoxical: sexual asceticism. Asceticism in marriage, as with respect to food and drink, has always been understood as integral to the struggle to holiness: enjoyment without being distracted by a self-indulgence that turns one’s heart from God.”³⁶³ Since marriage is a vehicle for growth in holiness, a couple’s spiritual father “will need to take into account the abilities of each partner, the temptations to which they are subject, the maturity of their mutual love, and the circumstances of their lives.” In other words, the norms of the Church must be applied pastorally and therapeutically to the particular situation of a given couple in their journey toward the Kingdom of God. Nonetheless, “By simply raising the issue of the traditional fast, marital sexuality has already begun to be directed towards God, even when that fast cannot be kept fully...whatever marital fast is undertaken must be done with the full consent of husband and wife, as St. Paul warns.”³⁶⁴

In agreement with the other Orthodox treatments of contraception which we have discussed, Engelhardt insists that the eschatological, salvific focus of Orthodox teaching on marriage reflects a method very different from that of traditional Roman Catholic natural law morality.³⁶⁵ In a proper theological sense, unnatural sexual acts are those which are not in accordance with God’s intentions for human sexuality and which do not lead those who practice them to greater holiness. “Natural law is not an objective external constraint, but the will of the living God experienced in our conscience. It is this natural law, the law of God in our nature, which calls for carnal sexuality to be accomplished only within marriage.”³⁶⁶ The nature of marriage is “the companionship of man and woman in the mutual pursuit of salvation.” While “the purpose of the carnal character of human sexuality” is procreation, intercourse may legitimately occur in marriage for the sake of preserving chastity and strengthening the marital bond, “as long as the possibility of reproduction is always accepted.” In other words, abortion is not an option.³⁶⁷

God intends the married to direct their sexual energies toward *theosis*, “to turn with love to each other and their children...they are like martyrs; they are to die to their passions.” To eschew procreation for reasons of selfishness, such as a desire for luxury, is contradictory to a Christian

understanding of marriage. Engelhardt allows, however, that a couple might decide “to limit children because of health or due to limited familial or societal resources [without]...a misdirection of energies; it can be made out of love for others and with humility before God.”³⁶⁸ Engelhardt even allows that a couple might marry with the intention of avoiding having children due to “very serious health risks to the mother or because of a very significant risk of conceiving a child with a very serious illness...which might lead the couple to be tempted to abort.” Such a scenario would be “far from ideal, indeed...broken.” A couple in this situation would require “careful spiritual guidance...approached within the medicinal response of a spiritual father to the challenge of bringing a couple to recognize that they must turn away from pleasing themselves and strive to become saints: the traditional goal of a Christian marriage.” As with all pastoral counseling, the aim is the salvation of the particular persons involved.³⁶⁹

Engelhardt states that “The Church is uncompromising in her demand that we open our hearts to God, that we become perfect, that we become saints. She is therapeutic in her approach to making us perfect. She recognizes that she must begin by treating us where she finds us in our sins.”³⁷⁰ Such a therapeutic approach to the spiritual growth of a particular couple is vastly different from the assumptions of contemporary western culture about marriage and contraception, for it seeks salvation instead of “luxury and indulgence.”³⁷¹

It is fitting to conclude our discussion with Engelhardt’s analysis, for he makes clear the salvific understanding of marriage which provides the background from which Orthodox Christians approach contraception and all other questions of sexual ethics. To live eucharistically is to die to self as we offer the entirety of our lives to the Father in union with the sacrifice of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. In all dimensions of our lives, we are in a dynamic state of growth in holiness, of growing into fuller communion with the Holy Trinity. The scope of our self-offering is likewise to grow by ascetic cooperation with sacramental grace. No matter where we are on the journey to the Kingdom, God accepts the offering of ourselves which we have the spiritual maturity to make. Given the sins “both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance” which beset us and have led the entire creation into corruption, we are all in need of repentance, spiritual healing, and growth in holiness. The particular infirmities (spiritual, physical, and social) faced by some married couples will lead them intentionally to delay, space, or limit the conception of children in accordance with the pastoral guidance of the

Church. The use of contraception, in such cases, may be the best that the couple can do to fulfill God's calling to them as husband and wife under the present circumstances of their life together, and is not condemned as sinful or immoral. The goal toward which couples should strive in their marital life remains, however, complete openness to the children with whom God may bless them through their union as man and woman.

Orthodox moral theology remains eucharistic and pastoral, focused on bringing fallen human beings into to fuller communion with the Holy Trinity. The journey of *theosis* is never undertaken alone, but in the communion of the Church. As we have seen, the entire existence of the Christian is to become Eucharist. Those called to marriage must learn how to offer their family life to God through eucharistic communion in the Body of Christ. Those called to abstain from sexual union must likewise find their salvation by offering eucharistically their celibacy to the Father. Whether single or married, Christians must offer themselves in union with Christ's sacrifice in order to conquer their passions, resist the temptations of our culture, and grow in communion with the Holy Trinity. The Eucharist is our salvation, our communion with God, and our shared ecclesial life. A eucharistic spirituality permeates the entire Christian life and draws us to the salvation of the Kingdom. Though it will sound strange to many in contemporary western culture, the meaning and fulfillment of human sexuality is found in the Body of Christ.

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1. Metropolitan John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 126.
2. See, for example, "The Didache," in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), para. 14, 197; and St. Justin Martyr, "Worship and Witness," as cited in H. T. Kerr, ed., *Readings in Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 23.
3. Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 224, observes that "People do not gather in the churches to constitute the body of the Church, to manifest and realize the true life of the communion of persons; they come to satisfy their individual religious needs and to pray as individuals, in parallel with the rest of the congregation, more alone perhaps than on the sports-ground or at the cinema."
4. Father John Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 11, notes that "'Christian ethics' is a Western category. 'Eastern' Orthodoxy, on the other hand, traditionally focuses on 'moral theology,' which is basically traditional ascetic theology: exposition of the interior struggle toward sanctification through the grace and transfiguring power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The new discipline of Orthodox Christian Ethics has come into being to help us as pastors and lay people to deal effectively and faithfully, in light of authentic 'living Tradition,' with moral dilemmas raised in modern technological societies. Its aim is above all to develop criteria that will enable us to make good, right, just and appropriate moral choices: choices that conform to the will and purpose of God for ourselves and for the world in which we live."
5. Father Harmon L. Smith, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Liturgy and the Moral Life* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1995), 65.
6. Smith, *Where Two or Three are Gathered*, 37.
7. Smith, *Where Two or Three are Gathered*, 38-40, 44-52. It is in the transformation of the worshipping community's identity that Smith identifies, 54, certain secondary results of the worship of God: "For centuries, the liturgy has been important for Christians because it teaches us who, by God's mercy, we are and are meant to be. Such knowledge is not something we have naturally; we have to learn it; we have to be taught it and trained in it; we have to acknowledge it; it is a gift. Insofar as we receive it, the liturgy

shapes us to be the reconstituted family of God, the people of God's new age, the *ecclesia theou*. It forms our lives morally by providing the essential means whereby Jesus' life becomes our life, his story becomes our story, his work becomes our work. It recapitulates the story of God's continuing effort to show the world its true destiny and claim it by God's faithful love. It tells us who we are and who we are meant to be if we purpose to understand and intend ourselves as disciples of Jesus, God's Christ."

8. Smith, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered*, 64-65.

9. Smith, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered*, 65-66.

10. Smith, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered*, 69-70. As such, the liturgy, and especially the sacrament of Eucharist, trains "us to see, to discern ourselves, the church, and the world—indeed all of life and reality—as formed by the Gospel. Because the liturgy is formed by the story of Israel, and the story of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, its power forms us in its image, after its assumption, according to its norms."

11. Vigen Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 46-47, "The memory of the church is both *anamnetic* and *epicletic*, and it is eucharistically centered. Eucharistic worship puts history to the service of doxology and calls on the Holy Spirit to place in communion with Christ those who remember him and consume his body and blood. Ultimately, Christian tradition and ethics are bound up with sacrament and eschatology...The collective remembrance of this community, in the power of the Holy Spirit, makes Christ and his sacrifice present and also affords a passage into and a proleptic experience of God's eschatological kingdom."

12. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 20-21, "It was in the eucharist that the Church would contemplate her eschatological nature, would taste the very life of the Holy Trinity; in other words she would realize man's true being as image of God's own being...Thus the eucharist was not the act of a pre-existing Church; it was an event *constitutive* of the being of the Church, enabling the Church to *be*. The eucharist *constituted* the Church's being."

13. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 114-115.

14. The Orthodox emphasis on the incarnation is implicit in the Orthodox view of *theosis* and of icons. The connection of these teachings is evident in St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Bk. IV, Ch. XVI, 88, and in Vigen Guroian, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 13-28. Michael Ramsey, *The Anglican Spirit* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1991), 21-22, comments on a theme in Richard Hooker that "It was that line of thought, I think, that tended to push the Incarnation into first place in Anglican theology. It would be a

bit of an oversimplification to say (but perhaps not too much of one) that in Anglican theology through the centuries the Incarnation has been a more central and prominent doctrine than that of the cross and redemption, and certainly more so than justification or predestination.” See also Ramsey’s account of “The Orthodox Church and Anglicanism,” *The Anglican Spirit*, 143-151.

15. Father Michel Najjīm and T.L. Frazier, *Understanding the Orthodox Liturgy: A Guide for Participating in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Saugus, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1995), 5-6.

16. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 85.

17. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 26.

18. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 31.

19. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 35-36.

20. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 86, observes that “The unification of ‘all in all’ is brought about with the incarnation of God the Word, and finds its practical manifestation in the eucharist of the Church. The Church’s eucharist is a *cosmic liturgy*: it sums up the life of the world and the inner principle of the world in the ‘principle’ of man, in the human word glorifying God, the word which is made flesh in man’s life.”

21. *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), Faith and Order Paper No. 111, 10-11, states that “The bread and wine, fruits of the earth and of human labor, are presented to the Father in faith and thanksgiving. The eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit.”

22. See Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 18.

23. This point is made vividly in “The Martyrdom of Polycarp,” *Early Christian Writings*, para. 14, when Polycarp offers a eucharistic prayer immediately before his death: “I bless thee for granting me this day and hour, that I may be numbered amongst the martyrs, to share the cup of thine Anointed and to rise again unto life everlasting, both in body and soul, in the immortality of the Holy Spirit.”

24. Colin C. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 149-150, observes “the importance of the reference to the Supper as enabling the maintenance of the christological and pneumatological mediation of the doctrine of creation. It enables in particular a continuing orientation to the doc-

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trine of creation's affirmation of the importance of the material world.”

25.Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 14.

26.Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 15.

27.Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 20-21.

28.Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 34-35. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 62, states “Thus we have been born; we have been stamped with Christ as though with some figure and shape. To prevent us from introducing any alien figure He Himself occupies the entrances of life. He appropriates the organs by which we introduce air and food to aid the life of the body, and through them He enters our souls; through the former He comes as chrism and a sweet odor, through the latter as food. We breathe Him, He becomes food for us. Thus, as He blends and mingles Himself with us throughout, He makes us His own body and He becomes for us what a head is for the members of a body. Since, then, He is the Head, we share all good things with Him, for that which belongs to the head must needs pass into the body.”

29.Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 61-62.

30.See Deacon John Chryssavgis, *Beyond the Shattered Image* and Anestis G. Keselopoulos, *Man and the Environment* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

31.For an Orthodox critique of natural law ethics, see H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., *The Foundations of Bioethics*, 172ff. (Exton, PA: Swets & Zeitlinger Publishers, 2000), 172ff.

32.Celtic Christianity challenges us to develop an environmental ethic that sees God's glory reflected in all creation. See William Parker Marsh and Christopher Bamford, *Celtic Christianity: Ecology and Holiness* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1987).

33.Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 122, comments on the incarnation that “For this cause He did not merely clothe Himself in a body, but He also assumed a soul, mind, and will and everything else that is human, in order to be united to the whole of our nature and completely penetrate us and resolve us into Himself by totally joining what is His to that which is ours.”Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 93-94, notes that “The eucharist thus defines a new human ethos. The moral endeavor of the Christian is a personal extension of the eucharist into every aspect of life. Work, economic life, the family, art, technology, politics and cultural life all become part of man's eucharistic relationship with God. Within the eucharist, man, the world and history find their true identity and at the same time are *made word*: they appear ‘according to nature’ as the Word and

Wisdom of God, as the blessed Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

34. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 120.

35. William Temple, *Nature, God, and Man* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1949), 493-494 comments: “The world, which is the self-expressive utterance of the Divine Word, becomes itself a true revelation, in which what comes is not truth concerning God, but God Himself...The spiritually sensitive mind can be in personal communion with God, in, and by means of, all its existence. It is probable that no adequately sensitive mind exists, and that all must deepen their insight by periods of adoring contemplation, which alternate with periods of activity inspired and guided by what is then apprehended. But the goal is to fuse action and worship into the continuous life of worshipful service; in the holy city which came down from God out of heaven the seer beheld no place of worship because the divine presence pervaded all its life.”

36. Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 105, emphasizes the union between God and humanity worked by the incarnation in his comments on the sacrament of chrismation. “When, however, flesh was deified and human nature gained possession of God Himself by hypostatic union, the former barrier opposed to God became joined to the Chrism. The difference gave way when God became man, thus removing the separation between Godhead and manhood. So chrism represents Christ as the point of contact between both natures; there could be no point of contact were they still separate.”

37. See Theodore Runyon, “The Sacraments,” *Keeping the Faith: Essays to Mark the Centenary of Lux Mundi*, Geoffrey Wainwright, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 209-217.

38. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 149, notes that “The Christian Passover takes on and reveals the full meaning of the Jewish Passover. Liberation from sin is at the very root of political liberation. The former reveals what is really involved in the latter. But on the other hand, communion with God and others presupposes the abolition of all injustice and exploitation. This is expressed by the very fact that the Eucharist was instituted during a meal. For the Jews a meal in common was a sign of fellowship. It united the diners in a kind of sacred pact. Moreover, the bread and the wine are signs of fellowship which at the same time suggest the gift of creation. The objects used in the Eucharist themselves recall that fellowship is rooted in God’s will to give the goods of this earth to all persons so that they might build a more human world.”

39. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1951), esp. chs. 2 and 3.

40. Deacon John Chryssavgis, *Beyond the Shattered Image* (Minneapolis: Life and Life

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Publishing, 1999), 21.

41. Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom*, 38. Guroian notes that “one of the reasons Christian moral arguments seem so ungrounded these days is that they have become utterly dislocated and dissociated from Christian worship and liturgy. Christians are losing the eschatological experience of the church as the inbreaking of God’s kingdom into the world, and so of course this experience is having an increasingly diminished effect on their conduct. They are forgetting that the quest for truth and excellence is part of participating in that kingdom.”

42. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Portland, ME: The American Orthodox Press, 1966), 57, “The event which is “actualized” in the Eucharist is an event of the past when viewed within the categories of time, but by virtue of its eschatological, determining, completing significance it is also an event which is taking place eternally. The coming of the Messiah is a single event of the past, but in His coming, in His life, death, and resurrection, His kingdom has entered into the world, becoming the new life in the Spirit given by Him as life within Himself. This messianic Kingdom or life in the new aeon is “actualized”—becomes real—in the assembly of the Church, in the *ecclesia*, when believers come together to have communion in the Lord’s body.”

43. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 23-24, notes that “The Church has been merged with worship, has come to be understood as a sacramentally hierarchical institution existing for the performance of divine worship seen as a sacred, supra-temporal, immutable mystery...But the individual believer, entering the church, does not feel he is a participant and celebrant of worship, does not know that in this act of worship he, along with the others who together with him are constituting the Church, is called to express the Church as new life and to be transformed into a member of the Church.”

44. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 24.

45. Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 214-215. See also Guroian, “The Shape of Orthodox Ethics,” *Incarinate Love*, 13-28. According to Meyendorff, the Byzantine Empire “was an authentic attempt to view human life in Christ as a whole; it did not admit any dichotomy between the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the secular, the individual and the social, or the doctrinal and the ethical, but recognized a certain polarity between ‘divine things’—essentially the sacramental communion of man with God—and ‘human affairs.’ Yet between the two, there had to be a ‘symphony’ in the framework of a single Christian ‘society’ in which both Church and state cooperated in preserving the faith and in building a society based on charity and humaneness.”

46. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 215. For discussions of *theosis*, see Meyendorff’s

“Introduction” in *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*, John Meyendorff, ed. (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983), 1-22; and Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), ch. 4, 67-90.

47. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 216. Meyendorff notes in *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 12, “Throughout the history of the Orthodox East, the Church was saved from absorption into the Empire by the hermits of the desert, the stylites standing year after year on their pillars, the great monastic communities that, like the monastery of Studios in Constantinople, preached the monastic ideal at the very heart of the city, commanding the reverence of the emperors and the Christian people. The essence of their testimony was that of the New Testament, not of the Old, in so far as the latter identified the chosen people with the nation and the state. Against the theocratic claims of the Christian empire the monks affirmed that the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of the world to come; it is not a sociological or political phenomenon in human history; it is the very Presence of God.”

48. John H. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Theological Seminary Press, 1991), 18-20.

49. St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, (New York: Doubleday, 1958), I/35, 63, taught that “the City of God itself, so long as it is a wayfarer on earth, harbors within its ranks a number of those who, though externally associated in the common bond of the sacraments, will not be associated in the eternal felicity of the saints. Some there are who, covertly or overtly, join the enemy in abusing the God whom they have promised to serve. They are to be seen flocking sometimes to the theaters with the godless, and at other times to the churches with us.”

50. St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, I/8,9, 45-49.

51. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), 79.

52. William Temple, *Nature, God, and Man*, 492, notes that “All turns, of course, on the conviction that in the sacrament God acts, fulfilling His own promise. This distinguishes the sacrament from magic, of which the essence is that man through the rite puts compulsion on the god, while it also endows the sacrament with the virtue and potency which magic falsely claims to offer.” Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 219, comments on St. Paul’s warnings of the abuse of the Supper in 1 Corinthians that “a sharing in the gifts of Christ does not automatically guarantee salvation, contrary to what ‘enlightened’ Corinthians, people at home with the Hellenistic mystery cults, seem to have thought.”

53. St. John Chrysostom, “On the Respect Due to the Church of God, and to the Sacred

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Mysteries,” in *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers* (Swedesboro, NJ: Preservation Press, 1996), Vol. 2, 143. “For as those butchers became guilty of His Blood, so likewise are they who partake unworthily of the Eucharist. For as he who has torn the royal purple, or besmattered it with mud, has equally insulted the one who wears it, so those who take to themselves the Body of the Lord, and receive It with an impure soul, treat Him with the same mockery as they who dishonor the royal apparel.”

54. Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 193. “Now the true Bread who ‘strengthens the heart of man’ (Ps. 104:15) and came down from heaven bringing us life (cf. Jn. 6:32-33) will suffice for all things. He will intensify our eagerness and take away the inborn sluggishness of the soul. Him we must seek in every way in order that we may feed on Him and ward off hunger by constantly attending this banquet. Nor should we unnecessarily abstain from the holy table and thus greatly weaken our souls on the pretext that we are not really worthy of the Mysteries. Rather, we must resort to the priests [for Confession] on account of our sins so that we may drink of the cleansing Blood. But if we know these things we should by no means incur guilt from great offences so as to be excluded from the holy table. It is the ungodly who insolently approach the sacred Gifts after committing a sin unto death; those who are not afflicted with such diseases may not rightly flee from that Bread. For those are still in their wills fighting its coals it is right to beware of the Fire and not receive Christ to dwell with them until they have been reconciled to Him. Those whose wills are rightly disposed but who are sickly in other respects have need of the strengthening medicine, and should betake themselves to Him who bestows spiritual health, and who ‘has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases’ (Is. 53:4), rather than shun Him who will heal them on the pretext of their ailments.” St. Ambrose, “The Sacrament of the Altar,” *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 3, 134, encourages a life worthy of daily Communion. “Receive daily what profits you each day. So live, that each day you may be worthy to receive: he who is not worthy to receive each day, is not worthy to receive after a year.”

55. *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), 860. Though not part of that Anglican Catechism, the version of the historic Articles of Religion included in the *Book of Common Prayer*, 873, state that “The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ; yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ; but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing.” See also St. Augustine, “Explanation of the Gospel,” *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 3, 144-148.

56. “Sacrament,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1219, indicates that the sacraments “do not convey grace to the recipient if he is not rightly disposed. In the absence of faith and repentance he may put an impediment (*obex*) in the way of grace which would naturally flow through the Sacrament. In such cases the Sacramental act, though ‘valid,’ is not ‘efficacious.’”

57. St. Basil the Great’s prayer before Communion reflects the Patristic consensus on

the gravity of receiving the Eucharist. “O Lord, I know that I am unworthy to receive Thy Holy Body and Precious Blood; I know that I am guilty, and that I eat and drink condemnation to myself, not discerning the Body and Blood of Christ my God. But trusting in Thy loving-kindness I come unto Thee who has said: He that eateth my Body and drinketh my Blood shall dwell in Me and I in him. Therefore, O Lord, have compassion on me and make not an example of me, Thy sinful servant.””Another Prayer of St. Basil the Great,” *A Prayerbook for Orthodox Christians* (Englewood, N.J.: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, 1997), 49.

58.Martin Luther, “The Pagan Servitude of the Church,” *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), 281.

59.Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 45.

60.Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 52-53, states, “Not that the penance should be regarded as a punishment; still less should it be viewed as a way of expiating an offence. Salvation is a free gift of grace. By our own efforts we can never wipe out our guilt; Christ the one mediator is our only atonement, and either we are freely forgiven by Him, or else are not forgiven at all. We do not acquire ‘merit’ by fulfilling a penance, for in our relation to God we can never claim any merit of our own. Here, as always, we should think primarily in therapeutic rather than juridical terms. A penance is not a punishment, nor yet a form of expiation, but a means of healing. It is a *pharmakon* or medicine. If the actual Confession is like an operation, the penance is the tonic that restores the patient to health during his convalescence. The penance, therefore, in common with the whole act of Confession, is essentially positive in purpose; it does not set up a barrier between the sinner and God, but serves as a bridge between the two. ‘Behold the goodness and the severity of God’(Rom. 11:22): the penance is an expression not of divine severity but equally of divine love.”

61.St. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, II,22, 4, provides a classic statement of Jesus Christ’s restoration of our fallen human nature: “He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants...So likewise He was an old man for old men, that He might be a perfect master for all, not merely as respects the setting forth of the truth, but also as regards age, sanctifying at the same time the aged also, and become an example to them likewise.” Irenaeus stresses the physical reality of the incarnation in order to show, III, 18, 1, that “what we had lost in Adam...we might recover in Jesus Christ.”

62.Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 220.St. Nicholas Cabasilas makes this point well. “But in the case of him whom Christ has bought it is impossible for him to be his own. Since no man has ever bought a complete man, and there is no price for which it is possible to purchase a human soul, so no one has ever set a man free or enslaved him save with respect to his body. The Saviour, however, has bought the whole of man. While men merely spend money to buy a slave, He spent Himself....So, by giving Himself com-

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pletely, He purchased the whole man.”

63. Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 109. Partial parallels to Orthodox teaching on the Eucharist are found in some other Christian churches. To quote again from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, 365, in Communion God accepts “us as living members of ...our Savior Jesus Christ...and [feeds] us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.”

64. St. Augustine, “To Children on the Sacrament of the Altar,” *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 4, 250.

65. Symeon the New Theologian, *Vie Spirituelle*, XXI, 1931, 300, quoted in Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 51.

66. St. Ephraim, “The Mystery of the Eucharist,” *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 3, 122, stresses the mysterious nature of the Eucharist, “Partake of the Immaculate Body and Blood of Your Lord with fullest faith; certain that you are receiving wholly the Lamb Itself. The mysteries of Christ are in immortal fire. Take care you do not rashly search into them, lest you be burned partaking of them.”

67. Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 159-160.

68. Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 165.

69. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 147.

70. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 148.

71. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 151.

72. Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 219, observes that “The meal puts believers in contact with the risen Lord and therefore in an ‘eschatological’ situation, which is a situation of judgment, for he who calls the community together and is mysteriously present is one who is already exalted in glory. This is why Paul urges his addressees to understand what it is they are doing when they gather for the Lord’s Supper.”

73. “Another Prayer of St. Basil the Great,” *A Pocket Handbook for Orthodox Christians*, 49.

74. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 60, notes that “The people who become citizens of the Kingdom, of the Church of Christ, are not those who are ‘all right’ in their own private religious conscience, not the superficially respectable, the ‘moral paragons’ for

the masses. They are the sinners, those who are not afraid to recognize their daily failures and the resistances put up by their rebellious nature, and make no attempt to hide them. These people alone have the capacity to accept the call to repent, to seek refuge in the life-giving grace of God.”

75. Robert N. Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), ch. 9, provides an illuminating analysis of the impact of individualism on American religious life.

76. Smith, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered*, 93-94.

77. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 61-63.

78. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 82-83.

79. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 40-41.

80. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 44.

81. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 58.

82. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 60.

83. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 88. He also argues that Christ must be understood “in terms of personhood which implies a particularity established in and through *communion*. The implications of this for the notion of continuity are clear. In a pneumatologically constituted Christology an event can never be defined by itself, but only as a relational reality. It is this that allows the Biblical notion of “corporate personality” to be applied to Christ: *Christ without His body is not Christ but an individual of the worst type.*”

84. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 206, “Our Lord, before He left His disciples, offered them a sort of ‘diagram’ of the Kingdom when He gathered them together in the Upper Room. It was not one ‘sacrament’ out of ‘two’ or ‘seven’ that He offered them, nor simply a memorial of Himself, but a real image of the Kingdom. At least this is how the Church saw it from the beginning. In the eucharist, therefore, the Church found *the structure of the Kingdom*, and it was this structure that she transferred to her own structure. In the eucharist the ‘many’ become ‘one’ (I Cor. 10:17), the people of God become the Church by being called from their dispersion to one place. Through her communion in the eternal life of the Trinity, the Church becomes ‘the body of Christ,’ that body in which death has been conquered and by virtue of which the eschatological unity of all is offered as a promise to the entire world.” Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 22-27, likewise stresses that the human is a person, “not an *individual*, a segment or subdivi-

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sion of human nature as a whole. He represents, not the relationship of a part to the whole, but the possibility of summing up the whole in a distinctiveness of relationship, in an act of self-transcendence.”

85. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 20, notes that “We Orthodox Christians today desperately need to rediscover the implications of communion for community, lest our much-vaunted ‘spirituality’ and ‘mystical theology’ degenerate into dilettantish escapism, and our church community into that caricature idolized by the legalist and scorned by the anarchist.”

86. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 217-218, “As people live the sacrificial ethos of the eucharist, it suffuses economics, politics, professional life, the family and the structures of public life in a mystical way...it transfigures them...”

87. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 126, notes that “When piety ceases to be an ecclesial event and turns into an individual moral attainment, then a heretic or even a non-Christian can be just as virtuous as a ‘Christian.’ Piety loses its connection with truth and its ontological content; it ceases to be related to man’s full, bodily participation in the life of God....Pietism is a heresy in the realm of ecclesiology: it undermines or actually denies the very truth of the Church, transferring the event of salvation from the ecclesial to the individual ethos, to piety divorced from the trinitarian mode of existence, from Christ’s way of obedience.”

88. Father Thomas Hopko, *All the Fulness of God*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), 91.

89. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 13, states that “The Church is indeed a society, the people of God, but precisely because the Church is a sacrament, the effective sign and presence of the kingdom which is to come. The Church is not an autonomous, self-directing society established long ago to dispense grace and make and break its own rules until Christ comes again in glory. The thrust even of the New Testament’s political imagery is eschatological: the Church is that chosen race, royal priesthood and holy nation foretold by the prophets for the last times (1 Pt. 2:9). The accent is on fulfillment. If the Church can be described as a perfect society, this is not because of a constitution laid down long ago by its Founder but because it effectively participates in the ultimate realities that it signifies. In other words, the Church is not just a horizontal community; it is also a vertical communion. And it is this life of communion which makes possible life as community, as the people of God. From this it follows that the Church’s ‘constitution’ is qualitatively different from those of other societies. It is not an extrinsic collection of rules laid down by the appropriate legislator. Rather, the Church’s structures and norms of conduct necessarily arise from and conform to its nature as the Spirit-filled body of Christ.”

90. Hopko, *All the Fulness of God*, 92.

91. Hopko, *All the Fulness of God*, 98-100, notes that all other Christian groups “contain formal and official confessional obstacles, distortions and deviations in essential doctrines and practices which block man’s way to perfect communion with God when they are accepted and practiced. In these communions the catholic fulness of Christ, the fulness of grace and truth, has been lost...[Orthodoxy] claims on the contrary, despite all of the weaknesses, deficiencies and sins of its members, that the Orthodox Church alone, in all that it formally teaches and practices, remains perfectly faithful to the catholic fulness of God given to His Church, the fulness of the Most Holy Trinity.”

92. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 158-159, notes of the Church that “She is catholic first of all because she is the Body of Christ. Her catholicity depends not on herself but on Him. She is catholic because she is where Christ is. We cannot understand catholicity as an ecclesiological notation unless we understand it as a Christological reality.... The Christological character of catholicity lies in the fact that the Church is catholic not as a community which aims at a certain ethical achievement (being open, serving the world, etc.) but as a community which experiences and reveals the unity of all creation *insofar as this unity constitutes a reality in the person of Christ*. To be sure, this experience and this revelation involve a certain *catholic ethos*. But there is *no autonomous catholicity*, no catholic ethos that can be understood in itself. It is *Christ’s* unity and it is *His* catholicity that the Church reveals in her being catholic.”

93. Hopko, *All the Fulness of God*, 100-101.

94. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (New York: Penguin, 1997), 308-309. Father Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1997), 244-245, argues that non-Orthodox Christians are simply not members of the Church. “Further, it is a fact that these non-Orthodox confessions have ‘broken’ in one form or another, directly or indirectly, with the Orthodox Church, with the Church in its historical form; they themselves have cut the bond, they have ‘departed’ from her. Neither we nor they have the right to close our eyes to this fact. The teachings of the non-Orthodox confessions contain heresies which were decisively rejected and condemned by the Church at her Ecumenical Councils....[Other churches] are all ‘*outside*’ the one Church of Christ. Some of them have cut themselves off, others have gone far away...None of them find themselves under the activity of the grace which is present in the Church, and especially the grace which is given in the Mysteries of the Church.”

95. Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 108. Chryssavgis, *The Shattered Image*, 168, suggests that “It is time we began considering salvation less a damnation of a certain part (smaller or larger) and more as the integration and reconciliation of all things in Christ. We have been forbidden to judge and commissioned to heal...I think it is characteristic of the Orthodox attitude towards salvation that it is likewise fearlessly open-ended, and includes soul and body, humanity and creation, animate and inanimate.”

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96. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 310.

97. Hopko, *All the Fulness of God*, 104-105, observes that those with different views “of the Church will not understand those who defend the view of the Church and its catholicity presented here, in which, on the issue of communion and intercommunion, the only possible position must be that there can only be *communion*, and that this communion can only be in the one catholic Church, because this is what the Church *is*. The eucharist in the Church, together with all the sacraments, doctrines, structures and spiritualities, must be expressive of the Church’s catholic essence as the full and perfect unity and communion of men in ‘all the fulness of God’ (Eph. 3:19)...Once again it is a question not of authority or of piety; it is a question of what the Church is, why it exists, and what it should be, realize and witness in the world.”

98. See Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume 2*, 211ff. for a discussion of the relationship between Eucharist and Church.

99. Nicholas Afanassieff, “The Church Which Presides in Love,” in *The Primacy of Peter*, John Meyendorff, ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 108-109.

100. Afanassieff, “The Church Which Presides in Love,” in *The Primacy of Peter*, 109-110. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 253-254, notes that, in the first centuries of Christianity, “we do not have a fixed and permanent center for the expression of ecclesial unity in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop, and it is in this that Roman Catholic ecclesiology since the First Vatican Council has deviated from the early Church. Instead of a permanent center of unity, a foundation was provided by the principle of the mutual recognition of each of the local Churches...”

101. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 133, 136. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 247-248, states that “the Divine Eucharist was not slow to form the foundation on which the Catholic Church of the first three centuries was built and took shape. Through the complete identification of the eucharistic assembly with the ‘Church of God’ which ‘is’ or ‘sojourns’ in a certain place, the basic principle was laid down for the formation of early catholicism: inasmuch as the eucharistic assembly incarnates and reveals in history not a part of the one Christ but the one Lord Himself in His entirety, who takes up the ‘many’ in Himself in perpetuity in order to make them One and bring them back through His sacrifice before the throne of the Father, what we have in the Eucharist is not a part of the Church, but the whole Church herself, the whole body of Christ.”

102. Schmemmann, “The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology,” *The Primacy of Peter*, 153-155, notes that “The local church as a sacramental organism, as the gift of God in Christ, is not part or member of a wider universal organism. She is the Church. Objectively, as the Body of Christ, the Church is always identical to herself in space and time. In time, because she is always the people of God gathered to proclaim the death of the Lord and to confess his resurrection. In space, because in each local church the

fullness of gifts is given, the whole truth is announced, the whole Christ is present, who is ‘yesterday and today and forever the same.’ In her sacramental and hierarchical order, the Church reveals and conveys to men the fullness of Christ into which they grow (cf. Eph. 4:13)...The Church of God is the one and indivisible Body of Christ, wholly and indivisibly present in each church, i.e., in the visible unity of the people of God, the bishop and the eucharist. And if universal unity is indeed *unity of the church* and not merely *unity of churches*, its essence is not that all churches together constitute one vast, unique organism, but that each church—in the identity of order, faith and gifts of the Holy Spirit—is the *same* Church, the same Body of Christ, indivisibly present wherever is the ‘ecclesia.’ It is thus the same organic unity of the church herself, the ‘churches’ being not complementary to each other, as parts or members, but each one and all of them together being nothing else, but the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.” Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 252, notes that “only in modern times has the relationship of locality to universality been understood as an opposition. To pose this question in the form of a dilemma of having to choose between the local and the universal Church in the Church of the first three centuries is to betray historical methodology. The relation of the local to the universal Church was not a dilemma for that period. Neither Protestant provincialism nor Roman Catholic universalism is justified by the sources of that period. On the contrary, what seems paradoxical to modern man was for the early Church entirely natural: each Church was the full body of Christ, ‘the whole Church,’ as St. Paul puts it, while all these full Churches together formed nothing other than *one* Church only in the whole world. This paradox was possible because the way the Church was seen at that period was primarily and principally mystical and sacramental.”

103. St. John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 83, Bk. III, Ch. XIII

104. St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 84, Bk. IV, Ch. XIII

105. Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 244, highlights the differences between Orthodoxy and Protestantism in strong terms, “[T]he whole of Protestantism denies the bond with the heavenly Church, that is, the veneration in prayer of the Mother of God and the saints, and likewise prayer for the dead, [which] indicates that they themselves have destroyed the bond with the one Body of Christ which unites in itself the heavenly and the earthly.”

106. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 353-354, para. 1401. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 311, also notes that “Virtually all Orthodox Churches permit what is termed ‘economic’ intercommunion, whereby non-Orthodox Christians, when cut off from the ministrations of their own Church, may be allowed—with special permission—to receive communion from an Orthodox priest.” See *The Primacy of Peter*, John Meyendorff, ed., for several essays that challenge traditional Roman Catholic understandings of St. Peter’s primacy, the authority of the Pope, and the “universal ecclesiology” which those claims support. See Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998)

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for a study which contrasts Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant ecclesiologies.

107.Hopko, *All the Fulness of God*, 153. “Religion in general, and belief in God in particular, have come today to be strictly and exclusively ‘private matters’—the ‘religion of your choice’—with the result being that members of the various faiths have come to believe that even their participation in their own particular religion is to be understood and practiced on their own terms rather than on those of the specific religious community to which they belong. The various churches and synagogues, in this way, become voluntary societies and corporations which individuals join and belong to in order to practice the ‘religion of their choice’—in ways which they have decided, with the sole conditions for utilizing the properties, personnel and services of their chosen religious society being the desire to do so and the financial support of the corporate operation. Almost nothing is asked, or is considered proper to be asked, in terms of doctrinal commitment or moral behavior; and when such questions are presented, they are considered a hangover from the less liberated and enlightened past to be tolerated, understood, endured or opposed, depending on how offensive and ‘un-American’ they are.”

108.Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 131-132.

109.Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 187-188. He also notes, 190-191, that “In a eucharistic approach to this idea, which characterized both of these Fathers and the Church of that time as a whole, this meant that the spoken or written word of God, as it is historically formulated and transmitted, becomes life and divine presence only in the context of the eschatological community of the eucharist.”

110.See Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 122-123, for a criticism of the secularizing influences of pietism on Western Christianity.

111.Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 234-235., writes that “The Church is one not only inwardly, but also outwardly. Outwardly its unity is manifested in the harmonious confession of faith, in the oneness of Divine services and Mysteries, in the oneness of the grace-giving hierarchy, which comes in succession from the Apostles, in the oneness of canonical order. The Church on earth has a visible side and an invisible side. The invisible side is: that its Head is Christ; that it is animated by the Holy Spirit; that in it is performed the inward mystical life in sanctity of the more perfect of its members. However, the Church, by the nature of its members, is *visible*, since it is composed of men in the body; it has a visible hierarchy; it performs prayers and sacred actions visibly; it confesses openly, by means of words, the faith of Christ.”

112.Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 79, states that “These signs—the *ordo* of the liturgy, the canon of books for public reading, the patterns of praying, our ministers themselves and more—come to us as gifts, and yet they need to be put into use. The creedal ‘marks’ of the church may be considered in the same light; they are characteristics of any assembly God is creating around the word and sacraments of Christ’s gift, an assembly that is one,

holy, catholic, and apostolic. At the same time, these marks are each a summons to be the thing that they describe, to work on *unity* with the other assemblies, on that paradoxical *holiness* of the assembly that is union with humanity's need, on *catholicity* as the localization of the assembly, and on the continual renewal in the assembly of the *apostolic witness* to the resurrection."

113. Lathrop, *Holy People*, 74.

114. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 266.

115. Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 268.

116. Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 275.

117. Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 136. See also his comments on 154, 158.

118. Father Joseph Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life: Virtue Ethics and Orthodox Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 9, stresses the importance of the Christian community for the formation of character.

119. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 310, notes that "Either Churches are in communion with one another, or they are not: there can be no half-way house. It is often thought that the Anglican and the Old Catholic Churches are in communion with the Orthodox Church, but this is not in fact the case. Despite our deep sorrow that we cannot share in communion with other Christians...we Orthodox believe that there are serious doctrinal difficulties which must first be resolved before sacramental fellowship can be possible."

120. See the Vatican II document "*Unitatis Redintegratio*," especially paras. 5-12, for a Roman Catholic account of appropriate ecumenical endeavors short of full communion.

121. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 258, concludes that "'intercommunion' between Churches divided by heresy or schism is unthinkable according to the [Patristic] sources of the period applied here. Communion in the Eucharist presupposes full unity in all the basics...because eucharistic unity constitutes the culmination and full expression of the unity of the Church. In consequence, it is not this or that particular difference between the divided Churches which makes it impossible for them to commune in the Eucharist but *the division per se*...The precipitate tendency towards 'intercommunion' in the modern ecumenical movement is due, theologically, to the absence of the ecclesiological view of the Eucharist emphasized here, and psychologically, to the tendency to accept schism as a natural fact endemic to the Church organism; any feeling of sorrow or repentance for which is superfluous. By contrast, for those who look at the Eucharist through the prism of ecclesiology, the avoidance of communion with the heterodox, far from having any sense of self-satisfaction or arrogance, expresses a continu-

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ing experience of the tragedy of schism as expressed in the most existential way through the refusal of eucharistic communion.”

122. Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 52, notes of the priest that “He can bind as well as loose. He can withhold absolution—although this is very rare—or he can impose a penance (*eptimion*), forbidding the penitent to receive Communion for a time or requiring the fulfillment of some task. This, again, is not very common in contemporary Orthodox practice, but it is important to remember that the priest possesses this right. In the ancient Church penances were often severe. For fornication (*porneia*, i.e., sexual intercourse between unmarried persons) St. Basil the Great enjoins seven years of exclusion from Holy Communion, and St. Gregory of Nyssa nine years; in the later canonical legislation attributed to St. John the Faster, this is reduced to two years, with rigorous fasting. For adultery (*moicheia*) the penances are more severe.... Today it would be altogether exceptional for the canons to be enforced in their full rigor; a broad measure of ‘economy’ is normal. But in principle the confessor-priest still retains the power to decide how he should act; he is responsible before God for the manner in which he administers the sacrament, and he can at his own discretion impose a penance, involving if need be a lengthy period of exclusion from Holy Communion.” In tragic cases where a person does not find spiritual healing due to a refusal to fulfill any penance assigned by his priest, he may be excluded from the chalice until such time as he truly repents and is reconciled to the Church.

123. John H. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 25-26.

124. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 70.

125. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 35-47, states that “The message that the Church brings specifically for modern man, wounded and degraded as he is by the ‘terrorist’ God of juridical ethics, is precisely this: it assures him that what God really asks of man is neither individual feats nor works of merit, but a cry of trust and love from the depths of our abyss. Or perhaps even one moment of sobriety and agony breaking through the closed, secure subjectivity of our happiness.” See also his comments on Anselm’s theory of the atonement and western legalism, 153.

126. Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), 80-81, notes that “The bread was originally...broken simply for distribution and not for symbolic purposes, immediately after it had been blessed.” Dix comments, 132-135, on the historical development of the importance of the fraction. Geoffrey Wainwright, “The Continuing Tradition of the Church,” in *The Study of Liturgy*, Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 550, comments: “Although the Fraction has sometimes been stressed as a sign of the ‘breaking’ of Christ in death, yet it is the taking of the elements, the thanksgiving, and the communion that have constantly emerged as the central features of the sacrament (ignoring the medieval Western aberration which made the

Elevation of the Host for the people's contemplation a practical high-point of the Mass—almost a surrogate communion.)” David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 297, notes also the great importance of the fraction of the bread in early medieval theology.

127. See Gerald Harris, “The Beginnings of Church Discipline: 1 Corinthians 5,” *Understanding Paul's Ethics*, Brian S. Rosner, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 134. Harris concludes that “This section (vv. 6-8) underscores Paul's emphasis on group purity rather than restoration of the individual.” Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 89-90, notes that “the old habits are not only bad ones—they are corrupting. Just like yeast they will work until the whole be permeated. The only thing to do is to get rid of them entirely. So Paul speaks of a new lump. The Christian Church is not just the old society patched up. It is radically new. The evil that characterizes worldly men has been taken away, and the apostle can say *ye are unleavened*. He does not say “You ought to be unleavened,” but states a fact. That is what Christians actually are. The implication is that they have no business to be re-introducing the old yeast.”

128. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 90.

129. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, Inc., 1976), 57. Margaret E. Thrall, *The First and Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 41, comments that “The reference to the Passover leads on to the idea that the Christian life is like a Passover festival all the time. To the Jews the killing of the Passover lamb was meant to remind them of the deliverance of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. To the Christians the death of Christ was likewise a Passover sacrifice. It has rescued men and women not from political tyranny but from the power of death and the domination of sin. Jesus was restored to life, and his resurrection will eventually bring about our own restoration to life (15:22). As a result of his death we receive God's forgiveness and can make a fresh start, without being discouraged by the memory of what our past life has been like.” Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 17, notes that “Whereas in Jewish practice the old leaven had to be disposed of before the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, in Christian practice God has taken care of the sacrifice first and now calls on the people to purge the old leaven (symbolic of evil) from their midst.”

130. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 8.22, as cited in Powers, *The Eucharistic Mystery*, 112-113, writes “For the one who understands that Christ our pasch has been sacrificed and that it is necessary to make feast in eating the flesh of the Word understands that there is not a moment in which one does not make pasch, that is, passover. Such a one in every thought, word and action passes from the things of this life to God and hurries toward the city of God.”

131. John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids,

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MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 188-189. The Protestant Reformer John Calvin rightly notes that St. Paul's focus here is on the imperative of faithfulness for the Christian. Calvin comments on this passage that "Paul, having it in view to exhort the Corinthians to holiness, shows that what was of old figuratively represented in the passover, ought to be at this day accomplished in us, and explains the correspondence which exists between the figure and the reality...Now there is no reconciliation without a sacrifice...The lamb, then, was sacrificed yearly; then followed a feast, the celebration of which lasted for seven successive days. Christ, says Paul, is our Passover. He was sacrificed once, and on this condition, that the efficacy of that one oblation should be everlasting. What remains now is, that we eat, not once a year, but continually....If, therefore, we would wish to feed on Christ's flesh and blood, let us bring to this feast sincerity and truth. Let these be our loaves of unleavened bread. Away with all malice and wickedness, for it is unlawful to mix up leaven with the passover. In fine, he declares that we shall be members of Christ only when we shall have renounced malice and deceit. In the meantime we must carefully observe this passage, as showing that the ancient passover was not merely ...a memorial of a past benefit, but also a sacrament, representing Christ who was to come, from whom we have this privilege, that we pass from death to life." Though Calvin's theology is far from Orthodoxy in many ways, his interpretation of this passage is admirable for its call to holiness in everyday life. See also the reading of the passage given by Hans Conzelmann, *1st Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 98.

132.Father Roch Kereszty, "The Eucharist in the New Testament and in Some Early Christian Writings," unpublished essay, 35-37.

133.St. Ignatius of Antioch, "The Epistle to the Smyrneans, *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, Maxwell Stanifroth, trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), para. 7, indicates the importance of the Eucharist for the faith and unity of the Church in his comment on Gnostic heretics that "They even absent themselves from the Eucharist and the public prayers, because they will not admit that the Eucharist is the self-same body of our Saviour Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins, and which the Father in His goodness afterwards raised up again. Consequently, since they reject God's good gifts, they are doomed in their disputatiousness. They would have done better to learn charity, if they were ever to know any resurrection. For us, the only proper course is to have no dealings whatever with men of that kind, and to avoid all mention of them either publically or in private; reserving our attention for the prophets instead, and particularly for the Gospel, in which the Passion and the crowning glory of the Resurrection are unfolded before us."

134.Fr. Robert J. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), 196, notes that "the Christian Eucharist came to be looked upon in the Early Church as the new Pasch; the Pasch also holds, not surprisingly, a central place in the thought of Origen on sacrifice." Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 274, recognizes the crucial importance of the link between the Passover imagery, Christ's death, and the Eucharist: it was the combination of these ideas and practic-

es “which from the outset had alone made the primitive Jewish Christianity of the Jerusalem church possible.” See also Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981) for a detailed analysis of the Eucharist in relation to the Passover.

135. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 200ff. He also remarks, 237, that 1 Cor. 5:7 “leaves little doubt that [Paul] shared the same belief with synoptics in this regard.... Thus Paul is by no means the originator of the Christian belief that Christ is the Christian Passover sacrifice.”

136. Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume 2*, 211-212, observes that “The body of Christ that the Corinthians culpably fail to discern is at once the gathered congregation, which is the actual object of their misbehavior and to which Paul has just previously referred as the body of Christ, and the loaf and cup, which are called Christ's body by the narrative of institution he cites in support of his rebuke. John of Damascus summarized deep and precise patristic interpretation of these two passages together: the Eucharist “is called ‘communion’ and truly it is. For through it we both commune with Christ, and share in his body as well as in his deity, and commune and are united with one another. For as we all eat of one loaf we become one body and one blood of Christ and members of one another. Thus we may be called co-embodiments of Christ.”

137. Fr. Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 381, writes that “The sacramental sharing in the body and blood of Christ makes the community one body and draws it into the fate of the body of Christ. Christ gives himself to the communicants sacramentally and they receive Christ sacramentally. In this way Christ is there to build up the faithful into a spiritual temple, in order that the faithful become changed into the true body of Christ and so become themselves a sacrifice pleasing to God.”

138. Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 91. See chapter 3 of the volume for Rosner's full argument.

139. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 368, para. 1463, indicates that “Certain particularly grave sins incur excommunication, the most severe ecclesiastical penalty, which impedes the reception of the sacraments and the exercise of certain ecclesiastical acts, and for which absolution consequently cannot be granted, according to canon law, except by the Pope, the bishop of the place or priests authorized by them. In danger of death any priest, even if deprived of faculties for hearing confessions, can absolve from every sin and excommunication.”

140. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians*, 85. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 79, concludes that “failure to discern the body can mean only inability to perceive the Christian unity rooted in the sacrifice of Christ and actualized in the sacred meal.”

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141. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), 328-329, “But excommunication is really nothing more than the recognition of a state of affairs which already exists, for the unrepentant sinner has condemned himself already (Titus 3:10), and before the community had to exclude him... The sinner is ejected from the fellowship of the Body of Christ because he has already separated himself from it. He has no further claim on the community.”

142. Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1990), 119, notes that “The Christian does not share in the Liturgy in order to live aright; he lives aright in order to share in the Liturgy. For the Liturgy is not an exercise of piety divorced from common life, it is rather the bringing of the common life into the sacrifice of Christ. The bread and wine placed upon the altar are the gifts of the people betokening the food and work and toil and livelihood of men, brought to Christ to bless and to break to the end that all creation may be summed up in His death and resurrection, to the glory of God, the Father.”

143. St. Justyn Martyr, “Worship and Witness,” *Readings in Christian Thought*, 23. *The Didache, Early Christian Writings*, para. 9, includes the warning that “No one is to eat or drink of your Eucharist but those who have been baptized in the Name of the Lord; for the Lord’s own saying applies here, ‘Give not that which is holy unto dogs.’”

144. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 27.

145. St. Augustine, *The City of God, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, Vol. II.*, W. J. Oates, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), XLIX/458

146. St. John Chrysostom, “On the Respect Due to the Church of God, and to the Sacred Mysteries,” in *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 2, 143.

147. St. John Chrysostom, “On the Respect Due to the Church of God, and to the Sacred Mysteries,” in *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 2, 144.

148. Readers who are members of Christian churches which do not practice penitential discipline may still wonder whether someone should actually be disciplined for their sexual sins. They might ask whether such an action be in keeping with the spirit of Christ. In response, would not any Christian acknowledge that our Lord began his preaching ministry with a call to repentance in preparation for God’s coming Kingdom (St. Mark 1:15)? He called the woman caught in adultery to “go and sin no more” (St. John 8:11). How would it be possible for anyone to grow in the Christian life without being called to repent of sin? Are not all pastors obliged to provide the guidance and discipline necessary to help their flock turn from the particular sins that have beset their souls?

Moreover, it is clear that there are situations in which the sexual sins of members of the community of faith do become an obvious threat to the faithfulness of the

Church, a dangerous bit of leaven in an otherwise unleavened lump of dough. For example, someone who publically and persistently flaunts his adultery or her promiscuity or their free love relationship in the parish is a bad example whose influence may lead others down the path to destruction. In such cases, a pastor would be horribly irresponsible not to call the offenders to repentance and to guard the faithfulness of the Church. Doubters of the appropriateness of penitential discipline would do well to consider also Jesus' clear instructions on how the Christian community should respond to its unrepentant members (St. Matt. 18:15ff.).

149. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 83, 119-121. See also Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 23-36.

150. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 128-129.

151. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 35, explains that "The Corinthians argued that Christian freedom permits sex outside of marriage. Their rationale was twofold. In the first place, sex, like all physical appetites, has its physical satisfaction and was meant to be satisfied. So satisfy it with no more qualms that you would your hunger by eating whatever food was at hand. After all, such physical acts are morally/religiously irrelevant, since both the appetite and its satisfaction belong to the physical world which will pass away. In the second place, sin does not involve the body; it is a matter of the spirit, of the inner motives, thoughts, and feelings. So sexual activity, which is a bodily function, has nothing to do with one's religious or moral life."

152. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 129-130.

153. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 36. Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 227, comments that "If therefore we think that our bodies are in a deep sense not really ourselves, either because we have absolute control of them or because they have absolute control of us, we shall be indifferent to the implications of sexual behaviour and the status of the foetus in the womb. Gnosticism is not only an ancient heresy but remains the alternative to the Christian doctrine of creation in all eras." St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 156-157, bears witness to the importance of the body in his support of the veneration of relics of the saints. "There is nothing more akin to the Mysteries of Christ than the martyrs, since they have body, spirit, manner of death, and all other things in common with Christ. He was with them while they lived, and after they died. He did not leave their bodies. He is so united to their souls that He is somehow present and mingled even with this mute dust. So, if it possible to find the Saviour and to contain Him in any visible thing, it would be in these bones."

154. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians*, 48, states that "Christians are so closely related to Christ that they can be described as limbs of his body...The character and personality of Christ himself is in some way transmitted to his followers as a result of this relationship. Now Paul maintains that when sexual inter-

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course takes place between a man and a woman there is likewise a union of two personalities. It is not merely a passing physical act with no permanent consequences for the real selves of the people concerned, it is something which has a lasting psychological and spiritual effect. Each person shares his or her character with the other. The fact that a man who has intercourse with a prostitute becomes physically one with her means that his whole personality is united with hers, and that her character becomes his. And since, to Paul's mind, a prostitute was necessarily a woman of evil character, it follows that the man becomes morally corrupted. Thus, his spiritual connection with Christ is broken, since he cannot at one and the same time share the character of Christ and the character of an evil personality."

155. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 126ff.

156. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 130-131. See also Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 33.

157. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 318, comments that "Whoredom is the first sin against the Creator. For the Christian, however, whoredom is in a very special way a sin against the very Body of Christ, for the Christian's body is a member of Christ, and belongs exclusively to him. Whoredom is also a sin against our own bodies. The Christian must realize that his body too is a temple of the indwelling Spirit (1 Cor. 6:13ff). So close is the communion between the Christian's body and Christ that his body cannot belong to the world as well as to Christ. Our common life in the Body of Christ forbids us to sin against our own bodies. The whoremonger will assuredly incur the wrath of God."

158. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 131ff.

159. Conzlemann, *1st Corinthians*, 112-113.

160. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 35-36.

161. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 134. Orthodox theologian Father Patrick Henry Reardon, "The Commerce of Human Body Parts: An Eastern Orthodox Response," *The Lion* (May-June, 2000), pg. 4, comments on Paul's reasoning in 1 Corinthians that he "takes this principle of bodily holiness to be a self-evident premise from which a number of moral inferences are necessarily derived...The holiness of Christians, that physical sanctification by which they can no longer even claim their bodies as their own property, is treated as a standing principle that places definite moral limitations on what sorts of things can be done with those bodies (cf. also Romans 6:13)."

162. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 228, states that "To be in communion is to participate in the definitive covenant which Jesus has made with God.

This participation evidently takes place through communion in the personal body of Jesus, but this in turn signifies directly an entrance into the covenant.”

163. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 60-61.

164. Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 124, states that “If we are prepared [for the Eucharist], nothing prevents Christ from being perfectly united to us. ‘This is a great mystery’ said blessed Paul (Eph. 5:32), referring to this union. This is the celebrated marriage by which the most holy Bridegroom espouses the Church as His Bride. It is here that Christ feeds the choir that surrounds Him; by this Mystery alone we become ‘flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bones’ (Gen. 2:21). These are the terms in which the apostle describes the marriage. John [the Baptist], speaking as the friend of the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:28), points out Christ as the Bridegroom and as possessing the Bride.”

165. St. John Chrysostom, “Homily 20,” *On Marriage and Family Life*, Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson, trans., (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 51.

166. John Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 93. See also Fr. Philip S. Keane, “Heterosexual Expression, Marriage and Morality,” in Fr. Charles Curran and Fr. Richard McCormick, eds, *Readings in Moral Theology No. 8: Dialogue about Catholic Sexual Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 422. Also writing in a Roman Catholic context, James P. Hanigan, *Homosexuality: The Test Case for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 103, makes a similar point by employing eucharistic language about marriage. “When a married couple engages in sexual intercourse freely and lovingly, they are ritually enacting the meaning of their relationship; they are, in fact, re-creating, enhancing, and celebrating that meaning...When married couples engage in sexual intercourse and realize the substantial goods of their actions, they are exercising and realizing both the personal and social meaning of their calling, to be for one another—this is my body given for you—and thereby to establish and secure that center of life and love around which family develops and grows and serves society. Their sexual relationship is fundamentally essential to carrying out the vocation.”

167. Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 140.

168. Oscar Cullmann, *Essays on the Lord’s Supper* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1958), 19, comments that “The new covenant established by the death of Christ—that is the first idea involved in the Last Supper. The second is the Messianic unity of the community, founded by the new covenant, with the Risen Christ.”

169. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 87-88.

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170. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 132-133.

171. Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 65.

172. Fr. Richard M. Hogan and Fr. John M. LeVoi, "The Family and Sexuality," in *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, Charles A. Curran and Richard McCormick, eds. (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 163. See also Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 65-66.

173. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 32, notes that in the marriage the fractured relations of "the archetypal human monad: Adam and Eve" are fulfilled in Christ. Hence, "The nuptial community arises as the prophetic figure of the Kingdom of God: the ultimate unity, the community of the Masculine and the Feminine in their totality in God."

174. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 124. See *The Book of Common Prayer*, 857, and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 293, para. 1131, for statements of Anglican and Roman Catholic understandings of sacraments.

175. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 135ff.

176. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 140-141.

177. St. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, V, 19, 1, emphasizes the importance of flesh to the economy of salvation. "For if the flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would in no wise have become flesh." Of the required shedding of blood in the Old Testament, Irenaeus comments that Jesus "thus points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own person of the effusion of blood from the beginning, of all the righteous men and of the prophets, and that by means of himself there should be a requisition of their blood. Now this [blood] could not be required unless it also had the capability of being saved; nor would the Lord have summed up these in Himself, unless He had Himself been made flesh and blood after the way of the original formation [of man], saving in his own person at the end that which had in the beginning perished in Adam."

178. Lewis B. Smedes, *Sex for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 64, "The Resurrection, as well as the Incarnation, carries the body-life of humankind in a deep divine embrace. Redemption is not the promise of escape from the demands or appetites of the body. To confess that Jesus Christ arose from the grave bodily is to reiterate God's good feelings about his own creation of human-beings as body-persons; to celebrate the Resurrection includes a celebration of human sexuality. God did not become man to show us how to get out of our body by means of spiritual exercises. He created a community of resurrection hope and invites us to bring our total sexuality into it. Christ's resurrection makes permanent God's union with the whole of humanity, and

it thus affirms sexuality as part of our hope for ultimate happiness and freedom.” See also Andre Guindon, “A Theory of Sexual Ethics For Concerned Christians,” *Readings in Moral Theology No. 8: Dialogue About Catholic Sexual Teaching*, 27.

179.Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church*, 47.

180.Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church*, 51-54. See Ford’s explanation, 77-78, for Chrysostom’s higher praise of virginity in his earlier works and his growing appreciation of the place of marriage in the Christian life during later periods. Of Chrysostom’s view that sexual intercourse did not occur in the paradise of Eden, Ford observes, 80, “Similarly, it was through God’s goodness and kindness toward mankind that sexual intercourse, in Chrysostom’s view, was given after the Fall in order to unify the man and the woman, since the Fall had so seriously disrupted their unity, to ensure that Adam would be drawn to Eve instead of despising and rejecting her because of her tempting him, and to provide for the procreation of children. Sexual intercourse becomes a kind of new cement which bonds people together.”

181.Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church*, 57.

182.Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church*, 67-68.

183.F.J. Leenhardt, *Essays on the Lord’s Supper*, 37, notes that “The relationship by which we are united to Jesus Christ must equally be understood in terms of totality. It takes its departure from Him in order to reach us; but it does not take its departure from a disincarnate being, pure spirit, magnanimous soul, generous heart. It takes its departure from a Being of flesh and blood who is concerned with the total reality of man because He assumed him for his own sake.” William Temple, *Nature, God, and Man*, 478, observes that “It may safely be said that one ground for the hope of Christianity that it may make good its claim to be the true faith lies in the fact that it is the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions. It affords an expectation that it may be able to control the material, precisely because it does not ignore it or deny it, but roundly asserts alike the reality of matter and its subordination.”

184.St. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, IV, 18, 5, notes the eucharistic basis of his criticism of the Gnostics: “Then, again, how can they say that the flesh, which is nourished with the body of the Lord and with His blood, goes to corruption, and does not partake of life? Let them, therefore, either alter their opinion, or cease from offering the things just mentioned. But our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit.” See also St. Irenaeus’s arguments from the Eucharist in V, 2, 2-3.

185.Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon, “The Commerce of Human Body Parts: An Eastern Orthodox Response,” *The Lion* (May-June 2000), 5.

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186.Fr. Philip Turner, "Limited Engagements," *Men and Women: Sexual Ethics in Turbulent Times* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1989), 70-71.

187.Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 110-111, "According to the biblical understanding, sexual intercourse is connected to the coming together of two persons as sexual beings into a one-flesh union. It represents the act of two becoming one at the deepest level of their being (e.g., Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:4-6)...This meaning is readily expressed in sexual relations between a man and a woman. Each engages in the sex act through the whole body, of course, but primarily through those body parts (vagina and penis) that most explicitly symbolize their existence as embodied, sexual beings, that most explicitly separate male and female, and that most readily allow male and female to complement the other. In this manner, both their own personal identities and their 'otherness' or difference from each other as sexual creatures become the foundation for the expression of unity of the bond they share. As a result, the sex act itself serves as a ritual act, an appropriate symbol of the union of the two who are sexually 'other' into a sexual bond." Philip Turner, *Sex, Money, and Power* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1985), 40-44, criticizes "personalist" revisionists of sexual ethics for failing to appreciate sufficiently the importance of the embodiedness of human sexuality. Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 209, notes "that redeemed relations of men and women are in some way central to the meaning of the gospel, as Paul in particular has made clear (Gal. 3:28), and that fallenness takes the form of disorderly sexual relations, among other things (Rom. 1:24-7). It is surely the case that some such theology of the mutually constitutive character of relations underlies Paul's contention that 'he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her' (1 Cor. 6:16)." See also Marva J. Dawn, *Sexual Character* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 53ff.

188.Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming*, 106.

189.See G.H.P. Thompson, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 82-88; and E.K. Simpson, F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on The Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 130-137.

190.Turner, *Sex, Money, and Power*, 64, comments that "[T]his passage...is the most basic and comprehensive statement concerning how it is that one may be many and yet many one. For the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians, God's plan from before the creation has been to unite all things in himself in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. God's plan to unite all things is revealed in Christ, but it is the church that makes known this mystery and lives it out in its common life. Unexpectedly, the relation that most adequately represents God's plan for unity is that between husband and wife. In their union of 'one flesh' we see the most complete expression possible of Christ's relation to the church and of the relation one to another of the members of the church, the most adequate expression we have of how God in Christ intends that one be

many and yet many one.”

191. See Rosner, *Paul, Sex, and Ethics*, 158ff; Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 37ff.

192. St. John Chrysostom, “Homily 19,” *On Marriage and Family Life*, 26.

193. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 89, comments “As Paul’s admonition indicates, the sex act is a physical, visible expression of mutual submission. It symbolizes in a vivid manner the desire of each of the marriage partners to give freely and completely for the sake of fulfilling the other. In this way it pictures what is to be true of the marriage relationship as a whole. Marriage is intended to be a most intimate human fellowship—the community of male and female—in which each person gives freely for the sake of the other.”

194. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, 382-383, concludes that “the Eucharist has the subjective aspect of the turning back of the community to the Father in which the faithful intentionally offer themselves as the only acceptable subjective response. The radical self-offering of the faithful is the only spiritual response that constitutes an authentic sacrificial act according to the New Testament (Romans 12:1). But it should be noted that the acknowledgment of the Father’s gift and the self-offering of the faithful have the goal of eliciting the continual bestowal of the gift and, as far as the self-offering is concerned, the intention is to receive from the Father, the source of all life, the meaning of one’s life.”

195. Fr. John Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1975), 83. See also 22ff for an account of the importance of Eucharist for an Orthodox understanding of Christian marriage as a sacrament. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 405, para. 1621.

196. St. John Chrysostom, “Homily 20,” *On Marriage and Family Life*, 46.

197. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 105.

198. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 101-102. St. John Chrysostom, “Homily 20,” *On Marriage and Family Life*, 61-62, comments on a marriage characterized by true Christian faithfulness that “If your marriage is like this, your perfection will rival the holiest of monks.”

