Scripture

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THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

The most effective symbol of the relationship between God and his people in the Old Testament was that of marriage. The Messianic era, then, when this relationship would reach fulfilment, was spoken of in terms of a wedding feast; and there are echoes of this idea in the gospels—in the parables, for instance, or when our Lord refers to himself as the bridegroom: 'Can the bridegroom's friends fast when the bridegroom is still with them?' (Mark 2:19). But it is in St Paul that the marriage figure is taken up again and explicitly applied to Christ and the Church. Indeed, so real is the relationship to St Paul that he can even reverse the figure; instead of comparing the Church to matrimony, he can use the Mystical Body to clarify and illustrate his teaching on marriage. That is what he is doing in Eph. 5:22ff. His subject is family relationships; and in order to drive home the obligations of married persons he points to the relationship between Christ and the Church which their marriage symbolises. Wives are to be subject to their husbands as the Church is subject to Christ; and husbands are to care for their wives as Christ does for the Church. And he sums it all up with the words: 'This is a great mystery—the relationship, that is, of Christ and the Church.'

The Mystery

It is unfortunate that the Latin uses here the word *sacramentum*, which has such technical connations for most of us. Certainly, St Paul has a theology about the sacred character of matrimony; but this is not necessarily identical with the development which it receives in scholastic theology. The Council of Trent uses this text indeed in its treatment of marriage; but it is careful to point out that it does not prove the sacramental nature of marriage, but merely suggests it: '*Innuit Paulus . . .*' The correct meaning of the word, 'mystery,' is one which is well known to Pauline theology, and central to it.[1]

[1] There is practically no limit to the bibliography which might be given on this subject; the article by John T. Trinidad, S.J., in *Biblica*, 1950, pp. 1–26, gives, besides a fair treatment of the subject, an extensive bibliography. See also P. Benoit, 'Corps, tête et plérome dans les Epîtres de la captivité,' *Revue Biblique*, 1956, pp. 5–44.

The term belongs to the language of Jewish apocalyptic literature. It is the word used in Daniel, for example, to describe the secret revelation given in a dream which only Daniel could interpret. The Qumran literature uses it in the same way—the hidden wisdom of the divine plan and of its execution, revealed to the prophets in part, and now to the sect of the new covenant.[1] It is used in the gospels in much the same way—the deeper truth of the kingdom which was confided to the apostles.[2]

For St Paul, it includes the whole mystery of salvation which is the sum of his gospel. At the beginning of this same epistle to the Ephesians, Paul shows how all-embracing it is (1:3–14). It begins with God; it is in fact essentially Trinitarian—it depends on the good-will of the Father, it is effected by the Son and it is sealed in the Holy Spirit. It is part of the idea of 'mystery' that it is progressive—not just a secret body of information, but God's hidden plan which unfolds in time; and in a sense this progressive movement begins in the procession of the Trinity. From there it moves outwards to creation, and encounters the fact of the Fall. And it is then that the mystery properly so-called comes into play, God's secret wisdom by which He plans to bring the world back to Him. It is prepared throughout the ages, it is foretold in the prophets; and it is finally realised when God becomes man in the person of Christ. It includes our redemption through Christ's death and resurrection, our adoption as sons, our sanctification in the Spirit; it includes the mystery of the rejection of the Jews and the choice of the Gentiles; it includes the summing up of all things, visible and invisible, in Christ. And it ends with the final return of all this, which is the fullness of Christ, to God who fills everything. And Christ then returns to the bosom of the Trinity, so that we end where we began, with God who is all in all—and the whole is for the praise of his glory.

Christ, then, is the heart and centre and sum of the whole mystery: Christ who contains in himself all the fullness of the godhead, and who unites himself in one body with man in the Church. It is here, in the Mystical Body of Christ, that the mystery is fulfilled; for it is in the Mystical Body that the 'restoring of all things,' 'the fullness of God,' is initially completed. It is in the union of Christ with his Church that the union of God with creation is effected.