199. Fr. Michel Najim, “The Two Ways in the East: The Marital Status of Clergy,” *Vested in Grace: Priesthood and Marriage in the Christian East*, Fr. Joseph J. Allen, ed. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 229, notes that “The benevolent love which is expressed in the Sacrament of Marriage grows through various means in our everyday life. This can be said first of all in the liturgical life where the couple should live through the *recurrence* of their communion with the Holy Gifts. It is there that they can nourish their love with the grace of divine love, in the company of God,

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and where together they join with the other ‘micro-churches,’ i.e., families, which are parts of the total body of Jesus Christ.”

200. Turner, “Limited Engagements,” *Men and Women*, 59, “By saying that marriage serves as a school for charity, the tradition of the church addresses the same problem in a more positive light, and across of broader spectrum of human experience. It has sought to indicate that the relation between a man and a woman in marriage can serve to teach them, in all areas of life, to love as God intends. For those called to it, marriage can serve as a school wherein we learn, by grace, to overcome a form of self-love that is both ungodly and humanly destructive; in so doing we learn greater compliance with the law of life, namely that we are made to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.” See also Smedes, *Sex for Christians*, 76ff., on the relationship between sexual love and Christian love.

201. Turner, “Limited Engagements,” *Men and Women*, 81.

202. See Keane, “Heterosexual Expression, Marriage and Morality,” *Readings in Moral Theology No. 8: Dialogue About Catholic Sexual Teaching*, 431ff.

203. O’Callaghan, “Pseudosex in Pseudoteology,” *Christian Bioethics* 4/1 (1998: 90), comments that “The sexual act is thus the means by which a man and a woman actualize the oneness of flesh mentioned in Genesis and repeated by Jesus. The underlying point of the entire New Testament polemic against divorce, fornication, and adultery is that sexual intercourse is the means by which the absolute oneness of husband and wife is realized. The sexual act manifests the existing oneness of the married couple whom ‘God has joined together and no man may put asunder.’ Therefore, taken outside the context of that absolute God-established oneness, sexual intercourse becomes abomination and sin. In marital intercourse, however, the couple realizes the oneness of their nature in an experience of the interpenetration of being which arises from the communion of persons in love. Thus, as an act of the most deeply personal sort, the unitive drive finds its pure and perfect fulfillment in the (re)union of man and woman. In the community of marriage, human persons find themselves imaging the paradigm of the Trinitarian God whom their relationship mirrors.”

204. Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 189, “[W]e cannot expect to begin to develop an adequate Christian sexual ethic without starting with the insistence that sex is a public matter for the Christian community. For our sexual ethic is part and parcel of our political ethic, as our convictions require that we take a critical stance against societies built on no true knowledge of the one true God. How we order and form our lives sexually cannot be separate from the necessity of the church to chart an alternative to our culture’s dominant assumptions.”

205. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 194, observes that “The question of sexual conduct before marriage is thus a question of what prepares me best for the tasks that

the Christian community may ask me to accept—whether the task be single or married.”

206. Turner, *Sex, Money, and Power*, 69-70, comments that “When the dust has settled, the church will, I believe, continue to hold out for real sex instead of its revisionist imposters. Beside the ‘one flesh’ unity sex promises and to which Christians have pointed, the individually focused and timid exchanges proposed in most revisionist sexual ethics will appear as the shady deals that more often than not they are. In order that real sex, with all the fullness of its promise, may be distinguished from its counterfeits, and the “one flesh” union of *the man* and *the woman* retain its power to display the divine mystery, the church will continue to insist for both pastoral and evangelistic reasons that sexual relations ought to take place *only* between a man and a woman who have made a covenant to be faithful one to another until parted by death.”

207. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 92, “It is because sexuality is the way in which the sacramental, covenantal bond of ‘one flesh’ is constituted. It is the unique sign of that bond and the unique mode by which it is sealed, just as eucharistic celebration is the sign and primary expression of priesthood. As a sacrament of the Church, marriage must be publically and communally performed. It must be *celebrated* as a witness to the grace bestowed both on the couple and on the community of faith. For the sacrament of marriage, like that of priesthood, initiates committed persons into a life of loving commitment and sacrificial service; and it does so both in and for the life and ministry of the Church as a whole.”

208. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 93. “Just as one cannot authentically participate in Holy Communion without being baptized, and the priest cannot celebrate a true Liturgy without being ordained, so a couple cannot enjoy the grace God offers through sexual union unless their relationship is blessed by him in the way prescribed and traditionally practiced in the Church. Their love may be deep and their commitment to one another genuine. But without the grace conferred through the sacrament of marriage, there can be no true *communion* between the two. Their sexual relations simply feed ‘the desires and pleasures of the flesh,’ and they are unable to attain to the eternal communion and ineffable joy of divinely bestowed, self-transcending *eros* that unites them with God as well as with one another.”

209. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 15.

210. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 95, notes that “[T]his sacramental reality is made of the very stuff of so-called natural marriage. The Orthodox use of this term natural is not in contradistinction to grace. Marriage is the primal human community. As such it is natural in the same way that human nature is. The two, man and woman were created as *one*. Humanity in its *two-in-oneness* is created *grace-in-natured*. Grace is not something external to human nature. It is a God-bestowed dynamism, an energy for growth toward perfection (*theosis*). This is how Orthodox tradition has understood the biblical concept of humanity being created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26).”

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211. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 87. "Before the fall, Adam was neither a 'pure nature' nor a deified man...both the cosmology and the anthropology of the Eastern Church are dynamic in character, and resolutely exclude the possibility of juxtaposing the ideas of nature and grace. Nature and grace do not exist side by side, rather there is a mutual interpenetration of one another, the one exists in the other."
212. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 126.
213. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 215.
214. Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 116.
215. Fr. John Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics*, 38-39.
216. St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 42-42, Bk. 2, Ch. XXX, "Bear in mind, too, that virtue is a gift from God implanted in our nature, and that He Himself is the source and cause of all good, and without His co-operation and help we cannot will or do any good thing. But we have it in our power either to abide in virtue and follow God, Who calls us into ways of virtue, or to stray from paths of virtue, which is to dwell in wickedness, and to follow the devil who summons but cannot compel us. For wickedness is nothing else than the withdrawal of goodness, just as darkness is nothing else than the withdrawal of light. While then we abide in the natural state we abide in virtue, but when we deviate from the natural state, that is from virtue, we come into an unnatural state and dwell in wickedness. Repentance is the returning from the unnatural to the natural state, from the devil to God, through discipline and effort." Chrysostom, *Homily V on Ephesians* as quoted in Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church*, 131, observes that "The body has a natural desire (*epithymei*), not however for fornication, or for adultery, but simply for sexual intercourse (*mixeos*). The body has a natural desire not for gluttony (*tryphes*), but simply for nourishment (*trophes*), and not for drunkenness, but simply for drink."
217. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 219.
218. St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 87, Bk. 4, Ch. XV
219. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 109-111.
220. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 117.
221. St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 47-48, I.ii.1 "For just as those who abandon themselves to sensual and corruptible pleasures fix all the desires of their soul upon the flesh, and indeed become entirely 'flesh,' so that (as Scripture says) 'the Spirit of God

cannot dwell in them,' so too, in the case of those who have elevated their minds to God and exalted their souls with divine longing, their flesh also is being transformed and elevated, participating together with the soul in the divine communion, and becoming itself a dwelling and possession of God; for it is no longer the seat of enmity towards God, and no longer possesses desires contrary to the Spirit." See Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* for a lucid introduction to *hesychast* spirituality and theology.

222.Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 105-106.

223.St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 51-52, II.ii.5, "For just as the divinity of the Word of God incarnate is common to soul and body, since He has deified the flesh through the mediation of the soul to make it also accomplish the works of God; so similarly, in spiritual man, the grace of the Spirit, transmitted to the body through the soul, grants to the body also the experience of things divine, and allows it the same blessed experiences as the soul undergoes....When the soul pursues this blessed activity, it deifies the body also; which, being no longer driven by corporeal and material passions... returns to itself and rejects all contact with evil things. Indeed, it inspires its own sanctification and inalienable divinization, as the miracle-working relics of the saints clearly demonstrate."

224.St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 55, II.ii.20, "Will not the passionate part of the soul, as a result of this violence, be also brought to act according to the commandments? Such forcing, by dint of habituation, makes easy our acceptance of God's commandments, and transforms our changeable disposition into a fixed state. This condition brings about a steady hatred towards evil states and dispositions of the soul; and hatred of evil duly produces the impassibility which in turn engenders love for the unique Good. Thus one must offer to God the passionate part of the soul, alive and active, that it may be a living sacrifice."

225.Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 107

226.Fr. Stanley Samuel Harakas, *Living the Faith: The Praxis of Eastern Orthodox Ethics* (Menneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1992), 89.

227.Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 89, writes that sex is "God-given, a part of the creation. In the fallen condition it has been, however, skewed and warped. Distorted sex is transfigured when the disordered passions of the sex drive are transformed so that sex finds its appropriate and fitting exercise in the holiness of marriage. This spiritual and moral 'struggle' can be accomplished by an *askesis* appropriate to persons living the spiritual life in the world." Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 125-126, observes that "The person called to union with God, called to realize by grace the perfect assimilation of its nature to the divine nature, is bound to a mutilated nature, defaced by sin and torn apart by conflicting desires. It knows and wills by means of this imperfect nature, and is in practice blind and powerless. It can no longer choose well,

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and too often yields to the impulses of a nature which has become a slave to sin. So it is, that that in us which is made in the image of God is dragged into the abyss, though always retaining its freedom of choice, and the possibility of turning anew to God.”

228.Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 106, “[T]he union of the material and the spiritual found in the sacramental life and in iconography, the ordination of married men to the priesthood...argue more for a hebraic unity of body and soul, than for a hellenistic dualism.”

229.Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 231.

230.Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 241-242.

231.Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 245.

232.Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 254. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 172-173, comments of the Holy Spirit that “In Him the will of God is no longer external to ourselves: it confers grace inwardly, manifesting itself within our very person in so far as our human will remains in accord with the divine will and co-operates with it in acquiring grace, in making it *ours*. This is the way of deification leading to the Kingdom of God which is introduced into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, even in the present life. For the Holy Spirit is the sovereign unction resting upon the Christ and upon all the Christians called to reign with Him in the age to come. It is then that this divine Person, no unknown, not having His image in another Hypostasis, will manifest Himself in deified persons: for the multitude of the saints will be His image.”

233.Deacon John Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 18.

234.Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage*, 22, “Marriage, as in fact every facet of human life, is placed in the service of salvation and the glory of God (Ephesians 5). That is why it cannot be regarded otherwise than as a sacrament, alongside and within *the* sacrament of love and communion which is the Eucharist. It is a solemn, permanent, and faithful consecration of two persons, free and equal before God, for their perfection according to the model of Christ and His bride, the Church. As the Church is a foretaste and pledge of and an actual participation in the Kingdom to come, so also marriage reveals joy eternal and divine communion. The sacrament of love for a Christian, therefore, is not a state but a stage in the development of life in Christ; it is not a sign of settlement (*apokatastasis*) but rather an essential way of salvation.”

235.Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage*, 25-26, “Chastity in marriage is repeatedly underlined throughout the prayers and petitions of the marriage service. This is appropriate since both marriage and virginity have the same source and goal, namely, union with Christ. Chastity, however, is understood as the integrity of the human person and is never reduced to the merely physical aspect. The wedding service shows no reservation towards sexuality, no trace of despicability or even suspicion.

Rather, it demands the miracle of the transformation of *eros*. ‘Carnal’ or ‘fleshly’ sin is not the “sin of the flesh” but the sin committed *against* the flesh, against the sacredness of the Incarnation.” Chrssavgis also notes, 16, that “The ascetic aspect of marriage is further shown in the prayer asking for the Archangel Michael to prepare the marital chamber. Only a Church that believes in the sanctity and integrity of the body and the world could either imagine an angel preparing the bed of the couple, or else implore for the preservation of the undefiled marriage bed.”

236. Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage*, 27-28, notes that “The separation of the marriage ritual from the Eucharist meant that the emphasis increasingly moved away from the sacramental aspect to the juridical and social dimension. Everyone desiring to marry needed to do so ecclesiastically as well, and so the Church was forced to become more discriminate with her sacraments, especially the Eucharist. During such an accommodation of the Church to the mores of society, the profanization of the Eucharist was avoided by its removal from the marriage rite.”

237. Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage*, 30.

238. Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage*, 33, “There is surely a close connection and interrelationship between creation, crucifixion, Baptism, Eucharist, and Marriage. Man and woman were created in the image and likeness of God. The woman being created out of man’s side, God proclaimed that ‘the two shall be one flesh.’ While our Lord hung upon the Cross, His side was pierced with a lance and from the wound water and blood issued forth. In the water of baptism, we died spiritually to our fallen nature and were resurrected to new life in Christ. In the Eucharist, we offer bread and wine mixed with water and receive divine Communion through God’s Body and Blood. Our Lord’s first miraculous sign was transforming water into wine in celebration of conjugal communion [at the wedding at Cana in Galilee]. This again connects back to the ‘re-direction’ of sexual love to its divine source. It draws the very presence of God into the sacrament of love and marriage.”

239. Fr. Thomas Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith: Spirituality*, vol. 4 (New York: The Orthodox Church in America, 1984), 164-165, states that marriage “allows them [husband and wife] to grow ever more perfectly one. He allows them to live and to love for eternity in the Kingdom of God. A marriage in Christ does not end in sin; it does not part in death. It is fulfilled and perfected in the Kingdom of heaven. It is for this reason, and this reason only, that those who seek true love and perfection in marriage come to the Church to be married in Christ.” Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith: Spirituality*, vol. 4, 166, comments that “God intends sexual intercourse as “the intimate act which finds its total joy when perfected by those who are fully devoted and dedicated to teach other in all things, in every way, forever...It is the act of loving self-sacrifice in eternal fidelity.”

240. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 163-164.

241. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 165-167.

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242. Father Joseph Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life: Virtue Ethics and Orthodox Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 101, “If the three prayers before the crowning establish the context of Christian marriage as eschatological, i.e., that the ‘crown’ of creation is God’s will and that God’s will is that the human pair, even from Adam and Eve, is called by God to be the crowning glory of his love, then the requirements for such a journey (or ‘dance’) are announced in the three short verses that attend the dance. Marriage can participate in the recreation of the world, as a foretaste of the Kingdom, if Isaiah’s hope was fulfilled and the Messiah has come, if we will witness to this love in our marriage, and if the Messiah who has come and of whom we witness is himself communion with God in a Trinity of love.”

243. Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life*, 102-103.

244. Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life*, 104, observes that “The final prayer before the couple is crowned returns to the story of Adam and Eve. The story of the Creation is evoked as if it were still at the beginning. The narratives are to be read, therefore, as the story of what might still be. If the betrothal narratives placed marriage in the context of God’s story of love for humanity and warned that ‘mere’ sexuality is not the end of human love—just as not wealth as such but generosity is the end of human resourcefulness—then the narratives of the crowning place marriage within stories of God’s ‘shelter.’ The ‘shelter’ of marriage is presented not as a static or private escape from the world, but, rather, as an ‘ark’ that preserves marriage for its intended resurrection. Although marriage is likened to a fiery furnace, the couple will be preserved if their hope is in God. Marriage is to be, then, not a static escape, but a dynamic vehicle of transfiguration.”

245. Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life*, 105.

246. Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life*, 108, “There is no indication that marriage is understood in the [Orthodox wedding] ritual as part of a right to sexual expression. The context of marriage is not consenting adults, but the church community and its ends. Those involved in, for example, educational institutions that encourage campuses where cohabitation is casual would be forming people with skills appropriate to love if, and only if, love is an exercise in sustaining the initial excitement of ever new sexual expression. Skills and abilities much different from those called for in the Orthodox Christian ritual are taught by men and women to men and women when coital activity is identified as or presumed to be the end of personal relationships. It is difficult to imagine how a male or a female “schooled” in a community where coital activity is an end in itself would be able to practice marriage as presented in the Orthodox Christian rite.”

247. Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life*, 109.

248. Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life*, 110.

249. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 126-127. In commenting on St. Paul’s teach-

ing on marriage in Ephesians 5:32, Evdokimov notes that “Mystery, *mysterion*, has the meaning here of an inexhaustibly rich content that one will enjoy for all eternity. In the text of Genesis, St. Paul sees a prophetic prefiguration, its hidden meaning now made clear. Thus, marriage goes back to the Fall; as archetype of the nuptial relations it explains the name of Israel and that of the Church, the Bride of Jahweh. Neither the Fall nor time have touched its sacred reality. The Orthodox Ritual specifies: ‘Neither original sin nor the flood has in the least damaged the sacredness of the nuptial union.’ St. Ephrem of Syria adds, ‘From Adam until Christ, authentic love was the perfect sacrament.’ Rabbinical wisdom viewed married love as the only channel of grace, even for pagans...Indeed, Christ instituted nothing at Cana, but His presence revalues and elevates marriage to its ontological function.”

250.Schememann, *For the Life of the World*, 83.

251.Schememann, *For the Life of the World*, 84. Appealing to the biblical imagery of Israel as the wife of Yahweh and the Church as the bride of Christ, Schememann insists that “The world—which finds its restoration and fulfillment in the Church—is the bride of God and that in sin this fundamental relationship has been broken, distorted. And it is in Mary—the Woman, the Virgin, the Mother—in her personal response to God, that the Church has its living and personal being.”

252.Schememann, *For the Life of the World*, 84-85, “This is why the whole creation, the whole Church—and not only women—find the expression of their response and obedience to God in Mary the Woman, and rejoice in her. She stands for all of us, because only when we accept, respond in love and obedience—only when we accept the essential womanhood of creation—do we become ourselves true men and women; only then can we indeed *transcend* our limitations as ‘males’ and ‘females.’”

253.Schememann, *For the Life of the World*, 85-86. Schememann contrasts Eve with Mary, noting that Mary “did what the first Eve failed to do. Eve failed to be a woman. She took the initiative...But Mary ‘took no initiative.’ In love and obedience she expected the initiative of the Other. And when it came, she accepted it, not blindly—for she asked ‘how shall this be?’—but with the whole lucidity, simplicity and joy of love. The light of an eternal spring comes to us when on the day of annunciation we hear the decisive: ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word’ (Lk. 1:38). This is indeed the whole creation, all of humanity, and each one of us recognizing the words that express our ultimate nature and being, our acceptance to be the bride of God, our betrothal to the One who from all eternity loved us.”

254.Schememann, *For the Life of the World*, 86-87.The fullness of her love toward God is shown in her identity as the Mother of the Redeemer, for Mary is “the fullness of love accepting the coming of God to us—giving life to Him, who is the Life of the world. And the whole creation rejoices in her, because it recognizes through her that the end and fulfillment of all life, of all love *is to accept Christ*, to give Him life in ourselves...what we find in her and what constitutes the joy of the Church is precisely the

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fullness of our adoration of Christ, of acceptance and love for Him.”

255. Oliver Clement, *The Living God: A Catechism*, Vol. 1 (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989), 29, “At the celebration of a marriage and at the ordination of a deacon or priest, when we receive the sacraments which open the way to the Kingdom of heaven, we conclude the procession by singing: ‘Rejoice, O Isaiah! A Virgin is with child, and shall bear a Son, Emmanuel, both God and man, and Orient is His name. Magnifying Him, we call the Virgin Blessed.’ At once both God and man: this is the whole meaning of the Incarnation. The Virgin has become united to God by becoming His mother. In the image of Mary we accept and receive God, for God also becomes incarnate in us through the Holy Spirit. The aim of the Christian, of his struggle against sin to obtain God’s pardon, is to allow the incarnation of the Word in his life—even his body—to become apparent.”

256. Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church*, 160-161, notes that Chrysostom saw great spiritual advantages for the woman in submission to her husband. “From a Christian perspective, then, it is a far greater glory to obey than to rule, to be willingly and submissively under subjection than to wield authority.” Nonetheless, Chrysostom also taught, *Homily LXI on St. John* as quoted in Ford, 177-178, that “nothing is more powerful (*ischuroteron*) than a pious and sensible woman to bring her husband into proper order (*rhythmizein*), and to mold his soul as she wills...If she happens also to be discreet and well-attuned, she will go beyond and excel all others in the management (*epimeleian*) of her husband.” Indeed, Ford notes, 187, that “Chrysostom actually implies, from a heavenly perspective, that the wife’s role is more important spiritually, as well as materially. He clearly states that the wife, at work day by day in the peace and quiet of her home, has much more opportunity to grow spiritually than does her husband who is in the midst of the rush, and, at times, the treachery, of public life.”

257. St. Amphilochius, “In Praise of Virginity, Marriage and Widowhood, and on the Meeting of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, Anna and Simeon,” *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol 1, 174, “Take away honorable marriage and where will you find the flower for virginity? For from nowhere else is this flower gathered. In saying this to you, Beloved, we in no way desire to place conflict between marriage and virginity, for both we admire, as one completing the other, since the Lord, Who in His Providence has ordained both has not set one against the other; for the true service of God embraces both the one and the other. For without the holy and precious love of God, neither is virginity to be revered, nor is marriage honorable.”

258. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 68, notes that “In marriage, the nature of man is changed sacramentally, as it is, though in another mode, in the one who becomes a monk. The deepest inner relationship unites the two. The promises exchanged by the betrothed introduce them in a certain manner into a special monasticism, because here too there is a dying to the past and a rebirth into a new life. Moreover, the rite of entrance into the monastic order makes use of nuptial symbolism, while the ancient marriage rite included the monastic tonsure, signifying the common surrender of the two

wills to God. Thus, marriage includes within itself the monastic state, and that is why the latter is not a sacrament. The two converge as complementary aspects of the same virginal reality of the human spirit.” See also Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 87-88.

259. *Homily XII on Philippians*, as quoted in Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church*, 88. Fr. John Mack, *Preserve Them, O Lord* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1996), 117, notes that “Many of the saints engaged in marital relations. The great Apostle Peter was married and I know of nothing in our tradition which implies that he ceased having sexual relations with his wife. Saint Philip had children. Saint Innocent of Alaska lived physically with his wife, becoming monastic only when she died. Saint Terence and his wife, Neonila, had seven children. All nine of them, martyred in the second century in Syria, are canonized saints of the Church.”

260. St. John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Bk. IV, Ch. XXIV, 97, “Good indeed is the procreation of children enjoined by the law, and good is marriage on account of fornications, but it does away with these, and by lawful intercourse does not permit the madness of desire to be inflamed into unlawful acts. Good is marriage for those who have no continence: but that virginity is better which increases the fruitfulness of the soul and offers to God the seasonable fruit of prayer. *Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*”

261. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 65, comments that “The East has never made the distinction between the ‘precepts’ and the ‘evangelical counsels.’ The Gospel in its totality is addressed to each person; everyone in his own situation is called to the *absolute* of the Gospel. Trying to prove the superiority of one state over another is therefore useless: it is an abstract, because impersonal, process. The renunciation at work in both cases is as good as the positive content that the human being brings to it: the intensity of the love of God.” David C. Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Full Views of St. John Chrysostom* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1996), 12-37, notes that the Eastern Fathers often held a more positive view of sex in the Christian life, as well as of women, than did the Western Fathers. For example, 13, “the East did not taint all women with Eve’s *guilt*, perhaps precisely because original sin in the Eastern Church never implied the transmission of Adam’s guilt upon all persons, as it came to do in the Christian West through Tertullian and Augustine.” Father William Basil Zion, *Eros and Transformation: Sexuality and Marriage, An Eastern Orthodox Perspective*, (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 51-89, provides an excellent discussion of the Fathers’ teachings on the places of celibacy and marriage in the Christian life. He concludes, 88-89, that “the Church, while accepting the heroic witness and the superiority of the monastic state, never allowed the sexual bond of marriage to be denigrated...gradually a theology of marriage as holy and itself a way to salvation emerged. The fact that the priests and deacons of the Orthodox Church were married had, no doubt, an affect on this positive vision. That the Church still called married people to spend half the year fasting and abstaining from the marital embrace represented a compromise. If they could not be monks and nuns all the time, they must attempt a way of asceticism at least half of the time. Nevertheless, there were always those who knew that the joy of their married love was itself a mark of the Kingdom and

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a sign of God's grace. That their way of life remained one which was celebrated and recognized by the Church was not only a mark of the continuity of the biblical tradition but of the essential conservatism of the Church in the face of the experience of the monastic fathers." Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, "The Monastic Life as a Sacrament of Love," in *Ekklesia kai Theologia* 2 (1981), 697-699, as quoted in Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage*, 98-99, notes that "Marriage is not only a state of nature but a state of grace. Married life, no less than the life of a monk, is a special vocation, requiring a particular gift or *charisma* from the Holy Spirit." Ware also states that "The monk is not a dualist but, to the same degree as the married Christian although in another mode, he is concerned to affirm the intrinsic goodness of the material creation and the human body. If the monk abstains from marriage, this is not because the married state is sinful, but because he personally is called to express his love for God and humankind on a different level. Monk and married Christian are both alike ascetics, and both alike materialists—using the world in its true Christian sense, of one who affirms the Spirit-bearing potentialities of material things. Both alike are sin-denying and world-affirming. The difference between them lies only in the outward conditions under which their ascetic warfare is carried on." Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 294, notes that "In marriage, as in kataphatic or symbolical theology, the archetype is attained through the icon. Husband and wife express their love for God through and in their love for one another...In monasticism, as in apophatic theology, the icon is laid aside: love for God is expressed directly, not through the image or medium of another person. Like the two ways of theology, the two forms of love complete and balance one another." See also Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 100.

262. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 83.

263. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 85.

264. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 122.

265. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 123.

266. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 119. Evdokimov, 117, notes that "This patristic concept is fundamental to the East and inspires all its canonical texts. Marriage is defined as 'the unity of two persons in one being, a single substance' or 'the union of one body and one soul, but in two persons.' The definition is important; the nuptial 'I' does not abolish the persons but is in the image of the Trinity. The union of the Three persons in one nature forms a single Subject: God, one and at the same time triune. Likewise, the nuptial union of two persons forms a dyad-monad, at the same time two and one, united in a third person, God...It is therefore nuptial man who is the image of the triune God, and the dogma of the Trinity is the divine archetype, the icon of the nuptial community."

267. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 120.

268. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 155.

269. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also places marriage in a theologically rich context:

“The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist. Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant.”

270. See Smedes, *Sex for Christians*, 123-126; Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 66ff., 203ff.; Keane, “Heterosexual Expression, Marriage and Morality,” *Readings in Moral Theology No. 8: Dialogue About Catholic Sexual Teaching*, 419. Turner, “Limited Engagements,” *Men and Women*, 67, notes that “It not unreasonable, therefore, to conclude that it is within the institution of marriage that erotic love finds its most adequate base for a full flowering. It is the institution of marriage which provides public support for the private space lovers need to go about their business. Secret loves are not noted either for their length or their health, and even when they endure, as they sometimes have, they nonetheless crave a public place in which to sun themselves and breathe healthy air. It is marriage that gives this place. In marriage, lovers enter a social institution that places them within boundaries larger than those inscribed by their private aims, desires and intentions...In entering the “order” or “estate” of marriage, lovers do not, by their vows, make a contract with one another for this or that service. Rather, they enter a relation whose precise duties and responsibilities cannot be either foreseen or predetermined by nuptial contract. The specific demands of marriage derive from what is demanded by a common good, one that exceeds the particular interests of the lovers and whose means of procurement cannot be predetermined or foreseen. Marriage is, therefore, the institution that best provides for the public blessing and support required for the success of our most intimate and private undertaking—a community based upon love. Further, if we look for an image that captures the nature of the bond marriage effects and enjoins, “one flesh” once more serves far better than any other available.” See also Robert Jensen, *Systematic Theology: Volume 2* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 92.

271. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery*, 302, portrays the eschatological dimensions of the Eucharist as being connected to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

272. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 59.

273. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 63.

274. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 63-65, states that marital love “is in its purest form self-transcending. Ultimately its purpose is to lead beyond the experience of the flesh and to center wholly on God...[God’s] ‘erotic’ love, his profound desire to be eternally

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reunited with his human creatures, inspires within the soul an ‘erotic’ response, an intense longing for God that tears express better than words. Embracing all that is signified by the term *agape* (disinterested, self-giving love), *eros* is the ‘unitive love’ that draws the soul into an eternal communion with God. Beginning with the passion of desire or fervent longing, it ends in the blissful joy of ‘dispassion’ (*apatheia*). In this state, the soul finds itself in utter surrender, consumed by the object of its deepest longing.”

275. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 67-68.

276. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 68.

277. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 69. Breck, 79-80, states that “Christian marriage engages the couple in ceaseless spiritual warfare at every level of their common life. Through continual repentance and the seeking of forgiveness, obstinate pride resolves into tender affection, and self-centered lust into self-sacrificing devotion. Beyond that, however, the couple’s struggle unites them into a common “priestly” ministry, as they offer themselves and each other to God as a ‘sacrifice of praise.’ The *telos* or ultimate end of conjugal union, then, is the salvation of the other, the beloved, with whom one is eternally united in a covenant bond of faithfulness and self-giving love.”

278. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 87, notes that “[I]f the sexes are ontologically equal and complementary, sharing a common nature yet reflecting in ways appropriate to their specific gender the beauty and perfection of the divine nature, then sexual conduct impacts directly on the person’s growth toward the likeness of God....In addition to stressing the eternal significance of gender, therefore, we have stressed as well the ontological equality that exists between the sexes...Nothing that we can say about extra-marital sex or homosexuality—or, for that matter, about abortion and *in vitro* fertilization—has any *theological* significance if we cannot affirm from the outset that in the eyes of God men and woman are ontologically (by nature) equal and that each gender possesses its own eternal value and meaning.”

279. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 81.

280. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 86.

281. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 89. Kean, “Heterosexual Expression, Marriage, and Morality,” *Readings in Moral Theology No. 8: Dialogue About Catholic Sexual Teaching*, 421, comments that “all of the married couple’s giving to one another and to their children is part of the sacrament of marriage. Sexual intercourse, as a major sign of the total union of spouses, is surely to be conceived of as a significant element in the sacramental life of married couples. In this context, sexual intercourse can be understood as a liturgical or worshipful action.”

282. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 90. Fr. Paul D. O'Callaghan, "Pseudosex in Pseudotheology," *Christian Bioethics* 4/1 (1998: 91), observes that "The love and oneness of a married couple actually takes on being of its own in their children...Realization of the self-transcending nature of sex means that a fundamental aspect of the marriage relationship is openness to child-bearing and rearing....According to Orthodox authorities, the marital relationship as a whole must be open to self-transcendence in the generation of children as the enfleshment of their parents' union. Intentionally to frustrate this end is to create a marital reality that 'dead-ends' in self-enclosed circularity between husband and wife. It is a refusal of the divine challenge to self-transcendence and sacrifice which are at the heart of the marital covenant. A marriage that is intentionally childless altogether abandons its Christian character."

283. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 96. "Not all marriages are entered into by persons who are compatible, willing, or able to make the blessing fructify. In the case of some marriages the ends of marriage are hopelessly frustrated. Under such circumstance the marriage is dissolved; the two, as it were, have 'died' to one another. The Church can admit this and allow divorce and even remarriage...[T]he fundamental issue is...how the Church can provide other ways for persons for whom marriage has failed to continue the journey toward God's Kingdom. The crucial problem which marital failure raises, therefore, is not juridical. It is soteriological. How can the salvation of the lives of those who have failed in marriage be yet secured?"

284. Fr. William Basil Zion, *Eros and Transformation*, 118, observes that "The view that marriage is a secular enterprise, carried out by two people who become an integrated couple by their love, consent and carnal union, is false insofar as it isolates them from the Body of Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit. Orthodoxy means the integration into wholeness and has no place for private unions based on individual initiative and choice. What may begin in the intimacy of a private space becomes integrated into the community by the blessing of the Church."

285. Guroian, *Incarnate Love*, 106, "Thus, the full Christian meaning of marriage is comprehensible only when a marriage is lived within the context of the whole life of the Church. Like monastic community, marriage is an *institution* with a purpose which transcends the personal goals or purposes of those who enter into it. It is an upbuilding of the Church in service to the Kingdom. Marriage is not only something which happens to the individuals who are wed and the children which they bear by the grace of God. Marriage is something which happens in and to the whole Church." Philip S. Keane, "Heterosexual Expression, Marriage and Morality," *Readings in Moral Theology No. 8: Dialogue About Catholic Sexual Teaching*, 420, observes that "married love proclaims that the whole people of God is called to newness of life in the resurrection. Hence, the married couple's covenantal love is a proclamation of hope for the whole communion of saints." Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality, and the Sacrament of Marriage*, 35, notes that "The Church is precisely a communion of persons, a union between mortal and immortal, humanity and God. Marriage grants the possibility to live in the Church, that is to say, to live in a personal relationship through which *eternity* is

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revealed. Outside the Church any physical relationship merely postpones death. Only in the Church can two people participate in the life-giving death of Christ, transforming mere survival into authentic life.”