Matrimony

And now, in Eph. 5:32, matrimony is associated with this great mystery of Christ and the Church. In the previous verses, the symbol

[1] cf. *Biblica*, 1956, pp. 247–57

[2] Matt. 13:11: 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom . . .'

of Christ and the Church has been used as a basis for exhorting husband and wife in their relationship with each other ; but now we see that it is not just a comparison with a homiletic value, but a real analogy with a theological value. The relationship of husband and wife is not just like the great mystery of Christ and the Church, but a part of it.

How is this so ? In the first place, we should notice that it is not the individual man and woman who are spoken of, but the state of matrimony. As individuals both husband and wife are equally members of the Church, the bride of Christ. It is their union in matrimony which is the term of the comparison. We should notice also that the point of the comparison is not the mutual love of husband and wife ; from this point of view they are equal—each is bound to love the other, for Christ's sake, as every Christian is bound to do. Nor can we say that there is a specific quality in marital love which makes it a fitting symbol of the love of Christ for the Church ; there is indeed a specific quality to marital love, but this quality is the result of the marital relationship, not the cause of it. Just as there is a specific quality in the love of parents which differentiates it from ordinary charity—but this quality is the result of the filial relationship, not the cause of it. Thus it is not accurate to say that the man represents Christ and the woman represents the Church. It is the man, in his specific character as husband, who represents Christ ; and the woman, as a wife, who represents the Church ; and the matrimony which represents the Mystical Body.

That is the point of Eph. 5:26 : ' Husbands, love your wives—as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself up for it, so as to sanctify it and prepare for himself a Church that was spotless and without stain.' The point is not merely that Christ loved the Church enough to die for it ; but that in dying for it he made it fit for union with himself. The stress of the sentence falls on the words : ' to sanctify it and prepare it for himself.'

And so it is too with marriage. The husband is not merely exhorted to love his wife ; he is exhorted to love his wife because she is part of him, and no man ever hates his own flesh.

' *For this cause . . .*'

This point is brought out finally and most definitely in a text which has caused some difficulty—St Paul's reference to Gen. 2:23f. in this context : ' For this reason shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh.' What is the reason ? In Genesis it is because woman was fitted by creation from Adam's rib to be united in one flesh with him. But for St Paul the

reason is that we are members of his body, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone (he uses of the mystical body the same phrase as Genesis uses of the relationship between Eve and Adam). Christ and the Church are one thing just as really as man and wife are one thing. And not only that but—' for this reason . . .'—the union of man and wife is in fact directed to this union of the Mystical Body ; it was, so to speak, the reason why God invented it. Marriage is not merely a symbol of the Mystical Body ; the Mystical Body is the prototype which marriage was intended to portray.

This, however, causes a difficulty. The text of Genesis refers to the natural contract of matrimony, as it existed before our Lord. Its symbolic relationship with the Mystical Body, then, can hardly be the mark of the sacrament, the Christian reality. This is true ; but there is no reason why an Old Testament reality, which in the Old Testament was purely symbolic, should not be raised to a higher status after the coming of our Lord. The sacrifices of the old law were preparatory, foreshadowing ; but they did have a certain value in so far as they symbolised the supreme sacrifice in which they were fulfilled. Circumcision had a certain value in so far as it was a mark of that covenant which was fulfilled in the New Testament and into which we are initiated by baptism. Now, it is not absolutely impossible that baptism should have been used in the Old Testament as the mark of initiation into the covenant ; or conversely, that circumcision should have been retained in the New, to signify our union with Christ. One can see good reason why a new symbol was chosen to convey the new and greater reality ; but there is no intrinsic reason why the old symbol should not have been retained. And if it had been retained it would still have had the sacramental efficacy which baptism now has in fact. And if that had happened, if God had chosen to act in that way, we would have had the same symbol referring to the same thing in different ways—the one, the Old Testament rite, preparing for the reality which was to come ; the other, in the New Testament, looking back to that reality and sacramentally renewing it. So, in the same way, there is no reason why the same institution of matrimony should not refer to the same thing in the Old Testament and in the New, but in two different ways—in the Old, as prefiguring the great reality which was to come, in the New sacramentally repeating it.