286.Zion, *Eros and Transformation*, 289, “The movement for the legitimization of homosexuality and its practice in North American liberal Christian circles is viewed by most Orthodox Christians as entirely alien to the practice of their faith. Not only are Orthodox Christians not in the habit of changing their moral standards in response to various secular movements, but they find the attempts to legitimize homosexuality perfidious.” He also comments, 308, that “Clearly the dominant, even exclusive, standpoint among Orthodox theologians and Church authorities has been the view that homosexuality is sinful and contrary to God’s will.”

287.Zion, *Eros and Transformation*, 301-302, quotes St. John Chrysostom, *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, 3, trans., David G. Hunter, in *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, Vol. 13, 140, on homosexual relations. “What, then, is the evil? A new and lawless lust has invaded our life, a terrible and incurable disease has fallen upon us, a plague more terrible than all plagues has struck. A new and unspeakable crime has been devised. Not only written law, but also the laws of nature have been overturned. Fornication now seems like a minor offense among forms of unchastity.”

288.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 249, argues that “Even if there were illicit sexual behaviors that are ‘genetically determined’ so that those who engage in them ‘do not choose their lifestyle’ (e.g., lifestyles shaped from a compulsion to commit adultery or engage in homosexual acts), still those behaviors and lifestyles remain sinful: they disorient from the pursuit of holiness. They would be sins, albeit involuntary ones. Such behaviors require repentance even when they cannot be controlled. At least at the second order of volition, one must whole-heartedly repent of such behavior: ‘I know I cannot control myself, but I mourn and repent of my weakness, asking God’s forgiveness and aid to flee what I lack the strength to avoid’ ...The often despair-ridden and desperate pursuit of satisfaction, consolation, and love that characterizes much search for intimacy must be relocated in terms of the pursuit of the kingdom of God... The dignity of those who find themselves in lifestyles that deviate from this [Christian] norm is expressed in their ability to repent wholeheartedly.”

289.Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., “Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life,” in *Sexual Orientation and Human Rights in American Religious Discourse*, Saul M. Olyan and Martha C. Nussbaum, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 134-160.

290.Rogers, “Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life,” 134-135. “Moreover, they can be a means of anticipating God’s catching human beings up into that wedding feast that God celebrates in the life of the Trinity, an elevation that the tradition has had the wisdom to call consummation...In the context of baptism, Eucharist, and (yes) monastic vows, the Spirit is now moving Christian communities to see marriage as the central symbol by which to test and renegotiate the fit of gay and lesbian bodies into

the body of Christ.”

291. Rogers, “Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life,” 138. “The shock and wonder of God’s self-determining love in creation has a better analogy, according to biblical metaphor, in the contingency of the love of one human being for another, than in procreation. The marriage covenant itself (human or divine) adds to love time and space for exchanges of mutual gift, with procreation or without. Passages that speak of Israel as God’s bride are distinct from those that speak of Israel as God’s child, and do not speak of procreation. Jesus and Paul both speak of marriage without mentioning children. That they do so because they expect the imminent end of the world only heightens the point that marriage has an integral, eschatological end in the grace and gratitude of the trinitarian life, apart from childbearing. God’s extension of the covenant to the gentiles, just because it comes eschatologically at the end of the world, grows by baptism, which is a rite of adoption, not procreation, and promises a future by resurrection, not childbirth...The mutual self-giving of the marriage covenant, divine or human, has an integral end not in multiplication, as such, but in the mutual self-giving of the Trinity—an end to which children may contribute.”

292. Rogers, “Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life,” 142. “‘Nature’ must become logically subsequent to soteriology, to God’s concrete history with Jews and gentiles, which means also that we must reconceptualize nature not in terms of pre-determined end, immanent to a general human nature, or *telos* (such as procreation), but in terms of a God-determined end, or eschaton, such as the mutual blessing of God’s own trinitarian life. In good Barthian fashion we learn about nature, such as it is, from what God does with it: if God appears to be capable of using sexual orientations too, both heterosexual and homosexual...for God’s saving purposes, then that is of a piece with God’s surprising salvation of the gentiles. Like the claim that the Spirit of Christ is joining the gentiles to the tree in baptism, the claim that the same Spirit is building up the body of Christ by joining together gay and lesbian couples is a pneumatological one—a claim, that is about what the Spirit is doing new in the church, one that will one day, if not soon, be empirically verifiable in the church’s life.”

293. Rogers, “Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life,” 145, “God’s providential order of salvation specifically *overturns* the standard argument...If God has not acted to overturn the standard argument on Jews and gentiles, then we gentile Christians are not saved after all. *We are not saved!* It is the wild branches that God grafts on according to Romans 11, the gentiles with whom Paul associated sexual license and on the hearts of whom the Spirit writes a new life, in this case, I argue, the law of marriage. As God grafts gentiles, the wild branches, onto the domestic covenant of God’s household with Israel, structured by the Torah of the Spirit, so God grafts gay and lesbian couples (whom detractors also associate with sexual license) by a new movement of the Spirit onto the domestic, married covenants of straight women and men.” See also his argument on 154.

294. Rogers, “Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life,” 149, provides an

account of the eucharistic dimensions of sex.

295. By citing Aquinas, I do not mean to equate an Orthodox understanding of natural law with that of medieval Scholasticism. This particular maxim, however, may be read in an Orthodox context as a statement of the need for the restoration and healing of our fallen nature through grace.

296. Rogers, "Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God's Triune Life," 146, "The question is: *Which* bodily things ought Christians to believe? Are some bodily forms, like gay and lesbian relationships, irredeemable, or can God sanctify them?...The center of biblical embodiment is circumcision...If the bodily distinction of circumcision is overcome, then gay/straight means nothing, especially if sexual license is the issue of concern about both gay and gentile Christians...Jewish and Christian societies have constructed gentile and Jewish bodies according to better and worse notions of justice. Paul overturns those patterns. Paul (at his best) causes bodies to be constructed, not according to human justice but according to God's justification, because he believes in a God who justifies *gentiles* and justifies them *uncircumcised*."

297. Rogers, "Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God's Triune Life," 148, "That is the body's grace *par excellence*, the transfiguration of the body by the indwelling of the Spirit who just is grace, the Spirit trinitarianly defined as the *Spirit* of the *One* who raised *Christ*, where Christ is defined in turn as the one who was crucified. The body's grace is first of all what identifies the Trinity by the crucifixion and reunites it in the resurrection. At the Eucharist, secondarily, the fraction breaks open the Trinity to let the body in. The Trinity is entered by the body of a believer through the broken body of the Lord, and the body of the Lord is also broken to enter into the bodies of believers. This co-enveloping or interpenetration of bodies is itself the trinitarian life embodied, broken open, entered into, which could not take place with unembodied human beings."

298. Rogers, "Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God's Triune Life," 149, "Since the true body, or the primary analogate of "body" in Christian discourse, is the body of Christ, any body is taken seriously that extends and deepens the Eucharistic entry into God's body. Marriage, gay or straight, receives its sacramental character not independently but from the welcoming of the one flesh, in soteriological ways a new body, into the eucharistic community."

299. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 74.

300. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 237. "Humans are in their essence, before and after the Fall and even in the Resurrection, ontologically male and female. For example, Mary the Mother of God is the Theotokos forever. Her very being for eternity is found up with her motherhood. Christ's resurrected body gives all indications as being recognizable as male. Our existence as male and female endures. 'But from the beginning of creation, God 'made them male and female' (Mark 10:6)."

301. Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 163, “[The Son] existed before the creation and therefore was not subject to the limitations of it; that as the agent of creation, the design and order established in nature, even in sexual matters, were instituted by him; that deviations from the divine order are inconsistent with his arrangement and oppose his purposes; that severe sanctions are imposed upon people who do not measure up to the divine standards.”

302. Wold, *Out of Order*, 181-182.

303. Wold, *Out of Order*, 182.

304. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 386-387.

305. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 399, “[I]t is crucial to remember that experience must be treated as a hermeneutical lense for reading the New Testament rather than as an independent, counterbalancing authority. This is the point at which the analogy to the early church’s acceptance of Gentiles fails decisively. The church did not simply observe the experience of Cornelius and his household and decide that Scripture must be wrong after all. On the contrary, the experience of uncircumcised Gentiles responding in faith to the gospel message led the church back to a new reading of Scripture. This new reading discovered in the texts a clear message of God’s intent, from the covenant with Abraham forward, to bless all nations and to bring Gentiles (*qua* Gentiles) to worship Israel’s God...Only because the new experience of Gentile converts proved *hermeneutically illuminating* of Scripture was the church, over time, able to accept the decision to embrace Gentiles within the fellowship of God’s people. This is precisely the step that has not—or at least not yet—been taken by the advocates of homosexuality in the church.”

306. Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 41, “The sacrament of marriage unites charisms that are complementary and is the prerequisite for a special form of the priesthood of all believers.”

307. O’Callaghan, “Pseudosex in Pseudotheology,” *Christian Bioethics* 4/1 (1998: 92).

308. O’Callaghan, “Pseudosex in Pseudotheology,” *Christian Bioethics* 4/1 (1998: 93).

309. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 110. He states, 115, that “The conservative—and today, very unpopular—approach taken by Orthodox Christians to this matter is, or should be, based on theologically grounded moral principle rather than on emotional reactions to the phenomenon of homosexuality itself. That principle, which undergirds all Orthodox anthropology, holds that *the single purpose of human life, including bodily existence, is to glorify God*. That principle also underlies Jesus’ command, ‘You must

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be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. 5:48), as it does St. Paul's admonition, 'glorify God in your body!' (1 Cor. 6:20). Homosexual (genital) acts by their very nature violate that principle, for reasons we have already mentioned. They misuse the sexual organs in an attempt to satisfy self-centered lust. They are devoid of procreative capacity. They parody the covenantal bond of 'one flesh' that only a husband and wife can assume."

310. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 173-174, notes a variety of difficulties with natural law ethics: "The difficulty in understanding 'natural law' lies partly in the ambiguity of 'nature.' Nature is everything created by God. Nature is also that which is proper to humans as human. In this sense nature compasses both humans and the world within which they were created. In addition, it is natural for man not only to have spatio-temporal, finite knowledge, but also to have noetic knowledge. Man is naturally a being who worships and turns noetically to know God, although the experience of God is beyond his nature."

311. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 247, "Homosexual desires, unions, and acts are signally deviant in radically directing sexuality away from its only appropriate expression: the union of husband and wife. For traditional Christianity, terms such as deviant and perverse have deep meaning, given the recognition of the goal of human life: the recognition that certain actions lead away from holiness. Desires, unions, and acts are perverse when they misdirect sexual affection, energies, and interest in ways that in the knowledge of the Church lead away from union with God."

312. Zion, *Eros and Transformation*, 309. Hanigan, *Homosexuality*, 102, notes that "The unity ritualized and enacted in sexual behavior is a two-in-one flesh unity, a unity that has its created basis in the physical and biological complementarity of male and female. There are various ways human beings can imitate, or play at imaging this unity, but apart from the actual basis in reality of male and female sexual union, these ways are only pretense or imaginative simulations of the real thing. To say that they are imaginative simulations is not to judge their moral worth out of hand, but merely to point out that such actions are not authentic rituals of a two-in-one flesh unity. To think that they are is to deceive ourselves. Such imaginative simulations may well have their own purpose and their own justification, but they cannot lay claim to being the real thing. Hence, whatever else may be said in favor of homosexual acts and relationships, they cannot be understood as exercises and realizations of the inter-personal, vocational meaning of sexuality." See also Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume 2*, 93.

313. Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming*, 111, "The partners in same-sex intercourse also bring to the act the physical features that most deeply represent their existence as sexual beings. But in this act, the specific body part each contributes to the act does not represent what distinguishes each from the other. Nor does it represent the unique contribution each brings to their sexual union, for their roles in the act can be interchanged. Further, in same-sex intercourse, some other body part...routinely substitutes for the sexual organ that neither partner can provide. But whenever this occurs, one or the other

partner presses an aspect of his or her anatomy into service of the sex act that, because it is not the definitive mark of the person as a sexual being, is not normally viewed as sexual. In this manner, same-sex intercourse loses the symbolic dimension of two-becoming-one present in male-female sex. At best, it is only a simulation of the two-becoming-one ritual that the act of sexual intercourse is designed to be. And a homosexual couple can only imitate the unity of two persons joining together as sexual others, so vividly symbolized in male-female coitus.”He also observes, 140, that “in a same-sex relationship the two partners do not contribute to the union what is uniquely theirs to bring, namely their *sexual* otherness. Because our sexuality is central to our essential personhood, a homosexual union can never fully be a uniting of the persons as two who are ‘other.’”

314.Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming*, 142. Grenz comments, 113, that “There is nothing inherent in the physical act [of homosexual intercourse] that would limit involvement to two persons. This observation leads us to ask: On what ritual basis would any homosexual bond necessarily consist of two and only two? If there is no intrinsic aspect of the ritual act that limits its participants to two, why should anyone privilege ‘monogamous’ homosexual relations? Further, if nothing intrinsic to the act inherently symbolizes the reality of two-becoming-one, then same-sex intercourse, even when practiced within a stable homosexual relationship, is simply unable to ritualize exclusivity. In contrast to heterosexual intercourse, it cannot function as the celebration of an exclusive bond and therefore cannot point to the exclusivity of the relationship God desires to have with us. In this way, same-sex intercourse loses the spiritual meaning of the sex act.”

315.Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming*, 113-115.

316.Hanagan, *Homosexuality: The Test Case for Christian Sexual Ethics*, 103-104, “It would, then, be my contention that only the vocation of marriage shapes a way of life in which free and complete sexual expression is an essential component and can realize both its personal and social significance; and that this realization requires that marriage be heterosexual. I would further contend that individuals who find themselves to have an irreversible homosexual orientation, something not lightly to be assumed, rightly read that condition as an invitation to Christian discipleship either as a single person in service to the world or in a life of consecrated celibacy...I do not know, nor do I know how to determine beyond question, whether homosexuality is to be understood psychologically as a pathology or as a natural and normal sexual difference. I do know that, theologically, God’s grace can be found at work in the homosexual condition and that it must be taken seriously as one indication of the concrete form one’s vocational call to holiness and service should take.”

317.Fr. Richard McCormick, S.J., *The Critical Calling: Reflections on Moral Dilemmas Since Vatican II* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989). He also observes, 306-308.

318.McCormick, *The Critical Calling*, 309.

319.McCormick, *The Critical Calling*, 309, “One thing seems clear: both judgments (irreversibly homosexual, not called to celibacy) are the *responsibility of the individual before God*. If an individual concludes—even with the help of a pastoral counselor—that she/he fulfills these conditions, the Church (remembering the difference between specific and individual rectitude, and the difference between the moral and the pastoral, this later including application to individual persons) can understand this and *ought to respect such a decision made before God*. The Church does not “justify” such a decision for the simply reason that she cannot. It is the individual’s responsibility. But the Church can respect it. It is at this point that a “pastoral approximation” takes on significance (doing the best one can to achieve the normative).”

320.Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 401.

321.Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 402, “While Paul regarded celibacy as a charisma, he did not therefore suppose that those lacking the charisma were free to indulge their sexual desires outside marriage. Heterosexually oriented persons are also called to abstinence from sex unless they marry (1 Cor. 7:8-9). The only difference—admittedly a salient one—in the case of homosexually oriented persons is that they do not have the option of homosexual ‘marriage.’ So where does that leave them? It leaves them in precisely the same situation as the heterosexual who would like to marry but cannot find an appropriate partner (and there are many such): summoned to a difficult, costly obedience, while ‘groaning’ or the ‘redemption of our bodies’ (Rom. 8:23). Anyone who does not recognize this as a description of authentic Christian existence has never struggled seriously with the imperatives of the gospel, which challenge and frustrate our ‘natural’ impulses in countless ways. Much of the contemporary debate turns on this last point. Many of the advocates of unqualified acceptance of homosexuality seem to be operating with a simplistic anthropology that assumes whatever is must be good: they have a theology of creation but no theology of sin and redemption. Furthermore, they have a realized eschatology that equates personal fulfillment with sexual fulfillment and expects sexual ‘salvation’ now. The Pauline portrayal of human beings as fallen creatures in bondage to sin and yet set free in Christ for the obedience of faith would suggest a rather different assessment of our sexuality, looking to the future resurrection as the locus of bodily fulfillment. Thus, eschatology looms as the crucial question that divides the traditional position from those who would revise it.”

322.See John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1993), paras. 54-64, for a discussion of pastoral concessions and the dignity of conscience in relation to the moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

323.Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 53, observes that “Asceticism is the endeavor which confirms man’s freedom and his decision to reject the rebellion of his individual will and to imitate the obedience of the second Adam. This is obedience not simply in the sense of submission to an external law, but in the sense of faithfulness to the

“image” of God which is Christ—of conforming to the trinitarian prototype of life which Christ made incarnate in human nature.”

324. Zion, *Eros and Transformation*, 317, comments that in Confession “what is most important is that the fundamental option of the penitent be retained as submissive to the will of God. As with masturbation, or even with sins such as lying or stealing, a fall is to be taken as something to be repudiated, and then with the assistance of God’s forgiving grace the penitent stands once more firm in his Christian orientation.”

325. The fullness of our nature is found in our communion with the self-sacrificial obedience of Christ. We are to look to him as the standard for our humanity, not to our fallen selves. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 190, comments that “It was for the new man that human nature was created at the beginning, and for him mind and desire were prepared. Our reason we have received in order that we may know Christ, our desire in order that we might hasten to Him....For those who have known him first, the old Adam is the archetype because of our fallen nature. But for Him who sees all things before they exist the first Adam is the imitation of the second.”

326. Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 119, comments that “*To ‘glorify God in the body’ means that genital sexual activity must be restricted to the blessed, heterosexual conjugal union.* The Church can no more bless homosexuals who want to live and express their sexuality together than it can bless adulterers or fornicators. Even where promiscuity is not a problem and the relationship seems to be based on genuine care and love, the homosexual lifestyle remains antithetical to what the Gospel calls people to be. Homosexuals must make a choice: either to abstain altogether from genital sexual activity or, by virtue of their refusal, to cut themselves off from full communion with the Body of Christ....With regard to Fr. McCormick’s criteria noted earlier, there is only one thing to say: from the perspective of Orthodox Christianity, *every person not called to conjugal union is called to celibacy for the Kingdom of God.* This is a difficult ideal, but the myriad saints throughout the history of the Church are proof that it is not an impossible one. Many of them, in secret and before the eyes of God alone, achieved sanctity precisely through their arduous struggle against sexual temptation.”

327. Zion, *Eros and Transformation*, 321, notes that “The fundamental Orthodox insight remains valid: our developmental end is to become what we are, for we are made in the image of God. [The way] to realize the likeness with God is by a *theosis* whereby *agape* is born in our lives. It is impossible for us to manifest in the likeness of God while existing in a state of hedonistic and sensual indulgence. Just as marriage involves wearing the martyrs’ crown, so the Christian and Orthodox homosexual will walk in the way of the cross. It is my firm belief that on the other side of that cross is the glory of the resurrection. To abandon the fundamental option of Christ in favor of the “gay” life is only to lose the hope and joy of participation in the resurrection. On the other hand, the particular and peculiar road of the Christian homosexual is a vocation similar to the monastic one. It is not a vocation to perpetual frustration but to an unfolding of love in

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the knowledge that God has a very special love for the outcasts, the rejected, and the eunuchs.”

328. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 247, “Because the focus should be on orienting one’s energies to God, one’s attitude to sinners must be one of love, though one must condemn their sin. That is, the Christian must never judge the sinner in the sense of having a view as to whether any particular sinner will find salvation or damnation. The commandment to love others as oneself (Matt 19:19) requires one to love others who are sinners, for one is oneself a sinner who needs mercy. One must respond to sinners only out of full and compassionate love. To respond in any other way would be to compound the sin of another with one’s own sins of arrogance, pride, and judgment. Still, out of love for the other, one owes him the truth: that sin is real and that it can only be overcome through repentance, ascetic struggle, and the grace of God.”

329. Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, in *On Moral Medicine*, Stephen E. Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 309.

330. Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 310, “That teaching, often set forth by the magisterium, is founded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. To use this divine gift destroying, even if only partially, its meaning and its purpose is to contradict the nature both of man and of woman and of their most intimate relationship, and therefore it is to contradict also the plan of God and His will. On the other hand, to make use of the gift of conjugal love while respecting the laws of the generative process means to acknowledge oneself not to be the arbiter of the sources of human life, but rather the minister of the design established by the Creator.”

331. Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 311.

332. Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 312, “Consequently, if the mission of generating life is not to be exposed to the arbitrary will of men, one must necessarily recognize insurmountable limits to the possibility of man’s domination over his own body and its functions; limits which no man, whether a private individual or one invested with authority, may licitly surpass. And such limits cannot be determined otherwise than by the respect due to the integrity of the human organism and its functions...”

333. See *Readings in Moral Theology No. 8*, Curran and McCormick, eds., part 2 for a survey of advocates and critics of the Roman Catholic teaching.

334. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/4, 265-76, as quoted in *On Moral Medicine*, Lammers and Verhey, eds., 325-326, “If married life includes sexual intercourse it

means that the possibility of parenthood is a natural consequence. To be sure, the attempt to evade this consequence is not always the result of arbitrariness or sloth. Yet those who exclude this possibility and deliberately avoid this consequence must be asked whether they do so under the divine command and with a sense of responsibility to God, and not out of caprice. From this standpoint, therefore, a strong warning must be inserted which we must always consider. In light of what marital fellowship demands, the use of this freedom may be something which the divine law strictly forbids. The fact remains, however, that even from this standpoint there can be no absolute denial of this freedom.”

335. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/4, 265-76, as quoted in *On Moral Medicine*, Lammers and Verhey, eds., 327-329.

336. Father John Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984,) 59, “There can be no Christian marriage without an immediate and impatient desire of both parents to receive and share in this joy. A marriage where children are unwelcome is founded upon a defective, egoistic and fleshly form of love. In giving life to others, man imitates God’s creative act and, if he refuses to do so, he not only rejects his Creator, but also distorts his own humanity; for there is no humanity without an ‘image and likeness of God,’ i.e., without a conscious, or unconscious desire to be a true imitator of the life-creating Father of all.”

337. Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 132. Meyendorff notes, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective*, 61, that “The Orthodox Church, for its part, has never committed itself formally and officially on the issue” of the use of contraception.

338. Harakas, *Living the Faith*, 132.

339. Harakas, *Contemporary Moral Issues Facing the Orthodox Christian* (Minneapolis, MN: Life and Light Publishing Company, 1982), 81, “The real issue is which of the two views best represents the fulness of the Orthodox Christian Faith. The first, negative response, draws primarily on an exclusively biological, physical and legalistic perspective. The second, affirmative response, emphasizes the close relationship of body and soul, places the issue in the total context of marriage and family, and most importantly, takes a sacramental approach.What we are saying is that if a married couple has children, or is spacing the birth of their children, and wishes to continue sexual relations in the subsequent years as an expression of their continuing love for each other, and for the deepening of their personal and marital unity, the Orthodoxy of contraception is affirmed.”

340. See Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 152.

341. St. John Chrysostom, “Homily 12,” *On Marriage and Family Life*, 76. See also Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 45, “Man and woman move toward one another by ‘mutually getting to know each other,’ by revealing themselves to each other for a

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shared ascent; nothing comes to ennoble or legitimize, still less to 'pardon' this meaning that royally imposes itself before, or even independent of, procreation. It is from this overflowing fullness that the child can come as fruit, but it is not procreation that determines and establishes the value of marriage."

342.Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 227.

343.Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective*, 62-63, "The question of birth control and of its acceptable forms can only be solved by individual Christian couples. They can make the right decision only if they accept their Christian commitment with ultimate seriousness, if they believe in the providence of God, if they avoid being concerned too much with material security ('Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth,' Matthew 6:19), if they realize that children are a great joy and a gift of God, if their love is not a selfish and egotistic one, if they remember that love reduced to sexual pleasure is not true love. For example, in an affluent American society, there is practically never a sufficient reason to avoid children in the first two years of marriage. In any case, the advice of a good father confessor could help much in taking the right 'first step in married life.'"

344.Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 176, "What is most important...is *the question of the spiritual age*. The couple passes through a maturation that finds an appropriate solution at each 'age' of the nuptial life, one that is intolerant of any general formula, of all submission to the concept of the 'common good.' Nuptial asceticism, nourished by the full life of the Church, draws from itself the necessary mastery to choose and to judge a situation in agreement with the spiritual age of the couple and the spouses' harmonious growth in charisms. At the most, the Church offers only elements for a basis of judgment. She exerts no constraint; her task is to free from all forms of enslavement in order to make him a free citizen of the Kingdom. As soon as the sociological and finalistic notion of procreation is set aside, a solution arises from the inventive art of the *magnus amor* and from its protecting grace."

345.Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 178, "Voluntary procreation is more noble than what is due blindly to chance, more often than not unforeseen and unwanted. If one accepts painless childbirth, there is no reason not to accept a time of temporary sterility, when a birth would pose a serious problem and where love, filled with anguish and anxiety, lives in an atmosphere where it runs the risk of dying. One cannot compel a woman to bring forth. Procreation can only be the reflected creation of free beings who have prepared themselves by prayer. In order that the child be freely wanted, it is essential that the possibility of not having it be given." He also observes, 45, that "It is from this overflowing fullness [of love between husband and wife] that the child can come as fruit, but it is not procreation that determines and establishes the value of marriage."

346.Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, 178-179, "The problem is not one of methods, but of the spirit with which one employs the methods. Assuredly, the problem is one of

the spirit....It is perfectly clear that one cannot purely and simply recommend contraceptive techniques; the most deserving solution lies in spiritual mastery. But man must uplift himself progressively toward this mastery and do it *freely*. The spouses are “subjects” who respect each other as responsible persons, free to choose their destiny and their art of loving one another.....At the hour of its maturity, love transcends all regulation, every technique, all prescription imposed from without and reaches the crucial plane: faithful to its vocation, it cannot avoid the summit of love crucified.”

347.O’Callaghan, “Pseudosex in Pseudotheology,” *Christian Bioethics* 4/1 (1998: 95).

348.O’Callaghan, “Pseudosex in Pseudotheology,” *Christian Bioethics* 4/1 (1998:95).

349.O’Callaghan, “Pseudosex in Pseudotheology,” *Christian Bioethics* 4/1 (1998: 95-96), “Orthodox theology would generally hold, then, that the unitive experience that is marital intercourse is an inherent good that need not be justified by reference to the fertility of each act. It is enough that the marital relationship be open to new life as a whole, and not that each individual act be so. Within their marital life, sexual activity serves to reaffirm and reestablish time and time again the fundamental unity into which God has joined the couple. In that context, the use of active means of family planning are acts of directive stewardship by which the couple arranges the particular characteristics of their family’s growth. None of this is fundamentally unnatural or a violation of God’s commandments or purposes. It is rather the exercise of human freedom to fulfill the divine directives in a manner appropriate for the particular married couple.”

350.Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 89.

351.Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 90.

352.Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 91, “[W]here openness to procreation is systematically rejected, sexuality cannot fulfill its God-given purpose. The same is true within a marriage where the couple refuses to have any children at all. We are not talking about situations where a couple may delay child bearing for a certain period of time, or even where, following the birth of several children, the parents may decide to use contraception indefinitely in order to hold their family to a manageable size. It is where procreation is rejected in principle, whether within or outside the conjugal union, that the true purpose of sexuality is frustrated. By its very nature that rejection is sinful. Its intentionality makes of it a moral and not merely an ‘ontic’ evil.”

353.Fr. Chrysostom Zaphiris, “The Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 11/4 (1974): 681.

354.Zaphiris, “The Morality of Contraception,” 682.

355.Zaphiris, “The Morality of Contraception,” 683. A couple’s decision to use contra-

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ception may be seen as “the cooperation of human reason with divine providence; for the Greek Fathers, human reason itself is a participation in the divine revelation. The discoveries and intentions of humankind are themselves permitted by God who governs the human spirit through the Logos without suppressing human freedom.”

356.Zaphiris, “The Morality of Contraception,” 684.

357.Zaphiris, “The Morality of Contraception,” 685, “We are compelled to answer that the encyclical...is lacking because it does not acknowledge the role of man and woman as God’s co-creators and co-legislators on earth. The Eastern Orthodox view of contraception...is that our capacity to control procreation is an expression of our powers of freedom and reason to collaborate with God in the moral order. A human being is viewed not only as a subject which receives passively the ‘natural law,’ but also as a person who plays an active role in its formulation. Thus natural law, according to Eastern Orthodox thinkers, is not a code imposed by God on human beings, but rather a rule of life set forth by divine inspiration and by our responses to it in freedom and reason.”

358.Zaphiris, “The Morality of Contraception,” 687.

359.Zaphiris, “The Morality of Contraception,” 688-689.

360.Zion, *Eros and Transformation*, 255-257, “Contraception may not be a permanent policy and practice between married couples unless there is a proportionate reason such as the presence of unavoidable genetic disease or conditions of life which would make the raising of children impossible.....Permanent sterilization of either the man or the woman in the context of marriage is not morally acceptable unless it is to prevent a likely and probable evil [such as]...where the medical judgment is that a woman must not conceive another child since such would pose a grave risk to her life and health....The contraceptive mentality, which excludes children on principle, should find no place in an Orthodox home...Openness to one another and to God’s purposes in giving us new life in the context of the family is part of the divine plane of salvation whereby we are saved by becoming members of one another in the Body of Christ.”

361.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 268, “[T]he use of family planning, whether through natural or artificial means, is never the norm, is indeed against the norm, and the contraceptive ethos is always to be condemned. The norm is an ascetic trust in the providence of God, while the contraceptive ethos lies at the heart of the liberal cosmopolitan confidence in human power and its pursuit of luxury and self-satisfaction. While ascetic trust in the providence of God takes aim at the transcendent, the contraceptive ethos affirms the immanent with its possibilities for self-fulfillment.”

362.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 264.

363.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 243.

364.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 264.

365.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 245-246, “The Church of the first millennium gives major accent to the bond between sexuality and reproduction without placing marital sexuality within a natural law understanding grounded in a philosophical account of natural inclinations or of biological teleologies. To understand human sexual obligations in such terms would be to ground human moral conduct in fallen nature. If one attempted to read human sexual morality from the findings of an Aristotelian, Scholastic, or even post-Darwinian sociobiological account of human sexuality, one would ironically be attempting an account of how to approach God in terms of nature after the Fall...rather than in terms of the telos of all teleologies: the Kingdom of God...A merely biological account would obscure the central telos: God.”

366.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 246.

367.Engelhardt, *The Foundation of Christian Bioethics*, 235.

368.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 265.

369.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 268, “At stake is not a pastoral softening of a general rule for a particular couple, but the economical, that is appropriate application of the rule, the directing of a general rule in a particular way in order to achieve that rule’s goal, the salvation of a particular couple in the conduct of their marriage. The rule is followed so as to realize its central meaning: the pursuit of the Kingdom of God in marriage. All of human life, including human sexuality, must be brought to focus on God. This will allow, in fact require, different points of departure for different persons in the pursuit of salvation, as long as they do not go beyond the traditional bounds of the marital union of husband and wife, the focus for all rules for sexual companionship in the pursuit of God.” He also comments, 236, that “Christian bioethics is not legalistic. The Christian ethics of reproduction is not merely a set of rules or principles. Its answers to questions about right and wrong conduct should not be understood on the model of juridical determinations of guilt or innocence, but rather in terms of aiming people closer to union with God. The crucial point of focus is not on particular rules but on changing oneself so as to turn from oneself to God.”

370.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 284.

371.Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 238, “Human sexuality even in marriage must be placed within the ascetic struggle to union with God; nothing, including marital sexuality, should distract from whole-hearted love of God. The contraceptive ethos, instead of focusing on God, focuses on luxury and indulgence and leads away from God. Marriage in its joyful companionship may lead even in this life beyond carnality to that life of the angels that is the destiny for all marriages.”