' *Filling up* '

Christian marriage, then, does not merely symbolise the union of Christ and the Church ; in some sense it re-creates it. It is something like the sacrifice of the Mass, which re-enacts daily the single sacrifice of Calvary. It is something analogous to what St Paul teaches con-

cerning our sufferings—that they 'fill up the things that are wanting to the body of Christ.' Our Lord suffered for us—and that suffering was 'once and for all.' Yet that suffering in his physical body in some mysterious way receives a complement from the sufferings of his Mystical Body. And that Mystical Body is the real Christ—it is the concrete, almost physical reality of that truth that gives marriage its place in the 'mystery' of salvation. When God became man he bound himself by the conditions of humanity; and the essential condition of humanity is contingency—to exist only at a particular moment in time. We say that our Lord became 'man'; but it would be more accurate to say that he became *a* man; there is no universal, generalised Man, no abstract Human Nature that he took, containing thus in some way all other men. Christ, now, is the Church, which is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.[1] This 're-Incarnation' of Christ has to be realised anew in every generation; and it is in marriage that this union is realised. By Baptism, Christ is united with the individual soul; by marriage he is united with a new being, one who is 'two-in-one-flesh'; and in that new union he takes on a new mode of being—the mode of being which in fact we call the Mystical Body. It is sometimes said that the family is a microcosm of the state; it is even truer to say that by the sacrament of marriage the church in microcosm is produced.

Sacrament

Here, however, we must exercise caution. The union of matrimony certainly portrays and gives concrete expression to the realism of the Church's union with Christ. But for the technical definition of a sacrament in the modern sense it is demanded that the symbol should be efficacious—that it should produce that which it symbolises. Now this does not seem to be true of marriage, at least from this point of view. It is certainly true that the sacramental contract of marriage produces the graces which that contract symbolises, the graces necessary to make the union a living supernatural reality in Christ. It is true also that the union symbolises most vividly the union of Christ and the Church. But it is very difficult to see that it produces this union. That is to say, the union of a husband with his wife does not actually produce Christ in his union with the Church—that relationship is a fact prior to and independent of the sacrament of marriage.[2]

One can indeed see that all that later sacramental theology looks for in marriage does stem from this its most essential function of

[1] Eph. 5:22; the phrase is omitted by some Greek MSS, but those which have it are of sufficient weight to make the reading at least probable.

[2] cf. *Summa*, III (supp.), q.42, a.1, ad 4um

portraying the union of the Mystical Body : the charity that makes this union supernatural, and the fruitfulness of that union in charity which produces offspring who are to be sons of God. But St Paul is content to dwell on that essential aspect : that the sacred character of marriage is due to the part it plays in the great mystery of salvation ; this mystery is centred on the Incarnation, where God and man became one person ; it is continued in Christ's Mystical Body, where God and men become one being ; and it is in marriage that this union is re-enacted and continued.

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THE BIBLE AND EVOLUTION

The reader who perseveres to the end of this article will probably sympathise with the old lady who did not like Shakespeare because he was full of quotations. This article *is* full of quotations and references, because it is by way of being a review of books and articles which have appeared on the Continent in the past decade or so. The purpose of the authors of these works of *haute vulgarisation* is to reassure those who are troubled by the apparent conflict between science and the Bible as to the manner of creation of living things, and more particularly of the human race. Since God is the author both of reason and revelation, there can be no discrepancy between the proved conclusions of science and the teaching of the Bible. Any apparent conflict is due either to the exaggerated statements of scientists or to a failure to understand the Bible aright. We will, accordingly, try to assess the degree of certainty which the evolutionary hypothesis can command and the present position of Catholic exegesis.

The theory of evolution

According to the theory of evolution, considered strictly as a scientific hypothesis, all living animal species have issued by way of generation and development from more general, simpler and less numerous forms. The diversification of species took place gradually in the course of the vast geological periods, by way of a progress from less complex forms to more differentiated forms. There exists therefore among the various species of all living animals a strict relationship either of descendance or of collateral affinity. According to some evolutionists all life, whether plant or animal, sprang from a single